

TOM HAWKINS
"A BUSY LIFE"

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SEPTEMBER 10, 2010

1927-2011



Tom Hawkins

Short Autobiography of Tom Hawkins

I was born in Antioch, California in 1927, at the old Antioch Hospital. My mother's name was Jessie and my father was named Wayne. I attended Antioch Schools until 1942 when I left to live in Manteca.

During my young years I traveled from Antioch to my grandmother's farm south of Manteca to help with her farm operation. This was every weekend plus the entire summers. It was necessary during the 30's because of the depression in our country.

As we drove through the Tracy area, we would travel along Linne Road, and we would pass the Jefferson School. Little did I realize that this would be an important place for me in the future. I remember loving this school because it was a beautiful place for kids to attend.

My mother, Jessie, was a very religious person who attended mass every morning of her adult life. She was a very happy person who made those around her enjoy life to the fullest. My father was a high school teacher who became vice-principal of Antioch High School, but he loved teaching history and coaching more than anything. Graduating classes seemed to always ask for his presence when they would hold their reunions and this made him very proud.

My brothers, John and Bob also helped with the farming operation while my sister, Rosemary stayed with my mother in Antioch when we would go to Manteca. Bob graduated from the University of California, while my father was a graduate of Stanford University which made for some great arguments as to whose school was the best in sports.

My brothers were older than me, so they volunteered for the Navy during WW2. Bob became a Naval Officer and John was a first class signalman on a Destroyer Escort for four years. These ships were notorious for their bouncing around on the high seas. My father volunteered for the Marine Corps, even though he was past the age of the draft.

I attended Manteca High School as a junior from Sept., 1943 until June 1944 because my father was in the Marines and was stationed in San Francisco. My parents gave me the choice of living there or on the farm. I ran for Student Body President during the junior year and was elected. However, as I became a 17 year old at the end of April, I joined

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the U.S. Navy and reported a week after school was out to boot camp in San Diego. I had enough units through my 3 years in high school to graduate, but missed the graduation ceremonies with the class of 45 because of being overseas at the time. I served with the Navy Amphibious Forces in the Pacific Theater and drove a landing craft, (LCVP's), which were sometimes known as Higgins' Boats. I brought Marines and Army Personnel into shore during invasions in the Pacific. There was still a lot of action in the Pacific Theater after the time I went overseas. I remember so well the Battle of Okinawa. It was one of the last big battles because the war was about to end. The casualties were so huge in such a very short time and the Kamikaze's flying into our ships was devastating. I remember laying smoke screens off of the back of my Higgins boat to try to hide the ships at anchor. Counting the dead on both sides, casualties were in excess of 80,000. Soon after this, my ship sailed into Tokyo Bay the day after the signing of the peace treaty. We had shore leave in Tokyo almost immediately. I kept wondering about what could happen when you would walk around in a territory that contained our enemy just a few days before. It was weird, but the people did not seem to mind us being there.

After World War II was over, I was discharged and attended the University of San Francisco for four years. I graduated in 1950 with a BS in business administration. While attending college, I held an eight hour a day job in the offices of Purity Stores. I would get out of school at noon and work until 8:30 and then went home to eat and do my homework. Two days a week, I would get off work at 2:00 p.m., and would get very little homework done. I was fortunate enough to hold this position the entire length of my college pursuits.

While attending U.S.F., I met an Italian Family, (Lorenzini's), who took me in and treated me as if I was part of their family. I spent seven years as a part of their household and paid fifty dollars a month for my room and my board. I never had such great meals, three times a day, anywhere. This family became my best friend and I truly miss them today. Spartaco, the father and Jenny, his wife, made me feel like I was really their son. We did many things together. They were members of the Civic Light Opera and made me a member. I never missed a live show when it came to San Francisco.

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My college life was extremely busy between working eight hours a day, attending college full time, doing lots of homework, but enjoying the life in the busy city. Spartaco and I attended the horse races on Tuesdays when the racing season was in the area and I might add that he always seemed to win.

I worked at the Bostich Western Corporation for two years as their office manager in San Francisco. I then went on the road selling Bostich Products. I ended up living in Stockton, as they kept moving my sales territory and Stockton became an area in the middle of my duties. I would sell from the East Bay area to Fresno and all the way up to Reno.

My father was a teacher and then an administrator and his brother was a teacher who became the San Joaquin County Superintendent of Schools. I felt a natural calling to teach and decided to work toward being a teacher.

I was hired by the Waverly School District as a fifth and then an eighth grade teacher. While starting as a teacher, I decided to take classes to work toward being an administrator. I took classes at the University of Pacific, (known then as College of Pacific). I received all of my teaching credentials, (Elementary and Secondary), as well as all of my administrative credentials, plus my Masters Degree from Pacific while teaching at Waverly. The Superintendent of Waverly School, Laurence DiRicco, was an extremely bright and caring person who made me understand that teaching was so important because of its influence on the lives of our students. He made me feel that anything that I could do to improve on these student's lives was the most important thing that I could accomplish. I always took my teaching much more seriously than I felt I could when I started.

I was married to Joyce Smith in April of 1955 in Stockton. Joyce and I lived in Stockton while I taught at Waverly and Joyce worked at the Sheriff's Office.

My brother John also went into education in San Joaquin County and became Principal of Escalon High School where he served very successfully. He died at the age of sixty-three from heart failure. His wife, Patricia, became a teacher and taught at Dent Elementary School in Escalon. She died of heart failure at a very young age while she was teaching her class. John and Pat had six children who are all very successful. One daughter, Edie, is the head speech therapist at the Mayo Clinic.

~~My sister Rosemary married and had six children. She too worked in the education field.~~ She worked for the Galt School District as a teachers' aide for many years. When she retired, they held a huge party for her and it was a pleasure for me to hear all of the great things that she did for her classes. I felt as if the entire city of Galt was there to praise her.

My brother Bob married Jaconda Jacuzzi, a member of the Jacuzzi Pump family. She reminded me of my mother in many ways. She, too, was very religious and a very happy person. They had five children who I found were great to be around. One son, Bob, has been very successful and runs in every marathon that he can find time for. He has ran in the San Francisco marathon and all the way back to the Boston Marathon. He even found time to run the France Marathon.

I was elected to serve as Superintendent and Principal as well as eighth grade teacher at Jefferson in 1957. After three years of these three duties, ~~the Board took away my~~ teacher responsibilities. However, I always taught at least one period of math to upper graders each year. I found this to be very valuable to me because I was able to know the kids better. I also was able to know everyone closely by teaching a speech and debate class each day before the regular school day started. It was amazing to see so many students, (5th through 8th grades), who would attend these classes faithfully. Their parents would have to drive them to school or they walked because the classes took place before the busses arrived. Many of these students would become my stars in the different performances we put on each year on our stage. I also coached the seventh and eighth grades in basketball, flag football, baseball, and track. All coaches were volunteers and were not paid for their many hours of labor. They did it because they loved kids and this was a great way to know them better. We held a summer school at Jefferson every year. ~~Sometimes we were the only school to do so. Our enrollment~~ would double and sometimes triple for summer school because we might be the only school district in the Tracy area to be holding these sessions.

~~It has amazed me to see the tremendous accomplishments of the students at Jefferson.~~ When people ask me about my success as a leader at Jefferson, I immediately informed them in the same manner. Number one was the fact that I always had the greatest teachers serving our students, and who any administrator would want to have. Their dedication was limitless. Then there were the community people, mainly farmers, when

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I arrived at Jefferson. They always backed our staff with an uncanny amount of devotion and hard work. How could anyone ask for more in a situation like we had here at Jefferson? We still have many of our teachers teaching who served under me and three of them are now the District's Principals. I am amazed at how Jefferson continues to be such a leader in the field of test scores. Great teachers and great kids, as well as community backing provide the District with a springboard for success. To me, though, I always felt that the competitions our students would compete in were much more telling than test scores. They won the Science Olympiads against larger Junior High Schools, the math competitions, the State Music Competitions against large Junior High Schools and a myriad of other events. Mr. Roy Troglia, our band leader would have as much as sixty percent of the 4th thru 8th graders in his bands. These students would not only win the highest honors in competition, but would capture the "Command Performance" award every year at the California Music Education Association's contest at various colleges. Roy's band was the first elementary school band to be asked to perform at Disneyland in Southern California.

I would like everyone to know how difficult it was for a person who served as a Superintendent and Principal of a small school district. They had no Director of Transportation, Food Service Director, Business Manager, Special Education Director, Title1, EIA, or any of the specialists that large school districts had. Yet, they had to fill out all of the same reports required of each of these specialists for the State and Federal Governments. The figures may have not been as large, but he or she was accountable for all of these reports. When I look back on those times, I still wonder how we were able to do so much.

I retired in 1989 and served for five different years as an interim Superintendent at Banta, Delta Island, Jefferson, and two at New Jerusalem School Districts.

I also was selected to be the Tracy Dry Bean Festival Chairman and held that position for a period of six years. The Festival always made a profit which provided a third of the profits to the Chamber of Commerce, a third to all of the volunteer organizations, and a third went into the festival for the next year. I was especially proud of the fact that we were able to give over \$5.00 per hour to everyone who devoted their time to volunteering. This money was added up and given to the non-profits organizations they represented. Believe me, we had hundreds of volunteers who devoted their time to the

Festival. One of the most vital jobs fell on the volunteer coordinator. I was very fortunate to have had a person who made me look so good in doing this job. After she left one of my daughters took over and also did a great job. Another of my daughters always volunteered during the event and helped tremendously.

I decided to run for a Tracy High School District Board Member's position in 1990, serving a total of 20 years.

Added onto all of this, I am very much attached to the Tracy Breakfast Lions. I began as a Lion in 1957 and as of this date, I have served for fifty-three years. I was initiated into the Tracy Lions and after approximately five years, I joined the Breakfast Lions because it would not interfere with my work schedule. I have served as Treasurer for more than forty five years. The Lions club does so much more for the community than any of the various clubs that I know of. Their donations have helped so many. Money donated to students, many schools, and various other projects amount to approximately \$85,000 a year. Some years we might give a little more and some years slightly less. I consider myself fortunate to have had such a busy and worthwhile life. I have not had many periods of time when I had what I call "leisure" time. This brings me to my family. I know that my time during all of my working years didn't leave a whole lot of time each day to do some of the things I wish that I could have done. We always spent a few weeks on vacation together which might be in Santa Cruz or the mountains or Disney Land, On my work days, I feel that I didn't give them as much time as many people did at the end of the day. My working hours were mostly a 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. day. Many times I would have meetings to go back to after coming home. I do regret that I missed time with my wife and children that others have been fortunate enough not to have missed.

I appreciate the fact that they have grown up with a respect for family and have endeavored and succeeded in their lives. Each of our girls have prospered and grown in different ways, but I respect all that they have accomplished to date in their lives.

My daughters have made my life a better one. My oldest daughter, Diane, has worked hard and is in the health industry. She works for Sutter Health and serves hospitals in Modesto, Tracy, and Los Banos. She has always been one of my four favorites. (I have four children). My daughter, Susan, has served as an executive for the Triad Corporation and was successful in this occupation. She received her Masters Degree,

and her teachers credential and now teaches fourth grade at Discovery School. Her husband is the Vice-Principal at Tracy High School. My daughter Catherine received her Masters Degree at Cal State Hayward and now is an assistant teacher at Discovery School. My daughter Anne works tirelessly for her family by leading in the 4-H program at Jefferson. She is also presenting the "Mad Science Program" to various schools including the Hawkins School, which was named after me.

It may sound as if I did nothing but work, but there was one activity I dearly loved and that was riding my bicycle. I started a 4-H bicycle club at Jefferson and had a great group of 4-H'ers. We averaged trips with thirty to forty people and took rides such as our twice a year trips to San Francisco. We would unload near Fisherman's Wharf and ride across San Francisco to the Golden Gate Bridge which we crossed and continued on streets and bike paths to Tiburon where we would catch the Ferry and ride back to the city. We did this every April and October when the time changes came along. We did this for some 12 years. I also took weekend trips in the area. I would ride out to the golf course, head south on the canal and turn off about Westly, head for Manteca the back way and then come home on the bike path near Mossdale. This was a fifty-four mile ride which I took most any weekend. As a Lions club activity we held a fund raiser in which the youth of the community would get pledges to ride 60 miles on the canal bank to a spot near Los Banos. We would hold a picnic there and then Lions and family members would get the kids back. This was a lot of work, but a heck of a lot of fun and we did this for many years. My longest personal ride was after I retired when I took a plane back to Minneapolis where my brother lived. I rode my bike then in Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. I started out fifty miles a day and ended up doing around one-hundred miles per day. It became a little scary when a Van pulled up ahead of me, stopped, and around five or six men got out and headed toward me. Luckily a police car pulled up between us and the men got back into the Van and took off. A trucker who saw the incident asked me if he could give me a short lift out of this dangerous area and I accepted. This was in Gary Indiana, and I never felt happy from that point on. I would advise anyone who rides cross country to have companions along for more than one reason.

Another of my personal activities was in the areas of the sports programs. I worked as a referee for high school football for approximately twenty-five years. I thoroughly

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enjoyed working as a head referee and looked forward to working on Fridays throughout the football seasons. It was a great way to exercise and keep my body working.

In my late years, I still feel a need to work hard for others. I want to continue my work both on the School Board and with the Lions club. These two organizations fulfill my needs, working for the public sector. I served as President of the Breakfast Lions and I also served as President of the first Lions Club that I joined.

Other organizations I have enjoyed are the Elks, (57 years), Tracy Community Memorial Hospital Board, (16 years), St. Bernard's Council, (2 terms), was Chairman of the first Tracy Tomorrow Committee for two years, and served as a lector for St. Bernard's from the inception of this group up to two years ago when my vision started to fail, a period of approximately forty years.

This marks the fifty-fifth anniversary for Joyce and me and I am very proud of her for putting up with me and the hours that I have spent working for the public. I know that there had to be times that she felt down and out because of my long hours away at work. For this, I feel very appreciative and I do not know how she put up with me. There probably aren't many people who would put up with their partner being away for so much time. I love her for allowing me to do what has meant so much to me.

This is indeed a short informational story of an extremely busy life. I want to thank the Jefferson School District Board of Trustees for allowing me the privilege of having a beautiful school named after me. This was a high point in my life.

(I updated this autobiography on September 10th, 2010)