

The Cactus Rivalry

- The 1970s was one of the Golden Periods of Peoria High School. There was great school spirit and an educational climate that was outstanding.
- The 70s was also a period of growth and change on campus. More students and new buildings were built to accommodate them.
- In the middle of the late 70s, there was a tremendous amount of growth in the northeastern part of the district. It was decided that a new school would be built around 59th Avenue and Greenway. This was to be Cactus High School.
- In 1977 Cactus High School began on the Peoria High School campus. The 9th graders that lived up north in the area designated for Cactus High School were separated into their own classes and athletic teams.
- The Cactus teams and Peoria teams had to share the same lockers. Both were given schedules and this is where the rivalry began.
- Cactus football for example played Bourgade, Cortez, and smaller schools while Peoria had to play bigger schools like St. Mary's and Brophy. Peoria lost some games and Cactus went undefeated against the easier schedule.
- The two teams never played each other but the bantering began and this is where part of the rivalry began.
- Another situation that caused there to be a problem among students was that at first Cactus was just to take 9th graders to the

school. Then parents complained and all of a sudden it became 10th graders and in the end all grades were allowed to go to the Cactus. It split loyalties at Peoria and caused some resentment.

- The selection of teachers also caused a problem. Cactus administration hand-picked who they wanted to go to the school. As a result, some teachers felt slighted and resented Cactus and the process.
- Some teachers at Peoria were asked to go but didn't like the process and decided to stay and help get Peoria built back up.
- In 1978 the two schools were about 1300 kids at Cactus and about 700 at Peoria.
- Peoria was under construction as Old Main was to be renovated with new doors, windows, walls, and air conditioning. It was a tough year as classrooms were scarce and everything was cramped.
- In 1978 the first football game was played in the rivalry and Peoria beat Cactus by a score of 28-0. Peoria had the better team and held the score down.
- In 1979 the rivalry heated up as the football game was held at Glendale Community College. The stands were divided, the spirit was great and Peoria prevailed when Fred Sanchez returned a kick-off to win the game. **GAME ON!!!!**
- The Peoria / Cactus rivalry is probably one of the most outstanding rivalries in the history of the state and it began in a locker room.