

## CHAPTER VI



**M**y Senior year was the most enjoyable of the four years spent at Alhambra High School. I was getting good grades and things began coming my way. I was elected Senior Class President and chaired the student committee that chose our class rings, pins and sweaters. The rings were gold with a black onyx inset upon which sat the bold figure of a Moor soldier and the number 19 was on one side of the ring shank and number 35 was on the other side. The sweaters we chose were powder blue with a white and blue W 35 sewn on the front. Ours was the winter of '35 graduating class and the school was known as the Alhambra Moors. If you still remember your geography you may recall that Alhambra was a Moor City. That's why the architecture of the high school was Moorish.

That was the year we won the CIF football championship and we not only won every one of our games that season but were never scored upon, much to the credit of our outstanding quarterback, Orv Mohler, and a great team coached by George Hobbs who went on to become head coach at Arizona State. Orv Mohler became a star player at USC. While attending USC he took flying lessons at the old Alhambra Airport and earned his pilot license. Two years later he was flying an open cockpit biplane from Alhambra to Bakersfield when he ran into unexpected bad weather in the vicinity of Tehachapi and died when he crashed into a moun-

tain.

That football season at AHS ended on a tragic note however as someone got the idea of our team playing the USC freshman team in an exhibition game. We beat the USC frosh but lost a much liked player in the process. Bob Hart made a flying tackle on a USC ball carrier and broke his neck when he hit the other guy who was bigger than him. Bob Hart died before they could get him to the hospital and his body lay in state in a funeral home across the street from the high school. They let all the kids out one day, a class at a time, so they could file past the open casket. It was pretty horrible and traumatic for many of the younger students. Flying tackles were later outlawed

South Pasadena High was our arch rival and we always played against them on Thanksgiving day. They were the most attended of all our games and there were occasional brawls between students of the two schools. It finally reached the point where they were etching their school initials in lye on each others school lawns. Administrators, realizing things could really get out of hand, decided to stop all future games between the two schools. After those games we would go to Grandpa and Grandma Bahn's house for Thanksgiving dinner. Following dinner, while the ladies cleaned up, the men would congregate in the living room to rehash the game and do a little Sunday morning quarterbacking.

Our Senior class had several fun outings during that last year at the school. One was a train trip to the Salton Sea. Back then the telephone poles, that ran along side the railroad track before the Colorado River flood inundated the area, were still sticking up about four feet above the water. A new rail track had been laid along the shore and that is where our train stopped. We all got out to look at the sea and listen to a lecture by one of the teachers on how the sea was formed. Some of the guys stripped buck naked and swam out to the phone poles where they climbed up onto the cross bars and posed for the girls lining the shore who were

screaming with delight and egging the boys on. It got a little raunchy and the teachers told the boys to get off the poles, swim back to shore and put their clothes on. Things got pretty wild on the trip home and during the ensuing horseplay some damage to the passenger cars occurred. That was the last train outing as the Southern Pacific Railroad executives took a dim view of the way the students treated their train.

Another outing was the unofficial, but traditional, "Ditch Day" when the whole class cut school. It was an accepted practice and plans were made in advance for the event. It was the dead of winter and we all motored up to Mount Baldy to play in the snow. There were some wild snow ball fights and kids got thrown into snow drifts but fortunately there were no casualties other than some of the guys who got quite drunk on liquor they managed to smuggle to Mt. Baldy.

My folks arranged a party for the senior orchestra at our house and most of the members came. They were all over the place, upstairs in the rec. room, in and out of the house and all over the yard having the time of their lives. Some of them got into the bunk house and discovered our whiskey bottle collection. One of them, Bob Ovington an oboe player, found our bottles of drop-pings and took several large gulps of the potent contents. He began choking and then went out in the yard and threw up. He was sick for the rest of the evening and none of the others cared to sample the stuff.

I had become pretty good at playing the trombone by this time and had memorized the tune "One Alone" from the "Desert Song." I was playing it one day in the music room at school while waiting for orchestra practice. Pop Ulmer heard it and was quite impressed. We had a concert coming up the next month and he decided to work my solo with orchestra accompaniment into the performance. So for the next month we practiced that number until we had it perfected. Mom was so excited about it that she bought tickets for a lot of her friends so they could attend.

The concert took place in the high school auditorium and the place was packed. A lot of our family friends and relatives were in the audience. As mentioned earlier, the school was of Moorish architecture, and the ceiling of the auditorium was covered in mosaic tiles. The printed program showed that my solo would be played midway in the concert just before the intermission. When that point in the program was reached, the house lights were dimmed, I stood up and a blinding white spotlight was aimed on me. I could not see the audience so I looked up at the ceiling which proved to be a fatal mistake. I was counting the tiles and becoming hypnotized by the designs as I played along from memory. All of a sudden I came to and did not know where I was in the musical score. I was totally lost and things began to deteriorate at a rapid pace. Pop Ulmer, realizing what was happening, stopped the orchestra and turning to the audience said, "I think Bill got lost somewhere along the line so we are going to start over." With that we went back to the beginning and a very red faced trombonist flawlessly played the most perfect solo of his life. Like they say, "If you fall off a horse, get right back on." My folks were very embarrassed and I was demoralized for the rest of the evening.

That was the last time I ever played my trombone and sold it shortly thereafter keeping only the sterling silver mouth piece that had been custom made to fit my receding chin and under bite. Our Senior class play was "Growing Pains" which was a popular script at the time. I was cast in a supporting role and the leading role was played by a girl named Virginia Bosch who was a member of my mother's Sunday School class and who I first came to know in the first grade at Ramona Grammar School. At that time she was a gangling dark-haired little girl with knocked knees whose mother had her taking dancing lessons. She used to wear her dancing shoes to school which were black pumps with big black bows on them. I never paid her much attention during grammar school but she would often be at our

house working with Mom on some Sunday school project when I got home. She was also in our eighth grade play and an outstanding student.

Two weeks after our Senior play I received a postcard from a talent search outfit in Hollywood saying I had been spotted in the play and they wanted to set up an appointment with me. Mom called them and got an appointment for a Saturday afternoon and became very excited. She took me out and bought me a maroon shirt with white pin stripes and a button down collar. To this she added a white necktie, black slacks and a gray jacket. I guess I looked real "Hollywood." During the trip to my appointment, with Pop driving, Mom kept lecturing me on how I could be in the movies and still live a normal life, that I did not have to start smoking and drinking and become debauched like so many of the movie actors were in those days.

At the appointed hour we arrived at a building on Hollywood Boulevard and went up to the second floor to find a talent office. The building was rather run down inside and the halls could have used more lighting. We found the room number which was painted on the florentine glass in the top half of the door. We knocked and nothing happened so we opened the door and entered just in time to see a pudgy little bald headed guy with dark rimmed glasses scraping the crumbs from his brown bag lunch off his desk. He did not bother to introduce himself but launched directly into the subject at hand. "Let me see you act," he said as he took a business card from his pocket and folded it into a tent and set it on his desk.

"Here's the scene," he said, "the folded card is your mother laying dead on the ground because you left a garden rake against the house with the prongs facing up and when your mother stepped on them the handle flew up and hit her in the head killing her. Now show me some emotion." Well I felt silly as hell as I got down on one knee by the desk and began wailing over that dumb card and emoting for all I was worth. I must have

been good because Mom burst out crying, but evidently not good enough for the fat guy because he thanked us and said I would be hearing from him, which I never did. The next week I mentioned this to one of the other kids that was in the play and found out everyone in the cast had received an identical postcard. So much for the would be movie star!

When the time came for our Senior Prom I had to find a date among the girls in our class because you could not take a lower grade student to the Prom. That ruled out Betty Bettinger who I was still dating at the time. Out of desperation I asked Virginia Bosch, who had become sort of a family friend and whom I felt comfortable with, to go to the Prom with me. She accepted my invitation immediately which should have been a warning to me. We had a good time at the Prom and afterwards with three other couples went to the Biltmore Bowl where Jimmy Greer and his band were playing. The class had chosen the Biltmore as the post prom destination so most of the class was there. The table service left a lot to be desired as the hotel crew did not take kindly to high school kids. As our waiter presented the bill he had the nerve to say, "I hope you will give me a better tip than the kids at that other table." This rubbed us the wrong way so we left him a tip of fifteen cents. I think the total bill for our table was about \$60!

I had made the mistake of getting Virginia a gardenia corsage and experienced the same headache again as the scent made me nauseous. Nothing much happened that night and I had her home and to the front door at the appointed hour. Frankly I was a bit afraid of her dad.

During the last couple of months prior to graduation I had come down with the flu which left me with a bad cough and I was experiencing night sweats. The condition continued and I was running a slight fever most of the time. After graduation, Virginia enrolled in the Sawyer Business School in Los Angeles and I got ready to enroll in college where I planned to major in

aeronautical engineering, but my failing health interfered with those plans.

Things finally got so bad that I could not function properly and had to stay in bed. Mom and Pop became worried and called in a doctor who, after examining me, had a meeting with my folks that ended up with Mom crying and Pop wearing a concerned look on his face. They then got up the courage to tell me that I had tuberculosis and would either have to go into a sanitarium or stay in bed at home for a year or more. I elected the latter and Mom became my untiring nurse for the duration of my cure.

The routine consisted of bed rest, lots of high protein food, medication, sun baths and a lot of love from my mother.

# Alhambra City High School

Alhambra, California



Be it known that William Allen Harker  
has completed Satisfactorily the Course of Study prescribed for  
Graduation from this High School and is therefore awarded this Diploma.



In Witness whereof we have affixed our signatures this seventh  
day of February in the year One thousand nine  
hundred and thirty five at Alhambra, California

W. M. W. W. W.

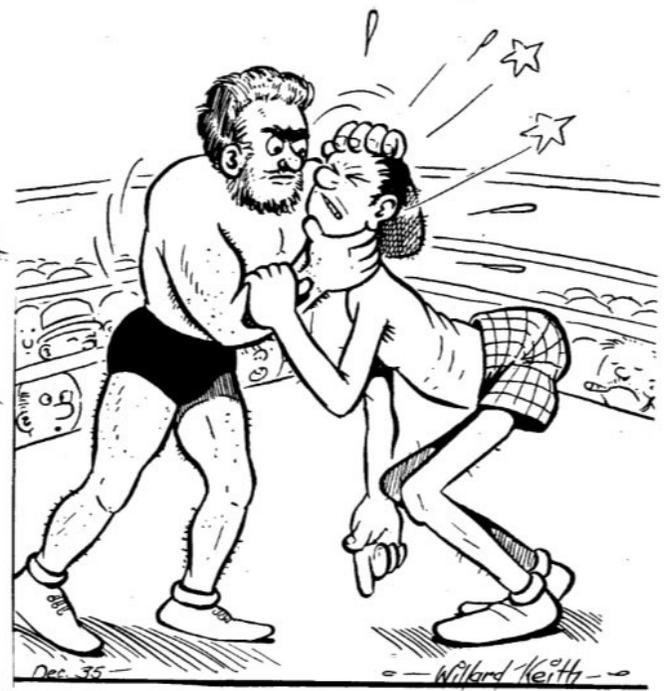
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Principal of High School

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Superintendent of Schools

\_\_\_\_\_  
President Board of Education

- FIGHTING BILL vs. SACKIE SAM -

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My boyhood friend Ted Dearing, right and examples



Cast of our High School Senior Play at a party in Rec Room above the two story garage in Alhambra. I am second from right in back row and Virginia is at right end standing.

# The Senior Class of W-'35

PRESENTS

## “BACKSTAGE”

Director, JACK RANDALL

### CAST

Castwell (Director)	Howard Portenstien
Assistant Director	Bill Harker
Script Girl	Geneva Smith
Mr. Kent (Owner of the Show)	Dean Brackenbury
Press Agent	Frank Harriman
Reporters	{ Don Higgins Jimmie Lindsay
Joe (Piano Player)	Glenn Peters
First Chorus Girl	Henriette von Buelow
Second Chorus Girl	Marjorie French
Mimi (Castwell's Wife)	Virginia Bosch
Jane Jones (Cousin from Kansas)	Dorothy Harding
Dionne LaMar (Temperamental Actress)	Muriel Rash
Her Maid	Marion Payne
Hortense	Frieda Patrick
Hairdresser	Eva Faye Harwick

### ACTS

Tom and Dick (Duet)	{ John Prince Ralph Hodge
Fern and Wesley (Continental)	{ Fern Smith Wesley Haworth
Louise (Solo)	Louise Magill
Stage Crew Stooges:	Leader, Jack Randall Dick Farrell, Chuck Ary, Eddie Hanson
Violin Solo	Andy Bertolino
Chorus:	Fern Smith, Frieda Patrick, Henriette von Buelow Betty Ray, Janet Coakley, Virginia Potts Jeanne Reppert, Dorothy Doring
Cab Calloway	Frank Ciarelli
Trio: (Class Song)	{ Peggy McBride Wadine Siler Muriel Rash

### STAGE CREW

Manager, Phil Chambers  
Albert Strinz, Dent White, Jack Hill, Jack Poole

### SENIOR CLASS ORCHESTRA

Directed by "Pop" Ulmer

Charles Anderson	Bill Harker	Fahy Smith
Andy Bertolino	Alma Marion Hull	Allan Stark
Doris Clark	Marshall La Cour	Terry Stirling
Jay Crawford	Glenn Peters	Anne Wallace

Affixing of Class Tablet - - - Bill Harker

# Program

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## BACCALAUREATE SERVICE IN HONOR OF THE WINTER CLASS OF NINETEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIVE OF THE ALHAMBRA CITY HIGH SCHOOL

The Reverend W. W. Kaler, Presiding

PROCESSIONAL HYMN—"Lead On O King Eternal" No. 408  
(The audience will rise when the choir enters and remain  
standing until after the Invocation.)

THE INVOCATION                      The Reverend Edward Wright

THE ANTHEM—"Gloria" from the Twelfth Mass              Mozart  
The Holy Trinity Episcopal Church Choir  
Dale Hamilton Evans, Director and Organist

THE SCRIPTURE LESSON—              The Reverend N. K. Tully

THE PRAYER                              The Reverend Holland F. Burr

A CONTRALTO SOLO—"Gloria"                              Peccia  
Miss June Spear, Soloist

THE BACCALAUREATE SERMON—"The Value of a Spiritual  
Perspective"                      The Reverend Theodore R. Leen

THE BENEDICTION                      The Reverend H. W. Cole

THE POSTLUDE                          Dale Hamilton Evans, Organist

### Officers and Class Advisor

Winter Class of 1935

PRESIDENT	William A. Harker
VICE-PRESIDENT	Jack A. Randall
SECRETARY	James R. Lindsay
TREASURER	Richard S. Hore
CLASS ADVISOR	Ruth H. McNeill