

REMARKS MADE TO THE KIWANIS CLUB OF TIERRASANTA

(March 14, 1990)

THE BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE SERRA FOUNDATION

By Robert C. Wright

Thanks for inviting me today. It is a pleasure to speak with you about the Serra Foundation.

In August, 1988, George Codling, Al Kidd, and I were sitting in my backyard discussing Serra High School. We believed that much could be improved. We questioned why Serra never was in the top ten percent of the county on standardized achievement tests and why Serra never seemed to have any national merit scholars listed in the newspaper.

We were also concerned about the fact that Serra had no consistency in its athletic program. With the notable exception of women's field hockey, Serra has no team that is regularly in the top ten or even the top twenty teams in the county. The reason for this is obvious: There is no consistent, effective program for developing athletes. That is why Serra has an occasional championship team, like the 1986 basketball team, but has few sports except field hockey which are outstanding year after year.

We decided to do something. I was in favor of having a small group, perhaps a ten-person club, which would meet occasionally. Dues would be \$1,000 apiece. George and Al felt that the group should be much larger than that. Their view prevailed.

The next issue was whether the group should be an incorporated or unincorporated association. After considering what a few other high schools in San Diego County have done, we decided to form a non-profit corporation.

There was also the matter of what the scope of our efforts should be. Should the Foundation assist all schools or just the high school? Should the Foundation be a booster club for athletics, academics, or both? After several hours of discussion, it was decided the Foundation should focus exclusively on supporting the high school and contribute equally to academic and athletic programs.

Let me share with you some of the principles of our operation:

1. We want to do a few things very well. None of us has a great deal of time to devote to the Foundation. This means focusing our efforts on three or four events each year.
2. There should no pressure on anyone to join or contribute to the Foundation. Giving must come from the heart, not because someone is twisting your arm.

3. There must be economical use of time. If our members can make more in business than they can by soliciting funds for the Foundation, they should work and give to the Foundation.
4. Foundation events should be first class and fun. I believe those of you who have attended any of the events will confirm that this is what we have tried to do.
5. The Foundation should not become involved in politics or the policy decisions of Serra High School.
6. Finally, the Foundation is not elitist. We are not merely concerned about the top students in the school. We are concerned about the success of every student, every day in every class.

By November, 1988, our group had expanded to about seven (7), including Dan Driscoll, Carol Weckman, Diane Eddy, Bill Mudd, and Las Saunders. By the end of 1988, we were incorporated, had applied for tax exemption letters, and developed a logo, membership brochures, and classes of membership ranging from \$25 to \$1,000. By the end of 1988, we were ready to set goals and have events. The goal for the first year was to raise \$15,000, return \$10,000 to the school, and obtain 50 members. In January, 1989, we hosted our first cocktail party at George Codling's house. We had only seven Foundation members, but 75 people came and many joined.

Through Jack Tierney, we also began the scrip program. Gift certificates were purchased from major supermarkets at a discount and resold to members at face value.

Dan Driscoll caused Coldwell Banker in Tierrasanta to donate several thousand dollars to the Foundation. As Chairman of the Membership Committee, he was also instrumental in increasing our numbers.

We ended the year with a catered cocktail party for which we charged \$30 per person. Thirty-five people attended.

In what remained of the 1988-89 academic year, we exceeded our goals. \$13,000 was contributed to the school in scholarships, equipment, sports banners, books, and support of senior class activities. We had seventy-five members. Some members, who will never have a child attend Serra, contributed thousands of dollars.

Our goals for the 1989-90 school year were to raise \$30,000 and have 150 members. It looks like we will come fairly close to these goals. We have about 120 members now and have raised about \$25,000. Our events for this year are a cocktail party in January, an auction in February, and a golf tournament in June.

The Lights Committee of the Foundation has been organized to raise about \$125,000 for

the construction of field lights at the high school.

Has the Foundation succeeded in meeting the original concerns which George, Al, and I had? The answer is, "Not yet," but we have made a beginning.

This school has a great leader in its principal, Dr. Saunders. There are areas of weakness which must be removed before the goals I mentioned can be achieved. But, I have already seen some change. In the athletic program, there are some positive actions being taken. There seems to be a spirit of enthusiasm among teachers. And, perhaps most importantly, the students are interested in the Foundation. They seem to like what we are doing.

In the final analysis, if we have only helped one student achieve greater academic or athletic success, we will have succeeded.

Thank you.

[Following the presentation, Kiwanis Club President Jesse Jones presented a \$500 check to the Serra Foundation.]