

Published April 27th, 2011

Acalanes Don Recalls the Early Days

Cathy Dausman



Bud Moulthrop Photo Cathy Dausman

Bud Moulthrop is an original, at least where Acalanes High School is concerned. A member of the class of 1944, he was in the first graduating class to complete all four years on campus. Moulthrop's family lived in Orinda on acreage at the end of Dias Dorados overlooking Miner Road.

Franklin Roosevelt declared war on Japan when Moulthrop was a freshman. His school bus route ran by Orinda Country Club. He says locals nicknamed the school "The Watch Factory" because of its flat building profile. Its parking lot was unpaved.

Lamorinda was "big time horse country," says Moulthrop. "Half the roads in Lafayette were paved; the other half were sand." The boys wore Levis or khaki slacks, collared shirts and tennis shoes or cowboy boots to school. The girls wore skirts and sweaters. Student population was a modest 300; "we just about knew everybody," Moulthrop says, and "everybody got along really well." Students danced to Glen Miller music before class.

During the 1940's in Lamorinda "nobody thought about money," Moulthrop recalls. Gas was plentiful, even during rationing, because the area was agriculturally based and eligible for generous "C" ration stickers. Teens earned their drivers license at age 14 or 15. Moulthrop got a car at 16 when he paid a friend \$50 for half-ownership in a 1929 Model A. He'd get picked up at home, and the two would swap driving chores halfway to school. During lunch or breaks, those that dared would quietly push their cars off the school's gravel lot so the noise of the oversized engines starting up wouldn't give them away.

In sports, Moulthrop recalls the Acalanes High School (AHS)

swimming pool was built without copper or brass because those metals went to the war effort. The St. Mary's College men's basketball team played at the AHS' then-new gym, and the football field had lights. Moulthrop lettered in sports. He ran cross country, jumped hurdles and boxed. He had very little free time after school: "We tended Victory Gardens, kept bees and sold the combs," he says.

Pinning down Moulthrop about class work proves difficult. He remembers taking penmanship ("we had no computers"), and recalls a teacher named Joan Orr. "I don't know what she taught," he says "but she was good looking!"

Thoughts of impending high school graduation brought a dose of reality. Moulthrop remembers thinking "I gotta go to work?" And work he did -as a Navy Petty Officer late in WW II and an Army Supply Officer during the Korean conflict. He graduated from U.C. Berkeley in 1950 and married in 1951. He'll celebrate his 60th wedding anniversary this year. After a work stint in Southern California in the early 1950's, Moulthrop returned to the East Bay, and has settled less than two miles from his alma mater.

Moulthrop hasn't attended a class reunion since 1984 but says his classmates had "lots of pride" in Acalanes High School. It's apparent that he still does.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA