

# MUSTANG MEMORIES

San Dieguito has provided excellence in public education to thousands of students since 1936. Please join us as we celebrate our 75th Anniversary!

Fall 2011

<http://sdafoundation.com/alumni/>

Vol. 5, Issue 1

## Our Founders' Reception is October 21

Are you (or do you know) a member of our "founding" classes of 1937-1942?



Page 2

## Bell Tower Blues

A frustrating delay pushes back the reconstruction of San Dieguito's much-loved bell tower.



Page 4

## A special request for 1952 alumni

Pete Kneedler is rounding up classmates for a big Blue and White jamboree in the Summer of 2012! He asks for your help locating classmates. Send your name, phone number, email address and mailing address to Pete, and if you'd like to help plan the reunion with Pete, please let him know!

1952 CLASS REUNION  
**Pete Kneedler**  
 PO Box 2251  
 Carmichael, CA 95609  
 (916) 480-9553  
 (916) 202-3263  
[petesuzi2001@netzero.com](mailto:petesuzi2001@netzero.com)

Other class representatives are listed on page 4

# All Gave Some, Some Gave All

Not many alumni know of the veterans memorial on our campus. How it got there is a story that should be remembered...

When David Gonzales ('59) went back to his first high school reunion, some of his old classmates were shocked to learn his first name is actually "David."

"People knew me as 'Chato,' which was really my dad's nickname," says David. "He worked as a bouncer in one of the bars in Eden Gardens—and he never backed down from anything. So they called him 'Chato'. It means 'bulldog'."

As the eighth of 16 siblings, David learned early on to fight for what he wanted. It wasn't long before the tiny but sturdy kid growing up in Solana Beach demonstrated to everyone that he deserved the nickname "Chato", too.

"I'm not proud of it now—of the way I was back then—but I would never turn away from a fight."

This bulldog quality came to serve David well several years later, when he had to battle against the San Dieguito Union High School District—but perhaps we should let David tell this story...

"It all started because of Mike," says David. "We were friends since way back, since Solana Beach Elementary."

Michael Zerbe and his twin sister Patty



David "Chato" Gonzales, 1959 Hoofprint

('59) lived in Solana Beach's version of the sticks. "Where Torrey Pines is now, that's what we called 'country'. You were either 'city' or 'country' and Mike and Patty were 'country'. We used labels back then! I think they found it a little hard to blend in."

Despite their different backgrounds and personalities, the City Chato and the Country Mike somehow hit it off in a third grade classroom, initiating a friendship that lasted several years.

They were both skinny and small, but where Chato was loud, Michael was quiet and reserved. Neither of the boys did their schoolwork with any enthusiasm but both appreciated a uniform,

and as soon as they entered San Dieguito in the seventh grade they signed up for the Cadet Corps.

"We were so proud when we put our khakis on," says David. "Mike loved anything that had to do with the military."

David liked it, too, but his deepest tie to San Dieguito was sports. "Sports kept me in school," he says. "Sports kept me from hanging out with the riffraff."

Football and track were his favorites, and while running around on the fields he be-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# Founders' Reception planned

**Alumni from 1937-42 to be honored October 21st**

All are invited to attend the Founders' Reception October 21, from 1:30 to 3:30 pm at San Dieguito. This reunion will honor our Founders, those members of San Dieguito Union High School's classes of 1937 through 1942.\*

All former classmates from those years are invited as honorees regardless of whether or not they graduated. You may bring a guest or two—but let us know how many and if they are alumni. (Mustangs from other class years are welcome to join us.)

Light refreshments will be served and tours of the campus provided. Founders who live locally and need transportation should let us

know, as we may be able to assist.

Please share this invitation with any other Founders with whom you are in contact. We've done our best to locate as many as possible but several have eluded us.

If you have responded already, thank you! We look forward to having you on campus again! If not, there is still time!

Please direct any questions you may have to Bettie Grice Wolfe (760) 591-0434, or Mary Arballo Magaña (858) 761-1965, or Bonnie Wren, (760) 753-1121 x5085.

(If you know of any Founders who have



*The Executive Council 1936-1937. "The student council has the unusual record of being a functioning body before school started. There were five students on the council which was headed by Frank Whigham. They met twice during the summer, and made the outline of the constitution for the student body and a general plan for the activities for the first semester. Thanks to them we were able to get our student government working in the shortest possible time."*

passed away, please let us know and we'll add their names to our online obituary pages.)

\*San Dieguito Union High School (SDUHS) is also known as San Dieguito High School (SDHS) and San Dieguito High School Academy (SDA).

**"ALL GAVE GOME, SOME GAVE ALL" CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE**

came friends with James Mitchell ('59), another sports-minded kid who seemed to excel at everything he chose to do. "Jimmy was a Rancho Santa Fe boy, almost my height, but maybe weighing about 20 pounds more than I did. He was a high achiever, the student body president."

In the tenth grade Michael's parents broke up. Mike went to live with his dad in Julian, and Patty stayed with her mom in Del Mar. "Up until then we were pretty close," says David, "but Michael and I, we lost touch."

David and Jimmy went on to graduate from San Dieguito in 1959. Jimmy got a degree at San Diego State and eventually earned a commission as an officer in the Marines. In 1964 he married his high school sweetheart, Jan Bertoncini ('61). David took another path, signing on with the Air Force in 1960 as an air-to-ground radio operator, flying in bombers and supply planes as part of the crew.

The war in Vietnam touched David's family in September 1963, when the plane carrying David's cousin, Staff Sgt Raphael Cruz, USAF, went down in Kontum Province, Vietnam. (Raphael's remains weren't repatriated until 1996.) "Losing a family member—it's just a big void," says David.

A year later he finished his stint in the Air Force and took a job in Fort Worth. While reading one of the newspapers his mom used to send him to keep up with the hometown news, he learned that Marine Lt. James McNally Mitchell, the father of two-month-

old Erin Lisa Mitchell, had died from injuries inflicted by a land mine while on combat patrol near Chu Lai in South Vietnam.

"Jimmy and Raphael—it was a huge sense of loss," says David. "It was 'why them and not me?' It was me considering myself not as accomplished as what they accomplished."

But David moved on. He lived his life, raising his two girls and working in the education field. In 1989 he decided to attend his first high school reunion, his 30th. He figured he'd look up old friends like Mike Zerbe; instead he got some bad news that had been waiting for him for over two decades.

"During the memorial portion of our reunion," says David, "someone said, 'oh yeah, Mike went down in Vietnam, too.'"

In April 1966, the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk was off the north coast of Vietnam when pilot LT(JG) Michael R. Zerbe took off in a helicopter that had just been serviced. It pitched, struck the deck, and rolled over the port side into the sea. Michael's body was never recovered. He was 24, leaving behind a wife and 15-month-old son.

It was a moment that pushed David to act. "Jimmy was bad enough, but Mike, too? That's what precipitated the memorial. I didn't want anybody to forget them."

He knew there must be other Mustangs lost to war, classmates he didn't know about but who deserved to be remembered, too. He

began to plan a memorial for all of them.

"I did research. I read newspaper archives. I went to the Veterans

**Vietnam**

- Marine 1st Lts. James M. Mitchell
- Charles B. Henricks
- Navy Lt. j.g. Michael R. Zerbe
- Army Spec. 4 Victor Lopez
- Pfc. Thomas L. Mericantante
- Sp4 Raymond N. Curley
- Capt. Joseph M. Tworek
- Pfc. David Dawson Peppin, Jr.,

**Korea**

- Pvt. William P. Ramey
- Navy Corpsman Jack E. Vaughn

**World War II**

- Sgt. Jerry T. Archer
- 2nd Lt. Richard B. Cozens
- Pvt. Jesus V. Covarrubias
- Pfc. Eugene Dawson
- 2nd Lt. Walter Hunt
- Pfc. Melvin A. Johnson
- Cpl. Joseph B. Mettam
- Sgt. Donald R. Petrie
- Pfc. Tom Williams



Administration. I asked around, got leads, some of them panned out.” Joining him in the project were his cousin Sam Hernandez (’60) and Bill Roebuck (’59). By 2001 they had identified five Mustangs for the memorial.

David approached the district about installing the memorial on campus, but was immediately shot down. A San Dieguito Union High School District administrator told David that the campus was not an appropriate place for a war memorial. The same administrator was quoted in the *North County Times* as saying, “We just felt the kids who attend the academy would not have any positive connection with these individuals.”

“When he said ‘no, we can’t do that,’ well, there was no way I was going to let that go,” says David.

David, Sam and Bill began contacting friends, other veterans, reporters, anybody who would listen. Word spread quickly and so did public indignation, especially so soon after the events of September 11. “...Memorializing deeds and accomplishments of graduates is something schools everywhere do with pride,” Tom Morrow wrote in the *North County Times*, “giving one’s life for one’s country is the ultimate sacrificial deed. Students do make the ‘connection.’”

Jim Wheyland, parent of San Dieguito student Patrick Wheyland (’03) and a Vietnam veteran himself, couldn’t believe what he read in the paper. He wrote a letter to the editor that became the focus of Tom Morrow’s next column, and soon he had joined the memorial committee. “Jim and his wife Jeri worked just as hard or more than the rest of us,” says David.

“We got out and fought. We went to the district, we went to Trustee meetings. We presented our case. People started to send us contributions.” Among those who helped was Jan Mitchell, who donated a portion of the proceeds from her book about Jimmy, *The Last Stamp, Remembering a Remarkable Young Man*.

After shoveling itself out from under a mountain of bad publicity, the district finally gave in.

The memorial was unveiled in a special ceremony on Veterans Day, November 11, 2003. Jim estimates at least 400 people attended, including Mike Zerbe’s son, Sterling, who flew in from Georgia, Jan Mitchell, and other relatives of the 19 Mustangs listed in the granite memorial.

The high school orchestra played, as did a Camp Pendleton bugler. A Marine Corps color guard represented MCAS Miramar. There were speeches and then finally, the focal point of the ceremony: one by one, each name was read by a relative of the deceased. (If no family member could attend, a San Dieguito student read the name.) A dove was released with each name.

Kaylene Turner (’03) read the name of World War II casualty Pfc. Eugene Dawson. “I think the memorial is absolutely beautiful,” she was quoted in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. “This has been so moving, and I think (the memorial) shows what our school stands for—being proud of who you are and standing up for yourself and other people.”

When Sterling Zerbe read his father’s name, its familiarity

startled one member of the audience. Retired U.S. Navy Captain Kent McNeil thought he had no connections to San Dieguito; he’d only come to the ceremony to support the veterans. Yet he recognized the name “Michael R. Zerbe”—because it was engraved on the POW/MIA bracelet he’d worn since 1970.

“I always figured it to be pretty much nonsense when people would tell me that we are all connected in one way or another,”

says Jim. “That changed the day the San Dieguito High School Veterans Memorial was dedicated.”

“Some things are meant to be,” says David. “The memorial just had to be, for so many reasons.”

Eight years later, the San Dieguito High School Veterans Association is still active, but only David and Jim remain. David retired from California State University San Marcos and lives in Sacramento. He still combs through military records, looking for Mustangs who must be remembered. “We left room for more names. We will always have wars.”

Jim worries that the Association, as well as the scholarships it gives every year in the names of the memorial honorees, will disappear once he and David retire. “We need new blood to keep it going.”

Both men take it one Veterans Day at a time. “I will be at the memorial on November 11,” says Chato Gonzales. “I will never forget.”



Mike Zerbe (right) in the Cadet Corps Rifle Team as shown in the 1957 Hoofprint. (Raymond Kubilus (’58) is shown on the left)

### More about the San Dieguito High School Veterans

The San Dieguito High School Veterans Association provides scholarships to deserving students from San Dieguito High School Academy, Sunset High School, North Coast Continuation or San Dieguito Adult School. Students who might not otherwise be considered for scholarships or grants but have a demonstrable determination and tenaciousness to pursue their education are eligible. Each scholarship is awarded in the name of one of the Mustangs listed on the memorial.

Please contact:

David Gonzales: [sdvets1@surewest.net](mailto:sdvets1@surewest.net) or (760) 420-5249

Jim Wheyland: [JWheyland@agloan.com](mailto:JWheyland@agloan.com)

#### SAN DIEGUITO HIGH SCHOOL VETERANS

P.O. Box 230178, Encinitas, CA 92023

The San Dieguito High School Veterans is looking for Mustangs to help carry on the good work. (Non-veterans are also welcome.) Please contact David or Jim for more information.

Our website, <http://sdafoundation.com/alumni/> provides more information regarding our memorial, including photos and links to the newspaper articles quoted in this issue of *Mustang Memories*.

### About Mustang Memories

The SDA Foundation publishes *Mustang Memories* to encourage alumni interest in San Dieguito High School Academy and help alumni reconnect with each other. [Your donations](#) defray mailing costs and support student programs.

**SDA Foundation 800 Santa Fe Dr., Encinitas, CA 92024**

(760) 753-1121, ext. 5085

[sdalumni@gmail.com](mailto:sdalumni@gmail.com), or visit <http://sdafoundation.com/alumni/>

# Singing the ole' Bell Tower Blues



Several delays have pushed back the construction of San Dieguito's bell tower, resulting in the cancellation of the bell tower rededication ceremony.

According to school district representatives and the Foundation's fundraising chair, the original bell tower plans must be redrawn and reapproved before construction may begin. The rededication ceremony, initially scheduled for September 16, 2011 to coincide with the 50th reunion of the class of 1961, will be rescheduled.

The rebuilt tower will look as much like the original tower as possible, minus the louvers installed in the late 1980s to protect the bell from theft. The new tower will contain many of the bricks from the original tower and will

be rebuilt in the same location. (More on the history of our bell tower may be found in our Fall 2008 and Spring 2011 issues of *Mustang Memories*.)

We want to thank those who've contributed

to our "Bring Back the Bell" campaign. If you are interested in contributing labor and/or building materials, please contact the Foundation Office at (760) 753-1121 x5085 or email [sda.alumni@gmail.com](mailto:sda.alumni@gmail.com).

## Alumni Contacts/Calendar

### 1937-1942

(See page 2 for info on Founders Reception)  
Mary Magaña (858) 761-1965  
Bettie Wolfe (760) 591-0434

### 1947

Jane Phillips King (858) 755-2458

### 1952

(See page 1 for info on upcoming reunion.)  
Pete Kneedler (916) 480-9553

### 1962

Marilyn West Fowler (760) 744-1474

### 1967

Cathy Hicks [Daungirl@gmail.com](mailto:Daungirl@gmail.com)  
Kathy Jensen 760-753-2624  
Anne Wolfe [adwolfe@att.net](mailto:adwolfe@att.net)

### 1972

Charlotte Gresham [charlotte@gresham.com](mailto:charlotte@gresham.com)  
Reunion will be summer 2012.  
<http://www.gresham.com/classof72/>

### 1977

RoseMarie Cesena [rmcesena@cox.net](mailto:rmcesena@cox.net)

### 1982

Stephanie Fairbanks  
[stephaniefairbanks@stephaniefairbanks.com](mailto:stephaniefairbanks@stephaniefairbanks.com)  
Reunion tentatively set for July 12-14, 2012:  
<http://sandieguitohighschoolclassof1982.com/>

### 1987

Syndee Wood [syndee.wood@gmail.com](mailto:syndee.wood@gmail.com)

### 2001

Kara Kerr [karaksda@gmail.com](mailto:karaksda@gmail.com). Family-friendly reunion at Ponto Beach Nov. 26. 7am to noon, then 2-hour meet & greet on the campus. Visit 2001 on Facebook at <http://tinyurl.com/3uey3h3>

### 2002

Beth Van Boxtel [bethpaige@gmail.com](mailto:bethpaige@gmail.com)

### Where is my class rep?

The most current list of class representatives may be found at <http://sdafoundation.com/alumni/>

## Help us keep Mustang Memories free!

**Donate dollars:** Any amount—no matter how small—will help! Make checks out to SDAF and send to PO Box 235109, Encinitas, Ca 92023-5109. (If you'd like to indicate a specific program, group, club, or some other use for your gift, let us know in the memo.)



[Or donate securely with PayPal](#) and indicate your gift preferences in the special instructions box. Go, Mustangs!

**Donate time:** Work with your class on a reunion committee or as a class representative. Serve on a school advisory board. Provide career advice and your life experiences to students in classroom settings. Collect and track San Dieguito memorabilia and memories. Join an alumni community service group. Join the San Dieguito Alumni Committee.

**Donate memorabilia:** We're looking for original commencement lists and graduation programs, original film (or good quality tape) of "San Dieguito High School: Those Early Years" and the school groundbreaking filmed on January 11, 1937. We're also looking for original *Mustang* newspapers (and local newspaper clippings) about the school prior to 1997, as well as report cards, pink slips, employee manuals, etc.

**Donate a special gift.** The Pension Protection Act allows you to make a tax-free distribution from your IRA (up to \$100,000 per year) to SDA Foundation if you are at least 70 1/2-years old. Call (760) 753-1121, x5152 for more information.



The Alumni Association is part of the San Dieguito Academy Foundation, a 501(c) non-profit organization which supports the students and programs of San Dieguito High School Academy by fundraising and promoting active parental and community involvement.

We invite feedback, good or bad! Please let us know what you think of this newsletter, or tell us what you want to read about in *Mustang Memories*.

Contact us for more information:

### SDA Foundation

800 Santa Fe Avenue  
Encinitas, CA 92024  
(760) 753-1121, ext. 5085  
[sda.alumni@gmail.com](mailto:sda.alumni@gmail.com)

Executive Director: Sheila Durkin  
Mustang Memories Editor: Bonnie Wren