

Once a Knight, Always a Knight

#1 • November 2006

Knight Lore : Interesting facts about Downey

- Thomas Downey, a native of Iowa, came to Modesto in 1891 as principal of the Modesto High School, then housed upstairs in the grammar school on 14th Street. Feeling that the high school had grown to the size that a separate building was needed, he made the acquiring of a new school site and the construction of a high school building his life's work. This resulted in the completion in 1901 of what is now Roosevelt Junior High School. Mr. Downey remained with the Modesto schools until 1915, and only reappeared posthumously in this fall's production of *The Mousetrap*.
- Thomas Downey High School opened in September 1951. Larry Tate, first Student Body President, and other SB officers were installed in a formal ceremony October 23 with founding Principal Milford Olson presiding, assisted by Virginia Belt, Dean of Girls, and Robert Diehl, Dean of Boys.
- Milford "Ole" Olson retired from TDHS in 1971 after 20 years of service to our school. The new atrium nearing completion on campus is named in his honor. "Ole" has been followed as principal by seven successors: Robert Diehl ('71-'74), Don Champlin ('74-'77), Eugene Mould ('77-'80), Jerome Kopp ('80-'87), Joe Gregori ('87-'94), Tom Brunskill ('94-'04), and Phil Alfano ('04-present).
- Appearing in the October 26, 1951 edition of *The Blueprint*--the unofficial name of the first campus newspaper--was the following:
 - WANTED: A victory for Downey; a permanent name for the school newspaper; a mascot for Downey; typewriters for the journalism class; money for *The Blueprint*; dances; and class officers
 - FOR SALE: Student Body cards in the student body room
 - LOST: Three football games
 - FOUND: As many "A" students in Downey as we expected in spite of worrying students and telltale progress reports
- Clubs chartered in 1951-52 included Boys' Glee Club; Girls' Glee; Mixed Chorus; Rally Committee; Future Farmers of America (all-male); Girls' Athletic Association; Wildlife Society; Key Club; Future Homemakers of America (all-female); *Veni, Vidi, Vici* (Latin Club); Press Club; *Sans Souci* (French Club); *Los Caballeros* (Spanish Club); Hi-Y Phi Kappa (boys); California Scholarship Federation; B Honor Society; Band; Orchestra; Tri-Y Sigma Phi (girls); Tri-Y Zeta Kappa (girls); Ski Club; Block "D"; Road Knights; and Social Dance Club (50% male, 50% female!).
- The Downey Band, decked out in uniforms for the first time, marched and played at the Downey-Stockton football game on October 19. The band, directed by Roger Nixon (later a renowned director at the University of Michigan) decided to combine the old Junior College band coats, hats and belts with white pants to serve as uniforms until money was allocated for new attire. During half-time activities the band saluted Downey High School by forming a large "D" on the field and playing "Come Join Our Band."
- The Downey "Knight" and "Day" mascots were chosen by November 9, 1951, as were the permanent names for the yearbook--*The Shield*--and the newspaper--*The Knights' Herald*. Also established was Friday as Downey Spirit Day--a tradition that lasted until this year.



Thomas Downey

- Downey won its first football game on November 9, 1951, defeating Edison, 19-13, after having tied Franklin the previous week. The victory featured a 90-yard kickoff return by Downey to start the second half and avenged two previous losses to Edison by a combined score of 43-0.
- The first dance, the Twirp Dance, was held November 21, 1951, in the study hall.
- Key Club's first project was to hang American flags in all the classrooms, and the Latin Club raised money for trees, shrubs and lawn seed to help beautify the campus. At Christmas the Wildlife Society sold living Christmas trees, and Hi-Y Phi Kappa placed a real Christmas tree in the main hallway.
- Four assemblies were held in late November to familiarize students with the dial telephone system, which went into effect nationwide on December 9, 1951, at 12:01 a.m. Telephone company personnel talked about the history of the telephone; improvements of the telephone; the dial system; and correct use of the dial phone, including how to dial a number correctly, how to deal with a busy signal, and what to do in the event of a wrong number.
- The December 7 *Knights' Herald* reported the radiant heating system failed for the first time, this after a storm flooded the tunnels and knocked out the circulating pumps. Consequently, school was closed for one day.
- Sung for the first time was *The Downey Hymn*, the result of collaboration between Gladys Crane, who founded the Downey Choirs, and Malin Langstroth, director of the Downey Orchestra.
- The first Christmas music program, given twice on December 13, featured the Downey choirs directed by Gladys Crane. Pre-concert and intermission music featured three student pianists.



Thomas Downey High School prior to its opening in 1951. Note the surrounding orchards as well as the absence of the auditorium, student center, girls' gym, government building and western classroom wings.

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Knight Lore: Whatever happened to. . . ?

- ☛ **Humberto Garcia** '94 is a Retention Counselor for CSU Sacramento's CAMP--College Assistance Migrant Program. Recently named to CAMP's Hall of Fame, he enrolled in the program as an entering freshman and was named to the Dean's List four times. Humberto earned both a BA and MA in Spanish at CSUS, spent a year in Spain as an exchange student, and plans to complete his PhD in Spanish Linguistics.
- ☛ **Ron Whitney** '60, has coached for over 20 years at Santa Rosa Junior College, where he is now Head Track Coach. A track star while at Occidental College, he was two-time national champion in the intermediate hurdles and went to the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City with the US team.
- ☛ **James Leonard** '98 is a *Contra Costa Times* Prep Sports Writer.
- ☛ **Hugo Patino** '76 is Chief of Battalion One C Shift of the Modesto Fire Department. His daughter Megan is a current Downey student and member of the Downey Choirs.
- ☛ **Elizabeth Stone Hill** '68, Downey's first female Student Body President, has served for 20 years as the Legislative Analyst for the State of California, providing nonpartisan fiscal advising to both houses of the California Legislature, overseeing the preparation of annual fiscal and policy analyses of the state's \$126 billion budget, and preparing impartial analyses for all initiatives and constitutional measures qualifying for the state's ballot. After earning degrees from Stanford University and UC Berkeley, she was a Fulbright Scholar in Stockholm, Sweden.
- ☛ **Andreas Wunn** '92 is a News Anchor/Reporter for ZDF, Germany's public television network with headquarters near Frankfurt. A native of Trier, Germany's oldest city, he was an exchange student to Downey, later graduating from the University of Berlin and working for several years in Peru.
- ☛ **Ann Veneman** '67 is Executive Director of UNICEF, the children's agency of the United Nations whose 10,000 staff members work in 156 developing and transitional countries to support child health and nutrition, quality basic education for all boys and girls, access to clean water and sanitation, and protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. Holder of degrees from UC Davis, UC Berkeley and the UC Hastings College of Law, she previously served in various positions in state government and the US Department of Agriculture.
- ☛ **Roger Freitas** '80 is Associate Professor of Musicology at the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music. Prior to joining Eastman in 1998, Roger sang with San Francisco-based Chanticleer, earned an MM in early music from Indiana University and a PhD in music history from Yale, and



Roger Freitas



Ann Veneman



Ron Whitney



Elizabeth Hill



Hugo Patino



Andreas Wunn

was a visiting lecturer at Wellesley College. He has earned numerous honors, including a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship and the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, where he resided in 2003-2004. Roger has published and/or presented numerous professional papers and is finishing a book on the life of Atto Melani, a castrato, diplomat and spy.

- **Steve Recca** '79 serves as Deputy Director of the Center for Homeland Security at the University of Colorado, where he is an associate research professor and the Director of Business Development. A graduate of the US Naval Academy, he worked as director of one of the Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA) international operations offices and earned a master's degree in National Security Affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School, where he subsequently served on the faculty as the B.R. Inman Intelligence Chair.
- **Patrick Gilmore** '83, after graduating from the University of Southern California with a BA in Cinema and Television Production, worked for such companies as Funcom, Eurocom Development, Virgin Interactive, Dreamworks, and Disney Interactive, where he led the development of more than 25 products including *Aladdin*. Currently Vice President of Electronic Arts in Los Angeles, he is Executive Producer of the *Medal of Honor* series and made his motion picture debut with *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas* (2003).
- **Linda Hua** '04 serves as a Student Ambassador at St. Mary's College in Moraga. A double major in Psychology and Math/Computer Science, she will graduate in 2008.
- **John Stone** '85, who earned an MBA at Harvard, worked as a vice president for Apple Computers after selling PowerSchool Inc., the dot-com he helped build, to the tech giant in 2001. Since leaving Apple three years ago, John decided to pursue his entertainment interests and thus became the managing partner for Stonehaven Media, a fledgling film-production company whose first release was *Down and Derby* (2005), starring Lauren Holly and Pat Morita.
- **Dan Hubbell** '93 graduated from San Francisco State University with a BA in Broadcast Electronic Communications, then moved north to Washington and a career with Microsoft. Currently a Program Manager for Windows.com, he also enjoys working as a freelance photographer. Dan served as a member of the Newcastle (WA) Planning Commission for four years, including two terms as its chairman, and recently was elected to the Newcastle City Council.
- **George Lucas** '62 is one of the most successful moviemakers in history. He co-wrote and directed *American Graffiti* (1973), a film based on his own experiences as a high school student in Modesto, produced *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and its sequels, and created *Star Wars*. He also is head of LucasFilms and the special effects studios, Industrial Light & Magic, and is an Oscar recipient.
- **Chris Crifasi** '83 was elected Mayor of Riverbank in 2004. After graduating from CSU Stanislaus with a BA in Business Administration and a concentration in Finance, he worked as an accounting manager for a local company before leaving to pursue additional experience in order to become a Certified Public Accountant. He is currently a Senior Tax Accountant at a large regional accounting firm in Stockton.
- **Suzy Powell** '94 originally intended to be a distance runner, but started throwing the discus in the fifth grade at the urging of her father. She was the longtime junior and national high school record holder for the discus, was named the 1994 Track and Field News High School Athlete of the Year, and also was a standout basketball player at Downey. A geography and business major at UCLA, she has been ranked among the top five US discus throwers for the past ten years and was a member of the US Olympic Team in 1996 and 2000.



Patrick Gilmore



Suzy Powell



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