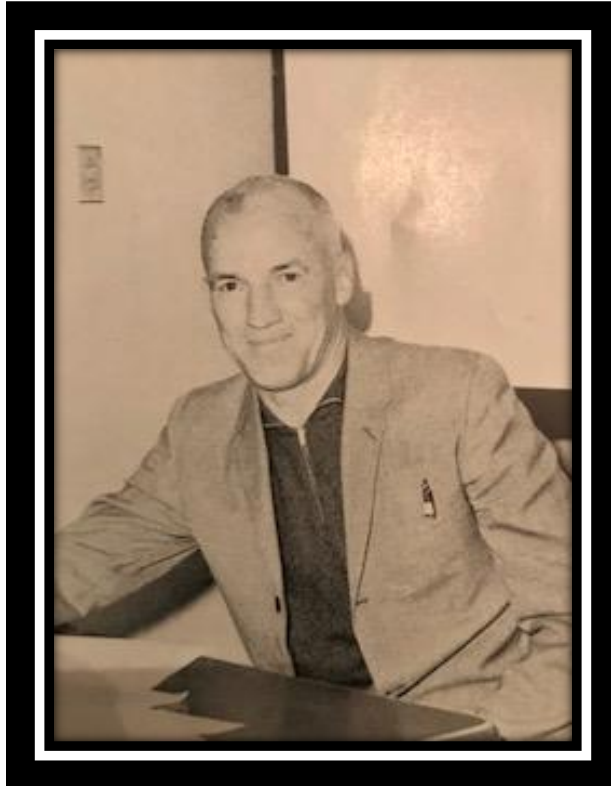


# Two of the Six Pillars of Peoria High School

## Ira Murphy, Superintendent

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- **Ira Murphy was the first student enrolled when Peoria High School was built in 1922. So when he became Superintendent he had a huge perspective on the community and school where he grew up.**
- **In 1960 one of the biggest events on the west side of the valley occurred was the construction of Sun City on North 97<sup>th</sup> Avenue and West Grand. From 1958 to 1970 the population of the city of Peoria had increased by 325%.**
- **The growth of Youngtown and Sun City along with the increase in the migrant population and people coming from Mexico caused a series of problems for the Peoria District.**

- **Ira Murphy was thrust into one of the worst crises in the history of the district. A huge increase in students, a retirement community that didn't want to support the education of other people's kids, and a community that needed to build new schools.**
- **Mr. Murphy tried everything, doing surveys, joining Sun City clubs, even going so far as moving into Sun City itself.**
- **In 1960 the district tried to pass its first bond issue and it passed but by a slim margin.**
- **A larger 1962 bond failed and then in 1963 a \$300,000 bond issue passed. By this time it was a hit or miss situation.**
- **In 1968 the retirement communities and their voters far outnumbered the voters of other areas of the Peoria District.**
- **In February of 1969, the district put out a new bond issue due to overcrowding that caused the district to use churches as classrooms. It failed.**
- **Not wanting to give up, the district put out a huge amount of publicity and got a bond issue passed in April of 1969. It took, however, the entire Peoria community outside of Sun City to vote for the bond issue.**
- **In 1971 the district managed to pass a new bond issue with the help of all Peoria voters as all three Sun City precincts and Youngtown voted against it. This bond issue provided for a new elementary school, which was named for Ira Murphy.**
- **In 1972 and 1973 there were bond elections for new elementary schools and a new high school. This was to be where Cactus High School is today.**

**Again, both failed even though the issue drew national publicity from “60 Minutes” and the New York Times.**

- **There were double sessions and sometimes triple sessions in elementary schools and the high school which was built for 450 kids now had over 1,100 kids. All through this Ira Murphy led and battled for the kids of Peoria.**
- **Without bond elections, the district had to rent portables and lease buildings to survive. Frustration boiled over to the point that some teachers and students, after losing another bond election, draped a bus in black paper and drove it through Sun City as a form of protest.**
- **In charge of this mess was Superintendent Ira Murphy, who came into the district at a salary of \$9,000 per year. He not only kept the district going but he added such things as a junior high system, language laboratories, a 12 month school year, and re-developed the curriculum for the district.**
- **Ira Murphy was a “hands-on” superintendent. He knew everyone and everything about his district. He observed all teachers, rode school buses, and even led cheers at pep assemblies.**
- **What was the solution to the Sun City problem for the Peoria District? Well, it was trying to get them out of the district since they didn’t want to pass bond issues, didn’t want to give teachers raises, and wanted a district of their own.**
- **The problem Sun City would have with forming their own district was that they would lose over 100 million dollars in valuation which also would make it harder to pass bond issues because of the bonding capacity.**

- In 1974 the district tried to go the route of petitions but was rejected by the county school superintendent. They then went to the board of supervisors and with a little bit of politics, succeeded in getting Sun City to become their own school district.
- Finally, one man, Ira Murphy, and an entire school district had risen to the task and created the Peoria District, where kids could go to schools that we're equipped and staffed with great teachers. Murphy retired after Sun City had its own district.
- Ira Murphy retired to Payson where he got involved in the city council.

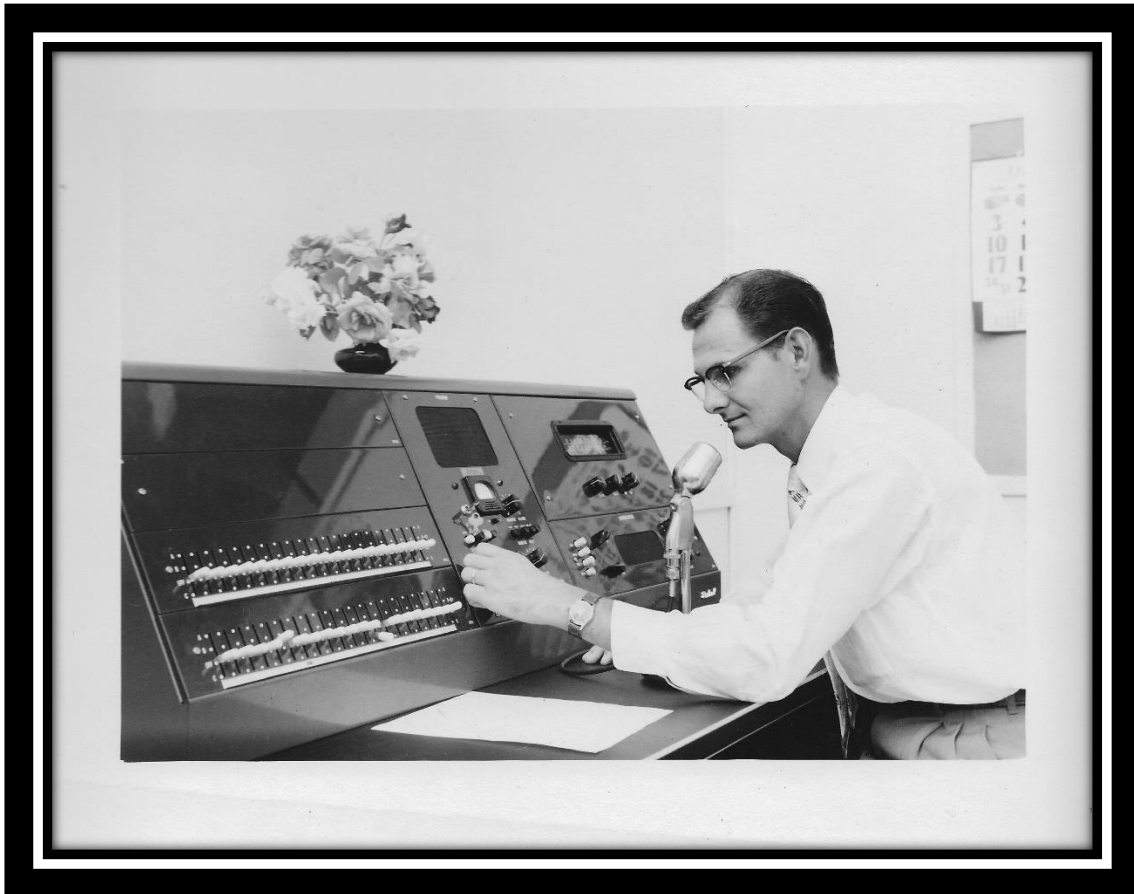
## Ira A. Murphy Elementary School

Home of the Mustangs



# Richard “Dick” Craig Elementary Principal and Assistant Superintendent

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- **Richard Craig was born on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1923 in Fort Worth, Texas.**
- **Dick Craig as he was known to his teachers received his B.A. and Masters from West Texas State College. He received his doctorate from the University of Wisconsin.**
- **In 1944 he enlisted during World War II and served in the Pacific Theater of the war until 1946.**

- **In August 1948 he married Betty Jean Lee and proceeded to take a teaching job in Clarkdale and Jerome, Arizona.**
- **In 1952 he took the job as principal of Peoria Elementary School and served as the principal of the school until 1973. In 1973 he took the job of Assistant Superintendent in charge of Elementary Education.**
- **Now, some are going to say “what did Dick Craig have to do with Peoria High School?” He was the foundation of the district. Everything was intertwined. The policies of one were the policies of the other. The problems of one were the problems of the other.**
- **Dick took over Peoria Elementary in 1952 when part of the campus was on the campus right next to the high school or on some floors of the high school. The other part of the elementary school was Central School in downtown Peoria. He constantly had to travel between both to keep them going.**
- **However, the real problems came in the 1960s and early 1970s when Sun City came into the district. The growth was tremendous and it hit mostly the elementary school. There were double sessions, triple sessions, and classes in local churches. It took a real leader to deal with all of this, and that was Richard Craig.**
- **Also, like Melvin Huber and Ira Murphy, Dick Craig was right in the middle of dealing with the Sun City question and all the bond issues. It was a crucial time for the district that required real leadership.**
- **Dick Craig believed in the district and that is why many of the teachers like Harold Amspoker, Bob Dobson, Lou Weems, Jim Prins, Bill Langdon, and many others completed their tenures at Peoria Elementary.**

- All of Dick's daughters went to Peoria Elementary Schools and all three Patty, Ginny, and Cherry all graduated from Peoria High School.
- In 1987 when retired he was asked in a newspaper interview what were the changes that worried him the most about education. He said that he worried about how many teachers would leave the profession due to pay. He said in the 1950s the state used to rank 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation in pay for teachers. In the 80's it had dropped to the low 40's. He was a man that cared not only for kids but also for his teachers.