

Happy Easter

Ever wonder where the name Easter came from? Louise Claspill explains and tells a lot more about the customs of Easter in an article on the last page on this issue.

Making tracks

Tom Slowik took the train from here to Chicago last summer and says it's the only way to see the country. He describes his trip on page 13

Baseball fever

Most of us look forward to the baseball season at this time of year. But Susan Bliss takes a look back and tells us about baseball uniforms of yester year. Turn to page 11 for the story

For advertising and subscription information, call 858-0968

palo alto - 68
box 50273
palo alto
94303

CR-02
Barbara Mouton
2575 Emmett Way
East Palo Alto 94303

BULK RATE
U S Postage
25¢ 1 D
Permit No 316
Palo Alto, CA

palo alto

SERVING PALO ALTO SINCE 1979

Vol. 7 No. 41/42 March 29, 1986

Editorial

Tinsley settlement asks for too little action on school integration - and at too slow a pace

THERE IS LITTLE to applaud in the proposed settlement of the Tinsley school integration case. This plan calls for doing too little over too long a time. And it will still leave too many children - black, brown and white - in continued racial isolation for as far into the future as we can see.

The settlement proposal was drafted by the plaintiff parents and defendant school districts over the past several months. With the case coming up for trial this year, the court exerted pressure on the parties to see if a settlement could be reached out of court.

The Tinsley lawsuit was filed nearly 10 years ago, but only this year was to get its day in court. It was filed by a group of 34 parents (including Margaret Tinsley) who believed Palo Alto, Ravenswood and other nearby school districts were not doing enough to advance racial integration in the schools.

They did not reach this conclusion lightly. These parents, and others, struggled for more than a decade to get the defendant districts to face up to their institutional responsibilities in providing quality, integrated education. Only after it became clear the districts would do little to alleviate the growing racial segregation in Midpeninsula schools did the parents turn to the courts for help.

THIS settlement calls chiefly for the busing of some students out of the Ravenswood school district and into the schools of Palo Alto, Menlo Park and several other districts. It also calls for two studies: 1) A look at the idea of a magnet school to advance school integration, and 2) A review of ways to get more money for the Ravenswood school district.

For Palo Alto, the chief result would be the addition of up to 60 students per year from the Ravenswood school district. These students would be admitted at kindergarten and then allowed to stay through high school. Ultimately, there could be as many as 540 students from the Ravenswood school system who transfer into Palo Alto. That's the maximum number - reached over a nine year period.

For other districts, there are different numbers of students, but the same pattern of transfer out of Ravenswood up to certain limits. Ultimately, about half of Ravenswood's 3,200 students could be attending schools outside of the district.

WHAT MAKES this plan so flawed is that it is such a limited attack on school segregation. First, it will have very little effect on students now in our schools. It virtually guarantees that those now in school will continue to attend largely racially segregated schools for the rest of their education. Palo Alto's schools will still be overwhelmingly white and Ravenswood's overwhelmingly black and brown by the time those now in school graduate from high school.

Second, even when this plan is fully implemented - a decade from now - it means that a substantial number of students will still be in racially segregated schools. For Ravenswood, it is likely that about half of its students will be in segregated schools 10 years from now.

It is distressing, too, to think that this limited plan could have been agreed to by Palo Alto and the other school systems involved 10 years ago - or even longer. That's what parents were asking for. But nothing was done during the past 10 years.

IN FACT, Palo Alto lost ground in the quest for quality, integrated schools in many ways during the past decade:

+Former superintendent Newman Walker and the school board provided no leadership on school integration during that time. Instead, they hid behind a legal smokescreen, saying they couldn't talk about

integrated education because of the Tinsley lawsuit.

+Lawyers for Palo Alto schools argued that our school district had no part in trying to solve the racial separation which afflicts our schools. In trying to get the Tinsley lawsuit dismissed, the attorneys argued the problem was due to housing patterns, so therefore the school district could do nothing about segregation.

+The district reversed its policy of welcoming transfer students from Ravenswood. Instead of rolling out the red carpet, Palo Alto built a wall around its schools.

+School administrators diluted the goal of human relations in the schools, reducing it to nothing more than a bunch of "warm fuzzies." Joel Henning, a former administrator here and a colleague of Newman Walker, played a key role in this reduction of human relations to silliness, but he was not alone.

+School principals and other educational leaders have refused many times to consider improved racial integration as a priority goal in the schools. A prime example of this emerged last year in this newspaper in an exchange of letters with Jim Mathiott, principal of the Ohlone alternative school. We suggested the school should be working harder to attract minority students, perhaps even undertaking a special recruitment effort. He said no and showed a remarkable lack of sensitivity by adding that "recruiting a single group would be discriminatory."

WITH THAT history, shouldn't we be pleased that at least some accord has been reached in the Tinsley case? After all, under Newman Walker's misguided leadership, Palo Alto wouldn't even talk to the plaintiffs about a settlement.

Unfortunately, no. Some accord is not enough.

Eliminating racial segregation in our schools requires much more action than the Tinsley settlement proposes. It requires an institutional commitment large

enough so every student will be able to attend a racially integrated school. It requires a personal commitment on the part of each parent, each teacher and each student to a more integrated school system - for Palo Alto, Ravenswood and the other school districts.

Many school districts have already done this - in California and elsewhere. Most have fewer resources - and a lot less money per student - than we do.

And many other districts had to grapple with segregated school systems which have been that way for all of this century - or even longer. In Palo Alto and Ravenswood, this segregation has arisen only within the last 30 years. The more swiftly we end it, the easier it will be to overcome.

IN SUMMARY, we should be moving much faster and much further toward racial integration than the Tinsley settlement proposes. We recall again the words of the Kerner commission in 1968:

We believe school integration to be vital to the well-being of this country.

We base this conclusion not on the effect of racial and economic segregation on achievement of Negro students, although there is evidence of such a relationship; nor on the effect of racial isolation on the even more segregated white students, although lack of opportunity to associate with persons of different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds surely limits their learning experience.

We support integration as the priority education strategy because it is essential to the future of American society. We have seen...the consequences of racial isolation, at all levels, and of attitudes toward race, on both sides, produced by three centuries of myth, ignorance and bias. It is indispensable that opportunities for interaction between the races be expanded. "The problems of this society will not be solved unless and until our children are brought into a common encounter and encouraged to forge a new and more viable design of life."



"BAYLANDS SUNSET," a photograph by Dana Fox. It is one now being exhibited at the National Wildlife Refuge, east end of the Dumbarton bridge, Newark. For another photo of San Francisco Bay and a bay history, turn to page 5 in this issue. Photos provided by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society.