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Lamorinda Schools

Three Generations of Dons

By Jean Follmer



Fred (1953) Charles (1979) Alissa (2005) Christian (2008) Tina (1979)

Photo submitted by Tina Skuce

Christian Skuce is a proud member of the Class of 2008 at Acalanes High School. He and his sister, Alissa Skuce (Acalanes Class of 2005), represent the 3rd generation of Acalanes graduates in their family. Their family's Dons legacy began with their maternal grandfather, Fred Ravazza, a current and lifelong Lafayette resident. Ravazza's father came to Lafayette from Italy to farm in Happy Valley and decided to stay and raise his children. Ravazza was on the football team during his high school career and graduated from Acalanes in 1953.

The Acalanes Dons legacy continued when Ravazza's daughter, Tina (Ravazza) Skuce, graduated from Acalanes in 1979. Tina played softball for Acalanes and met her husband, Charles Skuce, there. She said "We met in our junior year in Mr. Whyte's history class." They also attended the senior prom together. Like his father-in-law, Charles was also a Dons football player. When asked about his memories of Acalanes, Charles said "I enjoyed Acalanes and my friends and I enjoyed sports. It was a good high school." On being a lifelong Lafayette resident, Charles said "It's comfortable; we

were born and raised here. (Lafayette) has good schools and good athletics." Both Charles and his father-in-law attended Lafayette Elementary School and Tina is now a first-grade teacher there.

Years later, the Skuce's daughter, Alissa, attended Acalanes. She continued her family's athletic tradition as a member of both the Acalanes water polo and swim teams. She graduated from Acalanes in 2005 and is currently a student at Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo. Alissa began her swimming career as a Gutter Guppy for the LMYA Dolphins at age 4. She has continued the affiliation by coaching for the Dolphins during her college breaks. She said "I do it for fun now and to work out." Last year, Alissa competed in the AVIA Wildflower Olympic Distance Triathlon with her Aunt Maria (also an Acalanes graduate) and they won their relay event. Alissa plans to return to the Bay Area next year and is open to considering further coaching opportunities.

Christian is off to Cuesta College this fall and will room with his sister, Alissa. Also an athlete, Christian played lacrosse dur-

ing his four years at Acalanes and plans to continue in the future. He said "I liked the athletics and being part of the team. All my friends are on the team. I'm going to miss my friends." When asked if he plans to return to Lafayette frequently, Christian joked "That depends. Gas prices are pretty high and I don't want to push it." As for post college thoughts, Christian said "I thought about advertising because I have good commercial ideas or maybe a lacrosse company."

When asked if he would consider returning to Lafayette for the long run, Christian said "I like the suburbs more than the City, but it may be time to venture outside the bubble" to another suburb. Alissa cited her close ties to family saying "We were raised by our parents and our grandparents. If I have the opportunity, I would like to stay here." Their grandparents still live in Lafayette and frequently walk the track at Acalanes and attend sporting events there. Tina said "It's fun for my dad to go to the games." If Alissa has her way, Acalanes may be fortunate enough to have another generation of Skuce athletes in its future.

Glorietta Names New Principal—Wendy Sparks

By Andrea A. Firth

Orinda Union School District (OUSD) recently announced that Wendy Sparks has been selected as the new principal for Glorietta Elementary School. Sparks joins the OUSD from San Ramon, where she most recently served as principal for Coyote Creek Elementary School.

"We are delighted to welcome Ms. Sparks to the Orinda community," states OUSD Governing Board President Pat Rudebusch. "She clearly brings a wealth of professional experience to the job, including a solid background in curriculum development, literacy, and special education. Equally important, I believe that her interpersonal skills and student-centered focus will be an excellent match for Glorietta

School and the District's leadership team," she adds.

Sparks spent fourteen years with the San Ramon School District and prior to her career in school administration worked as a classroom teacher and a resource specialist. While working in the fast-growing San Ramon District, Sparks was involved with the district's affiliation with the Columbia University Teachers College Writing Project which is also used in Orinda's K through 8 schools in the English Language Arts curriculum.

"Literacy has been a primary focus of our district for the past several years, and many of our teachers have been trained in the Columbia University's Teachers College writing curriculum," states

Rudebusch. "The San Ramon schools have been leaders in implementing the Columbia program and our two districts have partnered on staff development opportunities. Having someone with Ms. Sparks' depth of experience in the Columbia methods is a real plus."

"Glorietta is clearly a special school with an outstanding staff, parents, and students," says Glorietta's new Principal Sparks. "I look forward to working in a smaller, more intimate school environment at Glorietta and continuing to support the high standards that have been established on this campus," she adds. In the fall, Sparks plans to hold a series of morning coffee sessions for parents to have an opportunity to meet her personally.

Stanley Welcomes a New Assistant Principal—Joseph Funk

By Andrea A. Firth



Stanley Principal David Schrag welcomes Joseph Funk

Photo Andrea A. Firth

The Lafayette School District's (LAFSD) recent Governing Board meeting was once again filled with teachers from Stanley Middle School, many of whom had just returned from an end of the year outing to Great America. What Board meeting agenda item was sufficiently enticing to keep these teachers from packing up their classrooms and heading off for summer break? The teachers were anxiously awaiting the announcement of the new Assistant Principal to fill the vacancy left by the departure of Sue Rusk who has moved on to head things up at Burton Valley Elementary School.

Before the Stanley newcomer was identified, Board member David Stromberg made a brief statement. "It is with great sadness that I announce my resignation from the Board effective in a few weeks," stated Stromberg. Having moved to a home in an unincorporated section of Lafayette, Stromberg is required by State law to relinquish his post. LAFSD Board President Stephenie Teichman noted that the Board would work quickly to advertise the two-year Board position now open secondary to Stromberg's vacated seat.

The meeting quickly moved on to the announcement everyone awaited. Stanley's Principal David Schrag, who was sporting shorts and a tan from a day at the amusement park, then introduced Joseph Funk who was unanimously approved by the Board as Assistant Principal at Stanley. "I am really excited. Joe will be a great fit for our school," stated Schrag. Funk concurred, "I can't tell you how excited I am."

Funk moves to Stanley from Taylor Middle School in Millbrae, where he has worked as the Dean of Students since 2005. After working several years in the high tech industry in the Bay Area, Funk taught a modular science and technology course at Taylor for five years and then taught 8th grade History (his true passion) and Leadership for four years. "When the opening in the Taylor administration became available (the Dean of Students position), I struggled with the decision to apply," notes Funk. "I still loved teaching but finally decided that I was ready for the new challenges and experiences that position offered."

"I am pleased to be working in a school like Stanley, in a small community that dedicates itself to the success of its children," adds Funk. "I recently had the opportunity to meet the staff at Stanley, and I am more convinced than ever that I made the right decision to leave a place where I was very happy for one so warm and welcoming and so clearly dedicated to their students."



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