

CHARLES RUSSEL TIMPANY:
A PROFILE OF DEDICATION AND LEADERSHIP

An Essay
Presented to
the California Pioneers
of Santa Clara County

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INTRODUCTION

Charles Russel Timpany was, in every sense of the word, a Renaissance man. Timpany was as comfortable enjoying the beautiful California Sierras as he was writing a report on the importance of chemistry or doing a complex calculus problem. All of these assets combined to make him one of the most influential administrators in Santa Clara County history. As Superintendent of the Santa Clara County Office of Education from 1957 to 1967, he provided strong leadership during a challenging time of tremendous growth and change.

EARLY LIFE:

1903-1919

Charles Russel Timpany was born on March 26, 1903, in Aylmer, Ontario, in central Canada. His mother was from England and his father was a native Canadian. Timpany was a much-adored only child. Religion was an important part of his upbringing and gave him a strong moral foundation. Timpany's family was fairly poor and not college-educated. He got along with his parents very well and he loved them very much. Charles was also the name of his uncle, so he was known as Russel to the family and "Timp" to his friends.

Timpany lived his first three years in Canada with his parents, but in 1906 the family had to move because his father had "frostbitten" lungs, and the doctor told his dad that he couldn't survive another Canadian winter. Timpany's father decided that the family would move to the warm climate of Cuba. While in Cuba his father managed a sugar plantation, and it was there that Timpany learned to speak Spanish at the age of four.

Timpany stayed in Cuba until he was seven, and then he moved back to Aylmer, Ontario, where he lived with his grandparents until his mother was able to join him many months later. While in elementary school Timpany developed a great affection towards music which he continued throughout his life, even though he did not actually play any musical instrument himself. Although Timpany was a small boy, he was active in many sports and always

kept busy.

Timpany excelled all through Aylmer High School and became one of the smartest pupils in the school. His interests in high school were reading, mathematics, and enjoying whatever sport was in season. Timpany graduated from the local high school at the tender age of fifteen.

Upon graduating from high school, Timpany and his family moved to Santa Clara, California, and lived with his relatives for a short time. Then Timpany and his family moved to a house on Lexington Street. It was there on Lexington Street in Santa Clara that he would meet his future wife Helen Plummer, who lived across the street from the Timpany household.

Timpany knew he wanted to attend Stanford University. It was his dream, but he was too young and was lacking a required year of United States History. So he went instead to San Jose High School to take the needed course work. This year also provided the rather shy Timpany needed time to mature and become more social with his peers. After Timpany had completed his year at San Jose High, he went on to become a citizen of the United States, setting an example for his parents who later became citizens themselves.

COLLEGE YEARS:

1919-1924

By the age of seventeen Timpany was at Stanford University studying chemical engineering, calculus, and physics. Timpany's first year of college at Stanford was tuition-free because of his financial need and his intelligence. While he was at Stanford University, he vacillated between majoring in either education or chemical engineering. He enjoyed both very much, but due to financial concerns he opted for chemical engineering.

In 1923 after receiving his Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering, Timpany took a year off from college to earn money to complete his college education. He worked for the Southern California Edison Company in the Sierra Mountains, maintaining its equipment and wires in the Sierras. He enjoyed this experience, too.

Timpany returned to Stanford University in the fall of 1924. Timpany received his Master's Degree in chemical engineering from Stanford in a mere four months. After receiving his degree, he went to work for Standard Oil in Richmond, California as a chemist. He excelled at his job and was pleased with it. Timpany worked as a chemist at Standard Oil until 1928, when he decided that he wanted to be a teacher.

TEACHING YEARS:

1928-1947

In 1928, four years after receiving his Masters degree, Timpany left his job at Standard Oil and became a teacher at South San Francisco High School. Timpany made this decision because he missed teaching and wanted longer vacations to travel and explore other interests. At the age of twenty-eight and with two degrees from Stanford, Timpany was earning a meager \$1,500 dollars a year as a high school teacher. While his pay was low, never had Timpany felt so good about his life. During his years of teaching physics, chemistry, calculus, and photography at South San Francisco High, Timpany was respected both by faculty and students alike. He loved teaching and he loved helping his students. He also enjoyed teaching adults at night school, and later became principal of that program.

In 1944 Timpany voluntarily joined the Navy and was assigned to teaching craftsmen and engineers how to become teachers. He was over the age of forty at this time, but he was needed by the Navy because of his teaching expertise. Timpany worked in the Navy for three and one-half years. After he came out of the Navy, he was offered the position of principal of South San Francisco High School which he graciously accepted.

In 1947, with the encouragement of his Navy officer friends, Timpany decided to return to Stanford University to obtain a doctorate degree in education. Timpany completed this task in a mere two semesters plus night classes.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

On June 23, 1935, Charles Russel Timpany was married to Helen Cecelia Plummer in Stanford Chapel. The two had been going together for nearly eight years and were madly in love with each other, but due to the economic hardships experienced during the Great Depression, they had postponed the wedding. Helen was an elementary school teacher. The two enjoyed many similar interests. Both loved traveling and during the summers would go on long trips across the country, often sleeping in their car because as Helen Timpany would say, "Back then we had more time than money." In 1942 they had a baby girl named Joan who later followed in her parents' footsteps by becoming a teacher for five years.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY SCHOOLS:
1947-1957

In September of 1948, while completing his doctorate degree in education, Timpany accepted the position of Assistant Superintendent of Santa Clara County Schools. Despite working full time, he completed his doctorate degree in one year. Timpany was Assistant Superintendent of Santa Clara County Schools for ten years. As Assistant Superintendent Timpany worked under Superintendent O.S. Hubbard, who Timpany admired tremendously. Timpany and Hubbard worked well as a team and accomplished a great deal together.

In 1957 Dr. O.S. Hubbard resigned as Superintendent of Santa Clara County Schools after eleven years of service. Dr. Hubbard was delighted to learn that Timpany was going to be the next Superintendent of Santa Clara County Schools, and was quoted as saying, "I am happy that the County Board of Supervisors saw fit to name Timpany as my successor in superintendency." Dr. Hubbard also said, "You will find him worthy of your confidence." (1)

Timpany was, to say the least, intimidated by his new job as expressed in this quotation: "It is with some misgivings that I take over the many diverse responsibilities of the office of the County Superintendent of schools from Dr. O.S. Hubbard." He added, "This is a trying period of rapid growth and transition from a rural area to a highly industrialized urban one." Timpany praised Dr. O.S. Hubbard saying, "The absence of his quiet

statesmanship and leadership leaves a void that will be hard to fill." (2)

SUPERINTENDENT OF
SANTA CLARA COUNTY SCHOOLS:
1957-1967

April 1, 1957, marked the date of Dr. C. R. Timpany's first day as Superintendent of Santa Clara County Schools. In Timpany's first written article as Superintendent he described what he deemed the role of the Santa Clara County Office of Education. Timpany wrote, "First, the County Office should not render services that can be carried on as well as or better at the district level. Second, it should act primarily as a coordinating and consultant agency except for the smaller districts where it has a clearly defined legal responsibility. It should also lend educational leadership whenever possible, promote pilot programs and studies, and act in a liaison capacity between the State Department and the local districts." Timpany also wrote, "May I take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the confidence that has been placed in me and I will do my best to be worthy of it." (3)

Dr. Timpany was indeed "worthy of it". He was Superintendent for ten years and provided strong, consistent leadership during a time of rapid growth and many challenges. He was well-respected for his fairness, his insight, and his dedication. Dr. Timpany took his responsibilities seriously and worked on them with nonstop energy. He had an insurmountable amount of work to be handled, he seemed to always have time to talk or have some witty remark to make. Some of his most notable

accomplishments as Superintendent of the Santa Clara County Schools, as noted in the October 1967 Superintendent's Bulletin, were "being instrumental in the shift to more encompassing services such as instructional television, assisting in implementing federal projects, cooperative development of teacher resource materials, and Career Guidance Institute." (4)

After almost twenty years of service to the Santa Clara County School system, Timpany retired in 1967. W.E. Hansen, editor of the Superintendent's Bulletin, said, "Santa Clara County will miss the personal foresight and professional leadership of Dr. Timpany." Hansen also said of Timpany, "That which has gone before services as a springboard to the future." Timpany left his job as Superintendent of Santa Clara County Schools with the same modesty, and decorum that he showed when he started his term. Timpany was succeeded by Dr. Glen Hoffman who had worked as Assistant Superintendent with him for many years. Timpany and Hoffman worked as a team and became very close friends while working countless hours together. Needless to say Timpany was very glad to receive the news that Dr. Glen Hoffman would be succeeding him as Superintendent of Santa Clara County Schools.

DIRECTOR OF HEALTH MAN

POWER TRAINING PROGRAM:

1967-1972

In 1967, even before starting his retirement, Timpany was offered a job working for the Santa Clara County Medical Society as "Director of Health Man Power Training Program." Timpany accepted the offer because of the attractive salary and so he could qualify for social security benefits. Timpany worked for five years for the Santa Clara County Medical Society. Timpany worked at his job from late in 1967 until early in 1972, shortly before he died. After retiring from his job, Timpany spent most of his retirement reading, travelling, and being involved in his church.

In 1968 at the age of sixty-five, Timpany was diagnosed as having prostate cancer. This cancer spread throughout Timpany's body, but he would not let this cancer handicap him. Timpany carried out most of his regular activities; however, if he was not feeling well his loving wife Helen would be there to lend a helping hand.

In 1971 Timpany, his wife Helen, O.S. Hubbard and his second wife Laurine went on a trip around the world. Timpany and his wife enjoyed this trip tremendously. Timpany's health was not a factor because as Helen Timpany said, "If Timp was not feeling well we just would stay in the hotel and rest."

PERSONAL DESCRIPTION

Timpany stood just under six feet tall and had a slight build. He had blond hair to complement his usually tanned face. Timpany was a determined, thoughtful man who was an advocate for knowledge of any and all kind. Timpany also had a warm place in his heart for children which in part explains his love of teaching. Timpany's favorite activities included reading early California history, spending time with his family, and travelling.

THE TIMPANY CENTER:

THE FINAL TRIBUTE

On April 9, 1972, Charles Russel Timpany died from complications of cancer. Timpany was mourned by family, friends, and co workers. Timpany's legacy still lives on, however, through the Timpany Center.

The Timpany Center, located on Empey Way in San Jose, was opened in 1979. Originally called the Care Center, it was the first center of its kind in the Western United States. Upon the suggestion of Dr. Glen Hoffman, the Care Center was renamed the Timpany Center as a tribute to Dr. Timpany and his concern for mentally and physically handicapped children. The Timpany Center is a leader in Therapeutic Physical Activity Centers. The Timpany Center is now a private, nonprofit corporation and is funded in part by the Santa Clara County. It also makes its money by having bingo, physical therapy, and special events. It has been estimated that there have been over one and one quarter million clientele visits to the Timpany Center.

It is fitting that the Timpany Center was named after Charles Russel Timpany because he lived his life to serve the community, and that is the sole objective of the Timpany Center.

ENDNOTES

1. Dr. O.S. Hubbard, "So Long", Superintendent's Bulletin, p. 2.
2. Dr. C.R. Timpany, "Role of County Office". Superintendent's Bulletin, p. 1.
3. Ibid. p. 1.
4. W. E. Hansen, "The Changing Face of the County Office", Superintendent's Bulletin, p. 1.

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March 4, 1994- April 1994.

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