

STAFF STORIES

THE BUS DRIVER



One of the drawbacks in starting a new school was the lack of facilities for student activities. While the teams could practice at Granada, until 1972 all “home” football games had to be played at Livermore High School on a Saturday, or a Friday night if Livermore was away. The Physical Education staff dearly wanted to expand their program to include swimming and bowling, but there was no pool and the only bowling alley was located at The Granada Bowl on Railroad Avenue.

Enter Lois Wheeler. Ms. Wheeler was one of the thirteen original teachers who transferred to Granada in January 1964. She looked to remedy this situation immediately. So she studied and passed the licensing to allow her to drive a school bus. She then, along with fellow teacher Pat Fracisco, bussed students to May Nissen park for swimming and to the bowling alley for bowling.



Ms. Wheeler’s escapades as a bus driver were not without incident. On two separate occasions the bus came back in a slightly different condition than when it went out. One happened when a tree somehow was too low for proper clearance, and a major limb of the tree was divorced from its trunk. This led to a heated discussion with the owner of the tree. The second situation occurred when Ms. Wheeler acquired “a great bus with synchronized gears and all”¹⁸¹ and, while making a sharp turn, drove a little too close to a cement fence at the golf driving range located at the end of L Street.

A third incident that drew the ire of the local educational leaders, however, was the time when Ms. Wheeler, on the afternoon of the Granada-Livermore football game, decided to bypass the scheduled trip to May Nissen Park and instead drove the bus slowly down First Street with the kids singing the fight song and whooping and hollering the entire way. For good measure, she then decided to head for Livermore High School, proceeding to drive the bus around the school with her students serenading the Cowboys. After deciding she “needed to get out of there”¹⁸², she was met back at Granada by “Jack Lee (Principal) and Marie Costick (Dean of Girls). She recalled, “He (Lee) started reading me the riot act and telling me how furious the Superintendent was. I asked him if I was fired, but he just looked at me and kinda winked. That was the end of it.”¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Lois Wheeler, March 7, 2014

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Ms. Wheeler's career as the bus driver was rather short-lived, especially after the local bus drivers protested, and the swimming pool at Granada was opened in June 1965

CASUAL FRIDAYS (OR SWEET REVENGE)

The following occurred after Principal Kevin Drake held a regular staff office meeting in the late 1990s. Terri Saenz, who was working as a secretary in the Student Services office at the time, best tells it:

We were having an office meeting and discussing casual Fridays. We were saying that we would still dress appropriately and professionally, though wearing jeans. (Drake) then made the wise crack "So this means you'll dress up the other four days", meaning we didn't really dress that nicely to begin with. We all found his being a smart-ass funny, but after the meeting, I suggested the following Friday we show him and really dress up. I remember going to a second-hand store to find a floor-length formal. We all scrambled to get our attire together and the next Friday we came to work looking like we were going to a red-carpet event. I believe some of the women wore tiaras. It was fun and I think someone at the D.O. (District Office) got wind of it and came over to take a few pictures. I surely hope there are pictures.

The fall-out from this event is that the offices were abnormally full of students the entire day as they came by to take a look.

Kevin Drake said that he filed this event under "Lessons Learned."

Footnote: Most of the dresses were definitely a dress code violation in any era, thus the influx of students to the offices.

THE CALCULUS CLASS

Sometime in 1977, Joey Wujek, the class of 77's student body president, and star basketball player, approached English teacher, Jim Willis, with a request.

Joey was in an after-school Calculus class at Granada, being taught by Joe West from Chabot Community College in Hayward. Joey told Mr. Willis that he and the other students all liked Mr. West and wanted to pull a prank on him and wondered if he would help them out in their little "joke."

The class was once a week on Wednesdays and Mr. West had told the class that on some Wednesday in the next month, there would be an administrator from Chabot attending the class to evaluate his teaching. He thus asked the students to please be on their best behavior during the evaluator's visit. They, of course, agreed.

Joey, being a clever and somewhat devious student asked Mr. Willis to come to the class the next Wednesday and pretend to be the evaluator. The plan was that the students would then act in extremely rude and immature ways and that they would give asinine answers to any questions Mr. West asked. Mr. Willis, somewhat devious himself, agreed to take part in the plot.

However, over the weekend, Mr. Willis had second thoughts. He surmised that teachers do need to stick together so he found out from fellow teacher, Len Abert, how to get in contact with Joe West.

He then informed Mr. West of the situation, and both agreed to give the students a "real show."

The next Wednesday, Mr. Willis wore a suit and tie (one of only a handful of times anyone had ever seen this done at Granada), borrowed someone's glasses, loaded up his briefcase, and walked into the Calculus class about one-half hour into the period. Mr. West looked at Mr. Willis and inquired, "Are you from Chabot?" He answered, "Yes. My name is Dr. Williams." A few of the students started to "snicker" but soon stopped because, supposedly, they had never seen him before. He then proceeded to a desk in the back of the room.

Soon, all chaos broke loose. The students started making various animal noises; at a signal from one student, they all pushed their textbooks on the floor; another student stood up, insisted on telling the class a joke, and it turned out to be quite foul; every question Mr. West asked was answered in some inane, imbecilic way.

Mr. Willis sat at his desk, furiously taking notes, and shaking his head in disgust. Finally, having had enough, he stood up and said, "Mr. West, I am frankly disgusted by what I have witnessed here. There has been a total lack of respect for you as a teacher or for me as a visitor. There has been extremely immature and rude behavior." Mr. West responded, "But, sir, don't you think what really counts is whether or not learning is taking place?" Mr. Willis replied, "Of course, but I don't feel any REAL learning can take place in such a pigsty atmosphere. In fact, Mr. West, I am going to have to write up a negative evaluation, and this could mean your job." During this tirade a few of the students were turning around and giving Mr. Willis the "high sign," meaning to "back off" a little.

After Mr. Willis said this could cost him his job, Mr. West slammed his textbook down onto the podium loudly and shouted, "Okay, you teach the @\$%#&^* class!" and then he stormed out of the room.

Mr. Willis looked at the students and said, "Do you think I went too far?" Their response was unanimously in the affirmative. Joey Wujek then headed for the classroom door to get Mr. West, but was interrupted by Mr. Willis who said, "Wait, Joey, I'll take care of this." He then went out the classroom door and saw Mr. West across the hall, leaning against some student lockers, doubled over in laughter. Both teachers shook hands, even though this was

the first time they had met, and then walked arm-in-arm back into the classroom. Mr. Willis then pointed at the students and said, "You have just been SMOKED!"

THIS BOOK IS BANNED

There was a book banned from the library in the late '60s. Forty years later the name of the book seems irrelevant, even though *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was the most prevalent recollection.

A mischievous social science instructor, who was against the banning of any book, took it upon himself to place this book back on the library shelf. He even replicated the book information for the card catalog. (For those of you who don't remember, the card catalog was the system used to chronicle all books in the library.) This individual then solicited the help of the Granada principal in this scheme.

The principal went to the library and looked up the title of the book in the card catalog and then went to the librarian to inquire why this banned book was still on the shelf. A flustered and embarrassed librarian had no answer but assured the principal it would be dispatched immediately.

A few weeks later, the teacher again placed the book and the appropriate reference in the library. The principal again inquired of the librarian why this book was still on the library shelf. The librarian was speechless.

Knowing when to quit this charade, the teacher and principal admitted this prank to the relieved librarian.



CONCLUSION

In the summer of 2013, we volunteered to spearhead a committee to research the history of Granada High School's first fifty years. Since that time we have spent hundreds of hours reading newspaper stories, perusing yearbooks, and interviewing alumni and staff. It truly has been a labor of love to bring to life the innovative spirit that has been a trademark of Granada since 1963. As educators looking into our past, it is heartwarming to know that we were part of a movement that did not accept the status quo. A constant over the past 50 years was the GHS staff continually investigating improved teaching techniques, curricular modifications, and doing everything humanly possible to make student life at Granada a positive learning experience.

As we conclude this effort to document the first years of Granada, there is a sense that there was so much more to say. But, again, the theme that comes through to us is that Granada has been a special place, from the first pioneering students and teachers to the present day. Granada has not been afraid of challenges, of making those changes in an effort to improve the educational experiences for students. We have been a family, not always getting along, but always invested in what is best for all students. We have lost some good friends along the way, and have made new ones. The Granada experience happened because of the contributions of many, too numerous to name.

Our hope is that the innovation that is so central to Granada's spirit will continue to thrive. And may future generations of staff and students say, with pride, **Go Mats!**