

FAREWELL

Continued from B-1

Rowe helped build gymnasium the school shares with community

the same campus and principal.

Upon Rowe's recommendation, the district's board of trustees in the early 1970s created seventh and eighth grades to serve the community's middle-schoolers. Doing so kept youngsters closer to home and reduced the taxes levied upon their parents by the San Dieguito Union High School District, said former Trustee Al Graff.

Rowe helped build the gymnasium the school shares with the community. He has rooted for his students at countless sporting events.

"One of my best memories is looking over from whatever sport I was playing and hearing him cheering from the sidelines," said Melissa Plummer, 21, a former Rancho Santa Fe student.

Some alumni invite Rowe to their weddings.

"I've been to four this summer," he said. "One day I went to two (weddings) that included three former students."

Much in the world of education has changed since Rowe joined the district as a teacher in 1958. He later worked as an assistant principal and principal before becoming superintendent in 1964.

In those days, principals could spank a naughty student.

That happened "not very often and not very firmly," Rowe said.

One student cut and drilled for Rowe a "board of education." The paddle served for gunboat diplomacy and never was used, he said.

Science also has changed since the late 1950s.

"At that time they said there were 93 elements and there would never be any more," he said.

The latest count is well over 100.

One constant has been Rowe's punctilious grooming.

"He reminded me of the president of the United States," said alum Cathy Giacomini, 35. "His haircut, the way he combed it, the way he wore a suit, he always looked very important."

That attention to detail is a reflection of Rowe's military service.

He was on active duty from 1952 to 1955 aboard the USS Phillip, an escort destroyer based in Pearl Harbor. Afterward he served for 28 years as a reservist.



Roger Rowe
1958

That meant once a month he would spend a weekend aboard the USS Tingery in San Diego to practice anti-sub warfare and bombardment.

Alternating the educators' and sailors' hats provided Rowe with "complete catharsis," he said.

Another form of purification for Rowe was fishing. Former trustee Graff and Rowe were fishing buddies.

On trips to Baja California, "We spent little time talking about school and school activities," Graff said. "We talked about everything else but that."

When Rowe first met former San Dieguito Union High School District Superintendent Bill Berrier, the administrators discovered they had a lot in common. They still do.

Berrier retired in July after 29 years as the San Dieguito district's superintendent.

Years earlier, in 1965, Berrier was a new vice principal at San Dieguito High School. Rowe called to invite him to lunch.

"He came and picked me up and told me his mother and my mother knew each other," Berrier said. "They were in the same women's club in Lee's Summit, Mo."

Although Berrier and Rowe did not know one another from Missouri, their parents became friends, and each would visit the other's parents on trips to their home state.

Berrier praised Rowe's ability to find the positive in each of his students.

"Even a kid who may have had some kind of difficulty, he found something positive to say about that kid," Berrier said. "He took that personal touch to an extra length."

Former student Plummer appreciated Rowe's accessibility, she said.

"He was always there," she said. "Knowing you could walk into his office whenever you had a problem was such a comforting thing when you were a kid. Going to the superintendent's office was never a bad thing."

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