

GROSSMONT HIGH SCHOOL

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

A History

Richard S. Dunlop, Ed.D.
Professor Emeritus
Division of Counseling Psychology
School of Education
University of Missouri—Kansas City

*Given as a Gift to Their Communities From
the Christmas Pageant's Founders,
Subsequent Faculty Directors and
Conductors, Grossmont Faculty, Student
Participants, and Volunteers*

Copyright © 2003 by Richard S. Dunlop, Ed.D. Permission to copy, for non-commercial purposes, is granted to encourage widespread availability. Permission for any copying for any commercial purpose should be sought from the author at 10924 Oak St., Kansas City, MO 64114-5087 (rsdunlop@everestkc.net).

An Apology in Advance

This project--apparently the only history of the Grossmont High School Christmas Pageant--was begun in July, 2003, with a letter to the Librarian at Grossmont High School. A request was made for a search of archival copies of *El Recuerdo* to determine when various faculty members joined the staff and to determine if any Christmas Pageant information might be located in the Annuals or elsewhere in the Library. No response had been received in two months' time, so a letter was sent (September 8, 2003) to the Superintendent of Schools, Grossmont Union High School District, describing the historical project and requesting assistance and the name and addresses for a contact person with whom to work. On October 9, 2003, I received an e-mail communication from the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources offering to be of help and asking what I needed.. I replied to the Assistant Superintendent by first-class mail on October 14, 2003. My reply contained requests for specific information on a number of faculty personnel (years of appointment and departure, their teaching assignments, etc.). This correspondence included efforts to clear up some uncertainties on a number of probable dates and name confusions. Access to archival Annuals, by some trusted person, was requested. No response had been received by May 20, 2004, so another first-class mail request, for the identical information, was posted to the Assistant Superintendent.

An independent inquiry was sent to the faculty adviser for *The Foothill Echoes*, requesting a search for a couple of old articles which had been recommended by a Red Robe Choir Alumni Association member who had become aware of the history search. That material, and some other, was forthcoming promptly.

I received a letter dated November 21, 2003, from the principal's secretary at Grossmont High School, advising that my inquiry to the Assistant Superintendent had been forwarded to the principal's office. This communication included a valuable program from the 1939 Pageant; a history of the high school, apparently student-written and found in the Library; and miscellaneous information already in hand and superfluous to present needs.

A conventional, letterhead-based business/academic letter was composed and mailed by facsimile and first-class U.S. mail to the principal's secretary on December 4, 2003. This letter described the need for information as "extremely important" to the work in progress and outlined the same staffing information which had been requested before, these regarding, specifically, the Drama, Choral Music, Instrumental Music, and Speech assignments. The need for promptness was emphasized. No response had been received to this communication by January 5, 2004, so an e-mail request was sent, inquiring into the status of the queries, and emphasizing, again, the importance attached to having answers so that the history would be complete and accurate.

As of today's date, I have not received the necessary data but have determined to publish what I have, on the Alumni site and elsewhere, so that what has been collected will be there, if nothing else.

I simply do not know what else to do to encourage the principal at Grossmont High School or the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources to authorize a simple file search for public-record materials that must be there and probably on-site. In my experience, it is incredible for a school or school district to refuse cooperation with a historical project, especially one centering on itself.

R.S.D.
Kansas City, Missouri
January 20, 2004
November 1, 2004

<u>Year</u>	<u>General Director</u>	<u>Choral Conductor</u>	<u>Orchestral Conductor</u>	<u>Readers/Speaking Roles</u>
1926--27	Eva McCarthy Quicksall			L. Andrew Smith
1927--28	"			"
1928--29	"			"
1929--30	"			"
1930--31	"	Merle Donohue		"
1931--32	"	"		"
1932--33	"	"		"
1933--34	"	"		L. Andrew Smith and Beulah Shriver
1934--35	"	"		"
1935--36	"	"		"
1936--37	No production	"		"
1937--38	Eva McCarthy Quicksall	"		L. Andrew Smith and Beulah Shriver
1938--39	William DeLannory?	"		"
1939--40	"	"	Harold Lutz	"
1940--41	"	"	"	"
1941--42	Eleanor (Nunvar) Poley?	"	"	"
1942--43	"	"	"	"
1943--44	"	"	John Metzger	"
1944--45	"	"	?	"
1945--46	Raymond Kniss	"	Harold Lutz	"
1946--47	"	"	"	"
1947--48	"	"	"	"
1948--49	"	"	"	"
1949--50	"	"	"	"
1950--51	"	"	"	"
1951--52	"	"	"	"
1952--53	"	"	"	"
1953--54	"	"	"	"
1954--55	"	"	"	"
1955--56	Paul Z. N. Zastupnevich	"	Arthur Schwuchow	Ann Cozens
1956--57	Robert Halvorson	"	"	Jane Austin Markley

<u>Year</u>	<u>General Director</u>	<u>Choral Conductor</u>	<u>Orchestral Conductor</u>	<u>Readers/Speaking Roles</u>
1957--58	Richard Dunlop	Merle Donohue	James Nichols	Jane Austin Markley
1958--59	"	"	"	Richard Plum
1959--60	"	"	"	"
1960--61	"	"	"	"
1961--62	"	"	"	"
1962--63	Bill Buck?	Donald Hubler	"	"
1963--64	?	"	"	"
1964--65	?	"	"	"
1965--66	Audrey Seidel Myers	"	"	"
1966--67	"	"	"	Danelle Barton
1967--68	"	"	"	"
1968--69	"	"	"	"
1969--70	"	"	"	"
1970--71	"	"	"	"
1971--72	Jan Manos	"	"	"
1972--73	Audrey Seidel Myers	Robert Boucher	"	"
1973--74	"	"	Carl Thompson	"
1974--75	"	"	James Nichols	"
1975--76	"	"	"	"
1976--77	Danelle Barton	"	"	"
1977--78	Audrey Seidel Myers	"	"	Richard Plum
1978--79	"	"	"	"
1979--80	Danelle Barton	"	"	"
1980--81	Edward Hollingsworth	"	"	"
1981--82	"	"	"	"
1982--83	"	"	"	Sharon Galvin
1983--84	"	"	"	"
1984--85	"	"	"	"
1985--86	"	"	"	"
1986--87	"	"	"	"
1987--88	"	Dr. Edwin Basilio	"	"
1988--89	"	"	"	"

Final Pageant

Preface

We wondered about that star, sparkling so brightly. We knew the legend about it, of course, but were mystified by how the remarkable students at the high school created a replica. We of the upper-elementary grades knew about high schools because we, from about fourth grade on, attended, every afternoon after school, on our radios, to the adventures of *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy*, the five-days-weekly, 15-minute serial that launched Wheaties.

Jack Armstrong was 17. His younger cousins were Billy, who rarely got anything right, and Betty, who required a good deal of rescuing. Jack Armstrong and his cousins were students at Hudson High School ("Wave the flag for Hudson High, boys/Show them how we stand!"). Sex never entered their minds or lives. And the three seemed never to graduate, even though they were enrolled there from 1933 until the '50s. Nonetheless, Jack Armstrong was a straight-A student; captain of every team and letterman in every sport; and able to kick 60-yard field goals without breaking a sweat, when circumstances required.

Jack Armstrong spoke with a terribly earnest voice and never smiled or made jokes. This may have been because he and his cousins were preoccupied, during the early days, with capturing bootleggers, mobsters, and other agents of corruption and malevolence. This honed their skills so that they were better prepared, later, to defend the country from various subversives and enemy attack, then thwart the military ambitions of Germany and Japan. Their vigor was explained by frequent nourishment with Wheaties.

The important thing to us who graduated from kid stuff to the adult world of late-afternoon radio in about the fourth grade was that Jack Armstrong, Billy, and Betty were enrolled in A High School, where Jack Took Science. In a Laboratory. It was this laboratory in which these dedicated scholars devised wondrous chemicals and machines, including airplanes, with which they frustrated America's several enemies and brought them to American Justice while writing in encouragement to hundreds of pen-pals, all of them soldiers or sailors, thereby lifting their morale.

Enculturation carried on in the arms of *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy*, and his poor cousins, helped us younger kids, at about sixth grade or so and sneaking into Pageant performances, to understand that sparkling star and the non-moving figures who somehow got from there to *there* without a twitch. These were high-school students. They learned to do that in Science Class. In their Laboratory.

Some years later, the author of this reverie was Second Serving Man, failed-auditioner for Reader, maker of merry, Red Robed chorister, and General Director for five Pageants. He came to understand how it was done: Those kids in Science Class. In their Laboratory!

Origins of Grossmont High School

A "union" high school district is one which encompasses more than one elementary school district and their middle schools. The El Cajon Union High School District, composed of several elementary-school districts in the Valley (Cowles, Lakeside, Meridian), was formed in 1893, destined to house the only secondary school east of San Diego High. Classes were held, until 1908, on the second floor of the Meridian School, in Lakeside, until construction of its own El Cajon Valley Union High School's quarters was completed, in 1908, at Third and Broadway, Bostonia, at the time the commercial center of El Cajon Valley. After the school burned down, in 1916, students who wished to attend high school were obligated to find transportation--commonly, the train--to San Diego High.

In 1902, Colonel Edward Fletcher and a colleague, William G. Gross, an actor, purchased what was then called the Villa Caro Ranch, on the north slope of Mt. Helix and including the smaller peak. Fletcher was instrumental in re-naming the area, and particularly the smaller mountain, Grossmont, out of respect for his business associate. By 1910 they were developing this property as an artists' colony and were successful in arranging residences there for figures from opera, literature, poetry, and the like. Other residential developments followed, particularly after Fletcher's company constructed the road that led to the summit of Mt. Helix. It was not long after, when a sufficiency of water was insured, that major development of avocado groves began and flourished, in time. Colonel Fletcher was responsible also for introducing Eucalyptus trees to the area, after importing them from Australia.

Grossmont Union High School District was formed in June, 1920, during the Presidency of Woodrow Wilson and at a time when the population of the United States was 106 million, of San Diego, 75,000, of La Mesa about 1,600, and, of El Cajon, about half of that, and with perhaps a dozen businesses and shops clustered near "Main and Mag." Prohibition found its way into national law, via the Eighteenth Amendment, in the same year, but it lasted only until 1933. A good number of others lived outside city limits of the incorporated towns. The population of the Grossmont area, originally, was sparsely settled by San Dieguito Indians, who had been around Southern California for 10,000 years or more but, by 1920, was overwhelmingly of Western European descent, although one small tribe remained for awhile in the shallow valley between the high school and Grossmont Mountain. All of these areas were primarily rural and dedicated principally to miscellaneous farming and citrus production. Each of the communities had, however, small but ample shopping districts, but no "shopping centers." If one wanted larger shopping opportunities, the goal would be San Diego and probably via La Mesa, either down Palm Street to Spring Valley and Lemon Grove, or west on either University Avenue or El Cajon Boulevard.

The new school district consisted of the consolidation of students from the existing El Cajon Valley Union High School District and others from Lakeside, La Mesa-Spring Valley, and Lemon Grove Grammar School Districts. Funding for the district was managed by a bond issue in the amount of \$110,000. Land for the school buildings and grounds, 14 acres, was purchased on December 13, 1920, from Colonel Ed Fletcher for \$10. Fletcher also gave much of the new building's granite, from Grossmont Mountain, for the cost only of removing the

rocks; other granite was quarried from a canyon north of Lakeside. Classes were conducted in Lakeside's Riverview School while the new high school, Grossmont, was under construction, from September 17, 1921 until January 13, 1923. The original school, in Lakeside, had 185 students and a faculty of 11.

The *Grossmont High School Yearbook* for 1921 contains this "Freshman Class History," which must have referenced the class which entered the Meridian school building in 1920 but graduated in 1924, from the new quarters. This unsigned opus from the Laureate of Lakeside, contains interesting historical information and a wonderful quaintness; it reads as follows.

When we, the freshman, came
The sophs tried us to tame
But freshies were so game
All efforts were in vain!

The bald headed row sat laughingly
For all the school to see
And those sophs butchered us
In spite of a terrible fuss.

Next on the program was the wiene [*sic*] roast
When the whole school good weiners [*sic*] did toast.
There was so much laughter and boast
We couldn't tell what we liked the most.

Then came the tug-o-war
But we were beat o'er and o'er
For they made our side so wet
That our boys on the ground did "set."

Of presidents we had two,
Whatever shall we do?
Whenever a president gets started
Off to somewhere else he's carted.

Saint Patrick's Day was full of fun and dread
For an old time custom (so it was said)
Demands that the freshman not wear green,
But they did and much rumpus was seen.

And thus the freshman class history is told in verse
And it is not so very good but it might have been worse.
Someone criticism may find,
But we hope they will at least be kind.

The same 1921 yearbook contains a comment, presumably by a sophomore: "We also showed the freshman their place this year by cutting their hair and gently and artistically removing the green from them on St. Patrick 's Day."

The first school year for the new Grossmont Union High School was 1922--'23. During the calendar year before its opening, events of lesser import occurred. Insulin was first used to treat diabetes. Eskimo Pie was patented. The National Football League was born and joined by Green Bay. James Joyce's *Ulysses* and the first edition of *Reader's Digest* were published and Eugene O'Neill was awarded a Pulitzer for *Anna Christie*. Walt Disney's first cartoon company, Laugh-O-Gram, was launched in Kansas City. The U.S. Supreme Court, unanimously, held the Nineteenth Amendments, women's right to vote, Constitutional; it also held that organized baseball is a sport not a business. In Europe, Josef Stalin became head of the Communist Party. The first radio commercial was aired.

The new school began during the Presidency of Warren Harding, who died in August, following the school's first year at its new location, Harding to be succeeded by Calvin Coolidge. This was early in the "Roaring Twenties," of which T.S. Eliot disapproved. The favorite musical pieces of students, and most faculty, were "I'll Be With You in Apple Blossom Time," "I'm Just Wild About Harry," and "It's Three O'Clock in the Morning," but the outstanding song for the nation was Al Jolson's "April Showers." The "hit" film was D.W. Griffith's silent, two hour *Orphans of the Storm*, starring Dorothy and Lillian Gish. The students' social centers were churches, fraternal organizations, and barns where dances were arranged now and then. In Los Angeles, radio station KNX went on the air in 1922; in 1927 it would become part of the new Columbia Broadcasting System. CBS did not have a station in San Diego until after World War II, when a new station (KSDJ, later, KCBQ) affiliated with that network. In the meantime, CBS programming was difficult to hear in San Diego County because XERB, in Rosarita Beach, was running its 100,000 watts directly at San Diego on an adjacent frequency. San Diego's first commercial radio station, KGB, with 10 watts of power, went on the air from an ordinary home in Normal Heights in July, 1922, two months before the high school opened. KFSD (now KOGO) followed, a few weeks later and affiliated with the National Broadcasting Company.

Grossmont's classes began a couple of months before the building was complete, consisting, then, of the east-to-west main building with other structures here and there. (The north wing of "Old Main" was added in 1937. "Old Main"--exclusive of the North Wing--was declared unfit for human habitation in the 1955-'56 year and was used thereafter to house District-level administrators and their staffs.) Enrollment at first consisted of 320 but this grew to 350 by year's end. The cost of construction was \$135,049.57.

During the first academic year at Grossmont High School more modest events transpired elsewhere. "*Deutschland Uber alles*" (Germany Over All) was declared the national anthem in Germany, the Nazi party formed-up in Munich, and Benito Mussolini became dictator in Italy. The British undertook to bring order to Palestine and to bring the British Broadcasting Company to short-wave radio. The Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics was born, along with Radio Moscow. The first woman was sworn in as an FBI investigator and the

first woman as a U.S. Senator. Jean Sibelius premiered his *Sixth Symphony* and *Time Magazine* appeared for the first time. Transcontinental air-mail was introduced and the first nonstop coast-to-coast passenger flight took place, from New York to San Diego's Rockwell Field (known later as North Island). The people at Firestone put inflatable tires on automobiles and "talkies" were introduced at the movies. The U.S. Attorney General declared it lawful for women to wear trousers.

To get to the new school and to return home a student was likely to walk, if home were only three or four miles away, perhaps more. Paved roads were few and most were of one-lane dirt and difficult to use. From El Cajon, the fastest route would be to hike west on Highway 80 and half-way up Grossmont Grade. La Mesa Boulevard (Highway 80) was also the walking route from La Mesa and points south, but, if so inclined, one could take the Grossmont Boulevard "scenic route" and come out close to the school. Students living farther away would have had to rely on horseback, horse and buggy, wagon, motorcycle, or the Model-T Ford "Tin Lizzie," or kindred, an automobile then 14 years old with even a school-bus model available by 1922. (The much more reliable Model-A Ford would not be along for another five years; but one was purchased by Legendary Grossmont Coach Jack Mashin, who drove it to school proudly, every day, through the 1940s.) The more stable mode of transport during Grossmont's early years could, very well, have been the railroad. The San Diego--Cuyamaca Eastern Railroad was completed from San Diego to Lakeside in 1889. Following company mergers, this was the San Diego and Southeastern Railway after 1912 and, after 1917, part of the San Diego and Arizona Railway, and so it was when Grossmont Union High School opened and so it remained. The vehicles amounted to gasoline-driven, 200-horsepower rail cars capable of being driven from either end. They were 55 feet in length and seated 75. Eight or nine round-trip passenger trains daily (and four freights) made the trip from Ninth and Commercial Street in San Diego, passed through Mount Hope Cemetery, followed Imperial Avenue, then made routine stops in Encanto, Lemon Grove, La Mesa, Grossmont, El Cajon, and Santee (or wherever flagged-down) before its return trip of 90 minutes from Lakeside. The long Alta Grade (later, the Grossmont Grade), westbound, was regarded by engineers as being the most taxing of the trip on their engines.

El Recuerdo, for that original year "on campus," was dedicated to Col. Ed Fletcher. The first principal left after two years and he was succeeded by Carl Quicksall, one of the founding faculty. Carl Quicksall remained as principal and superintendent until his retirement in 1944. Carl Quicksall died in 1968. He was succeeded by Lewis F. Smith, who served until retirement in 1964. The superintendency, by then over several high schools, was assumed by Dr. John T. Warburton, also formerly principal at Grossmont High.

(This brief history was constructed primarily by the principal author, with addenda drawn from Lori Lancaster [1977].)

Founding Faculty and the Pageant

Miss Eva McCarthy was among others of the founding faculty at Grossmont Union High School, she there to teach English and 22 at the time. Some years after the founding she and Carl Quicksall married. Mrs. Quicksall's career in the school included long-term commitment to the English Department, but it is probable she taught Drama in the early days. It is she, with colleagues, who picked up on an idea from another of the early teachers, staged the Christmas Pageant, and was recognized later as being its originator. The first production took place in December, 1926, under her gentle touch as "Supervisor," a title that endured until at least 1939. Mrs. Quicksall was a counselor during her last several years on the faculty but remained active in many scene-directing and oversight activities with the Pageant, to insure adherence to convention and correctness, until her retirement in 1962. She continued to attend performances throughout the years of her retirement. Eva McCarthy Quicksall died on May 2, 1988, in La Mesa, at age 90, the last surviving member of the founding faculty and seven months before presentation of the final Christmas Pageant.

Lazelle Andrew ("Andy") and Dorothy (Mrs. L. Andrew) Smith were also in the founding faculty and are certain to have been involved with the early rendering of the Pageant. Mrs. Smith's career-long commitment was also to the English Department, but she continued, in various roles, to assist with direction. Andrew Smith built, over the years, a formidable reputation in Speech Arts, primarily in debate and in what was then called "dramatic declamation." Andrew Smith taught, and his students followed carefully, an oratorical style common in the previous century, but which was expected by judges (many from the same enculturation) in speech contests. A problem with this oratorical style was that it was difficult to understand. He coached Readers until his stroke-related retirement in about 1956. Dorothy Smith retired some years later.

An English teacher on the founding faculty, with artistic skills, was Hayden Almendinger. He conceived of a program at Christmastime to give to the community as an annual gift of students and faculty at their new school. Mr. Almendinger suffered a fatal accident at Thanksgiving, 1939. He is credited in that year's Pageant program as scenic designer, and the 1939 Pageant was dedicated to his memory.

Mrs. Merle Donohue was, in 1926 (the year of the first Pageant), 30 years of age and an intern teacher at Grossmont, then she substituted there. She joined the faculty in 1930. Mrs. Donohue was responsible for choral music, glee clubs, and the like, and was founder of the Red Robed Choir and for giving it that name (at some time before 1972 its name was changed to the Red Robe Choir). She was a long-time resident of Descanso and, in the early days of automobile travel, trips to the campus along the two-lane Highway 80 were perilous, at times. She was central to the development of the Pageant and its nurturing until her retirement. Mrs. Donohue's entire career was spent at Grossmont High School, where her office was always heavy with the scent of coffee, doughnuts, and perfume. She retired in 1962 and lived to age 103 before her death, on Christmas Day, 1999.

Miss Beulah Shriver joined the faculty in 1933, taught Speech, and, in the Pageant, assumed principal responsibility for staging of the Feast Scene and for speaking-roles there. Her heavy-duty emphasis, along with L. Andrew Smith's, on correct articulation carried over to other areas of the school's programs. She retired at the end of the 1953--'54 year, on which occasion the Annual was dedicated to her and her long years of remarkable service. Miss Shriver continued to assist with Pageant rehearsals until the 1955 offering was in rehearsal, from which she was compelled to withdraw for reasons of ill health. The 1955 Christmas Pageant was dedicated to Miss Beulah Shriver.

Harold G. Lutz joined the faculty before 1939 to assume leadership of Instrumental Music. He enlisted in the military service during World War II then returned at war's end in 1945. Mr. Lutz created a formidable program in instrumental music, particularly with a succession of award-winning bands, and conducted Pageant orchestras routinely and in a kind of grand style. Mr. Lutz composed the "School Hymn" ("Hail to thee, dear Grossmont"). He transferred to El Cajon Valley High on its opening in 1955 to administer and conduct its choral music programs (he was an excellent tenor) and remained there until his retirement.

Faculty Bearers of the Tradition

The General Directorship

It was probably in the late 1930s that William DeLannory assumed the General Directorship but we don't know in what years he was on the faculty. Miss Eleanor Nunvar--later, Mrs. Eleanor (Nunvar) Poley, a teacher in Social Studies, relieved him in the role and is credited with having made substantial and important contributions to the program. Eleanor (Nunvar) Poley relinquished the General Directorship but continued in supportive direction activities for several years. She died in the late 1940s and the 1949 *El Recuerdo* is dedicated to her memory.

Raymond A. Kniss (NISS) came to Grossmont as a teacher of Drama shortly after World War II and succeeded Eleanor (Nunvar) Poley in the role of General Director. He continued in it for years, in addition to the ordinary responsibilities of classroom teaching and directing two conventional plays yearly. "Uncle Ray," as his students called him, was a slight man in physical stature but with a large theatricality about him that was never phony. Mr. Kniss also had a towering temper that could dwarf whatever was around him. It is probably with him that the tradition of the General Director's Temper Tantrum became common enough to be an expected part of one--but of only one--of the later rehearsals. He modeled the General Director's role for those who followed, as less that of a director in the conventional sense but more a choreographer and orchestrator who saw that the whole of the thing flowed together and sang. Uncle Ray died in a retirement community in Carmel in 2000.

After Eva McCarthy Quicksall and Raymond Kniss, an alarming number of teachers came to Grossmont High School to teach Drama, found themselves responsible also for the Pageant, and left after one year. Most had longer tenure with the responsibility, including Audrey Seidel Myers (1966--1979), 12 Pageants, the longest tour of any General Director apart from Eva McCarthy Quicksall); Richard S. Dunlop, GHS '49 (1957--1961, five

Pageants); Danelle Barton (nominally of the English Department but General Director of five Pageants, and Readers' director for at least 12, between 1963 and 1977). Edward Hollingsworth took over the Drama program in 1981. He had never heard of the Christmas Pageant but choreographed his first in 1981, and stayed with it until the end.

Without exception, the General Directors also assisted with other aspects of the production, depending on their individual skills and staffing needs.

Choral Directorship

The Red Robe Choir was conducted by Mrs. Merle Donohue until her retirement in 1962, having managed choral conducting for some 32 Pageants. She was succeeded by Donald Hubler who remained with the Choir until the end of the 1971--'72 school year. Robert "Bob" Boucher, previously director of the choral music program at Mt. Miguel High, took over the role in 1973 and remained at Grossmont until retirement, at the end of the 1985--'86 school year. During Mr. Boucher's tenure there was considerable emphasis on contest singing, and responding to invitations to perform, at which the Red Robe Choir of his years excelled. Dr. Edwin Basilio headed choral music thereafter, during which time invitational concert tours of Italy and elsewhere in Europe occurred, to high acclaim from miscellaneous large audiences there. Dr. Basilio was the Red Robe Choir's last conductor for the Christmas Pageant.

Orchestral Directorship

After Harold Lutz, the Pageant orchestra's baton was held by Arthur Schwuchow, former conductor of the Marine Corps Band and a long-time music educator in Aberdeen, SD, from 1955 to 1959, when he moved to El Capitan High School, on its opening, to direct instrumental music there. James Nichols followed him on faculty and remained at the podium as long as the Pageant lasted, conducting the orchestra for at least 24 productions in his tenure as the longest-lasting director of instrumental music.

Directorship of Readers and Other Speaking Roles

We do not know who relieved Andrew Smith and Beulah Shriver immediately after their retirements, but Ann Cozens joined the English and Speech Departments in 1955 and worked with the Readers for the Pageant of that year, before leaving. Jane Austin Markley joined the faculty in 1956 to head the speech program and to direct Readers for two academic years. She left Grossmont in 1959 to join the founding faculty at El Capitan High and was replaced by Richard Plum (GHS '50) who stayed at it for several years, even during his tenures as counselor and vice principal, then returned to be Readers' director before being replaced by Sharon Galvin in 1982. In the meantime, Danelle Barton, associated primarily with the English Department, coached Readers regularly, from 1966 onward, as needs arose.

Speech teachers and other Readers' coaches were able, after the 1950s, to permit spoken words to have less of the grand, but peculiar, oratorical style of the past, with its demands on speaker and listener, and to use a less stained-glass voice and more casual and intimate reading.

Evolution of the Pageant as Theatre

The original school plant included a separate building, north of the principal one, with a girls' locker room on the lower floor and a cafeteria on the floor above it where "hot" lunches were provided and group meetings were held. Grossmont's first "gift to the community" was presented in this room and it was so until the present Auditorium-Gymnasium became available. (This building was replaced later by one containing classrooms above and the Library below.)

Some of what we know of the earliest Pageants is from a witness to one, whose older brother was in it. These earliest "Merrymakers" were Charles Gross (GHS '29) and two other boys, all athletes, who burst through the curtains and sang "Joy to the World." The 1956 Annual describes the early going as "a few Bible pictures set to music." A more complete description (Sylvester, 1978) indicates that the staging consisted pretty much of the pantomime scenes, the tableaux that remained as a principal characteristic of the Pageant. (Genteel and socially prominent young ladies of the 1920s, of high school and college age, often made a hobby or public display of pantomimic assumption of figures found in antique Grecian art and statuary. This hobby, or entertainment, may have contributed to the tableaux idea.) Relevant Bible readings were included. The production ran for only 35 minutes on one evening but was welcomed warmly by the community.

It must have been very early in the Pageant's history that an invocation was introduced, to be delivered by the Reader, and, eventually to follow the Madonna Scene and precede the Choir's entrance. G. Carroll Rice (GHS 1947) recalls having been told by L. Andrew Smith how it came to be that the Reader, for the invocation, assumed a prayerful, arms up-and-out attitude with the palms open, while speaking in this portion of the program. Mr. Smith revealed that when he was a child, living with his family on a ranch in Arizona, it was the family's custom, at dinner time, to invite workers and hands to join them. Often, these visitors were encouraged to offer, as grace, any traditional prayer which they would like to share with the others. On one occasion this offer was made to a field hand, a Navajo. The man rose, extended his arms skyward, tipped his head back, and delivered a Navajo blessing. No one but he understood its words, but the ritual was so impressive to Andrew Smith, the child, that when he came into contact with the Christmas Pageant in its earliest days, the Navajo ritual was recalled with fondness and introduced as the invocation. Perhaps beginning when first introduced, but standard in the Pageant for many years, was this powerful poem, "Sound Over All Waters," written by the Quaker pacifist, John Greenleaf Whittier in 1873, less than a decade after the Civil War. Traditionally, it was delivered as a dramatic declamation.

Sound over all waters, reach out from all lands,
The chorus of voices, the claspings of hands;
Sing hymns that were sung by the stars of the morn,
Sing songs of the angels when Jesus was born.

Blow, bugles of battle, the marches of peace;
East, west, north, and south, let the strong quarrel cease;
Sing songs of great joy that the angels began,
Of glory to God and of good will to man.

With glad jubilation bring hope to the nations;
The dark night is ending and dawn has begun;
Arise, hope of the ages, arise like the sun--
All speech flows to music, all hearts beat as one.

The Madonna Scene--the only scene in which the performer is allowed no movement whatever, not even a blink--was introduced in 1934, with the central figure alone on stage and functioning candelabra on each side; Candlebearers were added later. This scene came to epitomize what can be done in theatre to separate, at times, what is fancy from what is real. During performances, it is common to hear from a child in the audience, "Daddy, is that a real person?" And the paternal response is predictable: "No, son. It's The Madonna." A similar observation is made backstage among cast and crew members, some of whom have little or no religious attachment, of the virtual reverence with which the actress is treated. (And the reverence with which the actress regards the role. Audrey Seidel Myers recalls a late rehearsal when, as the curtains came hurtling open, the set's stained glass windows became loose and fell forward with great crashing of timber, sawdust, screws, and muslin, but the actress stood solemnly on her pedestal and without a blink. Had this young woman continued, after high school, with theatre, she might well have thought, "Oh well; if you've seen one tech you've seen 'em all.")

This, 1934, was the same year in which the number of performances was extended to two and this schedule continued until at least 1939. The student cast at that time was 200.

The new Auditorium-Gymnasium was complete in 1937, so a larger stage was available as well as vastly expanded seating capacity. Earlier on, the Pageant started with a medieval English street scene. This included ice skaters in the cast and a "Skaters' Waltz." In 1937, with all renovations completed, the chilly street-scene was reconsidered, and the Feast Scene was introduced, with a court dance replacing the skaters' waltz. This was a scene displaying a Yuletide feast in the English manor of a Lord, his Lady, their friends of approximately equivalent status, and miscellaneous mendicants. (The use of this idea and setting was rhapsodized by *El Recuerdo* for 1952, although the Annual writer's understanding of history is less astute: "The pageant well represents the medieval theme because Christianity began in England about the early medieval times.") A "pipe" organ was introduced as well, according to the recounting of Tammi Sylvester's (1978) interview with Eva McCarthy Quicksall, but that seems improbable; the reporter may have misunderstood "Hammond" organ. Two thousand guests attended this initial production in its new quarters, in two performances. The enduring model was pretty well set in place by the early 1940s and the annual event was well-established as part of the school's heritage and a community treasure. The Red Robe Choir consisted, by then, of 40 voices. Two thousand guests welcomed Grossmont's annual gift, that year. As had become custom, they were guided to their seats by members of Girls' Activities (later, Hi-Fiettes), dressed in formal white gowns. The main doors would be closed and kept

that way until performances were over. At some time after 1955 and before 1973, the central figures, Lord and Lady, were changed to King and Queen. This would have been improbable in medieval times because ruffians such as Merrymakers would likely not be invited into a king's castle, but they might be, on special and well-guarded occasions, such as Christmas, be invited into the manor of a lord.

The 1939 offering, again in two performances (Wednesday, Thursday), was much as it came to be known in later years. Exceptions were only that there was no audience-welcoming organ music; the overture was "Christmas Fantasy"; two Jesters appeared before arrival of the Merrymakers (and those two and one other were also in the Feast Scene); Minstrels with "Greensleeves" had yet to be introduced; a ballerina had yet to join the cast; the court dance took place immediately after the Jesters'; "Hark! The Herald" was done exclusively on chimes; male voices were part of the Celestial Choir; and "Ave Maria" was not included before the Madonna Scene. The Red Robe Choir (identified as the "Red Robed Choir") consisted of 50 voices, the Orchestra of 48 instrumentalists. The program was prepared, probably by a school-office secretary or Office Practice student, and certainly on a manual typewriter, onto a medium called a "mimeograph master," which was perforated where struck by the typewriter's letters, creating a stencil. The master was placed over an ink-filled drum of a mimeograph machine, and printing commenced.

At some later time, the program was prepared by David Barnes, in charge of the print shop at *The La Mesa Scout*, and, still later, by Barnes Printers in La Mesa.

The community spirit associated with the Pageant was evident from several program credits in 1939: Thearle Music Company, San Diego, for chimes; La Mesa Congregational Church, for "organ and chairs"; Rev. Earn Lindsley, for Bible and robe; "Forestry Department of La Mesa and Descanso for Trees and Evergreen Boughs;" Mr. D Lanney, for candelabra; Dorothy Cooke Smith and Ruby Ismay Hayes, for makeup; Douglas Inman and Francis Cyrnes, Stage Crew '37, for assistance with lights.

In this 1939 production, following customs of a number of its earlier years, the tableaux sequence included a scene set "At the Court of Herod." Readers less familiar with Christian tradition may not recall that Herod was the king of Judea, at about the time of Jesus' birth, who ordered the slaughter of all infant children in the land. The scene did not include choral music but was replete with musicians, whose functions are unknown; the Wisemen; Roman soldiers; many women; and Nubian slaves. Nubia, at the time, was a primitive kingdom in the south of Egypt, which was conquered a lot by its neighbors. One wonders how the casting was managed.

During the War years, the Pageants of 1942, 1943, and 1944 began at 6:30, rather than the usual 8 p.m., so that audience members and performers could be home before night-time blackout rules took effect.

In the mid-1940s and later, it was *customary* for curtain to be held for five to 10 minutes while the principal, Lewis F. Smith, appeared at the front of the hall to request persons who had attended this particular production previously to yield their seats for persons standing in line who could not get in.

The 1955 offering, in three performances, included a cutesy, glitzy "'Who's Who in the Cast," of the sort common in college, community, and some professional theatre. The idea was dropped after one year.

The "Standard" Pageant

The early directors created, step by step, what we can call "The Standard Pageant," from which there were few deviations in later years. The Standard Pageant was so well established that it became customary, by the 1940s and later, for alumni to return, year after year, to participate and to fit-in comfortably. So many members of the Choir returned that, in its processional, members of the current Choir might not recognize their marching partners and wonder where all of the "old" people came from. Graduates emerged during "The Pageant of the Flu," recalled by Audrey Seidel Myers, in which speaking and musical roles were re-created by alumni veterans. The Standard Pageant:

PRELUDE

Organ in house. Audience-arrival and welcoming music, miscellaneous standard carols.

Orchestra. Overture. Commonly "The Story of Christmas" (Grossman), "A Carol Festival" (Ades), "A Christmas Festival" (Leroy Anderson).

Minstrels: "What Child Is This?" ("Green Sleeves.") (English folk song, Elizabethan or earlier, anonymous.) (After 1956 or 1957.)

Merrymakers. "Jingle Bells" (American, 1857. See note, below).

FEAST SCENE

Merrymakers, Chorus. "Deck the Halls" (traditional, secular Welsh, "Nos Galan," with English words--focused on New Year 's--added later.

Orchestra, ballerina. "Bell Dance" (*Fountains of Bakhchisarai*, origin, availability not established) or "Waltz of the Flowers" (Tchaikovsky, *Nutcracker.*) (1937 and later).

Orchestra and Jesters. "Fools' Capers" (origin, availability not established).

Company. "The Yule Log Song" (traditional). See note, below.

Company and soloist. "The Boar's Head Carol" (traditional, from 16th Century).

Bass or baritone. "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen, " with JENN-tll-menn pronounced correctly (traditional, English secular, from 16th or 17th Century). Later, the song was rendered by a bass and tenor duet with the chorus joining for the refrain.

Court Dancers. "Royale Promenade."

Cook, Serving Men, Merrymakers. "The Wassail Song" (traditional); see notes below.

Merrymakers, chimes. "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" (Mendelssohn).

INTERLUDE (VESPERS)

Orchestra and soloist. "Ave Maria" (Schubert or Bach-Gounod).

Orchestra, Candlebearers, Madonna. "Cantique de Noel" ("O Holy Night") (Adam, mid-19th Century). (See note, below.)

Celestial Choir. "O All Ye People Give Ear" (Praetorius, c 1600).

READER, *Invocation*

"Sound Over All Waters"

RED ROBE CHOIR ENTRANCE AND CHORUS

Red Robe Choir entrance. "The First Noel," with ane-JELL pronounced correctly (traditional; France, probably, 16th or 17th Century).

Red Robe Choir, a capella. "The Shepherds' Story" (Clarence Dickinson).

READER, *The Prophecy.*

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light . . . For unto us a child is born . . ." (Isaiah 9:2, 6).

NATIVITY TABLEAUX

READER: ". . . the angel Gabriel was sent by God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth . . . her name was Mary" (with MAY-ree pronounced correctly). (Luke 1:26--33).

The Annunciation (Mary, Angel Gabriel).

Vocal solo. "And the Angel Said Unto Her" (with ane-JELL pronounced correctly).

READER: "And it came to pass . . . that she should be delivered . . . and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them at the inn". (Luke 2:6, 7).

The Inn at Bethlehem (Mary, Joseph, Innkeepers, Women at Well)

Red Robe Choir. "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (American; Brooks and Redner, 1868)

The Appearance of a Star (Shepherds)

READER: "And there were shepherds in the same country . . ." (Luke 2:8--15)

Red Robe Choir. "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," with ane-JELL pronounced correctly (American; Sears and Willis, c 1849. See note below.)

READER: "And they came with haste and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe . . ." (Matthew 2:7--11; Luke 2:16--18).

Adoration (The Worship of the Christ Child) (Mary, Joseph, Little Angels, Wisemen, Shepherds, Townspeople)

Red Robe Choir. "Lo, How a Rose E're Blooming" (Praetorius; German, 15th Century).

Red Robe Choir. "Silent Night," with si-LENT pronounced correctly (Mohr, Gruber). (See note, below.)

Red Robe Choir. "Joy to the World" (Handel). (Sung in the first Christmas Pageant.)

Postlude

Orchestra, Red Robe Choir. "Hallelujah Chorus" (Handel, *The Messiah*). (1957 and after.)

Orchestra and Red Robe Choir grand exit. "Adeste Fideles" ("O Come, All Ye Faithful"), with tri-umm-FANNT pronounced correctly (French, Wade, 1742.).

Later Developments With the Standard

In 1945, demand for seats in the routine production schedule (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday) was such that the final dress-rehearsal evening, on Monday, was opened to students, who were encouraged to attend then. This routine remained standard, accommodating 5,000 visitors in 1953, but with continuing demand for more tickets than were available. In 1957, under Richard Dunlop, the Monday performance became the first of four, all for the general public, but now welcoming students. (Eva Quicksall, in an interview with a reporter from *The Foothill Echoes*, recalled this four-performance introduction as occurring in 1962 [Sylvester, 1978]. R.S.D. is quite certain of the earlier date and it can't be established firmly until programs from those dates are available for examination).

The ballerina, then with "The Bell Dance," became a part of the standard Feast Scene in 1948, and has remained, sometimes with the variant option from *The Nutcracker*.

It is believed that "What Child Is This?" ("Greensleeves"), with troubadour or strolling minstrels, was introduced in December 1956 or 1957, with one vocal soloist accompanied by an instrumentalist with a stringed, folk-type instrument, costumed as appropriate for the Feast Scene, entering from the rear. Genders depended on whomever were available and best for the roles. By the 1970s, this had evolved into a convention of two sopranos and two altos, bearing lanterns and accompanied by a guitarist, but always entering from the rear. There was a good deal of teeth-gnashing over this change, when "Greensleeves" was introduced, first, because it was a change and, second, because of the "aesthetic distance" problem. The long-standing theory and custom in theatre has been that members of the cast should never mingle with the audience, before, during, or after a performance. But Mrs. Quicksall and Mrs. Donohue were agreeable, so it was done and so it stayed (to remove it would be to change, thus unthinkable! Richard Dunlop, General Director from 1957 through 1961, recalled, much later, how he had wanted "Deck the Halls" pepped up so it would sound more like a dance and less like a dirge, but one moved cautiously, if at all.)

Since the mid-1940s, if not earlier, the idea of the Merry-makers was that they were separate from other Feast Scene celebrants and, presumably, invited into the manor only on special occasions such as Christmas Eve. They were not more than eight in number, and entered, following the overture, by bursting through the door at the northwest corner of the auditorium that connects with backstage. They sang "Jingle Bells" as they made this entrance and gathered on a short flight of steps leading to the stage. This gave them elevation above the audience so that they could be seen. After a verse or two the curtains would open grandly, revealing the Feast Scene setting and players and many singers already there, all would join in "Deck the Halls," and singers would find their ways to appropriate locations on stage to get the choral balance right. Somewhere along the way and before the early 1970s, this entering maneuver was changed so that the Merry-makers, now numbering some 16, and following "Greensleeves," entered from the rear as well, behaved as if they were greeting each other in a celebratory manner, then continued down an aisle with "Jingle Bells," greeting audience members. As the principal act-curtain opened, all moved to the stage and "Deck the Halls."

One did not make changes in the Christmas Pageant casually and few changes are in its more recent history. One occurred in what was long called "the Adoration Scene" (by 1973 identified as "The Worship of the Christ Child"). The central figures are approached slowly and virtually imperceptibly by shepherds and townspeople, while little angels stand around looking on. The three Wisemen enter, present their gifts, then withdraw to the edge of the crowd. Everyone kneels in an attitude of reverence. Richard Dunlop introduced a modification, here, in 1957, to symbolize the fact that events at hand were, to the minds of these people who had gathered, of great importance, but not all agreed as to their significance or meaning. Dunlop had the Wisemen remain standing, but in attitudes of respect. It is not known if this staging of the Wisemen remained.

During the Pageant's first several years of evolution, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" was introduced immediately following curtain on the Feast Scene and was used, primarily, to demonstrate musical talent but also to add time for members of the Feast Scene Chorus to join up with the remainder of the Choir and for the Madonna-Scene setting to be readied. At some time after the mid-1960s the staging was changed so that members of the chorus, while exiting the stage, hummed along with the chimes' percussionist.

After seeking approval from Mrs. Merle Donohue, Mrs. Eva Quicksall, and the Orchestra conductor, James Nichols, Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" (*The Messiah*) was introduced by Richard Dunlop, then the General Director, to precede the Choir's final anthem, "Adeste Fidelis," and grand exit. This had the predictable but unexpected effect of drawing audiences to their feet, before the long-standing (and useful) tradition of keeping them locked-down until the Choir had left the building. Further, Richard Dunlop fretted that the aesthetically clean line, genius, and beauty of the Pageant, from beginning to end in one hour and 12 minutes, was disrupted, but he did not encourage a change back to previous practice. Apparently because the "Chorus" is such a grand event for all involved, this change, to keep the oratorio in, lasted as long as the Pageant did.

From the first Pageant to be held in the new Auditorium-Gymnasium, there was a challenge in moving the Choir, at times 100-strong or greater, from the east bleachers out of the hall, without trampling members of the audience. The solution was for Choir members to rise, begin "Adeste Fidelis," descend from their seats, form a column of twos, and leave by a direct path to the northwest double "panic" doors and move out into Murray Drive. At some time after 1962 this standard exiting practice was changed. Choir members moved to the center aisle, tottered into a "column left" maneuver, and exited up that principal aisle, then out via the main doors. This required the left-most person in each pair to stop and execute a 90 degree left turn while the right-most member scuttled around to get side-by-side, and off they went, *in step*, unless someone had fallen over, and intent on the hope inspired by "Oh Come, All Ye Faithful." Military recruits spend weeks in basic training or boot camp learning to do this deftly, but the change remained in. Apparently it was successful.

In December, 1979, an experimental revision was presented in the East County Performing Arts Center, in El Cajon. Identified as "The Pageant," now, this production was

performed on only two nights, was set as a winter scene, and included miscellaneous new songs and Santa Claus (and, of course, Mrs. Claus) before continuing with the long-familiar Madonna Scene and Tableaux, then ending with "Hallelujah."

The standard Pageant returned in 1980 to Grossmont, under general direction of Dannelle Barton. She was relieved in 1981 by the General Directorship of Edward Hollingsworth, new to the faculty in Drama, and who had not been told of the Pageant until a month before it was to open. That Pageant, 1981, ran for three performances, which had been conventional for a time. Despite the perilous beginning, Mr. Hollingsworth is probably the only General Director to have directed his children, then ages five and two, as participants in it.

The problem of performers enacting multiple duties had been around for a time. Laura (Ortiz) Roberson (GHS 1983) recalls how she was in four Pageant productions, serving in both Orchestra and Choir in three of those, including her assumption of the Concert Mistress and the "Ave Maria" violin soloist roles in 1982.

In 1988, Mr. Hollingsworth modified the "Holiday Pageant" by introducing a "Mall Scene" in place of the Feast Scene, in the hope that modernizing this portion of it would have greater appeal. Circumstances in that year were such that only 30 students, apart from the Choir, rather than the customary 100 or more, auditioned, and the Pageant company consisted of many double-cast roles. This "student apathy," as described by the principal, Sidney Gerstler, was one fatal flaw, among others. It had been noticed, for the first time in many years, that Feast Scene costumes, now threadbare, were from various historic eras and would not have been worn there in any event. Properties were falling apart. The Red Robe Choir was vastly reduced in size. Attendance at the two 1988 performances was sparse (Spotts, 1988).

At the conclusion of the final Christmas Pageant at Grossmont High School, in 1988, all behaved as they always had: They followed tradition. They struck the set and put it away for next year. But all recognized that this gift to the community had had a grand run of 62 years. It was time to let her enjoy a genteel retirement in the minds of thousands and thousands of her descendants.

Comments On the Matter of Religion at School

The first breath of the first phrase of the First Amendment to our Constitution (the "Establishment Clause") protects us *from* religion. (Freedom *of* religion comes in the *second* breath.) "Freedom from religion" means that our governments cannot "establish" any religion for us. Court precedents have held that the meaning of this includes prohibition against our governments giving preferential treatment, or encouragement, or support to any religion or religious group.

Eva McCarthy Quicksall is reported to have been asked, at a Board of Education meeting in the 1930s or '40s, "What do the Jewish kids do during Christmas Pageant time?" Mrs. Quicksall is said to have replied, "I don't know. They're probably in the Pageant." This thinking was prominent for decades regarding the Pageant. The question rarely came up about the community at Grossmont High School and its gift to their larger community. By the 1970s and '80s, however, there had been enough abuse of the spirit of separation of church and state that people generally were sensitive to the potential problem of Constitutional conflict. Court actions were brought, here and there, to stop them, by litigation when necessary, from using public money and land to support religious activities. Freedom *of* religion permits them to be exercised in many places elsewhere. And one dispute came close to home in 1988 when complaints were raised about the crosses on Mt. Soledad and Mt. Helix. The contention was not over the crosses but over their display on public property; the public, it was argued, should be neutral in religious matters. An editorial-page headline in *The Foothill Echoes* alerted readers of "Atheists [*sic*] Threatening Religious Icons" (Dworkin, 1988).

The potential problem was not of "atheists," however, but of the possible Constitutional conflict. It is unknown if any person or group ever threatened litigation against Grossmont High School, or the District, regarding the Christmas Pageant. Had a law suit been filed, it is likely that the District would not have defended it, because of the prohibitive cost. Had there been litigation and a determination to defend, however, the principal defense contention might well have been on First Amendment, "Establishment Clause" grounds: There is no record that anyone was ever converted to any religion by the Christmas Pageant. The more important consideration, however, may be that many participants, over the years, regarded the Pageant as a religious and theological event; many others regarded it as a religious or spiritual experience but non-theological. We were all compliant with the First Amendment.

Comments on the Technical Side

One can "put on a play," but one can never Do Theatre without technical support, usually provided through miscellaneous hardware and electrical circuits going here and there.

From the time the Auditorium-Gymnasium was constructed and available, the "house" lights in it were controlled from a massive electrical contraption in a small storage space near the main entryways. This was not a problem with athletic events but it was awful for theatrical situations held there and, of course, the Pageant. A teacher, normally guardian of the Candlebearers, who clustered there, would wait until the audience seemed to be seated, then would peek through the door to see if the Orchestra conductor, at the other end of the

hall, was peeking back from his entryway. If so, a great lever would be thrown in the Candlebearers' waiting space, a shattering *clang!* would emit and the house would go dark. Two follow-spots, neither of which worked properly, would attempt to pursue the conductor to his podium, and the show was on. This is how it was done, for decades. For the 1957 Pageant, an alternative was introduced. An ordinary line of household extension cord was run from a rheostat on the light board, backstage, to the girders over the auditorium, and back and forth on them. Common 150-watt, clear floodlights were attached by clamps. We were then able to have a much more sensible arrangement, *with a dimmer*, suitable to the situation.

From dedication of the Auditorium-Gymnasium during the Depression to the Pageant of 1958, all lighting controls were managed from the light board, backstage. This board offered several ordinary electrical outlets into which various lines were connected, which had to be either "on" or "off." The board had eight rheostats with enormous handles, each of which had two positions but those dedicated to specific circuits. Intensities of light could be manipulated, but only to those circuits and their spotlights, floodlights, or extension cords. Thanks to the insistence of Grossmont's principal, Dr. John T. Warburton, the District approved a major, long overdue change. A "patching" panel was introduced in the dressing room behind the light board, which allowed any rheostat, in either its up or down position, to be connected to any electrical circuit in the system. This permitted enormous flexibility in lighting control which had never been there, before, especially helpful in a technically sophisticated production such as the Pageant. Dr. Warburton was responsible also for securing many new spotlights, both of the Fresnel type for over the stage use and long-throw ellipsoidals, clamped to beams over the audience-seating area.

From the day of its inauguration, the Grossmont Auditorium featured three "follow" spots, spotlights mounted on short steel poles and situated on platforms behind the basketball backboards at the south, northwest, and northeast areas of the building. These could be aimed, after a fashion, up and down and right and left. From at least the late 1940s onward, these follow-spots did not work. They "followed" but they could not focus so it could not be determined what it was they were following. The problem was of their heavy weight and difficulty in being moved elsewhere. Further, because they remained in position, they were frequent targets of students in gym classes or practicing basketball; every direct hit rattled the focusing mechanism. From 1958 onward, for several years, attempts were made to replace these with Trouperettes, modern, efficient, and convenient follow-spots of the time. It is unknown if budgets ever allowed replacements to be introduced.

In the mid-1950s, and perhaps later as well, it was recognized that general-lighting apparatus--spotlights, floodlights, etc.--although fine for stage plays and Community Concert Series programs which came through the auditorium several times a year, were insufficient

for a production as technically demanding as the Pageant. For several years the preparation routine came to include borrowing a great deal of equipment from Mrs. Dorothy Bonsignore, then head of the Drama program at Helix High.

Until fairly recent times, the General Directors of the Christmas Pageant did a good deal of screaming, particularly as preparations moved into technical and dress rehearsals. (This was independent of "The General Director's Temper Tantrum," a well-established custom through much of the '40s. It may have hit its high point--or low point--in the middle 1950s when, urban legend has it, the General Director strode from the principal entryway to stage, swearing all the way, and not repeating himself once.) The reason for this screaming is that none of the directors had any other way of communication, primarily to crew members, except hollering. In preparing the 1957 Pageant, an attempt was made to use walkie-talkies found in an Army-Navy surplus store, left over from World War II or Korea, but they were far too large and loud and their long, tank-type antennas posed a hazard. For the 1958 Pageant, ordinary telephone wire was liberated from its customary place and run, from light-board to the rear of the auditorium, with war-surplus headsets at both ends. This made communication possible, if inefficient, from the house to the light board. Citizens' band radio was introduced in the 1970s, as were radio-based intercoms, and surely the means were found to employ these technologies.

Other Prominent Faculty and Staff



Walter R. Barnett, GHS, 1928. Grossmont graduate, teacher, coach, vice principal, and principal, who was always available and who stood by the Pageant all the way. Of all who have been there, Walt Barnett was the ultimate Grossmonter.



There was a kind of institutional wisdom and caring that went along with long-time faculty and staff. The program did not even have a written script until Richard Dunlop put one together in 1963; the script was lost, later, in the Library's archives.

Faculty participation included remarkable tolerance for rehearsal schedules, which could not always be accommodated in late afternoon and evening hours. Teachers who had been there a year or two knew to design their schedules for December so that nothing was lost. They engaged in the annual grumbling but, as well, shared the traditional and communal Pageant Head-Cold (widely attributed to the chilly Auditorium but more likely due to stress impacting on immune systems). With these people, appointment to the faculty at Grossmont High School was a vocation, and the Pageant was a part of it.

Beyond that, these folks just seemed to show up when the time was right and they knew what to do. A couple of hours before curtain, a faculty member--who, perhaps, had done it for years--went to his source and secured dry ice to make "steam" for the Feast Scene's serving bowls. In the 1949--'50 academic year, as the new Helix High School student body and faculty shared the Grossmont campus, everyone accommodated and there was nary a hitch. (As soon as those people left for their new home in La Mesa, the ages-old Grossmont--Sweetwater rivalry ended and no passion was greater than that of beating Helix.) Some teacher always knew to be inside at the Auditorium's southeast door and to send it banging open, for the Choir to tiptoe secretly in, just as the tympani thundered in "O Holy Night." After 1959 or so, cadets from the ROTC class were assigned to rotate in guarding the chimes, from opening of the building in the early morning to the end of rehearsals or performances. Here are a few of the faculty and staff who accomplished these things.

Adams, Kay. Faculty. Nativity scenes for several years.

Adams, Mark. Faculty. Technical assistance.

Ahern, Ekoe. Faculty, Journalism. Pageant publicist from 1948 onward.

Arnold, Dorothy. Faculty, Women's P.E. Choreography, ushers, 1950s and '60s.

Atkinson, Mary. Women's P.E. Candlebearers, whom she recruited from her drill team, and choreography, from at least 1939 until the mid-'50s.

Brobst, W.B. Faculty. Lights and sound, circa 1939, before and after.

Burdick, John. Faculty. Former Merry Maker. Miscellaneous assistance

Cornelius, Tempy Dell. Faculty. Feast Scene, Ushers.

Crane, Audrey. Faculty. Costumes.

Creelman, Jean. Faculty, Women 's P.E. Candlebearers in 1951 and for many years thereafter.

Cummings, Irene. Staff. Ticket distribution for several years.

DeCoito, Edward L. Faculty. Technical assistance for several years.

Delmonico, Becky. Faculty. Program cover.

DiPinto, Robert. Faculty. Lighting and stage management for several years..

Doerr, Hal. Faculty. Settings.

Dorsey, Jeanne. Madonna for several years.

Duewel, Virginia. Staff. Programs, circa 1939, before and after.

Farrar, Michael. Faculty. Lighting for several years.

Fenn, Judi. Faculty. Feast Scene.

Galvin, Sharon. Faculty. Nativity scenes for several years and Readers ' director.

Geba, Susanne. Faculty. Nativity scenes, ushers for several years.

Gentry, Steve. Faculty. Assistant with drama, technical director, lighting.

Gizoni, Joe. Faculty. Technical assistance.

Gould, Tom. Faculty. Special effects.

Hannah, Edgar, Faculty. Carpentry, circa 1939, before and after.

Harker, Stelca. Faculty, Women's P.E. Jesters and dancers, circa 1955.

Hopkins, Henry. Faculty, Art. Scene design and miscellaneous assistance circa 1955.

Hughes, Harold G. Faculty, Physics. Business management, circa 1939, before and after.

Hyde, Marjorie. "Marge" Hyde, Art Department, was instrumental in assisting with various aspects of the Pageant in the 1950s and '60s.

Johnson, Marianne. Faculty. Ushers.

Jones, Gloria. Auditorium decoration, several years.

Jones, W.A. Faculty. Lights and sound, circa 1939, before and after.

Kamminga, Marilyn. Faculty, Commercial Department. Program and miscellaneous assistance from 1951.

Kendrick, Earl. Faculty. Carpentry, circa 1939, before and after.

King, Pat. Staff. Ticket distribution.

King, Winifred. Faculty, Biology. House decoration, circa 1939, before and after.

Kirch, Lois. Faculty. Costumes for several years.

Kirk, Alda. Faculty, English. Miscellaneous assistance, many years.

Lambert, Jane. Women's P.E. Choreography for several years.

Laswell, Evelyn. Faculty. Ushers.

Lentz, Jerry. Faculty. Costumes.

Lewis, Jerry. Faculty. Program covers for several years.

Locke, Ada. Faculty. Publicity, circa 1939, before and after.

Lockwood, Carol. Faculty. Madonna for several years.

Luxton, Cynthia. Faculty. Choreography.

Marshall, Angela C. Faculty. Nativity scenes for several years.

Mayrhofer, Al. Faculty, Auto Shop, Biology. Lighting and miscellaneous assistance, circa 1955 and later.

McSpadden, Beverly. Staff. Ticket distribution.

Miller, Shelby, Staff. Ticket distribution.

Mitchell, Mary Louise. Staff. Ticket distribution for several years.

Moriarty, Elsie. Faculty. Staging and costumes, circa 1939, before and after.

Norval, Betty. Faculty, English. Decorations, circa 1955.

Parker, James, GHS 1931. Faculty from 1939. Photography and Annual. By tradition, boys' makeup. Through the 1940s, Stein's greasepaint was used; later, a switch was made to the more comfortable and convenient Factor's pancake.

Piazzoni, Eli. Staff, Parking, circa 1939, before and after.

Prosser, Ethel I. Faculty. Ushers, circa 1939, before and after.

Redditt, Rosemary. Women's P.E. Candlebearers for several years and with the Pageant to the end. It was Ms. Redditt who, when Edward Hollingsworth joined the faculty to direct the Drama program, was the first to tell him about the Christmas Pageant. "The what?" he is reported to have replied. This information was conveyed one month before performances were scheduled to begin.

Reynolds, Craig. Faculty. Light Crew, circa 1947.

Rhodes, Elaine. Women's P.E. Choreography for several years.

Rooke, Dorothy. Faculty, Women's P.E. Jesters and dancers, circa 1955.

Rozendal, Jean. Civilian volunteer. Feast Scene, costumes, 1978.

Ryerson, Pam. Faculty. Ushers for several years.

Schmidt, Evelyn. Faculty, Homemaking. Costumes and miscellaneous assistance circa 1950 and later.

Sherman, Helene. Bookstore, since 1951. "Mom" Sherman was involved in all aspects, including, particularly, Madonna, costumes for Feast Scene, and miscellaneous tableaux. Mrs. Sherman, since before 1967, made a personal (and, later, traditional) visit to the home of the girl selected to portray The Madonna, and to notify her family. This tradition arose when the girl who had been cast neglected to tell her family of this. Her parents were seated in the third row on one performance evening. After the Candlebearers, "O Holy Night," tympani, cymbals, the volley of 21 cannon, tolling from banks of carillon, mighty strikes of lightning, and the curtains hurtling back, the mother stood, cried "Susan! Oh, my God! That's *Susan!*" Arrangements were made at once to introduce better communications following future casting decisions (Sylvester, 1978).

Slovacek, Christy. Staff. Choir accompanist, 1981-- '82; organist for audience-arrival music.

Silverberg, Steve. Faculty. Technical assistance.

Smith, Kris. Civilian volunteer from San Diego State. Assistance with tableaux, 1978.

Smith, May Jenkins. Faculty. Costume construction, circa 1939, before and after.]

Taylor, Don. Faculty, Industrial Arts. Parking and miscellaneous assistance since 1941.

Victor (Maschner), Valerie. Staff. Choir accompanist, 1973--'81; organist for audience-arrival music.

Vinson, Eugene. Faculty from 1939. Spanish and French. By tradition, boys' makeup. Through the 1940s, Stein's greasepaint was used; later, a switch was made to the more comfortable and convenient Factor's pancake.

Wallenborn, Walter. Faculty. Technical assistance for several years.

Wallis, Ross. Faculty, Art Department. Scenery painting and properties, circa 1939, before and after.

West, Dorace. Staff. Ticket distribution, 1955 and later.

The Grossmont faculty, from the school's founding until 1952, was stable. Teachers came and stayed, usually assuming the same roles in the extra-curricular world as they had in previous years. Exceptions were the draw-down of teachers to accommodate the openings of Helix High, 1952; El Cajon Valley, 1955; Mount Miguel, 1957; El Capitan, 1959; Granite Hills, 1960; Monte Vista, 1961; and Santana, 1965. The teachers who made the Pageant happen also had the usual responsibilities of educators, including conducting their classes; attending graduate school regularly; making other contributions in the community; and conducting parent, student, and staff conferences. They saw Alpine, El Cajon, Lakeside, La Mesa, Lemon Grove and environs go through Prohibition, the Depression, the New Deal, Fascism, Stalinism, and people like Mao elsewhere and the rigid orthodoxies of "political correctness" at home. Annual polio seasons took their toll. Regular brush and woods fires were common as were occasional floods. Faculty and staff saw their students and graduates go off, many into marriage and parenting and into every occupation and every confrontation the country had elsewhere: World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and other engagements over the years and were able to welcome most of them back for frequent reunions and later Christmas Pageants. They were comfortable in the knowledge that *The La Mesa Scout* and, later, Barnes Printers, would always prepare the programs and Boyd-Anderson would always shoot the formal Madonna portrait.

Notes on the Music In the Order of Employment

The melody for "What Child is This?" is that of "Greensleeves," which has been around since about the time of Henry VIII and used as a ballad and love song supporting various lyrics. The lyrics we are familiar with today in "What Child is This?" were composed to the "Greensleeves" melody and published in 1865 by William Chatterton Dix, manager of a Scottish insurance agency, but whose first love was poetry and composing music suitable for worship situations. Dix was author of over 40 hymns.

We don't know when "Jingle Bells" became part of the Pageant or, particularly, when the venerable, virtually-patented "ha-ha-ha-ha" got in. It is the most contemporary of Christmas Pageant songs, having been composed by James Lord Pierpont, organist at the Unitarian Church, Savannah, GA, in 1857. Another history credits the same composer and year, but gives its introduction as being a children's song in celebration of Thanksgiving and the church as situated in Boston, but the song became a Christmas standard promptly.

The ballet was, commonly, done to "The Bell Dance" (from a ballet, *The Fountains of Bakhchisarai*) but, often, "Waltz of the Flowers" (Tchaikovsky, *Nutcracker*) was used instead. Presumably the choice was dictated by the desires of dancer, faculty choreographer, and conductor.

Complaints were raised, from time to time from some in the community, about "The Wassail Song" seeming to celebrate an intoxicant. The song stayed, and for good reasons. Its introduction in the Pageant was more clever than most participants realized. Both "The Wassail Song" and "The Yule-Log Song," and especially together, derive from deep in European magical history, primarily that of England, France, Norway, and Yugoslavia. "Wassailing" is such an ancient tradition that its origins cannot be traced. It is rumored that members of various Pageant stage crews sought the goodwill and fellowship of wassailing high above the stage in a secret closet, up there. Little did they know that, in tradition, wassail did not have to have alcoholic content.

It may be providential that "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" was, traditionally, in the Pageant, done on chimes rather than instruments that could be thrown around easily. The words for this work were written as a poem in 1739 by Rev. Charles Wesley, brother of the founder of the Methodist Church, who specified that any eventual music should be slow and solemn. A Calvinist of the same period changed the words, some, over Wesley's protests. Felix Mendelssohn, a Jew and member of a distinguished family long resident in Germany, composed a cantata, in 1840, celebrating the Roman Catholic Johann Gutenberg's printing press and specifying that the music be employed only for secular use. Dr. William Cummings, an Anglican-church organist, discovered that the music and words were a pretty good fit and managed to put them together. Both the original author and composer, both dead by then, would have fretted. But, *hark!* It worked.

"Cantique de Noel" ("O Holy Night") must have been introduced to go along with the Madonna Scene, but we don't know which idea came first. The music was composed by the Frenchman, Adolphe Charles Adam, who was, also, composer of music for the ballet, *Giselle*. When it was introduced to the public, "Cantique de Noel" was denounced by Church authorities as being without religious merit or spirit.

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" was a poem composed by Dr. Edmund Sears, a Unitarian minister, in 1849 and set to music in 1850 by Richard Storrs Willis, of New York City.

The short story of "Silent Night" is that Joseph Mohr, an Austrian clergyman and amateur guitarist, wanted his brand-new poem, "Silent Night," set to music suitable for guitar. Mohr turned to his church organist, Franz Gruber, who tossed off the original version for two voices, choir, and guitar. The first performance occurred almost at once, at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, 1818.

"Rudolph" never made it. No class.

Acknowledgments

Carol Ambrosia, GHS 1964, currently secretary for the principal, Grossmont High School. Miscellaneous historical information from the school.

Frank Applegate, GHS 1943.

Jonathan Burdick, GHS 1981. Many responses to several historical details.

Sindy Buzzell, GHS 1959. Jester, 1957, 1958. Identical twin of Susan, perhaps the only twins in Pageant history to portray Jesters. Clarifying information on some faculty directors in those years.

Susan Buzzell, GHS 1959. Jester, 1957, 1958. Identical twin of Sindy, perhaps the only twins in Pageant history to portray Jesters. Clarifying information on some faculty directors in those years.

Gary Dorman, GHS 1962. Red Robe Choir and Pageant. Miscellaneous information on Grossmont High, Red Robe Choir, Mrs. Merle Donohue, and Pageant history.

Daniel Dworkin (1988). Athiests [*sic*] threatening religious icons. *The Foothill Echoes*, December 16.

El Cajon Historical Society. Net site only.

Judith Foster, GHS 1962. Red Robe Choir and Pageant. Details on faculty staffing and music.

Peter Gonos. Technical assistance with the final version of this history.

Stephanie (Dunlop) Gonos. GHS 1958. Many contributions regarding faculty and their Pageant assignments, mid-1950s.

George Gross, Ph.D., Hoover (!), 1939; Grossmont faculty, English, 1948--1962, Professor Emeritus, English, San Diego State University. Younger brother of participant in the first or second offering of Pageant.

Edward Hollingsworth, Grossmont faculty, 1981 onward. Miscellaneous information related to the Pageant 's end-cycle.

Duane Kuuhlow, Jr. GHS 1980. Clarifying information on orchestral conductor, 1980.

Lakeside Historical Society. Net site only.

La Mesa Historical Society. Net site only.

Lori Lancaster (1977). The history of Grossmont High. Unpublished. Library, Grossmont High School, .H1/GHS/Hist.

Audrey Seidel Myers. Grossmont faculty, Drama, 1966--1980. General Director, 12 Pageants. Many assistances with developing the history, circa 1966 and beyond.

Gerald Nachman (1998), *Raised on radio*. New York: Pantheon.

John Noble, GHS 1985. Several details concerning Orchestral conductors.

Wilson Ochoa, GHS 1981. Red Robe Choir and Pageant. Many and thorough details on faculty and staff, musical arrangements, staging changes.

Gary Lee Parks, GHS 1960. Red Robe Choir and Pageant, now Principal Conductor and Artistic Director, Northwest LDS Symphony, Portland-Vancouver.

Red Robe Choir Alumni Association.

G. Carroll Rice, GHS 1947; Light Crew circa 1947 and before. Many details regarding earlier faculty, Pageant productions and El Cajon before the major population growth.

Laura (Ortiz) Roberson, GHS 1983. Information concerning double duty performing in the productions of 1979--'82.

San Diego Railway Museum. Net site only.

Terri Segal, GHS 1984. Clarifying information on substitute orchestra conductor, 1980 Pageant.

Steve Sharpe, GHS 1975. Red Robe Choir and Pageant. Webmaster and Mailing List Administrator for Red Robe Choir Alumni Association. Many valiant assistances with data collection for the history and for its preparation for publication.

Bonnie J. K. Sheets, GHS 1980. Red Robe Choir and Pageant. Historical information circa 1980 and two programs.

Eddie Lou (Cates) Slunka, GHS 1946; Angel Gabriel, 1945.

Jenny Spotts (1988). Holiday pageant lacks support from students. *The Foothill Echoes*, December 16.

Tammi Sylvester (1978). Pageant changes scene since 1925. *The Foothill Echoes*, December 15.