



GAVILAN COLLEGE

**5055 Santa Teresa Blvd.
Gilroy, California**

Historical Essay

By:

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GILROY evening *Dispatch*

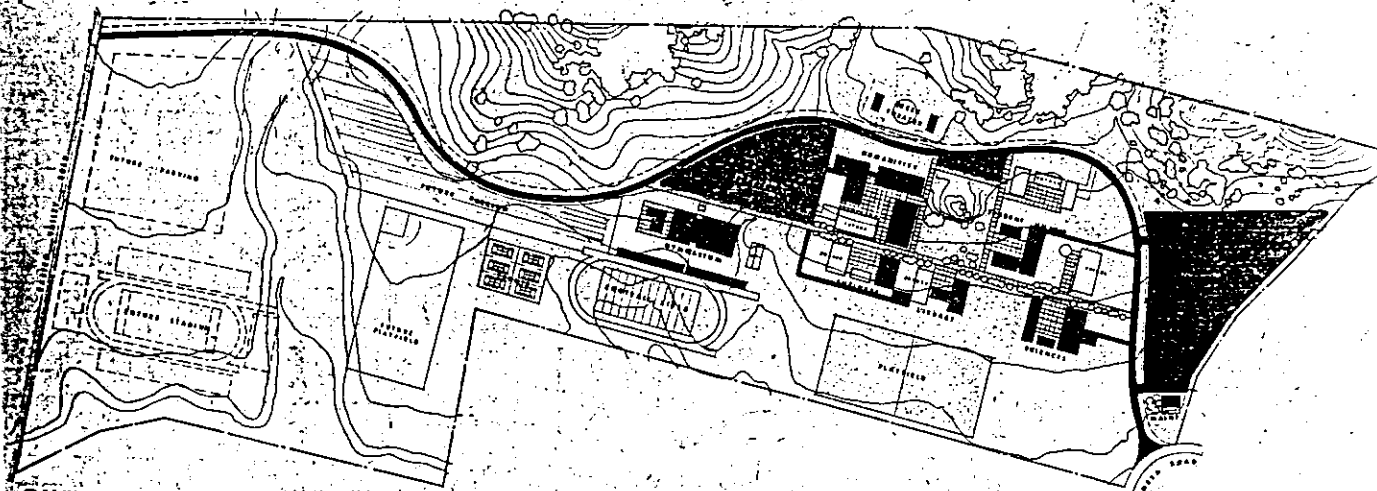
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GILROY, CALIFORNIA — Wednesday, Jan. 29, 1964

and the GILROY ADVOCATE, Established 1867

Ninety-Seventh Year, No. 10



GAVILAN COLLEGE CAMPUS — A mapped layout of plans for the new Gavilan College Campus drawn up by Architects Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons of San Francisco, shows classrooms, administration buildings, the library and student union flanked by parking areas, and in the foreground athletic facilities. The map also shows the Greek Theater planned for the rear of the humanities area, and to the extreme left areas pinpointed for future parking, additional fields and a stadium. The college site two miles south between Castro

Valley and Mesa Rds., embraces 142.29 acres of land at a cost of \$274,000. Construction of the new campus hinges on approval of a \$3,700,000 bond issue going before voters in a March 10 election. Contract for purchase of the site owned by the Shumaker family is in the process of being revamped in accordance with recommendations by the County Counsel. When completed and signed the college district will pay \$2,500 down and then buy the site outright on approval of the bonds, according to Dr. Ralph Schroder, Gavilan president.

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INTRODUCTION

Warning! Mountain Lion Habitat ...

This sign greets each student, administrator, teacher and guest when they enter Gavilan College. Nestled in the foothills of southern Santa Clara County in Gilroy, California, although the sign may imply otherwise, the physical beauty of Gavilan College has a calming effect on all those that come to visit. Great care was taken during construction to include the natural loveliness of the area and to give this campus a feeling of serenity; a sentiment conducive to learning. Students can study near one of the many waterfalls or duck ponds strategically located on the campus. Landscape on the campus has been honored by the West Coast Arboretum Society for the many variety of trees and botanical uniqueness. The area is abundant with deer, fox, raccoon and rabbit. In the 1790's, it was said that the Gavilan area had grizzly bear "under foot and a frequent nuisance." Early settlers were protected by harsh winter storms by the surrounding valley mountains including the "Gabilan" Range, located at the southern tip of the basin just south of Gilroy.

The area on and around Gavilan has a rich, full history that is fundamental to Santa Clara County and even to the evolution of California. Each semester nearly 5000 students walk through her doors and become part of this history. To put together the pieces that

now make up Gavilan College, one must become acquainted with early California history. It begins with the Ohlone or Costanoan Indians, the inhabitants before the Spanish. It concludes with residential construction encroaching into the farmland and the unaffected, intrinsic beauty that surround her.

So begins the tale of *Gabilan, the hawk with bright red feathers*, or as it is called today, "Gavilan" College.

In the Beginning

EARLY LAND HISTORY

The Gavilan College Student Handbook lists four persons and/or occurrences important to the early heritage of its campus land. For thousands of years prior to the Spanish/European arrival, Ohlone or Costanoan Indians thrived on its bounty. The famed Anza Expedition of 1776 passed through this area. Joaquin Murieta, the California Bandit, roaming throughout the state in the 1850's, also walked the region. The Cattle King, Henry Miller, originally owned the land where the college now presides.

For nearly 10,000 years prior to the first Spanish settlements, the Costanoan or Ohlone Indians inhabited the terrain of Gavilan College and infact, their territory covered much of what we consider the Greater Bay Area. The Ohlone's culture has been well documented. As is with most Native America tribes, the Ohlone maintained their mostly peaceful existence until foreign explorers and in particular, the Franciscan missionaries arrived in the 16th century. On May 9, 1967, a crew excavating during construction of Gavilan got a first hand look at what was believed to be an Ohlone burial. Five skeletons were unearthed, including one woman and a child, and charcoal surrounded the remains. Abalone shells, frequently used for barter among the native tribe, were placed near each individual.

On March 24, 1776, the Anza Expedition, traveled from today's Salinas through the Gilroy/Gavilan area and along Llagas Creek. Fray Pedro Font, the official chaplain of the

expedition, wrote that the Indians "offered us some of their game, and the Commander," Juan Bautista de Anza, "accepted a rabbit and an arrow which they offered him as a sign of peace." A full chronicle of the expedition which began in Baja, California in 1775 and concluded one year later in San Francisco, can be found in *De Anza's Trail Today*, written in 1976 by Frank Riley.

One of the more colorful characters to travel on the grounds was the California Bandit, Joaquin Murieta. In the 1850's, through a series of racially motivated events, Joaquin who had come from Mexico to seek his fortune in California, took revenge on white society by becoming a highway bandit. One such event which led him to this life of crime included the rape of his mistress by a gang of men calling themselves American's during which Joaquin was bound and forced to watch. The Gavilan area hills and local sympathetic ranchos were frequently used as hideouts for the bandit and his band of rebels (including several women) as he traveled from Sonora or Calaveras County to Los Angeles. In 1851, Joaquin stabbed Santa Clara County Deputy Sheriff Clark, in San Jose over a twelve dollar fine for disturbing the peace. At the ripe age of 22, Joaquin Murieta was ambushed, shot and decapitated.

In that same time period of 1850, after traveling some 6000 miles, Henry Miller, "the Cattle King," arrived from Germany in San Francisco with only six dollars in his pocket. From his humble beginnings as a butcher, he in a very short period of time was able to open his own meat shop. As the influx of migrants and miners grew, so did their demand for goods and meat. Miller was soon herding and breeding his own cattle and over the next

thirty years he purchased land in California, Oregon and Nevada. At the height of his empire, he owned and stocked well over one million acres of land. Henry Miller originally owned the 150 acres of Gavilan College. After passing through several hands, including Miller's heirs, Eugene Shumaker took possession of the acreage. The Gavilan Joint Community College District Trustees approved the final draft of the land purchase from the Shumaker Family on February 12, 1964.

The Showplace

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The President was John Kennedy. Ronald Reagan would be Governor. And, in the small town of Gilroy, California, population about 8,000, a new era of education was underway. The *Gilroy Dispatch* newspaper gave the report on January 9, 1963.

“Junior college vote gets huge majority. Formation of junior college district embracing Gilroy, Live Oak and San Benito High School Districts won voter approval at polls by a wide margin on January 8, 1963.”

Thus, what began in 1919 as the San Benito Junior College in Hollister with fewer than 100 students would become today's Gavilan.

Following voter approval, K.W. Titus, George W. Thomas, Ellis Bogle, Norman Currie, Howard Harris, Bruce Jacobs and Mrs. Bonnie L. Simonsen were elected Trustees. Dr. Ralph Schroder was appointed Superintendent. The Trustees immediate task was to find a site for the college, call for a bond issue and prepare curriculum offerings. On April 25, 1963, it was established that vocational training in Nursing and Law Enforcement would be offered. The college would be housed in buildings at Hollister Airport until construction of the new campus, about four years away, was complete.

In May of 1963, Dr. Schroder asked the public for assistance in naming the new community college. Names presented included Loma Prieta, Anza, Fremont and Gavilan. According to the *Gilroy Dispatch*, the Trustees on May 24, 1963, selected Gavilan being

somewhat unclear if the spelling should include a "V" or a "B". Headlines read, "It's now Gavilan College."

The Trustees also began to air plans for the new campus and in early 1964, a final draft of the land purchase agreement was presented. The property, which had once belonged to Henry Miller, was bought from E.C. Shumaker costing \$274,000 for 142.29 acres. San Francisco architects Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons were selected and soon after the first Gavilan College campus map was published.

A bond issue of \$3,700,00 was placed on the ballot and was approved on March 11, 1964. Then Gilroy Mayor, Ken Petersen was quoted, "I congratulate voters in the Gavilan Junior College District for their overwhelming support in assuring construction of a permanent campus to serve the three communities responsible for the formation of Gavilan College." The measure had passed by a five to one margin with a total of 5,790 votes being cast. It was one of the largest turnouts in South County voting history.

Theodore Bernardi continued his work on the Gavilan structure, first commencement ceremonies were held at the Hollister campus in June, 1964 (34 graduates were honored), Gavilan became an accredited institution and after many delays due to rain, a ground breaking ceremony was finally held on February 14, 1965.

On November 10, 1965, the *Gilroy Dispatch* reported:

"Gavilan College Trustees climaxed over two years of arduous and detailed planning when they authorized the architect to advertise for bids on the new college campus."

It had been a difficult and long effort to obtain the most attractive and practical campus that would serve the three different communities involved. In addition to classrooms, the site called for open land areas, parking, a sports facility, theater seating for 440, a gym with special acoustical considerations, a swimming pool, three science buildings and a lab, a student union, maintenance and administrative offices and an outdoor eating and patio area.

As with most massive construction undertakings, Gavilan's building process was not without its challenges. A 30-ton welded steel girder had to be hauled from San Jose to Gilroy via the old Blood Alley. According to contractor Bigge Drayage Company (October 4, 1966), it was the longest load ever hauled on Highway 101 and special permits were required. Once at the site the girder was lowered into pre-constructed notches for the gym.

There was also concern about water rights over an agreement that had been drawn up in 1929 between a private owner near the Gavilan site and the City of Gilroy. It became apparent in early 1967 that it would be quite a challenge to meet the September, 1967, targeted completion date.

But, the Trustees and community must have taken solace in the fact that they were building a first-class campus. Clarke Stahl, a building inspector that had worked on both the Cabrillo and Foothill Community College campuses stated on January 11, 1967, that Gavilan was "the most beautiful campus I've ever seen."

With improvements made on Santa Teresa Boulevard and 35 miles of phone cable

The 70's and 80's

AN AMERICAN COLLEGE CAMPUS

The early 1970's found Gavilan College in its prime. There was a steady flow and increase of students registering. Students comprised residents of Morgan Hill, Gilroy and Hollister on the most part. There was a small segment of foreign students attending.

By the mid-70's, a "shake-up" was in the works. Conflicts between administrators, the Trustees and teachers were becoming more common place. On January 16, 1975, *The Rambler*, the college newspaper, reported that Dr. Ralph Schroder, who had served as Superintendent and in the community college system for 30 years, was "forced" into retirement. Dr. Rudy Melone would take his place on July 1, 1975.

Here begins the turmoil that still faces the Gavilan College education system. From about 1975 through 1984, financial turbulence changed the face of the institution as it did with many school systems during that same time period. California was in a war called budget deficit, some of which stemmed from Proposition 13. The first casualties were education related.

From 1981 to 1983 the college experienced serious financial withdrawal from the state. Gavilan Superintendent Melone stated in September, 1983:

"If financial help does not come from Sacramento by November, we will ask the Trustees to declare a state of emergency."

There had been a loss of \$400,000 in support. In 1984, Gavilan Trustees were forced

to make program reductions. Subjects included construction/technology, athletics, nursing, engineering/physics, theater arts, music, journalism, art and aviation. There were frequent reports in the *The Rambler* wondering if even the college newspaper would be published due to lack of funding.

But, the outlook and progress of Gavilan College was not completely bleak. In July of 1979, the institution was accredited by the Accrediting Committee for Community and Junior Colleges for 10 years, the maximum offered. Cable television was brought into the campus. Enrollment increased by almost 25% for the 1977/78 school year and set a record high in 1986. Programs were in place for the Developmentally Disabled and access to the campus was made easier for the handicapped. The men's athletic department had football players go on to play for NFL teams, including the Rams and Atlanta Falcons. In March, 1978, Sue Oliviera was one of the first females in any police academy state wide to become a full-time instructor at Gavilan's Administration of Justice.

Speakers were a frequent addition to Gavilan events. There were panels of Vietnam Vets speaking for peace. John Dean, Ralph Nader, Vincent Price, Cathy Rigby, and Ray Bradbury were just a few of the noted celebrities to come to the campus.

There are also two historical landmarks at Gavilan which were brought to the property in the 70's and 80's. The San Felipe Community Church over 100 years old was disassembled and reconstructed at Gavilan by carpentry students in 1972. Special care was

taken to ensure the building was restored to its original state. Today it is a popular locale for weddings and in 1986 it was the site for filming of John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*.

On June 21, 1982, the Michael Mayock House was moved onto the Gavilan College campus. Constructed in 1886 of mostly native redwoods, the historical home was scheduled for demolition when low income housing was approved for construction at its original site. Through creative fundraising and personal contributions by the students, teachers, administrators of Gavilan, and support of the Gilroy Historical Society, the beautiful Victorian structure was saved. Members of the Mayock family played important roles strategic to Gilroy history including owning several local businesses, serving on the City Council, and a Mayock son served as Gilroy Postmaster in the 1890's.

The 90's and Current Events

INTO THE MILLINIUM

Before World War II, less than 20% of the population in southern Santa Clara County attended college. Today 60% of residents in Gilroy, San Martin, and Morgan Hill now partake. Gavilan College registers between 4,000 and 5,000 students per semester. Surprisingly, the average student age is 28. Certificate and Associate programs are offered in 53 areas. The Gavilan Central Coast Police Academy trains and teaches law enforcement officers for four counties.

Mr. Tony Ruiz, Instructor (English and Spanish classes) at Gavilan for some 30 years explains, "students today are more serious than those of the 1980's. Most of them have been touched by the horrors of drugs and violence. They are more academically motivated and concerned about helping with the major social problems we all face."

The student newspaper, *The Rambler*, continues its free expression of campus issues. The paper, published since 1962, circulates weekly and has sent many former staffers on to successful careers in journalism. The success of the publication is partially due to Robert Funk, Teacher of the Year in 1986, and Advisor of *The Rambler* from 1969 to 1990. The English Department also publishes an acclaimed annual literary magazine, *Soaring*. The publication represents collections of art work, short stories and poetry, solely contributed and produced by Gavilan students and alumni.

1994 still finds the Trustees struggling with serious financial dilemma and facing a

deficit of \$778,000. Even with the economic hard times, student services continue and encompass educational counseling, child care programs, disabled student programs, health and personal counseling and even financial aid. Courses in Media Arts and Interpersonal Communication have been added.

In September, 1995, the college also found achievement in Beatrice Gonzalez-Ramirez, a Gavilan student who was selected from 600 candidates to speak at the opening ceremonies with President Bill Clinton at the new CSU Monterey Bay campus.

With the exception of some minor car and college property burglary, Gavilan is and remains safer than most college campuses. There is special concern about evening lighting during classes, but students may request a security escort at any time.

Dr. Rose Marie Joyce, Interim Superintendent and President, envisions a better Gavilan as the millennium approaches. She explains the financial problems from 1990 to 1994 were mostly due to decreased enrollment, not just at Gavilan, but at many colleges throughout the state. A strategic plan has been developed which consists of alternative funding through industry partnerships, grants and foundation involvement, building a sense of community and learning in the classroom, creating an electronically networked campus with wider services linked to the Internet, innovative scheduling of classes and developing major action plans for all areas of the college.

The financial picture has improved through realignment of personnel and staff support, marketing a positive image and community donations. Increasing student

enrollment continues to be an important key. A satellite campus has been established in Hollister and there are plans for another in Morgan Hill by 1999. Community colleges are more critical to California than ever providing all residents access to higher education.

Molding Gavilan College to the future explains Dr. Joyce involves “better preparing our students to transfer to four year colleges or assisting in their vocational choice and professional career.”

The 1998 Trustees, Bob Bouchard, George Champion, Jean Ottmar, Herbert Peckham, Laura A. Perry, Elvira Zaragoza Robinson, Timoteo Vasquez and Student Trustee, Martha Hollis, have a mission:

In an environment that nurtures creativity and intellectual curiosity, Gavilan College serves the community by providing a high-quality learning experience and preparing students for higher education, technical and public service careers, life-long learning, and participation in a diverse global society.

Author's Notes

In 1995, as I was about to turn 40 years old, I took an inventory of my life. Seemingly happy, married, three great kids and a successful career, I still had that feeling that we all have at some point in our lives. Something is missing.

Remembering back to my high school days, the work I did on the school newspaper was one of the highlights of my youthful years. Being the oldest of eight children from a family of relatively low income, higher education had been out of the question. I had tried several times to write a novel, a little poetry, and also worked on technical publications through my job.

I decided to take a few night courses at Gavilan. What a difference it has made in my life. The teachers, students, and administrators are more of a family than institution. To learn again is to live. Writing is an inspiration. Thank you, Gavilan, for re-igniting the teenage fire in me.

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