

Transcript for Centennial Conversations

Podcast #5

1

00:00:04,130 --> 00:00:06,650

Doug Achterman (DA): Welcome back to Centennial Conversations, a series

2

00:00:06,650 --> 00:00:08,930

of podcasts about the first 100 years of Gavilan

3

00:00:08,930 --> 00:00:11,210

College. I'm Doug Achterman, head librarian and

4

00:00:11,210 --> 00:00:13,310

we're here with history instructor Leah Halper,

5

00:00:13,610 --> 00:00:15,830

who just completed- to Dream On Your Behalf, A

6

00:00:15,830 --> 00:00:18,650

History of Gavilan College. When Dana was last

7

00:00:18,650 --> 00:00:21,230

here, you talked about the 1940s, the war years,

8

00:00:21,230 --> 00:00:23,480

and the attendant challenges the college had in

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00:00:23,480 --> 00:00:26,810

surviving low enrollment. The 50s were really boom

10

00:00:26,810 --> 00:00:29,300
years, both in terms of population and the economy,

11
00:00:29,660 --> 00:00:31,880
but these years at San Benito Junior College were

12
00:00:31,880 --> 00:00:37,880
turbulent. It survived three, three serious crises,

13
00:00:37,880 --> 00:00:41,390
and then and then a fatal blow. It had a fatal

14
00:00:41,390 --> 00:00:43,940
blow. Can you talk about this? Leah Halper (LH): Yes. And thank you

15
00:00:43,940 --> 00:00:46,460
for having me in general to to talk about Gavilan

16
00:00:46,460 --> 00:00:50,330
history. So in the 50s, we had discussed last time

17
00:00:50,330 --> 00:00:52,610
that there was a fire which attacked the physical

18
00:00:52,610 --> 00:00:56,090
structure, and then Hartnell College down the road

19
00:00:56,090 --> 00:00:59,270
tried repeatedly to take over the college. I guess

20
00:00:59,270 --> 00:01:03,230
they wanted its tax base and the college fought

21

00:01:03,230 --> 00:01:06,260
that off, and continued to be San Benito Junior

22
00:01:06,260 --> 00:01:09,500
College, its own independent entity entity, and

23
00:01:09,500 --> 00:01:12,410
then in the late 50s, there was an accreditation

24
00:01:12,410 --> 00:01:15,230
failure, which, you know, strikes at the very

25
00:01:15,230 --> 00:01:17,150
roots of what a college does. If you can't pass

26
00:01:17,150 --> 00:01:19,970
your accreditation, your students go away, and

27
00:01:19,970 --> 00:01:23,900
remarkably, the college overcame all three of

28
00:01:23,900 --> 00:01:28,730
these really serious threats, but number four was

29
00:01:28,730 --> 00:01:32,510
impossible to overcome. In the early 1960s, the

30
00:01:32,510 --> 00:01:35,090
state of California changed its funding formula

31
00:01:35,090 --> 00:01:37,730
and decided that it didn't want to support really

32

00:01:37,730 --> 00:01:40,700
small local colleges just like San Benito College,

33
00:01:41,000 --> 00:01:43,850
and they wanted bigger districts with larger

34
00:01:43,850 --> 00:01:46,490
population bases. I guess they figured there were

35
00:01:46,490 --> 00:01:48,470
economies of scale, and improvements they could

36
00:01:48,470 --> 00:01:51,200
have. So they let the college know that it's

37
00:01:51,200 --> 00:01:55,040
spring 1963 semester would be its last and that

38
00:01:55,040 --> 00:01:57,980
would be the last graduating class. DA: So what

39
00:01:57,980 --> 00:02:01,250
options did the college officials have? LH: They

40
00:02:01,250 --> 00:02:04,970
weren't great options. They could shut down which

41
00:02:04,970 --> 00:02:07,640
people locally really didn't want, and then that

42
00:02:07,640 --> 00:02:09,740
would also mean insult to injury. This is what

43

00:02:09,740 --> 00:02:11,630
people in Hollister really hated. They'd have to

44
00:02:11,630 --> 00:02:15,470
pay to send their local students to another

45
00:02:15,470 --> 00:02:18,170
college like Hartnell, which by now is like the

46
00:02:18,170 --> 00:02:20,810
devil in San Benito County. You know, they

47
00:02:20,870 --> 00:02:23,450
mentioned Hartnell in the 1950s and 60s and

48
00:02:23,450 --> 00:02:27,830
people's, you know, ears kind of curl and, you

49
00:02:27,830 --> 00:02:31,400
know, maybe MPC, et cetera. So so nobody wanted

50
00:02:31,400 --> 00:02:33,350
to do that. It was more expensive than actually

51
00:02:33,350 --> 00:02:36,020
having a college, and it's an anathema, you know, to

52
00:02:36,020 --> 00:02:39,050
send your your students somewhere else they could

53
00:02:39,050 --> 00:02:42,500
join Hartnell voluntarily. Need I explain that

54

00:02:42,500 --> 00:02:45,800
that was not a good option. So that never flew,

55
00:02:46,190 --> 00:02:48,980
and then actually, you know, there were some very

56
00:02:48,980 --> 00:02:53,060
far sighted college officials since 1958 or so.

57
00:02:53,360 --> 00:02:55,580
They had kind of seen the handwriting on the wall.

58
00:02:55,580 --> 00:02:57,920
It was kind of like the Wild West in California.

59
00:02:58,160 --> 00:03:00,500
Community college districts would set themselves

60
00:03:00,500 --> 00:03:04,340
up, and then by the late 50s, it was kind of a

61
00:03:04,340 --> 00:03:07,610
situation where any town or city that wasn't part

62
00:03:07,610 --> 00:03:10,610
of a district, people were kind of looking to snap

63
00:03:10,610 --> 00:03:13,430
it up because it had tax revenues and it would

64
00:03:13,430 --> 00:03:17,040
increase the student population base. So the San

65

00:03:17,090 --> 00:03:19,490

Benito College officials were already kind of

66

00:03:19,490 --> 00:03:21,800

thinking maybe they could have a tri county

67

00:03:21,800 --> 00:03:25,370

college with with Watsonville and and Gilroy, and

68

00:03:25,370 --> 00:03:27,950

then in 1959, Cabrillo College snapped up

69

00:03:27,950 --> 00:03:31,730

Wilsonville. So all that was left was Gilroy. So

70

00:03:31,730 --> 00:03:34,730

this was really the only option, and they saw this.

71

00:03:34,730 --> 00:03:38,240

Ralph Schroeder said that if, you know, we're

72

00:03:38,240 --> 00:03:40,130

going to go this route, and that's what he wanted

73

00:03:40,130 --> 00:03:42,890

to start a whole new district that we had to have

74

00:03:42,890 --> 00:03:46,070

Gilroy. Morgan Hill could join or not, but we had

75

00:03:46,070 --> 00:03:48,350

to have Gilroy to do that. DY: So you mentioned

76

00:03:48,350 --> 00:03:51,290

Ralph Schroeder. He's sort of a larger than life

77

00:03:51,290 --> 00:03:53,450

figure in the history of the college. Can you say

78

00:03:53,450 --> 00:03:57,920

a little bit more about him? Who is he? LH: I just

79

00:03:57,920 --> 00:04:01,790

felt so honored to kind of get to know this

80

00:04:01,790 --> 00:04:08,630

remarkable person with with quirks. He was a guy

81

00:04:08,630 --> 00:04:10,850

from Oakland. His grandfather, actually, Kent

82

00:04:10,850 --> 00:04:14,270

Child tells us, was a pretty important California

83

00:04:14,270 --> 00:04:17,270

impressionist painter. So Ralph was somewhat

84

00:04:17,270 --> 00:04:19,760

artistic. Kent says he was a pretty good painter

85

00:04:19,760 --> 00:04:22,400

himself. He grew up in Oakland. He went to U.C.

86

00:04:22,400 --> 00:04:25,100

Berkeley. He majored in math and physics,

87

00:04:25,310 --> 00:04:27,920
got out in 1937 and taught in the Central Valley

88
00:04:27,920 --> 00:04:30,290
for a few years, and then he was mobilized. He

89
00:04:30,290 --> 00:04:32,960
spent three and a half years in the Pacific

90
00:04:32,960 --> 00:04:35,240
Theater in World War II, which, I tell you, must

91
00:04:35,240 --> 00:04:39,140
have been a hell of a crucible, and, you know, a

92
00:04:39,140 --> 00:04:42,260
lot of the early teachers and administrators

93
00:04:42,260 --> 00:04:44,990
actually were World War II vets, which I think

94
00:04:44,990 --> 00:04:47,510
might explain some of the toughness that they

95
00:04:47,510 --> 00:04:51,050
brought to the job of putting together a college.

96
00:04:51,230 --> 00:04:54,240
It wasn't easy, but it must have seemed easy then,

97
00:04:54,290 --> 00:04:56,690
you know, compared to what they had done. He

98

00:04:56,690 --> 00:04:59,990
married Catherine Hudner, who owned a fair amount

99
00:04:59,990 --> 00:05:03,300
of local ranch land in San Benito County, and they

100
00:05:03,300 --> 00:05:05,640
set themselves up on a cattle ranch, Hereford

101
00:05:05,640 --> 00:05:09,900
cattle, 2800 acres, huge cattle ranch, and that

102
00:05:09,900 --> 00:05:11,940
went on for about four years, and then he threw in

103
00:05:11,940 --> 00:05:14,550
the towel and came to teach at San Benito High

104
00:05:14,550 --> 00:05:20,970
School. He taught math in 1951, and as- I guess he

105
00:05:20,970 --> 00:05:23,610
was there, he was also teaching at the college. He

106
00:05:23,610 --> 00:05:26,700
went on to earn a doctorate in, I think, college

107
00:05:26,700 --> 00:05:31,050
administration in 1961. So he was a brilliant,

108
00:05:31,290 --> 00:05:36,270
brilliant hand with money and finances. He was

109

00:05:36,300 --> 00:05:39,930
absolutely dedicated to the college. He was very

110
00:05:39,930 --> 00:05:43,080
good at figuring out kind of college structure. He

111
00:05:43,080 --> 00:05:45,510
was friendly to the arts. He was friendly to

112
00:05:45,510 --> 00:05:49,770
athletics and sports. He made very good hiring

113
00:05:49,770 --> 00:05:52,740
decisions. He was just the right person at the

114
00:05:52,740 --> 00:05:56,100
right time, and they actually hired him during the

115
00:05:56,100 --> 00:05:58,110
whole crisis where Hartnell was trying to take

116
00:05:58,110 --> 00:06:01,500
things over, and he came in punching at the very

117
00:06:01,500 --> 00:06:03,930
first meeting. They had barely voted. OK, you know,

118
00:06:03,930 --> 00:06:05,610
he's going to become the director of the college.

119
00:06:05,850 --> 00:06:08,610
He said, I'm tired of a defeatist attitude and I'm

120

00:06:08,610 --> 00:06:10,590
going to tell you I need money. If you want me to

121
00:06:10,590 --> 00:06:12,900
do this, I'm not going to accept, you know, second

122
00:06:12,900 --> 00:06:15,660
class. He he read them the riot act and they you

123
00:06:15,660 --> 00:06:18,030
know, they handed the money over for for many

124
00:06:18,030 --> 00:06:20,910
years. The money from the state that was intended

125
00:06:20,910 --> 00:06:23,190
for the college had been used by the high school,

126
00:06:23,640 --> 00:06:25,950
and Ralph Schroeder knew this very well, and he

127
00:06:25,950 --> 00:06:28,020
told them, you're not going to do this anymore,

128
00:06:28,020 --> 00:06:30,180
and and he was absolutely right. If there's going

129
00:06:30,180 --> 00:06:33,740
to be a college, they needed to fund it. DA: So who

130
00:06:33,740 --> 00:06:36,290
else besides Ralph Schroeder and- were the sort of

131

00:06:36,290 --> 00:06:39,590
key figures in this part of the history, then? LH: What

132
00:06:39,590 --> 00:06:44,930
a cast of characters. There was a charter board

133
00:06:44,930 --> 00:06:47,960
for the new college, and I am going to kind of

134
00:06:47,960 --> 00:06:50,120
describe some of them. This is this is information

135
00:06:50,120 --> 00:06:53,810
that Kent Child actually personally had because he

136
00:06:53,810 --> 00:06:56,360
knew some of these people. They were pretty shrewd

137
00:06:56,360 --> 00:06:59,840
salt of the Earth, well educated guys for the most

138
00:06:59,840 --> 00:07:03,860
part. One woman- George Thomas, was a rancher. He

139
00:07:03,860 --> 00:07:05,930
served for many years. He kind of saw himself as

140
00:07:05,930 --> 00:07:09,800
the fiscal watchdog for the college, and he in the

141
00:07:09,800 --> 00:07:12,560
early days, every every warrant was reviewed by

142

00:07:12,560 --> 00:07:14,480
the board and they had to pass a motion to pay the

143
00:07:14,480 --> 00:07:18,080
bills. He always voted no, no matter what the bills

144
00:07:18,080 --> 00:07:21,170
were, just as Kent says, George, just to be George.

145
00:07:21,180 --> 00:07:23,210
I guess he didn't want the college to spend any

146
00:07:23,210 --> 00:07:25,610
money because that's how he voted. So the other

147
00:07:25,610 --> 00:07:27,470
San Benito County trustees, by the way, they

148
00:07:27,470 --> 00:07:31,730
had three on a board of seven so that they and

149
00:07:31,730 --> 00:07:34,340
people in Hollister could feel that they still had

150
00:07:34,340 --> 00:07:37,490
kind of a controlling interest in the board was

151
00:07:37,700 --> 00:07:40,820
Dr. Norman Currie, who is a physician, and Howard

152
00:07:40,820 --> 00:07:44,090
Harris, who was a geologist who lived on a ranch

153

00:07:44,090 --> 00:07:48,170
in Cienaga Valley. Then from Gilroy was Ellis

154
00:07:48,170 --> 00:07:50,960
Bhogle and then the chair of the board. The

155
00:07:50,960 --> 00:07:54,380
charter chair was Bruce Jacobs from Gilroy and the

156
00:07:54,380 --> 00:07:57,260
Morgan Hill representatives were Dr. Wolfgang

157
00:07:57,260 --> 00:08:01,010
Titus and Bonnie Simonson, who was the only woman

158
00:08:01,010 --> 00:08:03,230
on the board of trustees in the 60s and 70s,

159
00:08:03,440 --> 00:08:05,720
though by no means the first. There were women on

160
00:08:05,720 --> 00:08:08,120
the boards, as far as I can tell, pretty much all

161
00:08:08,120 --> 00:08:11,480
along. So that's that's the board members, but

162
00:08:11,870 --> 00:08:16,040
they wisely, immediately set up a whole other kind

163
00:08:16,040 --> 00:08:18,350
of parallel structure that they all participated

164

00:08:18,350 --> 00:08:21,500

in. They put together four committees, advisory

165

00:08:21,500 --> 00:08:25,970

committees. One was on education, one was on

166

00:08:25,970 --> 00:08:29,330

building costs and finances. One was on promoting

167

00:08:29,330 --> 00:08:31,550

the bond measure that they had to have in order to

168

00:08:31,550 --> 00:08:34,070

fund all this, and one was on landscaping. Those

169

00:08:34,070 --> 00:08:36,680

were kind of their priorities. DA: hmm. hmm. LH: So they involved

170

00:08:36,950 --> 00:08:39,770

more than 50 members of the public, lots of people

171

00:08:39,920 --> 00:08:42,710

from all three communities, which is the laying

172

00:08:42,710 --> 00:08:45,200

the groundwork so that people can get to know each

173

00:08:45,200 --> 00:08:47,610

other and collaborate. I think they didn't. I mean,

174

00:08:47,610 --> 00:08:49,880

these these towns are silos, really. They don't

175

00:08:49,880 --> 00:08:52,550
communicate much. So the college was a way of

176
00:08:52,550 --> 00:08:54,890
bringing people together that was new and

177
00:08:54,890 --> 00:08:57,920
different. One last thing I want to say. I kind of

178
00:08:57,920 --> 00:09:00,590
made a reference to George Thomas and what a

179
00:09:00,590 --> 00:09:03,080
tightwad he was. He wouldn't approve any spending,

180
00:09:03,290 --> 00:09:06,620
but the whole board I mean, Kent Child gave an example,

181
00:09:06,620 --> 00:09:10,190
In 1967, the district found itself with some extra

182
00:09:10,190 --> 00:09:12,620
money. There had been a five cent tax on community

183
00:09:12,620 --> 00:09:16,280
services. So, you know, a prudent board would

184
00:09:16,280 --> 00:09:19,430
pocket that money and use it as a hedge against

185
00:09:19,430 --> 00:09:24,290
trouble later, but this board voted to give one

186

00:09:24,290 --> 00:09:28,190
point five cents back to the taxpayer so that they

187
00:09:28,190 --> 00:09:30,110
could you know, they have this sense of

188
00:09:30,110 --> 00:09:32,750
responsibility for pennies and dollars, and was the

189
00:09:32,750 --> 00:09:34,610
right thing to do, and that's what they would want

190
00:09:34,610 --> 00:09:36,740
as local ranchers and farmers. So that's what they

191
00:09:36,740 --> 00:09:41,090
did. They were very, very fiscally prudent. DA: That

192
00:09:41,150 --> 00:09:47,630
tension between the, the conservative rancher salt

193
00:09:47,630 --> 00:09:49,940
of the Earth character that you describe that I

194
00:09:49,940 --> 00:09:52,010
know well from San Benito County, having

195
00:09:52,010 --> 00:09:55,730
taught there for twenty years, is such- it's such

196
00:09:55,730 --> 00:09:59,000
an unusual place because there is this real strong

197

00:09:59,000 --> 00:10:02,780
progressive streak as well that comes from a real

198
00:10:02,780 --> 00:10:08,210
value for education and for, and for a social

199
00:10:08,210 --> 00:10:11,420
awareness, and so I just I just that tension has

200
00:10:11,420 --> 00:10:13,700
always been kind of an interesting thing to me

201
00:10:13,700 --> 00:10:17,270
about about that county. LH: I, I think I think it's

202
00:10:17,270 --> 00:10:19,460
true. There has always been kind of a progressive

203
00:10:19,460 --> 00:10:21,500
group, and I'm pretty sure they were among the

204
00:10:21,500 --> 00:10:23,810
people who were the first officials of the college

205
00:10:23,810 --> 00:10:26,960
in the 1920s, but, but I also want to say I have to

206
00:10:26,960 --> 00:10:28,760
say, after talking to some of these farmers and

207
00:10:28,760 --> 00:10:31,070
ranchers dyed in the wool conservative, you know,

208

00:10:31,070 --> 00:10:34,370
really kind of old school conservative, they are

209
00:10:34,370 --> 00:10:37,490
committed to a college in their community. They

210
00:10:37,490 --> 00:10:39,890
really believe in it. They see the value of it.

211
00:10:39,920 --> 00:10:42,800
They talk about the time that they spent there. So

212
00:10:43,280 --> 00:10:46,490
it wasn't a hard sell somehow, and I can't really

213
00:10:46,490 --> 00:10:48,770
explain that because in other communities, people

214
00:10:48,770 --> 00:10:53,800
were not so supportive. DA: Mm hmm. So what, what are, what are

215
00:10:53,800 --> 00:10:57,460
the challenges did they face then in trying to

216
00:10:57,460 --> 00:11:00,460
create a college in the early 1960s? What all went

217
00:11:00,460 --> 00:11:03,220
into doing that? LH: Well, the first issue was money.

218
00:11:03,250 --> 00:11:05,380
I mean, they got some money from the state, but

219

00:11:05,410 --> 00:11:07,610
they basically had to raise a lot of money. They

220
00:11:07,630 --> 00:11:10,210
they knew that they needed a site and they needed

221
00:11:10,210 --> 00:11:12,520
a site that everybody would be able to drive to.

222
00:11:12,530 --> 00:11:15,460
So it couldn't probably really be in San Benito

223
00:11:15,460 --> 00:11:18,160
County. It would need to be in very southern Santa

224
00:11:18,160 --> 00:11:20,170
Clara County because that would bring them Morgan

225
00:11:20,170 --> 00:11:22,420
Hill people. So that's going to take a lot of

226
00:11:22,420 --> 00:11:24,820
money. So they got a bond measure going, and in

227
00:11:24,820 --> 00:11:28,630
fact, it was a cause for much celebration. When

228
00:11:28,630 --> 00:11:31,090
the bond measure went to the voters in March of

229
00:11:31,090 --> 00:11:34,360
1964, they must have been jubilant because they

230

00:11:34,360 --> 00:11:37,120
needed two thirds to pass and they got eighty four

231
00:11:37,120 --> 00:11:40,960
point nine percent, which is just a tidal wave of

232
00:11:40,960 --> 00:11:43,360
support. I mean, and again, you know, it's you

233
00:11:43,360 --> 00:11:45,670
look at that and you think, well, good for the

234
00:11:45,670 --> 00:11:50,050
people of California to see how important higher

235
00:11:50,050 --> 00:11:52,510
education is. So anyway, so the money was one

236
00:11:52,510 --> 00:11:55,300
thing then they had to find a site and keep the

237
00:11:55,300 --> 00:11:58,870
college going while the board frantically looked

238
00:11:58,870 --> 00:12:03,160
for a permanent site, and they chose the Hollister

239
00:12:03,160 --> 00:12:07,450
Naval Air Station, which is also commonly referred

240
00:12:07,450 --> 00:12:11,110
locally to as the Hollister Airport, a World War

241

00:12:11,110 --> 00:12:14,290

ll installation. That was a mess. There was

242

00:12:14,290 --> 00:12:16,630

asbestos, there was dust everywhere, which had

243

00:12:16,630 --> 00:12:19,510

been, you know, abandoned for a while. So they had

244

00:12:19,510 --> 00:12:21,220

to get in there and clean it up, and, you know,

245

00:12:21,220 --> 00:12:24,790

Bob Garcia tells a story about going in, hoping

246

00:12:24,790 --> 00:12:27,070

that he would get recruited and welcomed, and the

247

00:12:27,070 --> 00:12:29,980

two teachers he was looking for were barely able

248

00:12:29,980 --> 00:12:31,960

to talk to him or even look at it, and they were

249

00:12:31,960 --> 00:12:34,510

busy hammering sheetrock and they were so covered

250

00:12:34,510 --> 00:12:36,160

with dust you couldn't even, you know, you could

251

00:12:36,160 --> 00:12:39,250

see their lips, and that was all. So so they had

252

00:12:39,250 --> 00:12:41,980
to get money, get a temporary site, get a

253
00:12:41,980 --> 00:12:46,540
permanent site. The airport site was challenging.

254
00:12:47,290 --> 00:12:50,890
They they had a lot of kind of issues about that.

255
00:12:51,670 --> 00:12:54,740
DA: So how did how did that site wind up working out?

256
00:12:55,210 --> 00:12:57,880
LH: Well, you know, there were classes in a converted

257
00:12:57,880 --> 00:13:03,310
chicken coops. So labs were a problem. You know,

258
00:13:03,310 --> 00:13:05,380
there weren't that many places with running water.

259
00:13:05,560 --> 00:13:09,220
P.E. was difficult. They had to bus students to

260
00:13:09,520 --> 00:13:11,770
the Belato park pool if they were going to take a

261
00:13:11,770 --> 00:13:15,640
swimming class. So it was not ideal. I mean, it

262
00:13:15,640 --> 00:13:18,190
was an old building that was rickety. Actually, a

263

00:13:18,190 --> 00:13:21,880
number of the faculty who were hired to staff the

264
00:13:21,880 --> 00:13:24,130
new Gavilan College at the Hollister airport

265
00:13:24,400 --> 00:13:26,890
within 10 years had died of cancer. So there's

266
00:13:26,890 --> 00:13:28,840
kind of a dark murmur. Some of them thought that

267
00:13:28,840 --> 00:13:31,360
maybe it was because of exposures in that building,

268
00:13:31,360 --> 00:13:35,020
who knows, or in those buildings. So so it was

269
00:13:35,020 --> 00:13:38,110
challenging, but what's really important about

270
00:13:38,110 --> 00:13:43,210
this move is that they went from 180 students,

271
00:13:43,210 --> 00:13:46,150
which they had carefully built up on the Nash Road

272
00:13:46,150 --> 00:13:49,270
site in Hollister before they had to shut their

273
00:13:49,270 --> 00:13:51,310
doors and move over to the airport as the new

274

00:13:51,310 --> 00:13:54,520
Gavilan College. They had about 180 the semester

275
00:13:54,520 --> 00:13:57,700
before, and then they, college officials described

276
00:13:57,700 --> 00:14:00,430
it as an enrollment stampede. They gained 50

277
00:14:00,430 --> 00:14:02,830
students the first semester. By the second

278
00:14:02,830 --> 00:14:05,650
semester, they were up past 600 because they had a

279
00:14:05,650 --> 00:14:09,340
night program. So it was clearly drawing students

280
00:14:09,340 --> 00:14:11,620
from Gilroy and Morgan Hill and more people from

281
00:14:11,620 --> 00:14:13,750
San Benito County were starting to come. It

282
00:14:13,750 --> 00:14:16,360
started to kind of snowball in a successful way,

283
00:14:16,360 --> 00:14:19,510
and that must have just felt wonderful to these

284
00:14:19,510 --> 00:14:22,330
people who had dealt with crisis after crisis.

285

00:14:22,330 --> 00:14:25,540

It's working. DA: So that really affirmed that-

286

00:14:25,540 --> 00:14:30,610

reaffirmed that need for a new site. I'm still- I'm

287

00:14:30,610 --> 00:14:33,100

really surprised that the enrollment went up that

288

00:14:33,100 --> 00:14:36,040

much just from moving, because the airport's not

289

00:14:36,040 --> 00:14:40,630

that far from the the high school site. Right, and

290

00:14:40,630 --> 00:14:44,680

and so what can you explain that in some other

291

00:14:44,680 --> 00:14:47,080

ways or is that-? LH: They couldn't explain it? They

292

00:14:47,080 --> 00:14:50,230

were surprised to-o they were delighted, but it

293

00:14:50,230 --> 00:14:53,800

seems maybe that it was just the joujou of having

294

00:14:53,800 --> 00:14:56,080

a new thing, and everybody wanted to come and

295

00:14:56,080 --> 00:14:58,450

check out this new college, and it had a new name,

296

00:14:58,450 --> 00:15:01,090
and they you know, they were shrewd. They had done

297
00:15:01,090 --> 00:15:03,730
a fair amount of publicity. This is all covered in

298
00:15:03,730 --> 00:15:06,370
the local papers as the college is trying to twist

299
00:15:06,370 --> 00:15:09,280
and turn and figure out how it can survive, and I

300
00:15:09,280 --> 00:15:12,130
guess a lot of Gilroy, Morgan Hill students

301
00:15:12,130 --> 00:15:14,170
didn't want to drive to San Jose, which I can

302
00:15:14,170 --> 00:15:17,580
relate to. DA: Yeah. Yeah. All right. So so you've got-

303
00:15:17,770 --> 00:15:21,340
your operate. We're operating in a temporary

304
00:15:21,340 --> 00:15:24,850
location at the airport and we're raising money

305
00:15:24,850 --> 00:15:28,630
for this bond. What other kinds of challenges did

306
00:15:29,440 --> 00:15:31,780
they face in trying to get this new college up and

307

00:15:31,780 --> 00:15:34,060
running? LH: Well, the faculty were extremely

308
00:15:34,060 --> 00:15:37,660
overworked, ah people- DA: Oh, that sounds familiar. LH: -Yeah,

309
00:15:37,660 --> 00:15:41,800
well, yes, but imagine the day that you're

310
00:15:41,800 --> 00:15:44,370
spending now and then going and doing, you know,

311
00:15:44,380 --> 00:15:47,560
four or five hours of hammering. DA: Yeah. LH: And sheetrock

312
00:15:47,560 --> 00:15:49,570
and, you know, ripping things down. I mean, they

313
00:15:49,570 --> 00:15:53,640
were exhausted, but I suspect just from kind of

314
00:15:53,640 --> 00:15:55,440
what I've read, that there was also an

315
00:15:55,440 --> 00:15:58,620
exhilaration to it,- DA: Mmm Hmm. LH: You know, everybody loves

316
00:15:58,620 --> 00:16:01,110
starting something new. The CSUMB founding

317
00:16:01,110 --> 00:16:03,870
faculty felt like they had a purpose in life. They

318

00:16:03,870 --> 00:16:06,300
were going to leave this legacy, and I suspect

319
00:16:06,300 --> 00:16:08,760
people felt like that, but there were also a lot

320
00:16:08,760 --> 00:16:13,160
of complaints about pay, about hours. You know, it

321
00:16:13,170 --> 00:16:15,540
was just it was arduous for the for the people

322
00:16:15,540 --> 00:16:19,440
involved, the faculty, although one kind of credit

323
00:16:19,440 --> 00:16:22,170
to the board of trustees is that they were so busy

324
00:16:22,170 --> 00:16:24,180
doing the whole other piece that we're going to

325
00:16:24,180 --> 00:16:26,460
talk about eventually, you know, finding the new

326
00:16:26,460 --> 00:16:29,250
site, raising the money for it, that they kind of

327
00:16:29,250 --> 00:16:31,470
had to just let the faculty run the college, and

328
00:16:31,470 --> 00:16:34,020
the faculty did so very effectively and very

329

00:16:34,020 --> 00:16:37,200
efficiently. They the board of trustees knew they

330
00:16:37,200 --> 00:16:40,080
could trust this faculty to keep things going, and

331
00:16:40,080 --> 00:16:42,270
that's what happened for three or four years. It

332
00:16:42,270 --> 00:16:45,420
was pretty much the faculty running the show, and

333
00:16:45,420 --> 00:16:47,340
then one other challenge I wanted to mention is

334
00:16:47,340 --> 00:16:50,250
that they didn't know what to call it. That was a

335
00:16:50,250 --> 00:16:53,520
big issue. DA: I was wondering how did we how did

336
00:16:53,520 --> 00:16:56,810
Gavilan get its name? LH: They had a contest. DA: Huh.

337
00:16:57,030 --> 00:16:59,400
They couldn't call it Sam Benito Junior College

338
00:16:59,400 --> 00:17:01,050
because they've got people from Gilroy and Morgan

339
00:17:01,050 --> 00:17:03,780
Hill and, you know, they need to project this kind

340

00:17:03,780 --> 00:17:06,330
of two county image. So they had a contest. They

341
00:17:06,330 --> 00:17:08,850
offered a 25 dollar prize. They got a lot of

342
00:17:08,850 --> 00:17:12,540
entries, and there's a funny story, actually. Four

343
00:17:12,540 --> 00:17:16,440
people suggested some variation of Gavilan. Some

344
00:17:16,440 --> 00:17:18,510
of them spelled it with a B and so forth, but

345
00:17:18,540 --> 00:17:21,210
they all basically said Gavilan College, the

346
00:17:21,210 --> 00:17:24,180
runner up was Loma Prieta. It almost became Loma

347
00:17:24,180 --> 00:17:30,720
Prieta College, and the four who won wrote Ruth

348
00:17:30,720 --> 00:17:34,530
Mary Winter, who's Muriel Winter Brehm sister was

349
00:17:34,530 --> 00:17:37,050
one of the four who had suggested Gavilan College

350
00:17:37,050 --> 00:17:40,290
and her sister tells a story. We laughed that they

351

00:17:40,290 --> 00:17:45,120
sent her a check for six twenty five. (Doug Achterman laughing) They were so

352
00:17:45,120 --> 00:17:48,360
cheap that they divided the twenty five dollar

353
00:17:48,360 --> 00:17:50,640
prize they wouldn't even, you know, spring for

354
00:17:50,640 --> 00:17:54,330
another 75 bucks to give everybody the prize. So

355
00:17:54,330 --> 00:17:56,340
she cashed it and then she was sorry. She should

356
00:17:56,340 --> 00:17:58,290
have framed it as proof that, you know, these

357
00:17:58,290 --> 00:18:01,680
people can't even pay a basic debt. So anyway,

358
00:18:01,680 --> 00:18:04,470
there were there were a lot of those- a lot of

359
00:18:04,470 --> 00:18:08,340
growth pains and a lot of decisions to make, and,

360
00:18:09,450 --> 00:18:12,780
you know, people who went to the airport and

361
00:18:12,780 --> 00:18:15,660
graduated from the airport felt proud that they

362

00:18:15,660 --> 00:18:19,320
were starting this new college, but it was also

363
00:18:19,320 --> 00:18:22,830
not the best environment to go to college, and it

364
00:18:22,830 --> 00:18:28,320
was. DA: So- but, but it expanded enormously. Right. So

365
00:18:28,320 --> 00:18:32,790
it went from four times enrollment, and so that

366
00:18:32,790 --> 00:18:35,700
must have changed what was possible in terms, of

367
00:18:36,120 --> 00:18:39,570
course, offerings, programs available. Was there

368
00:18:39,570 --> 00:18:42,230
expansion in those kinds of things? And how did

369
00:18:42,240 --> 00:18:45,090
how did the sort of the offerings change and what

370
00:18:45,090 --> 00:18:48,180
was possible? LH: It was an exciting time. They tried

371
00:18:48,180 --> 00:18:52,320
real estate. They tried kind of some horticultural

372
00:18:52,320 --> 00:18:55,650
things, like pruning. Those didn't really make it,

373

00:18:55,650 --> 00:18:57,720

but they also tried to things that did. They got a

374

00:18:57,720 --> 00:19:01,230

big grant for cosmetology, and they installed some

375

00:19:01,230 --> 00:19:04,410

basic equipment at the airport, and they also I'm

376

00:19:04,410 --> 00:19:06,570

not sure if they had any kind of police training

377

00:19:06,570 --> 00:19:09,690

before this, but it certainly expanded, and that,

378

00:19:09,690 --> 00:19:14,010

too, has endured and become a major California

379

00:19:14,010 --> 00:19:17,250

state police academy. So, yeah, they're trying a

380

00:19:17,250 --> 00:19:20,220

lot of things, and at that point, vocational

381

00:19:21,000 --> 00:19:24,510

training is is still really important. It hasn't

382

00:19:24,510 --> 00:19:26,550

kind of fallen on the harder times it's going to

383

00:19:26,730 --> 00:19:30,780

see in the 80s and 90s, and a lot of students come

384

00:19:30,780 --> 00:19:35,130
from those things. DA: Yeah, yeah. I had no idea that

385
00:19:35,130 --> 00:19:38,130
the cosmetology program started that early, and

386
00:19:38,130 --> 00:19:40,620
the police academy as well as are kind of bedrock

387
00:19:40,620 --> 00:19:45,260
programs for the for the college. How about sports?

388
00:19:46,390 --> 00:19:49,330
LH: They had sports, Bobby Garcia kind of tells the

389
00:19:49,340 --> 00:19:52,090
story. There have been sports all along now where

390
00:19:52,090 --> 00:19:55,240
they very successful. They were successful in

391
00:19:55,240 --> 00:19:58,630
terms of involving especially males, not that many

392
00:19:58,630 --> 00:20:02,710
options for women until the 70s. Bobby Garcia was

393
00:20:02,710 --> 00:20:05,080
24 and he was home from the service. He had spent

394
00:20:05,080 --> 00:20:08,590
a couple of years in Germany. He was a man and he

395

00:20:08,590 --> 00:20:11,980
played on local teams and he was working and he

396
00:20:11,980 --> 00:20:15,160
was recruited by some guys who were playing for

397
00:20:15,160 --> 00:20:17,860
Jerry Flook, and they wanted him to play

398
00:20:17,860 --> 00:20:20,170
basketball, baseball. He he he could play any

399
00:20:20,170 --> 00:20:23,260
sport. So he went in to kind of check the whole

400
00:20:23,260 --> 00:20:25,390
thing out, and there these two guys, Bud Ottmar

401
00:20:25,390 --> 00:20:27,730
and Jerry Flook, and they're covered in dust and

402
00:20:27,730 --> 00:20:29,320
they're struggling to put up the sheet rock, and

403
00:20:29,320 --> 00:20:31,180
they barely paid him any heed, you know, and he

404
00:20:31,180 --> 00:20:33,160
was like, well, this is my recruitment to Gavilan,

405
00:20:33,430 --> 00:20:35,650
but he had a young woman who he was very

406

00:20:35,650 --> 00:20:38,170
interested and he was coming here. So he did come

407
00:20:38,170 --> 00:20:41,170
here, and it's hilarious. I mean, he said they

408
00:20:41,170 --> 00:20:43,240
played offense and defense both because the

409
00:20:43,240 --> 00:20:45,630
football team, his first year had seventeen guys. DA: Yeah.

410
00:20:45,880 --> 00:20:48,220
LH: So he named all the positions he played. He played

411
00:20:48,220 --> 00:20:50,290
quarterback. He played linebacker, he played

412
00:20:50,290 --> 00:20:52,690
running back. I mean, he played everything, and then he

413
00:20:52,690 --> 00:20:55,840
woke up very sore every Sunday, but he loved he

414
00:20:55,840 --> 00:20:57,640
said it was about the camaraderie. They didn't win

415
00:20:57,640 --> 00:21:00,400
any games his first year. They won two his second

416
00:21:00,400 --> 00:21:02,920
year. He learned on the basketball court he was

417

00:21:02,920 --> 00:21:05,590
celebrated for years because he had more points in

418
00:21:05,590 --> 00:21:08,020
one game, eighteen points, and it's because he

419
00:21:08,020 --> 00:21:10,300
could steal and do layups. You know, he's a small

420
00:21:10,300 --> 00:21:13,870
guy, so he wasn't like he was shooting from far

421
00:21:13,870 --> 00:21:18,250
off the court. DA: Yeah. LH: So anyway, he there was a sports

422
00:21:18,250 --> 00:21:22,630
program. It was it was not a competitive program

423
00:21:22,630 --> 00:21:24,700
in terms of beating other colleges.

424
00:21:27,190 --> 00:21:30,250
DA: So how did the students feel about this new

425
00:21:30,370 --> 00:21:33,550
college? LH: You know, from what I've heard. They were

426
00:21:33,550 --> 00:21:37,420
very excited. I talked to Cheryl Rosatti Bernardo,

427
00:21:37,660 --> 00:21:40,930
who was the president of the women's students

428

00:21:40,930 --> 00:21:45,530
organization, and she just had the best experience.

429
00:21:45,550 --> 00:21:48,550
It was so exciting to have teachers who were

430
00:21:48,550 --> 00:21:51,250
really passionate, and they were focused just on

431
00:21:51,250 --> 00:21:55,150
this one subject that they taught, and apparently

432
00:21:55,150 --> 00:21:58,120
a number of the professors collaborated so that

433
00:21:58,120 --> 00:22:00,100
they had kind of common themes, and you were

434
00:22:00,100 --> 00:22:04,150
learning about something in one class and then it

435
00:22:04,150 --> 00:22:06,970
was kind of underlined in another class, and then

436
00:22:06,970 --> 00:22:09,160
in a third class, there'd be a field trip to look

437
00:22:09,160 --> 00:22:11,980
at the art that had to do it. So she just felt

438
00:22:11,980 --> 00:22:15,400
like she got this explosive new understanding of

439

00:22:15,400 --> 00:22:17,950
the world that she had never had before and that

440
00:22:18,190 --> 00:22:20,590
suddenly all these things started to connect and

441
00:22:20,920 --> 00:22:24,820
excite her about learning, and she just she had a

442
00:22:24,820 --> 00:22:28,060
wonderful experience. Her teachers were really on

443
00:22:28,060 --> 00:22:30,430
top of it, and she became an English major and a

444
00:22:30,430 --> 00:22:33,490
teacher, and I think I think the college had a lot

445
00:22:33,490 --> 00:22:36,610
to do with that. Another student from this era who

446
00:22:36,610 --> 00:22:38,620
I talked to, I talked to several, actually, but

447
00:22:38,620 --> 00:22:41,710
this was John Perez, who's a local dentist and who

448
00:22:41,710 --> 00:22:44,500
later became a Gavilan board of trustees member,

449
00:22:44,710 --> 00:22:47,500
and his wife, Rachel Perez, is now our board of

450

00:22:47,500 --> 00:22:50,800
trustees president. He was a very good high school

451
00:22:50,800 --> 00:22:54,490
student, and he had a unique experience at Gilroy

452
00:22:54,490 --> 00:22:56,800
High. He was part of a Mexican-American youth

453
00:22:56,800 --> 00:23:00,040
organization that one of the teachers, Contra Barosi,

454
00:23:00,040 --> 00:23:03,400
had organized. So he was quite politicized by the

455
00:23:03,400 --> 00:23:06,610
time he came to Gavilan, and he found it to be

456
00:23:06,610 --> 00:23:09,370
politically kind of a vacuum, but the classes were

457
00:23:09,370 --> 00:23:12,250
so much harder that that was OK because he had no

458
00:23:12,250 --> 00:23:14,690
time, you know, like he had had in high school.

459
00:23:15,010 --> 00:23:16,690
The other thing that he noted, a couple other

460
00:23:16,690 --> 00:23:20,410
people noted this to, you know, college really was

461

00:23:20,410 --> 00:23:22,750
for the middle class at that point, but he and

462
00:23:22,750 --> 00:23:25,750
other students from very poor backgrounds were

463
00:23:25,750 --> 00:23:28,990
determined, but he had no car. You know, the

464
00:23:28,990 --> 00:23:31,360
airport kind of assumes that you have a way to get

465
00:23:31,360 --> 00:23:34,990
there. There was a bus, so he rode the bus, but

466
00:23:35,290 --> 00:23:39,790
the schedule was so infrequent that he spent a lot

467
00:23:39,790 --> 00:23:41,920
of time in the library and his grades- He was a

468
00:23:41,920 --> 00:23:43,720
good student anyway, but his grades went up, up,

469
00:23:43,720 --> 00:23:46,450
up, up, up, because he was studying so much, but,

470
00:23:46,450 --> 00:23:49,330
you know, it it kind of cramped his style. He

471
00:23:49,330 --> 00:23:52,270
couldn't date until college, you know, as for his

472

00:23:52,270 --> 00:23:54,160
four year college, he didn't have a car, so he

473
00:23:54,160 --> 00:23:59,590
couldn't do that. So he, too, though, says that he

474
00:23:59,590 --> 00:24:02,260
was exposed really for the first time to people

475
00:24:02,260 --> 00:24:06,820
who are passionate about what they were teaching.

476
00:24:07,060 --> 00:24:09,580
They organized a series of debates that he was

477
00:24:09,580 --> 00:24:12,400
helping organize between a teacher and a student

478
00:24:12,400 --> 00:24:14,320
on one side and a teacher and a student on the

479
00:24:14,320 --> 00:24:16,120
other side of a number of issues, and it was so

480
00:24:16,120 --> 00:24:19,060
exciting to engage with teachers, and to question

481
00:24:19,060 --> 00:24:21,820
them in public about the position they were taking.

482
00:24:22,060 --> 00:24:24,310
So it was intellectually apparently it was a

483

00:24:24,310 --> 00:24:26,890
really wonderful time and there was a lot of

484
00:24:26,890 --> 00:24:30,460
social activity going on also at the Hollister

485
00:24:30,460 --> 00:24:34,670
airport site, for example. Niki de Quin's mother,

486
00:24:34,910 --> 00:24:38,540
Barbara Goodwitch De Quin tells about being one

487
00:24:38,540 --> 00:24:41,810
of the few women in the Bombadier's club, they

488
00:24:41,810 --> 00:24:47,000
actually flew and threw fake bombs at Targets. DA: Oh,

489
00:24:47,000 --> 00:24:51,200
my God. LH: Yeah, and, and women were part of the club

490
00:24:51,200 --> 00:24:53,120
and she flew with them, and she was part of the

491
00:24:53,120 --> 00:24:56,240
crew, and I mean, you know, things that we

492
00:24:56,240 --> 00:25:00,020
wouldn't really associate with college they were

493
00:25:00,170 --> 00:25:03,170
exploring and, and open to. I mean, it sounded like

494

00:25:03,170 --> 00:25:05,330
a wonderful environment in a lot of ways. DA: That

495
00:25:05,330 --> 00:25:09,340
sounds like a lot more fun than beer pong. LH: Yeah.

496
00:25:09,710 --> 00:25:14,570
So don't mix the two, please. Anyway, I. I think

497
00:25:14,570 --> 00:25:18,440
the college at the airport was such a success that

498
00:25:18,440 --> 00:25:21,320
people were able to just kind of relax and say, OK,

499
00:25:21,320 --> 00:25:23,390
this is going to go now let's just work out the

500
00:25:23,390 --> 00:25:27,950
details. DA: We really are at college. LH: Yes. DA: Thank you.

501
00:25:28,580 --> 00:25:29,270
LH: Thank you.