

Fight on for good old MA High, boys; save that apron string yell for later

So the Sequoia Union High School board went right ahead and named the new South San Mateo County plant Menlo-Atherton High School. Brother, if that isn't a case of small-town "let the public be damned" philosophy I don't know what is.

Apparently nothing was considered except politics. Local pride wouldn't allow Atherton to accept any name without Atherton in it, nor would it allow Menlo Park to accept a monicker without Menlo Park prominently displayed. And the result is a monstrosity.

Maybe you think this has nothing to do with sports, which shows just how wrong you can be. The name of a school means much—especially to youngsters of high school age.

Elinor Cogswell, Dave Wik, and others on the Times have already pointed out that the school will inevitably have its name abbreviated to MA High. There's no way out. And kids in opposing rooting sections won't be slow to take it up as a battle cry.

This in turn will arouse the animal instincts of the MA High youngsters, and it will lead to bloodshed. If you don't think so, then your memory isn't so good. Just try to think back over the years to when you were in high school. That apparently will be a large order for the members of the Sequoia board, but it would have been worth a try.

Less gross insults than that have caused after-game fist fights and even riots. If you don't think so, you must have been born at the age of 42 or some such.

Picture was framed, but not by an old master

Naturally the political angles to this bit of shenanigans don't fall into my province. The only comment I can make is in the sports field—but from that side of the picture things look more like a Dali than a Matisse or a Rembrandt.

The only policy I have, outside of trying to write this thing in English rather than gobbledegook, is to promote clean amateur competitive sports as a safe outlet for the animal passions which we all have—whether we admit it or not. So it pains me to see trusted leaders set up an extra hazard to clean sports without seeming to give any thought to the ramifications of their action.

The board made a survey on this name business. In the sampling—which may have been accurate but probably wasn't, judging from the opinions I hear—Menlo-Atherton received more votes than any of half a dozen other suggested names.

And with a great air of democratic acquiescence the board picked that name, willy nilly. It completely ignored the fact that, while Menlo-Atherton got the most votes, it received only about 15 per cent of the total. In other words, approximately 85 per cent of those voting did not want the name of Menlo-Atherton. But they got it.

If the Sequoia board planned to govern its actions by the wishes of the majority, it certainly went about it in the wrong way. The logical thing to do was to eliminate all but the top two or three names and make another survey. And you can bet the name of MA High would not have been the people's choice.

Actually the board, if it intended to play politics, should not have been content with just the name of Menlo-Atherton High School.

Like announcing trains—or calling horse races

To do a really good job of fence sitting the board would have had to pick something like Menlo-Atherton-East Palo Alto-North Palo Alto-Belle Haven & Way Points High School. Sounds more like calling a train than anything else.

With so many names from which to choose, why Menlo-Atherton? Even Burgess High would have been a good selection, although heaven knows the mayor-board president has so many things named for him now that he needs another about as much as he needs a hole in the head.

But there was Oakwood, a beautiful and fitting name that could never have caused a pitched battle in the rooting section. And Abbot High. That would have been a nice tribute to the retiring San Mateo County superintendent of schools. Or how about Hoover? There's no other full-fledged high school by that name closer than San Diego.

Then there're Lindenwood, Dumbarton, Portola, Bayview, Wilbur, Hopkins, and a host of others. Truman and Warren, too. Those names aren't all good, but all have one thing in common: they're far better than Menlo-Atherton High School.

Because Menlo-Atherton (MA or M-Ath) High School is a horrible name for a school, because it must inevitably be abbreviated to something silly. It's a terrible name. It's lousy. It stinks.

Not that it will be changed merely because the majority does not like it. Human beings don't often reverse themselves just because they meet with public disfavor. They're more likely to hold to their course harder than ever because "no so-and-so is going to tell me what to do."

But, you residents of the area to be served by the new school, if you think there's still a chance I'll be glad to forward your opinions to the board. I don't think anything will come of it, though.