

January, 2006

*"It's only free
speech when
you use it."*

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The President's View

by Don McKell

If you are a non-management certificated employee of the East Side Union High School District, then you are ESTA and ESTA is you. Whether you just got hired last week, or you've been here since dirt was rocks, you are a part of our Association. You are important.

I could not help but be impressed by the outpouring of support we demonstrated by massing over a third of our membership at the December 8 meeting of the school board. There probably isn't a single one of us who would rather not have been somewhere else on that chilly Thursday night.

But Marty Brandt's rave and Dave Johnson's song and Ralph Giannini's entendres provided entertainment, skillfully punctuated by all the other speakers. Each, in his own way, served notice to the management of this District that a sleeping giant had been roused from a twenty-year slumber. And it was not happy.

One outcome of the December 8 meeting of the school board was the scheduling of a December 15 meeting of the school board. A special meeting. As I write this, I can only suppose that meeting took place, but neither I nor any member of ESTA's leadership team were there. Neither were CSEA leadership, AFT leadership, or ACSA leadership.

What if someone called for a meeting that had all the appearances of trying to jump start another worse-than-useless Budget Task Force, and nobody came? I can't speak for the leadership in the other employee groups in the district, but I for one have had my fill of seemingly endless meetings that serve more to aggrandize the chair than to actually accomplish anything positive. People's time has to be worth something.

My job description as President of ESTA calls for my attendance at all sorts of meetings, including school board meetings. In my 8 years in this position, I reckon I've gone to over 100 of them. So I brought the issue to our Executive Board the day before the special board meeting to see what their opinion on the matter of taking part was. If they tell me to go: I go. I am gratified that our E-Board was unanimous in agreeing that there was nothing to be gained by attending. It was a really easy meeting to miss.

McKell, continued

At the two prior school board meetings, ESTA members including me had addressed the board regarding our desire to see contract talks take a more serious approach now that money issues are just about all that's left to discuss. And at both of those meetings, our school board sat there with glazed looks in their eyes, giving the impression that they'd heard it all before. Yada, yada, yada.

But none of those folks has heard it quite like this. Not even the longest-serving one of them. Because the contract COLA language that has made it unnecessary for us to mass at board meetings during contract negotiations has been in place for nearly twenty years. And now, it seems, our board needs to be reminded of a few things.

Another outcome of our massing at the December 8 meeting of the school board is the continuing realization that we – every ESTA member – are in this together. Individually, we are weak against the power, authority, and indifference of the school board. Together, we are not weak. We are solid, and we are strong.

We provide the expertise that allows the district to fulfill its mission. We are the teachers, counselors, advisors, librarians, psychologists, nurses, and all the rest.

The degree to which we each do our jobs well is largely a function of four things: our preparation prior to getting hired, our personalities in dealing with students and each other, our morale and willingness to get the job done no matter what it takes, and the quality and frequency of the on-the-job training we get. Certainly, there are other factors, such as skillful administration, adequate supplies, and clean, comfortable work spaces.

I am convinced that no ESTA member enjoys doing a poor job. I've learned this from first hand association with thousands of dedicated, caring professionals over my 36-year career. I see it when the lights go on in a classroom at 6:00 in the morning, or when one of our colleagues finally leaves school at 7:00 at night. I see it in the teacher who needs a wheeled cart just to transport the boxes of student work she's going to read over the weekend. I see it when a veteran teacher mentors a less-experienced department member. We all see

it; just look around.

I also know that we in ESTA are being pushed to a point at which we may need to consider another show of solidarity. We may need to be willing to do a little bit less.

Our school board seems to think that it's OK to overload core academic classes by ten percent. We accommodate them, because we're professionals. It's OK to reduce counseling staff. We just work harder, in slightly less safe environments, getting slightly less done. It's OK to return problem children with extra-special needs from non-public-school settings into our midst to save a few dollars, especially if it's done on the cheap. (This last gem is especially effective if the Board subcontracts out the work of teaching these kids, but leaves them on one of our largest campuses.)

When second semester rolls around in a couple of weeks, and if there haven't been any breakthroughs at the bargaining table, I recommend that we all reconsider just how cooperative we want to be in perpetuating this "more for less" mentality.

PANORAMA MARTIN BRANDT, IHS EDITOR

Panorama is a monthly publication of the East Side Teachers' Association, 888 S. Capitol Ave. San Jose, CA.

Panorama is a forum for ESTA members, and welcomes all member contributions. Submissions must include author's name, position, and school site. Those with fewer than 250 words will be printed in the "Letters" section. All submissions may be edited for length or clarity.

Letters, articles, columns, queries, or classified ads (for ESTA members only) should be emailed as Microsoft Word Attachments to brandtm@esuhsd.org. Deadline for February submissions is Friday, January 27, 2006.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in *Panorama* are those of individual members and may not represent the official views of the East Side Teachers Association. *Panorama* will not print ad hominem attacks, personal insults, or racially provocative imagery.

HHH 1912-1993

Homemade solution: A Superintendent's Mansion

Piedmont Hills High School

In the wake of the departure of our latest superintendent and her \$400,000 low-interest home loan, I have a proposal that will go a long way toward attracting new candidates with a housing and salary package.

I propose that the district build a superintendent's home (based on the models of the governor's mansion or the White House) on district property. It would go a long way in cutting costs and ensuring that the new boss is always available and at work on time. It would eliminate the concerns of high real estate costs when we go about our next nation-wide search for a new fearless leader.

How could the district afford to build such a home in these times of fiscal crisis? The answer is that we already have the property and the materials. As I said, the house would be constructed on the D.O. property, and built out of all the materials discarded during various renovations of our schools.

For example, just think of the potential savings from installing discarded industrial-strength, manual-flush urinals and toilets; elegant hardwood floors from gym remodels, complete with artistic free-throw lines still visible; state-of-the-art, stainless steel kitchen furnishings supplied with food service/cafeteria hand-me-downs; crash-bar doors--interior and exterior--from the gyms and theaters; glass/metal mesh windows (nearly burglar-proof) with old world maps on rollers serving as shades. Of course, the maps would be of countries that have since experience revolutions and now have new names, governments, etc. But this would add a quaint, "Old World" feel to the super's mansion.

Heating and air conditioning would be a snap: just bring in the old green monsters from our schools built in the 1960's. (Never mind the pcb's; if our new Super is anything like the last, he/she won't be around long enough to sustain any long-term damage.)

The possibilities are endless, and already paid for: large drinking fountains strategically placed inside and out, hall lockers and PE lockers for kitchen cabinets, chalkboards in every room for notes and artwork. We could even offer a home theater with vintage projectors and classic reel-to-reel films like *Red Asphalt*, *Blood Alley*, and old sex-ed films (for those special nights).

Who wouldn't jump at the chance to live in a palace like this? With such an enticement, we'd have no problem attracting the best and the brightest to our empty Super's chair!

--Dave Fredericks

PAC to ESTA: Endorse Cortese Now

Andrew Hill High School

As a Political Action Committee member, I feel that with every day we do not offer our endorsement of David Cortese for the office of San Jose Mayor, ESTA is wasting its political clout.

Certainly Manuel Herrera must know that--with the mess he has led the board into, and their unresponsiveness to teacher and student needs--no teacher in his or her right mind could vote for him for ANY public office (dog catcher is filled and requires much too much decisive action for him to be considered).

Cindy Chavez and Chuck Reed have not expressed any interest in teachers, students or education, preferring big business to the future voting citizens of San Jose. I'm sure they would both be happy to pave over all of that extra land on our campuses (grassy areas, athletic fields, walkways, parking lots, etc.) to bring us another business or development to keep *their* key constituencies happy.

As a onetime member of the East Side Board, David Cortese actually has been a friend to education: he helped bring COLA language to ESUHSD--unlike his erstwhile colleagues who now sit on the board and do nothing. He supports using a specific percentage of community funds on education/kid projects (for example: homework centers). And he never fails to respond to a call from teachers for help or support.

I therefore urge the leadership of the East Side Teachers Association to accept the recommendation of the Political Action Committee and offer its immediate endorsement to the candidacy of David Cortese for Mayor of San Jose. To wait any longer would be extremely short-sighted.

--Wendy Stegeman

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

This month's notebook entry is composed of remarks I delivered to the Governing Board of the East Side Union High School District, on the night of Thursday, December 8.

On Monday, August 22 of this year, the teachers of this district gathered

**By
Martin Brandt
IHS**

in the gym at Oak Grove High School to listen to the district leadership prostrate itself before us and beg forgiveness for the recently-ended reign of error. I have to confess, it was so strange to hear people in positions of authority—people not usually in the habit of pleading for anything—asking us for our forgiveness. It was such a strange sensation that I felt compelled to document the occasion by taking notes.

Now between the surging rhetoric of renewal and the frequent “take me back” pleas, I have to tell you I was reminded of the great themes of country music. The supplicating tone was a wonder to behold. Mr. Herrera, yours was a speech, spiced with the phrasing of the straying husband coming home: “I am sorry...I do regret...I do apologize.”

Mr. Herrera, you exhorted us to “please take heart,” and to “renew your commitment” to “restore this district.” I found this strange at the time, since I was unaware that my subscription for commitment to this district was up for renewal in the first place (save for those several weeks in the spring when the district had expressed its lack of commitment to me and 965 of my fellow teachers.) But let’s not dwell on that unfortunate time. After all, according to you it was “Time to declare that it’s a new day” of “renewed hope and vision” because a “Team works best when everyone fulfills their duties.”

Now I’m sure you meant what you said on that day, sir, because as we all know, people who are running for public office rarely make empty promises or meaningless assurances. And speaking for the board, you assured us teachers that, “In our hearts, each one of us board members are not here for the big bucks.”

Neither are we, Mr. Herrera. I know this

because here it is, “a new day,” and we teachers find ourselves working without a contract; we also find that on this “new day” we have agreed without complaint to an increase in our class sizes in order to accommodate the financial needs of this district; on this “new day” the district finds itself with a 5.58% increase in funding from Sacramento; and yet on this same “new day,” the district has so far refused to bargain in good faith and to consider including COLA language in the new collective bargaining agreement.

So I have to ask you and your fellow board members, and the interim superintendent, how can we “take heart” when it appears that the district has no intention of giving us the respect we deserve? How can we renew our commitment when it appears that the only thing being renewed is this district’s well-chronicled contempt for its teachers? How can we accept your apologies—let alone recognize them as sincere—if you turn around and treat us like trash once the echoes of your *mea culpas* have bounced meaninglessly off the walls of the Oak Grove gym?

Mr. Nunez, you concluded your remarks on August 22 by saying, “Let me know what I can do to help.” I know what you can do to help: you can encourage the members of this board and the district bargaining team to fulfill their duties, put an end to this malingering, begin good faith discussion of COLA language, and demonstrate once and for all to the teachers that the fine rhetoric of August 22 was not empty. Otherwise, don’t even bother calling a meeting for next August, because nobody with any self-respect will bother to show up.

**Deadline for Submissions
to the February issue of
Panorama is
Friday, January 27, 2006**

ESTA Classifieds

FOR SALE: Beautiful (NEW) timeshare at the Westin Ka'anapali, on Maui. Two-bedroom lock off, island view. Excellent investment! Has appreciated 40% in two years!! Two kitchens, two bathrooms, all housekeeping supplies, sleeps 8, pools, waterslides, kids' club, on the beach, grocery delivery, etc. Use the one bedroom one year, then use the studio the next or use the whole unit every other year (floating week); you can even stay for two weeks!! Current selling price: 32-37K -- we're selling ours for only 25K. Website: www.westinkaanapali.com. Please call Pat at 532-1332 or email phboyd@pacbell.net.

MindsInSight Online Classroom Tools - MindsInSite is a hosted Moodle solution for teachers and trainers of any kind. Allowing us to host your remote learning solution allows you to spend your time developing content rather than managing software and hardware. Cut your time spent on paperwork in half. 10% discount for all ESUHSD teachers. Take a look at our services at: <http://www.mindsinsight.com> and/or contact Bruce Selzler @ 347-4936

VACATION RENTAL: Cozumel houses available by the week. One and a half blocks from ocean. Easy walking distance to shopping & ferry to mainland. Three rental units: 3 bedroom, 2 bath \$950; 2 bedroom, 1 bath \$650; & 2 bedroom, 2 bath \$680. All 3 units combined for \$2,052. Ten percent discount for teachers. Summer rates are lower. All have kitchen, A/C, DSL internet, cable, safes, and phone and access to pool, rinse tank for scuba, courtyard, and sundeck on roof. Contact Mike at 251-1584 or cloughmf@msn.com.

For Sale: Wurlitzer Organ. Full pedals, 2 keyboards, beautiful walnut finish. Sounds great. \$300.00, negotiable. Contact Nick Shehadi (408) 265-0351.

Sharks tickets for sale. Great seats in the lower bowl. Section 120, row 15, isle seats 16 and 17. Contact Liz Chaboya (YB) at echaboya@aol.com for a list of the games and prices.

Room Available in Cambrian Area From James Garcia (MP) 700 per month close to Oak Grove and Santa Teresa Nice Home Excellent Neighborhood contact Julia Guerrero (831) 601-3156 Female teacher preferred to live with Julia.

Don't miss Sha-Boom's Farewell cruise! Rock 'n roll on the high seas Easter Vacation to the Western Caribbean from Galveston. 4/16/06 7 days from \$786.42 per person Carnival's "Conquest." Also **Oceania Cruises**--FREE air and two-for-one Cruise Fares: **Copenhagen to Stockholm: 8/3/06, 10 days from \$2,799 pp. Nor-**

wegian Holiday Cruises from \$649 pp. Contact Marian Dotson, **CGT Travel**, at 831-338-1959 cctravelpals@yahoo.com CGC Travel cst 2027232-40

Cosco travel crib, in pristine condition Great for traveling to motels, hotels, visiting grandma. Can pack in a case for travel. Please call and buy: Mary at (408) 296-7632, or email at mlnavarrete@comcast.net.

Duplex-like 1 bdrm/ 1 bath, with private patio and parking space in Cambrian/Willow Glen area. All utilities and cable included. No pets; non-smoker preferred. \$1100/mo. Call Kathleen (MP) @ 347-4712

Clean, quiet and safe condominium complex near Hwy 85, Hwy 87 and Hwy 101 at Blossom Hill and Snell. Very convenient! Features include: Covered parking, indoor pool, sauna, hot tub, health club and laundry facilities. Garbage, water, and grounds keeping included. Pets welcome with a pet deposit. Contact via email Virginia (EVHS) vyenter@yahoo.com or phone - (408) 365-6831 307 Tradewinds Drive #3.

LOS GATOS LATTICE: fences, decks, gates, pergolas, arbors, patio covers, retaining walls, automated gates, outdoor projects. Also, general construction/remodelling as well: crown molding, baseboards, doors, windows, drywall, finish work, etc. Call DAVE FREDERICKS @ 947-1019 or contact at big57wave@yahoo.com. References from colleagues at all ESUHSD schools.

Lonely school board, seeking idealistic teachers for sick, co-dependent relationship. Must be easily bullied and gullible, willing to accept abuse, insults, and endless psychological mind-games. If you love long walks on the beach, candlelight, and classical music, or any affirming, uplifting human experience, don't bother us. You're just not our type. If you want to lick our boots and plead for mercy, contact East Side Union High School District, 830 N. Capitol Avenue, San Jose CA 95133.

Pajaro rental February 21-26. Pajaro Dunes in Watsonville: Condominium available for rent. \$150 per night. One hour drive from San Jose. Half hour drive to Santa Cruz or Monterey. Two bedroom, two full bathrooms, ground level, ocean view, tennis courts, gated security, cable tv with dvd, etc. Great beach for sunset, dolphin and otter spotting, beach fires, and ten uninterrupted miles of walking/jogging. Call 347-6294 Barbara Uchiyama at S.T. or email if you are interested. (Some other dates also available)

The Backside

Lies, lies, all lies!

East Side Board diagnosed with behavioral disorder

(BP) A study conducted by local psychologist Les Moody suggests that the reason why the East Side Union High School District is unwilling to bargain in good faith with its certificated and classified employees may not be political or economic, but in fact psychological. Moody has found that the district suffers from an epidemic of Cooperation/Responsibility Unwillingness Disorder, or CRUD.

CRUD is a serious mental disorder quite common among certain segments of the general populace. According to Moody, "In the case of the East Side Union High School District, CRUD appears to be both acute and rampant."

Moody went on, "Typically individuals with CRUD demonstrate a cyclical set of behaviors characterized by periods of intense disdain for others,

followed by sudden and dramatic apologies which usually include assumption of responsibility for CRUD-dy behavior, and pledges to work cooperatively with others. However, this period of cooperation is usually short-lived and is almost immediately followed by a complete reversal, setting the stage for the whole sick cycle to begin again."

Moody concluded that "The end result of the cycle is that those suffering from CRUD lose all credibility with those who must put up with CRUD-dy behavior."

In the East Side District--site of so much recent CRUD-dy behavior, reaction to Moody's study was mixed.

"So *that* explains it," said one teacher. "All this time I thought they were just a bunch of creeps, when really it was their CRUD at work all along!" Said another teacher, "I wish I

had CRUD. Then I could treat people like crap and have a ready-made excuse."

Moody indicated that "In varying degrees of severity, CRUD may afflict as many as three-fifths of the members of the management caste."

However, Moody warns, there is no known cure for CRUD, although pharmaceutical companies, sensing a lucrative market, are frantically working on one.

In the meantime, Moody suggests that the best coping mechanism is a heavy dose of pity both for those suffering from CRUD--and those who work with them. "Look, if you're unfortunate enough to work with those suffering from CRUD--you're pretty much screwed."

Pepsi to teachers: "Get yer cola!"

(BP) Anxious to keep labor troubles from interfering with the steady profits and growing consumer base from its deal with the East Side Union High School District, local officials of Pepsi Co. have stepped in to offer the teachers the cola they are demanding from the district.

"Pepsi is a very refreshing cola," said Howie Cheatham, head of Pepsi's regional sales and distribution offices. "After a long day teaching little consumers how to use our vending machines, I believe teachers deserve a good cola. And Pepsi has the best taste at a reasonable price."

When informed by *The Backside* that the acronym "COLA" does not refer to a bubbly drink but instead to the term "Cost of Living Adjustment," Cheatham looked perturbed for a moment, shifted in his seat, and said, "Let's not get carried away here. Just remember to buy your Pepsi!"

Competing theories abound in Kansas biology classes

(BP) Liberated from the thrall of evolution-based science standards by a recent state board of education decision, students across Kansas are now posing multiple alternative theories to compete with Charles Darwin's once-accepted theory of evolution.

"My theory is that Harry Potter and Dumbledore created the universe after working together in Snape's potions class," said Willie Maket, a sophomore in Matt Brady's Wichita High School biology class.

Classmate Betty Whoant disagreed: "My theory is that Mariah Carey created the universe as a way to make up for the flop of her film *Glitter*." When asked what empirical evidence supported her theory, Whoant replied, "I don't need evidence as long as I have an ideology--I mean, a theory."

"Now that we call anything you'd like to believe a 'theory,' these kids are really getting turned on to the rigors of scientific thinking," said a delighted Brady while watching them work one recent morning. "With this kind of thinking flourishing in our classrooms, I believe Kansas will soon find itself on the cutting edge of human progress."

As for the spurned Charles Darwin and the vast body of science that has accumulated from the original publication of *The Origin of the Species*, Willie Maket was dismissive: "I like my theory about Harry Potter better, anyway. And Evolution? Natural selection? Empirical evidence? What kind of theory is that? C'mon, man--that's just plain stupid."