

3-19-10

DEAR MR ADAMS

THANK YOU FOR THE GIFTS!!


I'M SORRY THIS LETTER IS LATE. AFTER ALL ITS BEEN ALMOST SIXTY YEARS SINCE I HAD HOMEWORK — I HOPE THE FORMAT THAT I USED IS O.K. SOME DATES MIGHT BE CONFUSED BUT THEY ARE VERY CLOSE. ITS TO BAD THEY DIDNT KEEP ONE OLD BARRACKS CLASSROOM AS A MUSEUM.

THE ONLY PART OF THE PRESENT CAMPUS THAT WE HAD WAS A PARTIALLY BUILT GYM. WE GOT TO GRADUATE FROM THE GYM WITH PORTABLE LIGHTS AND UNFINISHED FLOORS. THE WALLS WERE COVERED WITH TARP!!

THANKS FOR LETTING ME DO THIS. IT WAS A REWARD IN ITSELF. PLEASE A COPY OF YOUR SCHOOL PAPER FOR OLD TIMES SAKE.

SINCERELY

Don Willis



- 1951-1952 -

THE FIRST DESERT HIGH CLASS MET IN THE FALL OF 1951. THE KOREAN WAR WAS STILL GOING ON. THE FIRST CLASS HAD ABOUT 60 STUDENTS.

AT FIRST WE WERE NOT CALLED DESERT HIGH. THERE WAS SIGN THAT SAID "M.R.O.C". FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT. LATER THE SCHOOL BOARD NAMED US DESERT HIGH.

I HAVE ALREADY TOLD ABOUT THE SCHOOL COLORS AND MASCOT.

THE ORIGINAL CAMPUS WAS LOCATED ABOUT ONE-HALF MILE FROM THE MAIN GATE AND WALKING DISTANCE TO THE OFFICERS CLUB OF EDWARD AFB.

WE COULD SEE THE DRY LAKE AND THE COMING AND GOINGS OF EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT.

THE CAMPUS CONSISTED OF FIVE WOODEN BARRACKS. EACH BARRACKS WAS DEVIDED INTO TWO CLASSROOMS. ONE BUILDING HOUSED THE WOODSHOP CLASS, THIS WAS NOT DEVIDED.

THE LIBRARY AND THE PRINCIPALS OFFICE SHARED THE SAME ROOM.

THE BARRACKS WERE COLD IN WINTER AND HOT IN SUMMER. DESKS HAD TO BE WIPED OFF EACH TIME A STUDENT SAT DOWN.

THE FIRST TWO YEARS WE HAD TO BRING OUR LUNCHES. SOME TEACHERS WOULD HAVE A POT-LUCK LUNCH DAY ONCE A WEEK. EACH STUDENT WOULD BRING TWO OF EVERYTHING. TWO CHIPS, TWO BAGS OF COOKIES, TWO APPLES, ETC.

THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO MENTION THAT WE WERE A TEACHERS DREAM; "SMALL CLASSES"!!

THE SCHOOL WAS MADE UP OF STUDENTS FROM EDWARDS AFB, BORON, MOJAVE AND WHAT IS NOW CALIFORNIA CITY.

THE SCHOOL CUSTODIAN DROVE THE BUS FROM BORON. THE SHOP TEACHER LIVED IN MOJAVE AND DROVE THE BUS EARLY EACH MORNING, 5:30 AM, TO CALIFORNIA CITY TO PICK UP STUDENTS AND THEN RETURN TO MOJAVE TO GET THE REST OF US. WE HAD TO BE AT SCHOOL BY 8:30^{AM}.

AFTER SCHOOL THE BUS-TRAVEL WAS REVERSED. SO THE SHOP TEACHER WOULD HAVE A VERY LONG DAY!!

HOW MANY STUDENTS TODAY WOULD GET ON A BUS AT 6:00^{AM}? NOT GET UP - BUT ACTUALLY GET ON A BUS AT THAT TIME?

-1951-1952-

OUR FIRST PROM WAS HELD IN THE OFFICERS CLUB IN THE SPRING OF 1952. THE MUSIC WAS PROVIDED BY THE AIR FORCE BAND. THERE WAS ALSO A MAGICIAN THAT WENT FROM TABLE TO TABLE. HAVING A STUDENT WHO'S FATHER WAS A HIGH RANKING OFFICER HELPED ALOT. WE ALSO USED THE OFFICERS CLUB FOR ASSEMBLIES THE FIRST TWO YEARS.

OUR SHOP TEACHER AND BUS DRIVER FROM MOJAVE HAD A BAD ACCIDENT IN EARLY 1952. HE ADVOCATED SAFETY AT ALL TIMES IN THE SHOP. CLASS. WE HEARD A LOUD SCREAM IN THE BACK OF THE CLASS ONE MORNING. MR HILL, THE TEACHER CUT OFF HIS INDEX FINGER. HE WAS RUSHED TO THE BASE HOSPITAL. WE DIDN'T SEE HIM FOR A FEW WEEKS AND WHEN WE DID HE HAD A BANDAGE OVER HIS HAND.

WHEN THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR STARTED WE NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN. THEY HIRED A MAN TO DRIVE THE BUS THE REST OF THE YEAR. WHEN THE 1952-1953 SCHOOL YEAR STARTED WE HAD NEW SHOP TEACHER AND DRIVER.

- 1952-1953 -

IN 1952 - WE BECAME "BIG STOTS", SOPHOMORS!!
A NEW FRESHMAN CLASS JOINED US, EVERYTHING WAS
THE SAME EXCEPT WE WERE NOW ABOUT 110 STUDENTS.
EACH YEAR OF COURSE WE MOVED UP AND A NEW
FRESHMAN CLASS ARRIVED. SO BY OUR GRADUATION DATE,
THE FIRST, THERE WAS ABOUT 225 STUDENTS.

NOTHING CHANGED MUCH IN THE 1952-53 SCHOOL YEAR.

- 1953-54 SCHOOL YEAR.

WHEN WE ARRIVED FOR SCHOOL IN THE FALL OF 1953
WE WERE SURPRISED TO FIND THAT THE SCHOOL
HAD MOVED TO ITS PRESENT LOCATION. DURING THE
SUMMER THE BARRACKS HAD BEEN MOVED.

WHAT REALLY EXCITED OUR CLASS WAS THAT WE
COULD GET A LUNCH AT THE JR High NEXT DOOR!!

BROWN-BAG LUNCH DROPPED DRAMATICALLY.

WE USED THE SCHOOL NEXT DOOR ASSEMBLIES
AND SCHOOL PLAYS. EVEN ON OUR FIRST
GRADUATION NIGHT WE USED THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA
FOR OUR RECEPTION.

-1953-54-

By moving to the present site the Principal finally had an office of their own. The Librarian was happy also. When they moved the campus that summer they also added two more barracks. We were getting bigger!!

-1954-1955-

We were finally seniors!! The first class of Desert High!! We were very proud. It should be pointed out that being on a military base students came and went a lot. So the main body of the first class was from Boron and Mojave.

Of the 50 graduates on June 2, 1955, a least 40 were from the original freshman class of 1951.

In the 1950's young men age 18 had to register for the draft. So some of us ended up in one service or another. This interrupted college plans for many. Out of this class

We had 2 Engineers, one teacher, two pilots that I know of and one policeman.

Some of us have passed on during the year. Like most high school grad we dispersed after graduation, like the desert winds.

ACADEMICS -

THROUGH THE YEARS WE HAD THE USUAL REQUIRED THREE "R'S". THE BIG ISSUE THE FIRST COUPLE OF YEARS WAS "ELECTIVES".

IF YOU WERE MALES YOU HAD TO TAKE WOOD SHOP. FEMALE AND MALE STUDENTS TOOK TYPING CLASSES. NO COMPUTERS THOSE DAYS!!

IN THE 1953-54 TERM THINGS LOOKED UP. WE COULD TAKE DRIVERS ED AND HOME ECONOMICS. EVERYONE WANTED DRIVERS ED. IN FACT A LADY FROM THE DMV IN LANCASTER CAME TO OUR SCHOOL TO GIVE US OUR WRITTEN TESTS. WE ALL PAST!!

WE HAD A FORD DONATED BY THE FORD DEALER IN MOJAVE TO USE FOR DRIVERS ED.

ALSO REGARDING ELECTIVES, THE HOME EC TEACHER HAD THREE CLASSES AND NEEDED TO JUSTIFY ANOTHER CLASS. SOMEONE CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF HAVING A BOYS COOKING CLASS

THEIR WAS TWO good REASONS Boys signed up
for this class. THE TEACHER WAS young AND
PRETTY AND IT WAS ANOTHER ELECTIVE. IN
NOVEMBER OF 1953 THE BOYS COOKING CLASS
MADE A THANKSGIVING TURKEY DINNER FOR
THE FACULTY. IT WAS A BIG HIT. THEY LIKED
IT SO WELL THAT WE DID IT AGAIN IN
NOVEMBER 1954.

DO THEY STILL HAVE THIS CLASS? ALL THE
JOCKS IN THE SCHOOL TOOK IT!!

SPORTS -

WE HAD A FRESHMAN FOOTBALL TEAM IN 1951.
WE DIDN'T WIN ANY GAMES. IN FACT OUR SCHOOL
COLORS COULD HAVE BEEN BLACK AND BLUE.
OUR UNIFORMS WERE DONATED BY THE AIR FORCE,
WHITE HELMETS AND JERSEYS.

THE FIRST TEAM TO WEAR THE PURPLE AND WHITE
WAS THE BASKETBALL TEAM IN 1952. AFTER THAT
THROUGH THE YEARS WE WON A FEW GAMES IN ALL
SPORTS, BUT NEVER CHAMPS!! WE TRIED.

WE HAD A FEW SPORTS HIGH LITES THROUGH THE YEARS. ONE OF OUR BASKETBALL PLAYERS, BILL BASS, THROUGH A BASKETBALL WITH THREE SECONDS REMAINING, FROM ONE END OF THE COURT TO THE OTHER. THE BALL HIT A RAFTER AND WENT IN !! THE CROWD WAS STUNNED AND SILENT FOR A MOMENT AND THE REF. ALMOST CHOKED ON HIS WHISTLE !! THIS GAME WAS PLAYED AT THE BASE GYM.

OUR BASEBALL TEAMS DID WELL. OUR STAR PITCHER JIM BRIDGMAN WAS SIGNED TO A MINOR LEAGUE CONTRACT WITH THE CHICAGO WHITE SOX. HE LASTED TWO YEARS BUT NEVER MADE IT TO THE BIG TIME. OUR CATCHER WAS GIVEN SCHOLARSHIP TO FRESNO STATE.

THE BIG SPORTING EVENT FOR US WAS IN THE FALL OF 1953. SOMEHOW WE GOT A GAME WITH THE BIG BOYS, ANTELOPE VALLEY H.S. SOME OF OUR STUDENTS HAD SIBLINGS THAT WENT A.V.H.S. SO BRAGGING RIGHTS WERE ON THE LINE.

WE WENT TO A.V.H.S. ON A SATURDAY. THEY HAD MORE PLAYERS THAN WE HAD IN OUR WHOLE SCHOOL. AT FIRST THEY OVERWELMED US AND SCORE EARLY. THEY KEPT PUTTING IN SUBS ON A REGULAR BASES. WHAT THEY DIDN'T COUNT ON WAS THAT WE, BEING A SMALL SQUAD, WERE TRAINED TO PLAY OFFENSE AND DEFENSE WITH NO BREAKS. OUR COACH, COACH MOSK, HAD A SAYING "IF YOU CAN FEEL THE PAIN, YOU KNOW YOU'RE ALIVE".

IN THE SECOND HALF WE SCORED ENOUGH TO BEAT THEM. IT WAS AT THE TIME THE BIGGEST SPORTS EVENT FOR DESERT HIGH.

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT IN THOSE DAYS THERE WASN'T ANY SPORTS FOR GIRLS. THEY PLAYED VOLLEY BALL AND BADMINTON AT P.E. AND THAT WAS IT. MOST GIRLS TRIED OUT AS CHEER LEADERS AND DID VERY WELL.

I HOPE THINGS HAVE CHANGED FOR FEMALE STUDENTS IN REGARDS SPORTS.

I would like to END this HISTORY of the
FIRST CLASS by saying that NO-MATTER How long
IT HAS BEEN THE MEMORIES will ALWAYS BE WITH
US, Especially knowing that WE WERE in the
FIRST CLASS of DESERT High.

ONE piece OF ADVICE to the STUDENTS OF
TODAY - TAKE THE TIME to MAKE ALL THE FRIENDS
YOU CAN. IF YOU SEE SOMEONE HAVE LUNCH ALONE
JOIN THEM AND MAKE A NEW FRIEND. YOU WON'T
BE SORRY.

Sincerely

Dow Willis

CLASS OF 1955