

Twenty-Seven IFs in Life On My Path to Becoming a Teacher Freshman Year – A Slow Start and IFs Is Waiting

Before School Started

Before the start of school, I met with Mrs. Henry, the woman who was to be my Guidance Councilor for the next four years. I told Mrs. Henry that I planned to go to Stanford. She then wrote out a four-year plan for the courses I would need to take to reach my goal.

High school was very different back then. There were no advance placement classes and the scene in the movie Grease where the boys are working on their car in a body-shop could have been shot at most high schools at that time. Menlo-Atherton had an auto shop, a woodworking shop and various home-making classes. The yearbook from my Freshman year even had a picture a clothes making class. Students taking the auto shop classes at M-A were referred to as Greasers. It was not a derogatory term. It was viewed no differently than referring to athletes as Jocks.

High school courses underwent major changes after the launch of Sputnik by the Russians in October of 1957. My High school class graduated in June of 1957, so all the educational changes that came about after Sputnik's launch had no effect on me as a student.

Each Freshman was assigned his or her own four-foot high locker in the rows and rows of lockers lining the school's halls. The lockers assigned to Freshmen had been the lockers of the recently graduated senior class. Students did not carry backpacks in those days. Our lockers were for the storage of books, jackets, lunch bags, and anything else too burdensome to carry around all day long. We traveled to our lockers between classes to drop off the book needed for one class and pickup the book for the next class. The locker, once assigned would be that student's locker for all four years in high school. Lockers each came with a student partner. Two students to every locker, with the assignment of partners done alphabetically. Robert Lorton had Lawson Lowe as his four-year partner. Lawson and I would end up going to Stanford together, as well.

New School Shyness

Menlo-Atherton High School was a new school. My brother Paul, who was now a Junior, was in the first class to have entered M-A as Freshmen. That meant the members of the current Senior class, had begun their high school careers elsewhere. Apparently that "elsewhere" came with a weird and, to me, downright offensive initiation tradition for incoming Freshman. As I entered the school building the first day of classes, I was greeted at the door by Seniors who, once they confirmed I

was a freshman, proceeded to cover my face with designs drawn on with red lipstick. I was not at all happy with this, but at least I could see I was not the only one being subjected to this absurdity, since every other Freshman within my field of vision was undergoing a similar fate. Also, when I finally made it to my first class, every Freshman's face in the room was also covered with lipstick drawings.

The incoming Freshmen all came from two different schools. Both schools were K-8 elementary schools like I had gone to for my seventh and eighth grade years. So, nearly everybody besides me had friends in the Freshman class who they had known since kindergarten. Sign-ups for Frosh-Soph football took place on the first day of school at our P.E. class. Zero friends and lipstick covered me was too shy at that point to sign up for anything. My desire to play End on a football team would have to wait a year.

My school involvement that first year consisted of my attending classes and nothing else. The index for the school yearbook for my Freshman year has only one page number by my name.



For the yearbook, the Freshman Class was photographed in alphabetical clusters. A few of my fellow "L's" are pictures above. Lawson Lowe and I are in the back row. Lawson on the far left. Me standing next to him.

A Future Swimming Pool With Its IFs Just Waiting

As I said, Menlo-Atherton High School was a new school. So new, in fact, that it was still under construction. In September of my Freshman year, construction of the school's swimming pool commenced. Its construction was not completed until half way through my Sophomore year.