Manual Arts Takes State Track Crown: PREP TRACK de La Vega, John Los Angeles Times (1923-1995); May 30, 1953; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times

Manual Arts Takes State Track Crown

BY JOHN DE LA VEGA, Times Staff Representative

FRESNO, May 29-For a meet that wasn't supposed to be held tonight, the 35th annual State High School Track and Field Meet proved the greatest ever as one national record was set, two were tied and five meet marks were tumbled.

A truly great mile duel saw Bob Seaman of Reedley out-kick Whittier's Danny Schwei-kart to win by two yards in 4:21 flat, which broke Louis Zamperini's long standing na-tional standard. The Zamp set the record at 4:21.2 back in 1934 while at Torrance.

And to top off the spirited evening Manual Arts came through with a flossy 1:27.6 clocking in the 880 relay to equal the national mark set by North Des Moines in 1948. The victory was doubly sweet for Coach Charley Toney's Toilers, for it netted them the team tro-phy with 16 3-5 points. Delano was second with 12.

Armstrong Flies

The lad who really brought the bacon back to Manual Arts was Don Armstrong, was Don Armstrong, a low hurdler who placed only third in the city meet. In the after-noon prelims he tied the na-tional record of 18.9, set by Glendale's Steve Turner in 1950, and in the evening, though clocking only 19.3, he scored an impressive victory that meant five completely unexpected markers. Fastest Armstrong had ever gone before was 19.8, but that was largely because he was injured early in the

campaign.

Aside from that tampering with national standards, which of course also bettered the meet records, Leamon King of Delano became the third coholder of the 100-yard dash record at 9.6. He also took the 220 in 21.4 after running 21.3 in the afternoon.

Morris Sets Mark

Ronnie Morris of Burroughs in Burbank accounted for the fifth meet record when vaulted 13ft. 9%in. came within a w And came within a whisker of clearing an even 14ft., which would have been a new national record.

But back to that torrid mile.

It was really a dilly. Duane Ludlow of Stockton set the first lap pace, in 60.5, and San Pedro's Fred Ackenback led at the half-way in 2:10.5. Then Seamon took over. He completed the third lap in 3:18.8, right on the national record pace, but

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PREF

chweikart ootsteps.

chweikart was dogging his ootsteps. Schweikart tried desperately o grab the lead on the backretch of the final lap but Seanon just kept going faster. Seaman kept a stride ahead all around the curve and down he long road home. Schweicart never did close the gap, ut he forced the classy Seanan to run 62.2 for the final luarter. Danny Boy was locked in 4:21.2. The said both Seaman and Schweikert are headed for SC. Before the first race was run here was a record set — of sorts. We'd call it a running lecision change with a half-ruth twist. The meet was postoned until Saturday at 8:33 am, but when the sun got a hance to dry out, the track officials were forced to go head with it. Unfortunately his decision came at 1:30 in he afternoon, and several athetes failed to hear about it in ime.

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Life Style: A Big Little High School Closes Its Doors Forever

Stix, Harriet

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Life Style

A Big Little High School Closes Its Doors Forever

By HARRIET STIX

Dear Editor,

. . . We are cordially inviting you, your readers, past graduates, personalities, dignitaries, royalty, government officials and the entire world to our last graduation.

If you feel you can make a contribution, please get in touch with me . . . Our graduation will be June 9 at 7 p.m.

The President and Governor have yet to respond to their personal invitations.

Harry Hanna School president P.O. Box 667 Fort Jones High School Fort Jones

FORT JONES, Calif.-Rain was falling gently Friday morning as high school students in this isolated community just south of the Oregon border trickled into school to collect their final report cards. It was the last day of school in Fort Jones. Ever. The smallest public high school in Northern California has

On the balance sheet, small is not beautiful, and money, or more accurately lack of it, has done in Fort Jones. From now on, the little farming and lumber community's 80-odd high school students will be bused down the road to a larger

Before that happens, though, this year's seniors decided they would like to make their graduation an international happening. School president Harry Hanna sent personal invitations to an assortment of government officials and celebrities and also wrote to a couple of newspapers.

Busy Schedules

The response was not exactly overwhelming. A University of California professor wrote that he liked small schools and enclosed a check for \$5. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill Honig wrote that "Due to the tremendous number of day-to-day activities and duties as State Superintendent, available time for such participation is limited."

Gov. George Deukmejian's scheduling secretary declined on his behalf "due to an extremely busy schedule during this legislative session." President Reagan didn't answer at all.

Harry Hanna thinks the problem was that the students didn't get started with the invitations early enough. School principal Robert E. Novo suggested that "nobody wants to go to a funeral.'

It was quite different two years ago, when the Fort Jones seniors decided that since "nobody ever comes here" they wanted "somebody famous" to make their awards banquet and graduation ceremonies special events. They, too, wrote to celebrities and the newspapers, and the results were spectacular.

Secretary of State March Fong Eu and B. T. Collins, then-Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr.'s chief of staff, turned up from Sacramento; then-California Rep. Paul McCloskey, Michelle Phillips and Tennessee Ernie Ford also made the trip. A team of parachutists offered to jump out of an airplane carrying colored smoke bombs, but wanted to be paid for the stunt. Several prisoners wrote they'd like to come, but they were constrained by considerations other than financial.

Glorious Time

It was a glorious time. But it was not to be repeated. The youngsters couldn't pull off a star-studded event this year, any more than their parents could block the closing of the high school.

On the whole, though, the students have accepted gracefully both the quiet graduation exercises and the end of their school. "The kids," said science and math teacher Betty Kellems, "are adjusting better than the townspeople.

Indeed, the high school has long been regarded as a social center of

Fort Jones High School graduating class sits in gymnasium as last commencement gets under way.

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See full page image or

microfilm.

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SCHOOL: Fort Jones Holds Its Last Graduation

Continued from First Page

Fort Jones, pop. 525. The town has no movie theater, no disco. "This has been the gathering place of the community," said Kellems. "Basketball is the main social event of the winter here."

Fort Jones, named for a not-particularly-memorable 19th-Century army officer, is one of those towns where even the kids say "this is a great place to raise kids." Its broad main street—called Main Street, naturally—is lined with false-fronted stores, Western style. There's one bank, one gas station, eight real estate agencies. On the outskirts is the Fort Jones Complex, with plenty of parking for a restaurant, bowling alley, drug store, Laundromat, the Scott Valley Rural Health Center, Aylene's Clothes Nook, and Colinda's Bridal Illusions.

The high school, the heart of the town, lies across Moffett Creek from Main Street—turn right at John's Texaco. It was built in 1974 and is as spotless as the day it opened. "That's because of the pride of the kids," said Principal Novo, as he began a tour of the six-room building on graduation day.

Janitor Cathy Haws looked up from polishing the already immaculate floor to add, "They're good in the bathrooms even," then spoiled the effect a little by adding "but I do put the fear of God in them. They say, 'You better watch out or Cathy Haws is going to get you." 'She grinned and turned the floor polisher back

Novo opened the door to the well-equipped home economics room, where several senior girls were fussing with the flowers for the commencement exercises. "The alternative to closing this school would have meant that home ec, music, sports and business would have been cut," he said quietly. He moved on down the hall past the solidly furnished classrooms, apologizing for the rows of mostly manual typewriters but pointing proudly to four computers, bought six months with a \$12,000 donation from a local rancher.

Townspeople have been generous to the school. They could not save it, though.

Not that they didn't try. Some parents got so upset

they threatened a sit-in in the governor's office. "I calmed them down." Novo said.

Robert Fink, who represents the Fort Jones area on the Siskiyou Union High School Board of Trustees, has a son in the graduating class. "I thought we should hold out for another year or two," he said. "There is money in reserve we could have used, until things come back.

"I fought this to the end. The vote was 4 to 1."

So next year, most of the Fort Jones youngsters will be bused 12 miles down the Scott Valley to Etna High School, which has about 200 students. (A handful have chosen to go to a larger school in Yreka, 15 miles over the mountains.)

John Trumbo, editor of the Pioneer Press, the local weekly, commented that "Fort Jones is the kind of high school where there is more participation, where everybody can be outstanding before they leave. Small schools are common up here. People get used to the idea that you don't need a factory."

Finances the Key

He pointed out that "Etna and Fort Jones are at odds. Twenty or 30 years ago, they could have had land in the middle to build a school, but they didn't do it."

Said Novo, "Logic didn't bring them together;

finances are the only thing that did."

He added mournfully, "When I got my MA in secondary education at USF, they never taught us about financial crises, or closing schools down. They never told me how to do a last graduation, either, but the ceremony has to happen just like a funeral has to happen."

Funeral. It was a word repeated often Thursday evening as townspeople gathered outside the gymnasium where the commencement exercises were held. "Do you feel like you were at a funeral?" one woman asked. "No," her neighbor answered facetiously, "I feel more like a picnic!"

Judy Hammer, who works in the Siskiyou Telephone Co. offices in Fort Jones, graduated from the high school, as did her father and her husband. Her daughter is a freshman. When there was first talk of closing the school, she recalled, "nobody ever thought it would actually happen. I think they could have kept it open and waited to see what the economy does, but the school board didn't agree."

She goes to the commencement exercises most years—"between friends and family we usually have somebody (graduating)," she explained—adding that "several people said they didn't think they could handle the emotion, so they didn't come."

Carol Ballow, class of 1968, said "the town is disappointed. What bothered us most was that we had nothing to say in it. A lot of the old-timers were upset because it was just taken away from us."

Indeed, her father and mother felt so strongly about the school closing that they boycotted graduation this year. Her parents, Charles Willard, Class of 1932, and his wife Dorothy, own Willard's Store on Main Street.

"Other older people were also conspicuous by their absence," Dorothy Willard said the next day. "Marion Fowler—she and her husband gave the land the school was built on—didn't go, and Emily Duncan wasn't there either.

"We have always gone to an awful lot of the events at the high school, it's a main part of our lives," she went on. "But I doubt if we will go to Etna very much. It is a struggle to drive the extra 12 miles. This will certainly change our life style."

Dorothy Willard believes the school was "dumped," and agrees with Judy Hammer that the community "should have been given a year or two to see what we could do. We had already pledged over \$30,000 to keep programs going."

Ax to Fall

For the students, it has been uncertainty about what was going to happen, as much as anything, that has got them down. They waited months for the ax to fall. On Feb. 28, the student council wrote to the school board, "please don't prolong your decision . . . We feel that everyone involved will need as much time as possible in which to make any change happen as smoothly and effortlessly as possible. Once the commitment is made, we feel that all problems (no matter how gigantic they may seem now) will be resolvable."

But even after the decision was made, in March, uncertainties lingered. Ninth-grader Kyle Peiper and 10th-grader Erica Cardona talked about some of them. First and foremost, of course, is the question of friends.

Said Kyle, "We know people at Etna, but"

"We've no friends there," Erica finished up, adding hopefully, "the Etna people say they are really excited about getting us."

Then they are worried about whether there will be a late-afternoon bus. Kyle likes to stay after school "for the computers," while Erica was a cheerleader and starred on the track team this year. "Maybe there will be car pools for after school," she said. "Or maybe we will practice at both places, and play at both. No one really knows."

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SCHOOL CLOSING

Continued from Second Page

Senior Tonia Stephenson pointed out that next year is going to be hard on the teachers too. Three of the

school's six teachers have not yet found new jobs, and even those who have face relocation. Kellems will be

teaching in Happy Camp. 70 miles down a slow road. She

town during the week, so that her husband can stay

Novo and two other teachers will be moving to Weed.

with her part time. "I'm kicking a young man out of a

job. Would you like to be me?" she asked sadly.

plans to live in a little trailer on the Fort Jones side of

But there were differences. Ten of the 14 graduates got the chance to stand up and either give a speech or

humor or emotion.

make a presentation. Halfway through the program.

north of Mt. Shasta. Novo will "bump" the principal

For a little while, however, during the commence-

The ceremony itself was pretty much like any high

school graduation-Pomp and Circumstance played by

the school band, earnest speeches and moments of

with family and friends coming forward to take pictures

of the graduating class against the backdrop of two huge

hand-painted signs. One, in green and red, read "Fort

there, who will return to the classroom.

ment exercises, anxieties were forgotten.

everything came to a halt for a "photo opportunity,"

Meet Again."

sitters were in the audience.

Jones High, The Biggest Small High School in the

World:" the other, in blue and white (the class colors).

read, "We Must Love Old Memories: Hopefully We Will

in the place—and there were lots of them—was cooing.

crying or questioning. Presumably, all the usual baby

Meanwhile, it seemed that every baby and small child

Finally, everyone gathered outside round the flagpole

for the "little surprise" the senior class had plotted for

After the presentation of diplomas, some of Novo's neighbors (he has been saying for weeks that "we'll go out in a blaze of glory") came on stage to sing a song

called "Blaze of Glory," and then, after the benediction, the students left the platform to music from "Grease."

trumpet.

Then the American flag and the flag of the State of Stix is a Berkeley-based free-lance writer.

the town. Junior Randy Palermo played Taps on the

California were lowered to half-mast.

Prep runs a 4:21 mile Palo Alto Times, May 30, 1953 for new national mark

scholastic Federation Track and the impressive time of 1:57.1. Field Championships.

The meet was an on-againoff-again affair before it was finally decided the track at Ratscliffe Stadium was dry enough to hold it.

Bob Seaman, a lanky 17-yearold miler from Reedley, highlighted the competition with a record-shattering time of 4:21.0 minutes.

Seaman's effort eclipsed the -19-year-old U.S. standard of 4:21.2 held by Louie Zamperini state category included Ronnie 4:23.4 was set by Fernando Ledesma, competing for Compton in 1952.

Eggers, West break records at Belmont

Northern California's ace motorcycle racers, paced by San Jose's Kenny Eggers and Charley West, re-wrote their seasonal the team title with a point total speed record books last night in a top notch Belmont Speedway bike racing program.

One all-time seven-year rec-

Prep stars battered one na-|Jose) was the lone Peninsula and four state high Athletic League winner in the school records last night at track classic. The Lion junior Fresno in the California Inter-raced around his 880 event in

None of the other PAL entries landed in the money bracket. Palo Alto's Lloyd Carter ran seventh in the 440 and Lincoln's Bob Knoth finished ninth in the 220. Chuck Hightower of San Jose tied for sixth in the pole vault with a clearance of 12 feet and Frank Herrmann of Willow Glen was shut out in the broad jump.

Other record breakers in the of Torrance. The state mark of Morris of John Burroughs High. Burbank, who pole vaulted 13 feet 91, inches; a speedy 800yard relay team from Manual Don Bowden of Lincoln (San Arts High School of Los Angeles -George Hutcherson, Everett Jackson, Wallace Wade and Homer Dunn-turned in the time of 1:27.6; and Donald Armstrong, also of Manual Arts, who bettered the state mark and tied the national with a time of 18.9 seconds in qualifying for the 180-yard low hurdles.

Manual Arts High captured of 163/5. Delano was second with 12 and Jefferson of Los Angeles third with 103/5.

The results: