

The following speech entitled “The end of the Beginning of Riverview’s Legacy of Excellence” was delivered by Ron Carr at the very first RHS Retired Faculty and Staff Reunion on November ,20015. Mr. Carr graduated from Riverview High in 1964, and after college graduation, Mr. Carr returned to Riverview where he taught, coached speech and debate, chaired the Language Arts Department, held membership on the RHS Foundation Board, served as an Acting Principal, and later as the Coordinator of the International Baccalaureate Program.

In designing a program for this...our very first RHS Retired Faculty and Staff Reunion, it was suggested that we remember...that we celebrate the earliest years of Riverview’s history. With that goal in mind, it was time to dust off old yearbooks, to research through editions of old newspapers including the *Ram Page*, and to collect memories from those actually at Riverview during those early years.

Please understand, that fifty-seven years ago, Riverview High School was little more than a community’s dream and the sketches of Paul Rudolph, the architect.

The plan was for Riverview to be built in what was then a very isolated area of Sarasota County. The land was covered with palmetto bushes, scrub palms, and a few pine trees. Proctor Road was a dirt road, there was no bridge over Philippi Creek, and Riverview’s neighbors kept livestock. After the land was cleared, the construction of modern...unique looking buildings began. Finally, in the fall of 1958 those buildings came to life as a school.

**1958...In 1958:**

The average wage for an American worker was \$3,851 per year.

Gasoline was 25 cents a gallon.

The average cost of a new home was \$12,750.

Eisenhower was President.

NASA was formed.

14 year old Bobby fisher won the U.S. Chess Championship.

Nikita Khrushchev became Premier of the Soviet Union.

The Microchip was invent.

Wham-0 introduced the Hula Hoop.

Elvis was inducted into the Army.

Teenagers across America slow danced to *Dream* by the Everly Brothers.

The Ed Sullivan Show was the most popular program on TV.

AND, YES! Riverview High School opened its doors for the very first time!

Those watching from the sidelines in 1958, jokingly referred to Riverview as the 7-Eleven store. The 7-Eleven store...because in '58 Riverview included grades 7 through 11. Riverview was a junior high school and not quite a high school for one year.

The Sarasota County School Board had decided that the Seniors at Sarasota High School would not be forced to move to Riverview. The Seniors would be allowed to graduate from Sarasota High School.

During its second year, Riverview added 12th grade and dropped 7th grade. The next year Riverview dropped 8th grade, and the next year dropped 9th grade in order to become a 10th grade through 12th grade high school. Do the math! Many of the students graduating in 1964 had attended Riverview for six years... 7th grade through 12th grade.

There is a very old African proverb that teaches...if you are on a journey and you want to go fast, go alone. However, if you want to go far, go together. The administration, faculty and staff from those early years journeyed together, gave freely of their experience, wisdom, and skills in order to make that **far journey** possible!

During those first six years, the dedication to excellence demonstrated by **that** administration, **that** faculty, **that** staff, and **that** student body became the foundation for the rich and storied tradition that followed!

The historical record shows that the first Principal was **Mr. O.U. Johansen** (1958 -1960), the second Principal was **Mr. Freeman Vaughn** (1960 -1963). The impact of Mr. Johansen's and Mr. Vaughn's leadership in Riverview's early stages cannot be overstated. However, as in most historical records, there is much, much more to the entire story. There is a group that is referred to as "The Big Three". Yes, "The Big Three"! Their professionalism during those first six years and beyond helped establish the legacy of excellence that we celebrate here today! "The Big Three" were **Ed Brown, Dr. Jean Marani, and Austin Haygood.**

**Mr. Brown** was the assistant principal from the time the school opened in 1958 until he became principal in 1963. He was the one constant in the frequently changing leadership in a school that was trying to establish an identity. As an

assistant principal and a principal, Mr. Brown established the perfect leadership style for an up and coming school. His philosophy was rather simple...hire the best possible person for the job and then encourage that individual to achieve excellence in the classroom. For over thirty years and under his direct leadership that philosophy allowed Riverview to become one of the best of the best. Those of us who had privilege of working with him Mr. Brown, thank him for believing in us...for supporting us...for making our time at Riverview special and productive!

**Dr. Marani**, the second of “The Big Three” was a history teacher and the Curriculum Director. After Dr. Marani's selection as one of the top ten teachers in the United States, she used her title/her position to make a positive impact on curriculum development throughout the country. With Dr. Marani’s expert guidance, Riverview was able to participate in several cutting edge educational innovations. And over the years, other educational leaders at Riverview followed her example. They worked, as she did, to establish unique educational alternatives. Later, Dr. Marani would serve on many major state and national boards and advisory councils. She is 91, lives in Tallahassee, and still drives.

The third of “The Big Three” was **Mr. Haygood**. In addition to teaching math classes, he was the Director of Student Affairs. As the director, Mr. Haygood worked with teachers, students, parents, and members of the community to establishment an ever expanding offering of student centered activities, clubs, and organization while maintaining a balance between academics and extra-curricular activities. During those first six years, Riverview offered: **Service Clubs: Foreign Language Clubs: Special Interest Clubs: Honor Societies, Athletic Clubs, and Student Government Organizations at each grade level.** Later, Mr. Haygood would become the principal at McIntosh.

There is no doubt that “The Big Three” played significant roles in establishing Riverview’s legacy. However, it took the support of a dedicated faculty and staff to move Riverview from its opening as a fledgling school without much of an identity to that of a comprehensive high school with strong academics and extensive extra-curricular activities. From the Fall of 1958 to the Spring of 1964, a core group of twenty faculty and staff members faced all of those challenges and provided a much needed sense of stability. In addition, as the student population grew during those first six years, other outstanding faculty and staff members joined that core group of twenty.

It was important to note a list of just some of their achievements. Even a partial list of achievements made by that early group of educators is amazing.

**John Cooper** - Chorus Director: Mr. Cooper's reputation as an outstanding choral director secured an invitation for the Riverview Advanced Senior Mixed Chorus to sing on the stage of the Florida Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in New York City. **Just a side note:** the location where the chorus sang is now where the United States Open Tennis Tournament is played. Mr. Cooper would go on to add assistant principal and acting principal to his list of achievements at Riverview. Today, Mr. Cooper enjoys his hobby of biking!

**Ella Hoffman** - Language Arts Department Chair and Sponsor of the school newspaper: The RHS newspaper, *The Ram Page*, won state and national recognitions from the Scholastic Press Association. Those recognitions included being named the Most Outstanding High School Newspaper in Florida.

**Tom Murphy** - Social Studies Department, football and track coach and a favorite of many students: During the last period on the day before a long holiday, students would beg their teachers to take them to the cafeteria. There in the cafeteria, Mr. Murphy would be entertaining students and faculty members with his singing and his guitar playing. Mr. Murphy is also the individual credited with suggesting kilts for the band and for writing the original Fight Song! "The mighty Rams are on the Rampage charging down the field". Ella Hoffman, the newspaper sponsor, "borrowed" part of Tom's lyrics as the official name of the newspaper: *The Ram Page*!

**Barbara Reed** - Science Department: Miss Reed's knowledge of physics was unparalleled. She received a scholarship from the Atomic Energy Commission to study radiation at the University of New Mexico. That opportunity enabled Miss Reed to establish radiation courses at Riverview. In addition, her expertise in various scientific fields led to the creation of an actual radiation lab and eventually a one of a kind planetarium at Riverview.

**Jack Woolever** - Marine Biology: Jack Woolever developed science programs with an emphasis on environmental field trips and hands on learning. He was voted the Outstanding Biology teacher in the Southeastern United States. Later he became the first principal at Pineview School.

**Harry Putt** - Kiltie Band Director: He establish the foundation of excellence on which all future Kiltie Bands would be judged. It was said during those early years, when the Riverview football team was losing by really big numbers, that Riverview may have lost the game, but they definitely won the halftime show.

**Ed Repulski** - Physical Education Department and coach: During the first six years, Coach Repulski wore so many different hats that is difficult to list all of them. He is best remembered for his long and successful career as a golf coach at Riverview. He went on to reach legendary status as a tournament director of high school golf at the state level.

**Paul McClure** - Drama Director: Paul was the second teacher from Florida to receive a fellowship to study the humanities at Yale University.

**Demsey Thomas** - Science Department: Mr. Thomas received a grant from the National Science Foundation to study at the University of Texas. Later, he was selected to serve during the summer as a science consultant in India. In recognition of his talents as an educator, he was named the Outstanding Biology Teacher in the State of Florida in 1962.

**Joe Bauman** - Foreign Language Chair and Spanish teacher: Mr. Bauman lead a Language Department that offered Latin, German, French, Spanish, and Russian. Joe's Spanish students and colleagues learned that "every day is a holiday". That attitude made learning from Joe Bauman fun and working with him as a colleague uplifting.

**Sylvia Burdine** - Social Studies and English Departments: Mrs. Burdine was awarded a Fulbright Grant to study at the University of Paris.

**Ed Swope** - Guidance and Science Departments: Mr. Swope received National Science Foundation grants to study at the University of North Carolina and the University of Florida.

**Jesse Swallow Cooper** - Physical Education and media specialists: Jesse **was** the girls PE department during those early years Before title 9, RHS offered just two sports for girls: tennis and swimming. Later, Jesse went back to school and became Riverview's media specialist.

**Richard Pugh** - History teacher and head football coach: Coach Pugh initiated the Turkey Bowl Game which was played between Riverview and Sarasota on Thanksgiving Day at 11:00AM. In 1963, the football team won the White Sands Conference Championship with a record of 3 wins, 3 loses, and 3 ties with one game cancelled due to the assassination of President Kennedy.

**Al Brown** - Math teacher and basketball coach: Al Brown was awarded a summer grant to study at the University of Florida. In 1964, his varsity basketball team won the White Sands Conference Championship. Later in his career, he would play a significant role in helping Riverview make its transition into a racially integrated school.

There were so many other outstanding individuals: **Keith Shadduck, Dorthy Cutrell, Alfred Lassister, Bessie Henry, William Dietz, Sharon Conoly, and Molly Cardamone!**

Students at Riverview during that time period had a few memories to share...no air conditioning, big wooden ceiling fans in the library and the cafeteria, a bugle playing every morning before the pledge of allegiance...the Cuban missile crisis...a very strict dress code for students and teachers...being in class with the only Black student to attend Riverview during those first six years. Her name was Linda Black. She was a member of the Art Club and the French Club...those prep rallies in the gym for the entire student body...building a huge bonfire at Riverview the night before the homecoming football game...foreign exchange students...a bomb scare...those crinolines that a girl would wear under her skirt that made her skirts puff out in such a way as to knock materials placed on the top of desks to the floor as the crinoline wearer passed by each desk...fish sticks every Friday...Senior Skip Day at the public beach...graduation day! On June 5, 1964, students put on their caps and gowns in classrooms on the second floor, walked down the front steps and took their seats in the courtyard.

For over one hundred of students and exactly twenty faculty and staff members, that date signaled the end of the most unique period in Riverview's history. Six years together! That unique group had seen Riverview grow in spirit, population, success, recognition and opportunities. That graduation marked the end of the beginning of Riverview's Legacy of Excellence! That legacy of excellence has continued to shine over the decades that followed!