

Sept. 19, 2009

The Rise & Fall of Poly

Dear Editors,

First I applaud and thank you for the great effort you make to keep the memory of Polytechnic High School alive. I know that it is not easy. However, I must take exception to parts of the Polytechnic History 101 section, especially part 2. I attended Poly during its last two years, beginning in the fall of 1969 through fall of 1971 prior to transferring to Balboa High School when it was determined that the school would be closed.

Although the enrollment was abysmally low and the school was treated as an unwanted stepchild by SFUSD, the school spirit remained high and we were proud to attend. I never saw or heard of any "gangs charging people to use the restrooms." and though there were unsavory characters I doubt that there were more at Poly than any other high school. The death of the teacher and coed was determined to have been accidental. They were not "killed", they died, at home, far from Poly.

Was there ignorance enough on both sides during those turbulent times. Much of it had to do with the emergence of the civil rights movement, and the ensuing so-called Black Power movement. Young people too immature to fully grasp all of the complexities of changing social relations acted like the children they were. On the other hand many of the teachers who choose to remain at Poly were also unprepared, uneasy and ill-equipped to respond.

Personally, I never felt threatened or afraid. In fact graduating from Horace Mann Jr. High, I deliberately choose to go to Poly over Mission or Lowell High schools. I have never regretted the choice. I learned more from my two years at Poly than I would have at either of these two schools. I left when it became clear that no one was really concerned about the futures of the African American students. This was borne out by the ridiculous curriculum that was adapted in its final year. That is the truth about the fall. It was allowed to fail. I fear that too much of the blame in the article is placed on those who attended Poly, instead of being victims of a society that ultimately decided to sacrifice them to the gods of indifference.

Rick Moss

(Would have been Poly High Class of 1972)

EDITOR: The two part story, "The Rise & Fall of Poly", was written 12 years after Poly had been closed. We have no idea of how or where the author collected his information or if that person even attended Poly. Our sincere thanks to Rick Moss for his "I was there" glimpse into the final years of Poly.