

Chapter Thirteen: Easy Ed and SAHS

Names change while hidden losses are recovered

St. Anthony High School

Given the overall success and happiness associated with my first decade as Eddie Lamoureux, there seemed to be little motivation for changing names. And yet, events on the ground often dictate unintended consequences. Simply put: I got renamed and it stuck, hard and fast.

The Lamoureuxs never considered a high school alternative: St. Anthony Boys High School was the target.



SAHS

Although the public-school option in East Long Beach, Millikan High School, was solid, and of course much less expensive than Catholic school tuition, Roger and Evangeline never hesitated or wavered. Eddie was going to receive a Catholic education and Mom and Dad made the necessary budgetary adjustments to make it happen, just as they had since Catholic-school kindergarten in Iowa.

Somewhere along the line at St. Cornelius, I fell in love with the idea of St. Anthony as the place for me—my entry was eagerly awaited and gratefully accepted. A small number of the St. Cornelius graduates in my class went to other schools: Millikan was the public high school in our district, St. John Bosco was the new(er) co-ed Catholic high school, north of our neighborhood in the suburb of Bellflower, and St. Joseph's was a brand new all-girls Catholic-school alternative. St. Anthony, a downtown Long Beach fixture since 1921, got most St. Cornelius graduates.

When my class entered in fall 1967, St. Anthony maintained co-institutional Boys' and Girls' high schools. During our four years there the school transitioned to a fully co-educational institution. With enrollment just over 1,000 students, SAHS was much smaller than Long Beach's public high schools but was large enough to feature a wide range of extra-curricular activities as well as solid academics. However, the physical plant was long-in-the-tooth and significant renovations did not happen until decades after we graduated.

St. Anthony Boys' High School remained a conservatively traditional place in 1967-68. Although we were not forced to wear uniforms (as had all Catholic grade school children in Long Beach) SA boys wore slacks, collared dress shirts, and hard shoes. Jeans, polo shirts, and tennis shoes were not permitted. Boys, on SAHS sports teams, wore white shirts and ties on their team's "game-days." Freshmen went through an initiation week wearing beanies. Seniors spent most of the year ordering freshmen boys to do menial tasks such as picking up trash from the school courtyard and/or carrying books between classes for the older boys' girlfriends. Some of the less friendly rituals subsided after the school moved to co-education: One could not treat freshman girls badly so most of the initiation rituals went by the boards.

My intention was to transfer excellence at football in the park to high school gridiron prominence; freshman year marked the start and finish of that dream. "CEE" football on the freshman team was pretty grueling stuff for a boy who had not played organized football through grade school. I auditioned as a quarterback, but had trouble executing

the gateway play, the "sprint-out-quickie," a roll-out play featuring a pass thrown off the wrong



Evidence that Eddie Lamoureux played high school "Cee" high school football

foot. Mastery of that skill was required of all quarterback candidates at SAHS; I did not master it and my throwing arm was weak anyway.

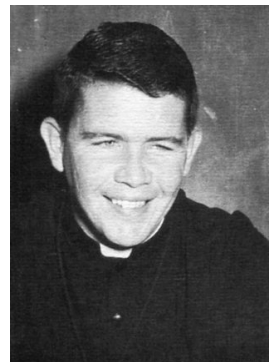
Worse, I was not allowed to try out as a running back. I'd never run a real football play and didn't know a tackle from a guard or which "hole" (the space between linemen identified by the play-call) one should run through. I'd always just taken the hand-off and run toward daylight or over-and-through-or-around opponents. That wasn't going to happen in an organized offense when I didn't know which direction the play was going, not to mention that there were now eleven players on each side and many of them were very large, fast, and aggressive. I was relegated to the defensive backfield where it took me a few weeks to learn about, and adjust to, organized play calls of various defensive coverage schemes.

Eventually, I got the hang of playing organized defense and by the third game of the season I was the starting free safety (or was it cornerback?) on the freshman team. We played a road game against non-league opponent Mary Star of the Sea from San Pedro. I covered, hit, tackled, and seemed to be well on my way to a respectable showing and a solid high school football career. And then it happened pretty much as we all should have known that it would (as Roger suspected all along). As I tackled a receiver in the middle of the field, one of our linemen continued blocking one of their linemen, pushing him back, back, back. And of course, the big lout fell backwards without any body control and landed on my right leg; the leg that had the receiver's body lodged beneath me. **WHAM!**: Instant football injury. Not quite a twisted ankle, not quite a bum knee, and certainly nothing broken. But lots of pain, a noticeable limp, a severely weakened right leg, and lots of pain (oh yeah, I already said that).

In those days, if one missed a football practice, ten “suicide” drill runs awaited. Never mind what those were; they involved all 100 yards of the field, lots of running and bending over and were WAY worse than they sound. My leg hurt so bad that I missed three or four days of practice. A few of the senior players found me on the lot at school on day five; it was just my luck that by that time the limp had faded so they saw no good reason for my absences. They set my suicide punishment at fifty after practice that afternoon. Stunned, I didn’t go to practice and so ended my high school football career.

Corporal punishment was still strongly in play at St. Anthony Boys’ High School. However, the administration of frontier justice was more haphazard and violent than were Sister Margaret Mary’s post-quasi-judicial paddling sessions in grade school. Many of the Holy Cross Brothers and laymen on the teaching staff also participated as athletic coaches; physicality ruled the day.

One man in particular, Brother Charles Lloyd, stood out among his peers as willing (eager?) to engage in re-shaping out-of-order boys toward more acceptable behavioral norms. From time-to-time, students got into tussles in the hallways; generally, those shoving matches came and went of their own accord and seldom escalated to fisticuffs between combatants, let alone spreading to wider battles with additional fighters. Woe unto the shoving pair unlucky enough to encounter Brother Charles Lloyd!



Unruliness pushed Brother Charles’ action button, with immediacy, urgency, and much energy. Brother Charles flew into the fray, grabbed both young combatants, one in each hand, and lifted them up off the floor and slammed them against

*Brother Charles
Lloyd*

the nearest lockers. His face turned beet-red and the energy he threw off and into those boys sent a clear message received as loudly as the sounds of their bodies banging against metal lockers: Cease and desist, now, or suffer way more! And here—here we get to the renaming.

Brother Charles Lloyd taught ethics class. There was a fairly well-known seating strategy in Brother Charles' classes. He sat at a desk that was on an elevated platform in the front, stage right, of the classroom and he generally taught from that perch. However, now and then, especially when he became emotionally involved with his lecture material, or when a young person wasn't paying attention or was misbehaving in class, he rushed down off that pedestal as if in flight. Oft-times the end of his descent found him taking a good hard kick at the shins of a student in the front row. Though sometimes the offender got booted, often the victim of the kick was only guilty of sitting too close to the teacher. The key feature was simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

As a result, students systematically avoided sitting in the front row, or dreaded it when forced to do so, preferring instead, to put an empty row of seats between them and Brother Charles. Eddie Lamoureux, however, suffered no such trepidation and sat in a variety of seats around the classroom including, sometimes, in the front row.

One lazy afternoon in spring 1968, as ethics class droned on and Brother Charles became impatient with the lack of interest and energy in the room, he came flying down to the main floor and headed straight for the only student sitting in the front row. At this point, although fully awake and adequately attentive, I had stretched out my legs in front of my desk and sat, slightly slumped, with legs crossed at the ankles. Brother Charles ran toward me, pulled his foot back as if to throw a heavy blow toward my shins—and yet, I did not move a muscle in self-defense. I

returned Brother Charles' glare with a very small, very wry smile, careful to not disrespect, mindful of the potential consequences, but fully aware that I had done nothing wrong and resolute in the knowledge that since I deserved no punishment I was in the right to hold my ground without so much as a twitch. Brother Charles hesitated; a smile came over his face as the blood returned to proper locations below his neck.

“Ed—just taking it easy eh Ed? *Easy Ed*.”

Brother Charles Lloyd spun on his heels and returned up the platform having replaced, for everyone except family and very old friends, the moniker Eddie with Easy Ed. That nickname is still used by many former classmates today. In fact, many of my high school baseball teammates and classmates don't even bother with the Ed part; they just call me Easy.

At the time, the name was willingly accepted as it was also sometimes used in reference to my favorite college basketball player of the day (well, of just about any day), local Cal State Long Beach hero William Edward “Easy Ed” Ratcliff. Roger also retained fond recollections of former NBA star “Easy Ed” Macauley. In short, Easy Ed it was and Easy Ed it would remain, for some, forever.

Speaking of basketball, we might as well take this opportunity to get that out of the way. By the time that I got to high school, I was at least a couple inches shorter than the shortest member of the “CEE” team; by our senior year, classmate Tony Marques stood just below 6-foot-tall and was still the shortest player on our varsity team. Through high school, I was close to my adult height, 5 foot 5½ inches, and simply could not compete with full-sized high school players. Regardless of whether I was Elgin Baylor in my head or pretended to be Ed Ratcliff under the hoop, my basketball game translated to high school ball even more poorly than had my

football skills. Freshman year I did not make the “CEE” team and Brother Charles McGannon’s always technically proficient freshman team was the absolute gateway to a basketball career at St. Anthony.

Sophomore year, I was convinced that things would change. I went out for, and made, the “BEE” team. Almost immediately after I qualified to play—I excelled in the only high school basketball game I ever competed in—I got a case of tonsillitis that was so bad that the Navy doctors in Long Beach finally agreed to the surgery that the Navy docs in Iowa had earlier refused. The mandated month-long recovery was during mid-season and I never again played basketball on an organized team. One football game, one basketball game, and, at that point, no high school baseball equaled one youthful yet disappointed and disillusioned former jock.

Gratefully, freshman year introduced a new, very positive, element that validated my delight at attending my school of choice. Love was in the air and for the only time during the entire four years (let alone the previous few late in grade school), I was happy with a girl who wanted to be with me rather than pining over a continued succession of girls with no interest in either Eddie or Easy Ed. Janet Lester spent some of her first year in high school fending off my advances.

Physically, Janet was unlike most girls who interested me: She was short (a good 2”-3” shorter than me) and stocky (a muscular volleyball player), with short hair and without a hint of non-white ethnicity. She flashed a huge, braces-filled, smile and threw a laser-like dagger-driven stare. Janet was smart and extremely committed to faithful Catholicism: she lived the real “good Catholic girl” ethic (not the fake kind that some girls used as a way to hide “naughty” behavior).

Janet and I never actually dated; we met only at school and during school-sponsored functions, especially the nearly monthly dances held in the gym. We spent time together in the courtyard before school and at lunch, and I sometimes watched her practice volleyball on the SA JV team. Then came the most wonderful adventures in our young lives. After school, one of the older SA girls that Janet knew sometimes provided her rides home. With our relationship progressing, I was allowed to ride along in the back seat with Janet on the way to her house. After the drop-off, I was taken to the nearest bus stop for my ride home. Things got very interesting in the backseat of that car.

Now, having never experienced an open-mouth, French kiss, I had zero idea that anything was missing in the equation. The heat seemed almost unbearable to me as things were. Janet, on the other hand, had a mouthful of new braces (for the year) and was pretty sure that French kissing led directly to a bad reputation (or worse) so had no intention whatsoever of allowing contact between anything but lips and tightly held hands. No tongues, no matter: Pressed lips were love enough to steam up the windows a bit. Our friends in the front seat were nice enough to ignore us as best as they could. Although this went on for months, we did not make it through our first year. Long before the end-of-the-year gatherings, Janet and I were no longer an item. She later developed a relationship with another classmate and I suffered through the rest of high school without a girlfriend.

After Janet, the tenor of my social life changed significantly. I seldom dated and only once went out with a female who attended St. Anthony High School. Instead, I had to rustle up girls from other schools/cities/counties when I needed a date for some special event, including companions for Christmas dances and proms.

Serving as the leader of our parish Chi Rho organization came with a distinctive and particularly useful perk during the two years I was in charge; I was even able to leverage the feature a couple of years after I was no longer president. The man who served as our adult advisor, Mr. Patrick Horan, was an executive in a local bank. The bank's Los Angeles office subscribed to a six-seat, Plexiglas-enclosed luxury box at the "Fabulous" Inglewood Forum, then the home of the Lakers and Kings. The bank executives filled the box for each and every game, but apparently, had no teen-agers in their homes because the box (and seats) went empty during concerts. Pat let me know that anytime I'd like to take in a show, he could check to see if the box was available.

The only difference between our group and the bank executives was that the scantily-clad females responsible for serving snacks and refreshments to the boxes made it clear to us, each time, that they would not be serving us: we'd have to get our concessions from the concourse, just like the regular paying crowd. They'd gotten the word that we weren't the sons and daughters of bank executives and that they could not expect the usual gratuities for serving us; their Forum bosses allowed them to focus their attention on more lucrative customers. We were fine with that. The seats were really cool and free; the deal even came with a parking pass!

I used that offer and privilege to take a group of friends to see concerts by Three Dog Night, Chicago (then known as the Chicago Transit Authority) and a Jimi Hendrix concert opened by the Buddy Miles Express. I took a gaggle of SAHS friends to the shows and generally had a great time, sans girlfriend that I didn't have notwithstanding.

Despite my total lack of luck with girlfriends, I had a pretty wonderful social time at St. Anthony. Especially after breaking up with Janet, I discovered that there were many "single"

girls who enjoyed taking the dance floor without long-term commitments. Girls who had boyfriends would sometimes share a dance with me if their relationships were secure and their boyfriend was off getting a beverage or sneaking a smoke (of one sort or the other). And in sophomore year, one of the new freshman boys began to provide great fun at dances such that we became fast friends, eventually cemented by being baseball teammates.

Ramon Estape's family emigrated from Cuba, via a very small boat, just before Castro's full takeover. They made their way from Miami to Long Beach in time for Ramon to attend a couple years of Catholic grade school and enter SAHS. Ramon loved to dance. Each of us thought himself to be the best dancer on the floor. We executed free-style rock and roll dancing and since it lacked any real judgment standards, other than how smoothly one could execute overly enthusiastic motion and how thoroughly one could soak clothing with sweat, we often faced off in true physical joy, regardless of which poor girl ended up being ignored as our dance partner. I often emulated James Brown while Ramon used a lot of Latin-dance moves that I'd never before seen. He was the only boy with quick enough feet to provide competition and Ramon and I had a blast at dances, with or without dates, although Ramon eventually latched onto a high school girlfriend. Sometimes the three of us danced together. Good times at dances contributed mightily to my positive feelings about social life at SAHS.

I was also fortunate to enjoy wonderful times in the company of girls who weren't going out with me (especially useful since only one girl at St. Anthony did, once). For example, I shared many a public bus ride sitting next to one of the most popular girls in my class, Bridget Martin. Bridget went steady with Joe Derryberry. Joe played on our JV basketball team in his freshman year (a significant accomplishment) and became the star running back on our varsity

football team for the next three years. I knew Joe, casually, from playing basketball against his grade school team. At Saint Anthony, Joe and I did not run with the same crowd as he hung out with his grade school mates as well as with the other successful athletes at the school. But we were friendly toward each other and given his size and popularity, I was no threat to his relationship with cheerleader Bridget, leaving her and I free to happily chat during the daily bus ride in our freshman year.

The bus route took us past St. Matthew's parish and school. One afternoon, toward the end of our first year, I told my bus-mate the story about losing my first little girl friend, the other Bridget. She listened intently and grew very silent for a while and then turned to me with the widest eyes I'd seen in a long time and said

“You know, I think that little girl was me. My folks got a divorce just after I was in the third grade and I went to live with my grandmother in Huntington Beach so left St. Matthews.”

We were both shocked and yet gladdened that we had each re-discovered an old friend.

I was also blessed by the good graces of Lynne Veeder, another female classmate who eased my loneliness through her kindness and care. One of the most oft-occurring social events associated with SAHS was accurately and enthusiastically labeled “*Party at Portners.*” Mark Portner was one of eleven children in a committed SAHS family: three older and four younger brothers and three younger sisters attended SAHS in our generation. Mark was (repeatedly) elected in our student governance, performed as a cheerleader, and ran as a long-distance athlete on our cross-country and track teams. Mark was well-liked for his smile, personality, and dare

we say most of all, because his parents allowed huge crowds of high school students to converge on their home on Friday or Saturday night for a “*Party at Portners.*”

Home to thirteen, the Portner estate was large both inside and out. There was ample garage and shed space as well as large yards front and back. The back yard was fenced for privacy; there was a covered patio and a place for a fire-pit. In short, the perfect location for a party. And yet, no place was fit for the large number of students who showed up for these bashes. No estimates were published; I’ll not hazard a numerical guess. Let us just say that it seemed as though “everyone was there” and there weren’t very many spaces not covered by a body or two.

Circumstances at Portner’s parties were to the liking of high school students. Light was provided in many locations; shadow and/or darkness in others. Hand holding was most certainly only the start of much of the male/female contact during the evening’s events. Music was provided; not quite so loud as to cause the neighbors to call the police early in the evening but by the end of the night, the party was almost always broken up by authorities answering noise complaints. Under-age drinking was, well, status quo as the adult Portners provided coffee, tea, hot cocoa, and punch yet did not supervise the liquid refreshments that the young people brought themselves. In short, a *Party at Portners* was a real bash. These events took place three or four times a year, only during the academic calendar, and often on a weekend featuring an important football or basketball game.

I always attended Portner’s parties as a single and I did not drink alcohol while there. Although I occasionally took in a little Spanada (cheap, sweet, Sangria-like fruit wine) in those days, I generally avoided alcohol when I drove to events. In the case of Parties at Portners, I almost always ended up drinking too much coffee and spending the rest of the night sitting up in

my bed at home wishing that I had gotten drunk with the rest of my friends. I probably looked a little gloomy during the party. That's where Lynne came in.

Though we never dated and spent very little time together other than at Mark's, Lynne allowed me to act as though I was her boyfriend at Portner's parties. We'd stand or sit together, sometimes hold hands, occasionally peck each other's cheek or lips, and carry on as though we were there together. Lynne was kind and gentle and had a sharp wit; we laughed a lot—she had a great sense of humor and was able to cheer me right up. I can't say why she never indicated further interest outside of Portner's parties—we know why I didn't pursue her: I was too busy chasing girls who didn't like me. I can only say that she saved many nights from embarrassment and loneliness and reminded me, regularly, that boys and girls did not have to date to be good friends and good company.

I usually only drank coffee or soft drinks at Portner's parties, but I was not immune to underage drinking. Now and then, standing a little too close to bottles of Spanada found me headed for home in less-than-perfect condition. One such late night I was forced to take refuge with one of our next-door-neighbors, a young Navy-wife, Kitty Moore.



Kitty Moore, circa 1969

Kitty lived next door during three of my high school years; her then husband, Ray, was often away from home, on Naval duty, including a tour off the coast of Vietnam during the war. Kitty was a southern-belle who only headed north to be with her man. After their divorce, she returned to her home in Charlotte, North Carolina and settled there for the rest of her days.

I pulled my car into her driveway (instead of ours) and quietly knocked at her back door. Kitty and Ray kept a large German Sheppard but “Admiral” knew me so didn’t bark at me. Kitty let me in, assessed my perilous condition, had a good laugh at me, then started the coffee brewing. I stayed there an hour or two until I was able to gather myself for a straight-forward entry next door at 5231. I sat up all night, half-hammered and fully caffeinated, thinking that I might have gotten away with it. I suppose that Mom and Dad heard the story from Kitty eventually but I never lost driving privileges over that (or any other) drinking and driving episode.

During the summer 1970, Kitty and I attended a rock concert together: Blood Sweat and Tears, with David Clayton-Thomas, at the Hollywood Bowl. Kitty drove and we had a blast. I was sad when Kitty learned that her marriage with Ray was ending and pulled up stakes to return home, in January of 1971. She went on to a successful marriage and business ventures in the Carolinas.

That BS&T show was not my first music concert experience. Growing up in the Los Angeles area provided numerous social advantages, especially in the 1960s and 1970s when prices were still reasonable and the massive crowds that would eventually swamp special events were yet in the future (in most cases).

For example, I spent many a Friday or Saturday night with a date at Disneyland. In those years, general admission ranged between \$1.20 (when I was a young boy) and \$3.50 (by the time I left for college in 1971). Due to the many visits from Midwestern relatives on summer vacations, we always had a shoe box filled with unused ride tickets in the den closet. All of the “E” tickets (for the Matterhorn, Pirates of the Caribbean, Haunted House and other top rides)

were gone; “D” tickets also seldom remained. But there were always ample quantities of “C,” “B,” and “A” tickets that meant free rides down Main Street behind horse drawn carriages and around the park on the Monorail as well as other lesser attractions. In the summer, Disneyland featured a parade just before and fireworks just after dark and always employed the best local bands with plenty of room on the outdoor dance floor. My first concerts were at Disneyland where B-list artists such as Tommy Roe and Joe Tex held forth for only the cost of admission. I even spent time, there, listening to the resident Disney Dixieland Orchestra, my first in-person experience with Dixieland and traditional jazz music. Many nights were spent showing dates around the Magic Kingdom. It was the very best cheap date that one could imagine.

The first stand-alone concert that I was allowed drive myself to occurred in November, 1969 in the Long Beach Auditorium. The show proved to be, perhaps, *the* most memorable of the many concerts I’ve been fortunate to attend.

Since the show was “just downtown,” (11 in-town miles away) my folks allowed me to drive the Volkswagen square-back so that I could see Simon and Garfunkel in concert. Little did we know (virtually no one in the public knew) that the show was part of the final American tour before the duo’s seemingly sudden breakup. They were promoting their smash *Bridge Over Troubled*

Water album (that ended up as the duo’s last studio-recorded album). Arthur’s rendition (with only a piano in accompaniment) of the title track was stunning. I bootlegged an audiocassette recording of the show and spent the entire thirty-minutes I waited in the parking lot after the

SIMON and GARFUNKEL



SAT. NOV. 15 8:30 P.M.

LONG BEACH ARENA

RESERVED SEATS: \$6.50, 5.50, 4.50, 3.50 at

Arena Box Office, All Mutual Agencies, Music City Stores, Sight & Sound Stores, Ticketless & Compulsory Outlets. Mail Orders with Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope to Arena Box Office.

—ONLY SO. CAL. APPEARANCE—

A SIGHT & SOUND PRODUCTION



show (for the traffic to thin) rewinding and listening to the song over and over and over. Pure genius; a notable, unforgettable, first concert experience!

Janitor on Signal Hill

A teenager driving one of the family cars requires gas money; even high school students without intensely active social lives need spending money. My lawn care business provided adequate income during grade school but when junior year and a driver's license were firmly in place, \$10-20.00 a week did not adequately fill the bill.

Southern California provided almost limitless opportunities for youths seeking their first job experience in the 1960s. Easy entry into the fast food industry promised a way to pick up

Tastee-Freez-Long Beach



quick cash as soon as one turned sixteen. Not long after passing that threshold, I applied at the *Tastee-Freez* franchise outlet across the street from the Los Altos Shopping Center.

As I entered junior year, time away from sports drew me toward reentry into the world of high school athletics: I was planning to go out for the varsity baseball team in the spring. During the job application process, I was very clear with management about the need to attend practices after school; my availability at “the Freez” was limited to night shifts and after practice on Friday and weekends. That arrangement suited a management team having trouble filling shifts that older employees did not want.

After a week's worth of training, I settled into the drive-in service routine. I learned to take orders, fill out tickets and clip them to the short-order wheel; I made change, drew cones from the soft-serve machines, and delivered products to customers at the window. When the schedule went up for what would have been my second week of work, I was listed for three after-school afternoons. Aghast, I confronted the store manager by reminding him about our conversation and agreement during my interview: I needed weekday afternoons free for baseball practice. Suddenly and unexpectedly (to a young boy not yet hip to the ways of the world), Mr. Manager did not remember our "deal," and insisted that everyone working at *Tastee-Freez* had to be available for all assigned shifts. I would have to show up as scheduled. I thanked him, handed him my white apron, and walked away. I wish I could say "never to work in the fast food industry again." Alas, not true; but that sad tale comes much later.

Gratefully and fortunately, my good friend Tom Brenner offered an almost immediate solution to both my new out-of-work status and my financial needs. Tom preceded me, by two years, as St. Cornelius Chi Rho president. Despite our age difference, we'd often played pick-up baseball and basketball together. Tom worked as an evening janitor, on Signal Hill, at the firm where his father was an executive. Founded in 1922, the *Signal Gasoline Company* merged with *Standard Oil* in 1929 to become *The Signal Gas and Oil Company*. An additional merger, with the *Garrett Corporation* in 1964, resulted in *The Signal Companies*. Tom was part of a four-man crew that cleaned the corporate offices five nights a week and that sometimes did extra janitorial work on the weekends. The *Signal* operation featured a large corporate office building with executive offices, data processing and call center (such as they were in the mid-1960's), and a

wide range of corporate business services. Three outlying (annex) buildings housed engineering, drafting, and research and development teams.

Each night, Lloyd H. “Buzz” Busbee led a janitorial team through a fine-tuned routine lasting approximately three hours. Since no work could begin until the last employee had clocked out, the shift started at 6:30 pm. I was easily able to attend practice after school at Wardlow Park, a short five blocks from the house, walk home for a quick dinner, then make the ten-minute drive to Signal Hill in time to begin the nightly ritual.

Working for Buzz followed a strict pattern and taught me how janitorial work is properly completed. I have, since, almost always found the janitorial work done at places I’ve been employed to be wanting as it never measures up to Buzz’s high standards. Buzz instructed each member of the team in every required task. The contract for this job was Buzz’s only source of income (other than sketchy claims of winnings at a local racetrack). Buzz insisted on nightly meticulous cleaning and near-perfect outcomes. Each task featured particular equipment and specific techniques leading to a clean outcome. Our work began in the corporate office then moved to the annex buildings.

First, the low man on the totem pole, me for a time, collected the trash. Rolling a large barrel down the hall, the “trasher” entered each office to empty the trashcan and dump and wipe clean (with a specially prepared rag) the many ashtrays on desks. Each small plastic trashcan in offices was wiped with a different (equally clean and prepared) rag than was the ashtray. Plastic bags were removed from the large cans in common rooms and replaced with clean bags. The small boxes filled with punch-outs from computer punch-card machines were emptied from under each of the stations featuring that not-yet-fully-electronic technology.

While the “trasher” made his rounds, the “sweeper” cleaned floors and the “bathroom man” cleaned sinks and toilets. While the trasher worked away, the sweeper swept all of the linoleum hallways and common areas with a push mop, always being careful to stay well behind the rolling trash can in the hallway. Eventually, the “sweeper” took up a standard Bissell portable vacuum and cleaned all of the carpeting in common areas, including the removable entry-way carpets that the “trasher” had taken outside the door so that they could be vacuumed away from the hallway and so that the area underneath them could be swept clean before the newly-vacuumed mats were returned to their rightful place. The “bathroom man” transitioned from cleaning sinks and toilets to wet-moping the bathroom tile floors.

All the while, Buzz worked on consecutive games of solitaire at a long table in the lunchroom. At the point that we were out of view from the lunchroom, Buzz opened his copy of the *Daily Racing Form* and planned his bets for the next day’s visit to Santa Anita, Hollywood Park, or the Los Alamitos Racetrack. By the time the crew returned to the lunchroom, Buzz was back to solitaire and the racing form was neatly folded at his side on the table.

At this point, approximately two hours had elapsed. When the crew joined Buzz in the lunchroom we took a fifteen-minute break punctuated by much chatting and teasing. After the break, the crew exited the back door and into the white 1955 Dodge Town Wagon that Buzz kept on the premises for cleaning the annex buildings. The Wagon held a duplicate set of the cleaning equipment. The front, bench seat, was just wide enough for the three crew members to slide into. The senior crewman drove; special skill was required as the wagon featured a 4-speed manual transmission with shifter stick on the steering wheel column. Brenner had learned to drive a stick shift on that very vehicle; I knew how to operate a stick on the floor but the “Buzz-mobile”

provided my first instruction and practice with a “stick on the column.” The annex buildings were cleaned following the same routine used in the main office building, with the exception that the senior man on the crew carefully dusted each desk area with a feather duster. Only Buzz was allowed to clean the desks in the main building.

During the hour the crew cleaned the annex buildings, Buzz completed the cleaning circuit in the administration building. Taking his “special” Bissell vacuum into each carpeted office (he had a newer and cleaner model than the one used in the hallways and common rooms), Buzz, first, carefully circled the room with his feather duster. He started by running the duster over the window blinds in each room. Then he checked to see that the trash cans and ash trays were thoroughly cleaned (no streaks or smears allowed) followed by lightly dusting over the edges of bookcases and the tops of doors. He gently dusted each chair and desktop, moving only those items that appeared to harbor or hide unsightly dust or paper scraps. He kept a clean, damp, towel in his back pocket and firmly wiped off any stains or marks from desktops as well as wiping down each phone receiver. Finally, Buzz vacuumed each carpet and carefully returned chairs to their proper positions. When Buzz turned off the light and closed the door, he left a clean room behind—every single room, every single night. By the time the crew returned from cleaning the out buildings, Buzz was back at the lunchroom table, playing his last hand of solitaire.

I worked this job through high school and 3 years of college, only stopping for summer vacation trips during high school and the first term of freshman year in college. I was allowed nights off when I had baseball games; those always finished much later than did practices.

Buzz sometimes lined up contracted work on the weekends and in the summer. Some of that work was at the *Signal Companies* as Buzz's regular contract did not include "extras" such as window washing. Other times the work was elsewhere. Often, *Signal* employees contracted Buzz for cleaning the carpets or windows in their homes. Occasionally, he would do a job for someone we suspected was a current or former girl-friend. I suppose that he sometimes took side jobs to help pay off various debts, more than likely, from gambling. The first two years I was on the job, weekend and/or summer contracted work went to Tom as he was the senior member of the crew. But when Brenner went off to college at Loyola Marymount in LA, I was thereafter the eager recipient of the extra work. Oh, I guess I didn't mention that Buzz didn't actually do any work at the side jobs; he just arranged the contracts, took a cut off the top, hired us out for the work, and dropped by the worksite when we'd finished to be sure that our work was up to his standards. We were more than accepting of this arrangement, as the pay rate was higher than usual and sometimes included tips from the homeowner/customer.

The money earned as a janitor enabled me to support my modest transportation and entertainment habits. "As long as I kept my grades up," my folks provided the use of a vehicle. First, I shared the hatchback with Mom; eventually, Dad invested in older model used cars including an aqua-blue Studebaker and a classic Edsel. A date-night trip to a concert using one of Dad's cars, rammed the first wedge into my relationship with Roger and Evangeline.

I met a girl named Debbie Payne through a mutual friend prior to our junior-year prom. With special permission, we were allowed to bring "outsiders" to the prom; non-SAHS students were forbidden at other school dances. Debbie and I had a fine time at that event. We spent most

of the evening making-out on the outdoor balcony of the high-rise, beachfront classic *Villa Riviera Hotel*. Debbie was my first “French kiss,” and man could that girl suck face!

I was eager to develop our relationship, so I asked her to accompany me to a concert. I had purchased tickets to see then budding-star Jose Feliciano at the *Greek Theatre* near Griffith Park in North Los Angeles. I’d long wanted to take in a show at the *Greek* and at the same time I was hoping to impress Debbie into becoming my girlfriend. I talked Dad into allowing me to drive his 1965 Chrysler Imperial (“the Detroit Living Room”) to the show; he was reluctant but I assured him that I would be careful. I was, but to no avail.

The *Greek* is a relatively small venue with (in those days) even less adequate parking than most concert spots. Attendants directed cars that parked on the grass lots surrounding the facility. We pulled in and got a space, enjoyed the concert, then headed for home. At the point we spotted our car, the trouble was apparent. Not a single parking attendant remained. They worked only until the cars were parked; getting out it was “every driver for him/her self.” Cars darted every which way toward the few exit driveways. The Imperial was long, wide, and heavy, with an extensive turning radius; one did not just whip it around. As I turned to approach an exit, a car cut in front of me: I came to a dead stop just to the left of a parking stanchion. The exit was just to our right and as I turned the wheel to make the tight turn, before we moved forward even an inch, I pressed the stanchion into the rear right (passenger) door. The door face buckled slightly under the force. I was able to veer to the left and leave without doing any further damage; but of course, my panic ruined the night. Apparently, my lack of confidence soured Debbie on our relationship; we dated only one time thereafter before she took up with a guy at her high school.

I woke Dad up as soon as I arrived at home and explained what had happened. The folks assured me that all would be well and that they were glad that I was not injured. They took the car to a cousin-in-law, Ray Gansko, who worked as a trucker but who had once owned and operated a body shop. That's when the trouble started. Ray assured them, with all the authority he could muster from twenty years of fixing cars and bending body parts, that such damage could absolutely *not* have been produced in the manner that I described. I had, obviously, been hit by another vehicle/driver.

No matter how much I re-explained and argued, my parents did not believe me and thereby began the first real break in our relationship during my teen-age years. From then on, my folks doubted my word. Except for the Boy Scout misdeed (beer and cigarettes at the campout), the occasional splash of Spanada, and my self-destructive smoking habit, I always told my parents the truth (oh wait, there was ditching Sunday mass). Therefore, I expected them to believe me and to think of me as an honest person. The Chrysler Imperial accident and their preferring Ray's interpretation over my explanation, dented our relationship far worse than the damage the car suffered at the behest of that *Greek Theatre* parking stanchion.

Wardlow Park Redux: The Diamond

As I approached the middle of the third year at SAHS, the defining characteristic of my time there came into focus. Having decided to return to the baseball diamond, I faced a somewhat daunting task. By the time I tried out for the varsity during the spring of my junior year, I was more than three years behind all of the boys playing on the team.

Our team that year was not outstanding. Although there were solid players at many of the positions, the team featured only a couple of gifted athletes and suffered from a lack of quality

pitching. The year would be Marty Johnson's last season as head baseball coach. His assistant coach, my first year back, was fortuitous for me: Walter "Spud" O'Neil was in the midst of a transition from coaching grade school athletics to the high school level. Spud had been our basketball coach at St. Cornelius through 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Having a familiar coach on the field everyday provided vast support for my return to my best sport.

Unfortunately, my baseball skills did not re-enter the sport along with my body and will. Even in high school, 3 ½ years away from the sport is a long time, especially when teammates and competitors are playing nearly year-round. In addition to giving up organized play, I had scaled back all other baseball activities other than listening to the Angels on the radio. Physical education classes and basketball in the driveway enabled me to stay in relatively good shape; I was still thin and fast. But I simply could not flip the baseball skills switch to the upright position on command.

The greatest weakness on that team should have provided me almost instantaneous playing time. The incumbent second baseman could neither field his position nor hit a lick. Even though he was a senior returning from the year before, his hold on the position wasn't even tenuous: it was non-existent. The coaches tried three or four other players at the position, including myself and the guy who would be the shortstop-in-keystone-combination with me the next year, good friend Tom Crotty. Although the incumbent's play was so bad that both Tom and myself drew a number of starts at second base our junior year, neither of us was able to nail down the position. Tom had always played shortstop, so the move to second base was counter-intuitive for him. I had played second base for years and the position should have been a breeze.

But I simply could not make my body respond to commands. The team floundered, but no more than did I. At the end of the season, I was determined to improve toward our senior year and season.

For the first time since 7th grade, I played baseball on a summer-league team. I signed up and tried out for the Alamitos Bay team, St. Anthony's entry in the American Legion summer league. The team was coached by legendary Albert "Frenchy" Guesno, a short, stock, grizzled, cursing, mean-looking (and sometimes acting) old school throwback of a coach. Nearly everyone who played for Frenchy claimed to not like him much. But almost everyone who played for Frenchy left convinced that he was one of the best youth baseball coaches in Southern California. Frenchy taught advanced fundamentals to adolescents who thought that they knew everything they needed to know about baseball. They were wrong: Playing for Frenchy made one a better player largely due to the fundamentals he drilled until good habits were formed.

The summer started pretty rough as I continued to perform poorly. Worse, my return to the game after such a long layoff led to the development of a sore throwing elbow. While the primary cause was probably a poorly formed side-arm throwing motion, correcting the bad mechanics (the first thing that Frenchy did) failed to reduce the pain. Eventually, Frenchy hauled me off, on a Sunday morning, to one of the oddest (and truth be told, scariest) incidents of my young life.

Frenchy told me to meet him at an address near the corner of Anaheim and Temple in Long Beach. In the late 1960s, this neighborhood was not upscale. In fact, two short, white, fellows like us probably wouldn't walk the streets at night without keeping eyes peeled for trouble. Frenchy took me into a squat building with a sign on the door that indicated something

about medical services but I did not have time to fully comprehend the details. I became more an apprehensive little guy than an over-confident teenager.

Before long, I was the subject in my first (and only) hypnosis session (as the subject; in early college years, I dabbled as a hypnotist). Not knowing what was going to happen wasn't clearly either good or bad: in short, I was probably more in shock than anything else. Without asking me or my parents, Frenchy took it on himself to take a long-shot, last-gasp at curing my sore arm. I have NO idea whether it helped. I'm sure that I had sore arms later in my career; I do not remember if, later in the summer of 1970, the pain was less severe than before our Sunday visit to the hypnotist. I do know that I was thereby convinced that Frenchy was as far off his rocker as his worst critics thought while also being the single most dedicated and important baseball man I ever encountered. I practiced hard and long that summer; gradually my play improved. Eventually most of my abilities returned. Two important points about this.

First, the moment that I knew my baseball abilities returned was a joyous, stunning and unexpected revelation. The hypnosis did not appear to do much for my arm and probably did little for the rest of my game. But learning and playing under Frenchy, and getting more repetitions under my belt, mattered a lot. One at bat stood out: I ripped the ball of the base of the wall, in the left-center gap, at Long Beach's best baseball venue, Blair Field. As I tore around the bases, turning second and heading for third, a euphoric feeling of flow came over me like a cloak. In that moment it dawned on me: "I'm back." Further, I was conscious in that moment of the depth and breath of my baseball abilities. I could really play.

Second, the circumstances further illustrate my lack of maturity. I didn't finish that summer season with the team, further building on my newly re-acquired skill level. Instead, I

headed off to Iowa with Mom, Dad, and Aunt Lucille for our summer trip. The training lacuna would not see me regress the coming spring; but it certainly did not enable me to build on my summer successes.

Senior season held the promise of an improved SAHS varsity team and my re-emergence as a quality player. For about six months, from the summer of 1970 through mid-spring, 1971, I was one of the better high school 2nd base prospects in Southern California, a traditional hotbed of baseball talent.

At SAHS, I faced an early-season challenge from a would-be usurper. “Tim” had started at 2nd base on the JV team our freshman and sophomore years (recall that I didn’t play at all those years) but skipped junior year to focus on football. Once football season ended in the fall, Tim set his sights on regaining his starting position on the



*Adequate hitter, but not exactly
Nellie Fox*

baseball team in our senior season. The fact that I had not conquered the position in our junior year encouraged him. Tim was talented, but I was at the top of my game and held off every effort he made. I was faster, played better offense and defense. Tim’s challenge was met and in weeks he stopped coming to practice. I was deeply embedded as the team’s starting second baseman.

Personal resurgence or not, I was not the team’s best player. Our starting left-handed pitcher, John Engelke, was as talented, motivated, and dedicated as any high school pitcher in Southern California. John would go on to a college pitching



Making the Pivot Play

career at CSU, Los Angeles and was the fastest athlete on our team (I was a close second). My Cuban dancing buddy, Ramon Estape, was an outstanding 1st baseman with plenty of pop in his bat. Good friend Tom Crotty held down the shortstop side of our double-play combination. Junior catcher Steve Capic was very solid behind the plate and served as our offensive leader. Two juniors, Bob Walker in center and Bobbie Hill in left field, provided solid defense with speed and outright athleticism. They would be superior players in their senior season. Greg Sanossian ended up being the best player of the bunch. Greg was our 2nd pitcher and right fielder. He went on to play 1st base on a 4-year scholarship at St. Johns University and was eventually drafted by, and went to a Spring Training with, the New York Yankees.



The day baseball was great, then as good as over

As we played games prior to Angelus League play, our collective future looked pretty bright. We won more games than we lost and appeared to be a very solid bunch. Mid-season in league play, we faced top-ranked Bishop Amat. The Lancers not only sat atop the Angelus League but were also highly ranked in the CIF southern section. Our pitcher, John Engelke and their ace, Tony Bonura, battled through a tied game. In the 3rd inning, my second at-bat, I made a fundamental mistake that led to a short-term win and many

long-term losses. Bonura threw a high, hard, fastball right at my head. Training says “turn toward the plate, showing your back to the pitcher.” Unfortunately, my brain and body, instead, said, “Look at that sucker, it’s coming right for my face; GET DOWN!” So I turned the wrong way, then down I went, crumpling in the batter’s box like a jack in the box heading back down his hole. **SNAP!**

I'd heard that sound before; you may recall the ankle injury in my last football game. However, good news, sort of: The umpire thought that the sound was the ball hitting my plastic batting helmet and immediately awarded me first base as a hit-batsman. I struggled up and jogged down to first base. My ankle was absolutely killing me. But we needed a run so I stole second base on the first pitch. Two pitches later, Bobby Hill lined a single just over the 2nd base bag. I took off as fast as I could on one good wheel, turned around third and slid safely into home, scoring the only run of the game. Engelke pitched a masterful shutout and we moved into a tie for first place (with the Lancers); the game was the highlight of my baseball career and of the Saints' 1971 season.

After scoring, I came out of the game; my baseball career was never quite the same thereafter and the 1971 SAHS Saints suffered as well. Although not the most important player on our team, I was the leadoff man and spark plug. Unfortunately, the baseball team did not have a sports trainer; I didn't get the right medical care for my ankle and did not fully recover until well after the season ended. The injury only kept me out of the lineup one full game but severely limited me in a number of ways. Speed was crucial to every aspect of my ability but I could not push off the injured right ankle. That limited my ability to bunt for hits (I was a very proficient bunter with a lot of infield hits that way), ruined my base-stealing and defensive range, and limited my stability around the bag (especially on my throws to first during double plays). I couldn't swing the bat properly; my plant foot wasn't stable. As my batting average and play took nose-dives, so did our overall team performance. We made the CIF southern section playoffs but were routed in the first game.

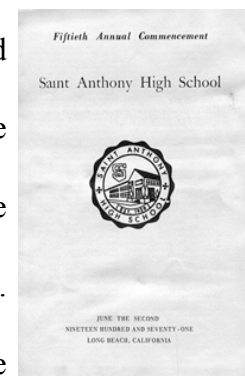
Given my poor performance during the key part of the season, I should not have received an offer of a college scholarship to play baseball. However, earlier in the season, when things were going good, an assistant coach on our football team, Mr. Latham, saw me play, was impressed, and contacted the baseball coach at his alma mater, the University of Nevada at



Gary Powers (l) and Coach Jackie Jensen (r) spring, 1971 season—the spring before my arrival at UNR

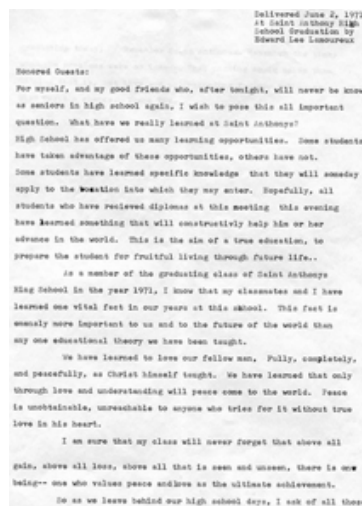
Reno. I was offered a full tuition scholarship (we had to pay for my room and board), essentially, sight-unseen by UNR. The day after the ankle injury, I was scheduled to meet the team and coach, legendary former big-league MVP Jackie Jensen, at their game with Loyola of LA. I made the visit on crutches, thereby further “bolstering” (or was that “blustering”?) my already shaky credentials. I spoke earnestly and eagerly with Coach Jensen as I was hopeful that playing for him would shore up the weakest part of my game, hitting, and thereby bring me closer to the only goal I’d ever had while playing baseball: to play in the major leagues. As we shall see, later, that dream did not end as hoped.

The close of my time at St. Anthony featured an event that foreshadowed important aspects of my adult future. Our 1971 graduation year celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first graduating class at St. Anthony High School. Special booklets, banners, and promotions were prepared and the graduation ceremony was scheduled in the Long Beach Civic Center downtown; a venue that featured a much more formal and celebrated atmosphere than the usual walk-through in the St. Anthony gymnasium. As is the custom at most high school graduations the



featured student speaker was the class valedictorian, Frances Tinker. Additionally, the school offered the opportunity for another student to give a speech at graduation and held a speech contest to select this student.

I was fortunate that St. Anthony sponsored neither a debate nor speech team—I was in competition with students who had only given speeches when seeking positions in student government or for class projects. Had I been up against formally trained high school forensic students I’m sure that I would not have won the competition. Nevertheless, our high school graduation featured Easy Ed Lamoureux at the podium



representing a student perspective in a less scholarly way than that expected of Francis. And I almost fulfilled that lower expectation in spades.

Although I had written and rehearsed the speech in preparation for the competition leading up to the event I had not yet fully committed the speech to memory. I decided that I should take note cards as reminders in case parts of the speech failed to come to the tip of my tongue on command and so walked across the stage toward the podium holding a stack of 3 x 5 note cards. I do not recall what it was that caused me to lose control of my feet and hands but my foot skidded a bit and I moved my hands to brace myself so as not to fall. I did not trip and fall; however, I did manage to splay the deck of 3 x 5 cards on the floor and podium as though preparing to play a game of “52 pickup.” Flustered not only by my fumble but by the size of the crowd—while it probably numbered around a thousand it seemed like 10 times that many—I only managed to pick up the cards; I did not have time to reorder them properly.



*After 1971 SAHS
Graduation. Back
row: Janet Lester
and boyfriend. St.
Cornelius & St.
Anthony
classmates
Jeannie (Fanelli)
Torres and Easy
Ed in front*

And so I cannot say whether I gave the speech as planned. The audience applauded and I think that the speech was well received but of course, who knows? The only evidence of the speech that I was planning to give is the text of the draft from the speech that I gave during the contest; that text was written out on 8 x 11 sheets of white paper before transfer to the poorly planned index cards. Nevertheless, I came away from the event with a sense that I could be good at that sort of thing.

Life after high school almost always produces surprises. We'll get to those parts soon enough. In the mean-time, it is important to note one life-changing event that occurred over that first post-high school summer.

Mark Portner experienced a tragic accident while swimming at the beach and suffered damage to his neck and spine that left him confined to wheelchair the rest of his life. The unfairness of it, the closeness of it, the randomness of it struck each of us to our very core and reminded us that indeed life after high school would never be the same. Good news: Mark went on to a successful career as a lawyer. Lamoureux, on the other hand, wasn't ever getting into law school. And more not so good news: As one should expect, not all of Easy Ed's plans and dreams worked out as designed. In fact, the name didn't even stick!

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