

NOTES & QUOTES

School a happy place in short lives

Encinitas' John Tyler reckons he knows where those five San Dieguito



TOM MORROW

High School graduates who gave their lives during the Vietnam War would like to be remembered — where else, but a place where

they experienced some of the happiest days of their young lives — on their high school campus.

"Recently I returned to my old home town back in Connecticut where I drove to the old high school location, parked my rental car, and walked across the lawn to the flag pole," John told me. "I knew that beneath that flowing flag was an important stone."

He explained that shortly after World War II, when all the veterans came home, the town's people wanted a permanent memorial to the young boys who were killed — to those who never came home.

At first, there were a lot of disagreements, John recalled.

"Everyone in town stood together with the group they agreed with, and arguments were rampant," he said. "Many lost friends in the argument, and the families of the young boys in question were distraught."

Then, at one of the meetings someone, who is now forgotten, got up and simply said, "Where do you think the boys would have liked to have it placed?"

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liked to have it placed?"

John recalled the silence was like a prayer. No one had thought of that question before. Where would the boys have placed it, if they could now speak? Some of the veterans, who had returned, spoke up.

"When we were fighting we thought of our families, our country, just trying to survive, we thought of many things when we had the time," one of them summed up. "But we also remembered the junior prom, the senior prom, the graduation exercises, the teachers who helped us through those years. We remembered our classmates, dates with girls, we wondered where they all were.

"Perhaps that's where it should be placed. Where they had the happiest days of their short lives."

John said he walked across the Branford High School campus to the flagpole on the green. There he gazed upon a granite stone with a brass plaque, which reads: "World War II — Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose, but young men think it is, and we were young."

Below those words are the names of 36 young men of Branford, Conn., some of whom John had known.

"So, those young men who graduated from San Dieguito, then went off to war, probably would like to be remembered where they were the happiest — on their high school campus," John said.

FROM MARS — "The secrets of success are hard work and a good wife. At least that's what my wife told me."

— *Neal Mars, Oceanside*

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