

PUNKY 1 – Students and his style of teaching 24:51 KIM MOORE VIDEO

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### **Most Memorable Students: Cramers, Verhoye, Mandler Brothers, *et al.***

Let me just start by saying that this is the hardest question for me to deal with, in terms of the sheer numbers. I not only have left out some of the great students and haven't mentioned them simply because of my memory. When I was at Point Loma High, I worked with - on a fairly intensive basis - something like 10,000 students. For me to pick out eight or 10 of the 10,000 is not really fair, but, on the other hand, if those eight or 10 are representative of all the others, which I think they are, then it has some possibilities.

Some of the ones that I've picked out was because of things they accomplished since I taught them. Some of them because of the things that they accomplished when they were there at Point Loma High. But, let me just go through the list.

Let me let me start with a whole family. The Cramer family was an incredible group of students. There were five of them, four of whom I had in class. There were two doctors, a lawyer, a minister, and an executive and founder of the Karl Strauss Brewing Company in San Diego. When I think about the students that I projected great futures for, Chris is the only student I've ever had that I thought would become President of the United States. They were amazing and I enjoyed teaching them and working with them. But, they were not the only ones.

One of the things I want to talk a little bit about is the involvement of students and what goes on at the school.

One of the students that I worked with who was one of the most involved was Lori McFarland. She was a great student, a marvelous student. I was able to get her a job helping at my dentist's office during her time in high school, which was unusual. She's also the only student I've ever taught who came to high school possessing a flying license. Her father had taught her to fly. Lori is the only student I ever co-authored a book with. Most of the writing I did was educational writing, things like "Units for English Teachers," or "Plan Ahead for High School and College". Lori helped Pete and me when we wrote a book about teaching the gifted. She brought in the students' point of view. She went to Washington, DC and worked at the Brookings Institute. She was superb.

One of the things that obviously influenced me in choosing memorable students like the Cramers, is many are still in the community. Bryan Verhoye was, and still is, a fine pianist. He has made a life out of his work at the Point Loma Community Church as Music Director, and with local groups that he plays for.

When Bryan was a senior, he applied to Harvard. The Admissions people at Harvard were very anxious to get him there. He's the only student about whom I've had a call in

which the Admissions Director said, 'if I have Leonard Bernstein call Bryan, do you think he'll come to Harvard?'

I taught two brothers, the Mandler brothers, whose father was a professor at UCSD, both brilliant and very fine students. I remember two things about them, one of which was kind of a little side issue. Michael, the youngest one, was doing his own thing and just wandering around. His father came up to me one day and said, "What can we do about Michael? We're not very happy with what he's doing with his life." I said, "Nothing, just wait. Maturity will take care of it." I was very happy that, two years later when Michael graduated, his father came up to me and said, "You were right. We just left him alone." His older brother Peter did OK also. He is now the only Point Loma graduate I know of who is a Professor at Cambridge University.

The McKenzie family were interesting in a couple of ways. There were two boys who were in my class. The older one, Jon, went on to become an English teacher. I really enjoyed having my former students go into education, especially English. Bruce became an actor. We saw him perform at the Old Globe and the La Jolla Playhouse. What was really interesting was we got to know his parents, because they liked to go to the theater, too. Every so often, when we went to the Globe, Mr. McKenzie or his wife would come up, so we could talk about what the sons had been doing. It was these community relationships that were as important as the fact that my students turned out to be very, very successful people.

Another person I taught who is enormously successful in the world was Dennis Connor. I remember Dennis very well because he was a fine student, but he was always interested in going out on boats. He stood out from all of the other students that I knew, because if we ever had any question in a novel or short story or anything like that where we had to talk about boats, we could ask Dennis and get the answer. I was very, very pleased later on, after he had won the America's Cup and the America's Cup came to San Diego, that they formed local committees, including a committee of educators, and we produced a curriculum guide for teaching about the America's Cup in San Diego schools. It was great fun be able to do that.

Roger Sholey became a reporter for the Union Tribune. In my class, he was a fine writer. I always take particular pride in former students who became professional writers. Roger is still a fine writer and has done very well for himself. He not only stayed in the smaller community of Point Loma, but the broader community of San Diego.

Lisa Foster became a judge. One of her great accomplishments is that she is a fine judge. She also became the wife of the Superintendent of Schools. She was outstanding as a student.

Oh yes, my wife insists that I mention that two of my best students were our sons, Carl and David. They both were in my English class from 10<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I'm very proud that both of them scored fives on their Advanced Placement English exams. I am enormously proud of Carl. Both sons went on to Swarthmore College, where Anne

and I attended. Carl graduated with highest honors in physics. The only other Swarthmore graduate that I know who graduated with highest honors in physics was Howard Temin, who won the Nobel Laureate Prize in Physiology or Medicine 1975. Carl has not won his Nobel Prize yet, but there's still time! Being part of that high school community made it so important that my sons could be there.

## **Teaching Styles – Drama in the Classroom**

Let me go back a little bit and say that I went through two different periods of teaching. I had been fortunate to have great teachers when I was in elementary school, high school, college, and graduate school. I remember them well. For about the first 15 years of my teaching, what I did was copy what they did. We did things in my classes that they had done. For example, for each class, we created our own town. Everybody wrote a part of the history of the population. Each class published a little booklet. It was great fun. We recorded a lot of poetry that the students read either as a chorus or as individuals. We did a lot of drama. I had been very involved with Drama when I was in school and loved to do dramatic things within the classes. Part of that was scenes from plays we were studying. The other part was challenging students with whatever we were studying to create dramatic presentations out of their studies and present them to the class.

The most memorable presentation that any of my students did was one morning I came into the classroom, which at that time was under the front steps of the old Point Loma High, and found that there were several hundred pounds of sand spread out on the floor of the classroom. My students were preparing to give a presentation of poetry of the Romantic poets, who dealt with the ocean, beaches, and so on. It was extremely effective, until it was almost done, when we found out that they had also brought a few sand mites with them. So the whole class walked out itching. Still, it was a great, great presentation.

I had other students, two girls in fact, who were studying fencing. They decided that we should do the final scene from Hamlet. They would play Hamlet and Laertes, and I could be the king who got killed. And they had great fun “killing” me. They brought their fencing equipment to class and off they went. I didn't know enough to know that this was fairly dangerous. I should've been a little more careful, but we had great fun doing that.

I remember once especially, when we were doing a scene from Shakespeare's “The Tempest.” I was playing Caliban, and I was on the floor of the classroom, not literally but figuratively, licking the shoes of Trinculo. He was the stupid, comic character that came ashore with his betters. And, all of a sudden the door opened, and the principal walked in. He was coming to evaluate me. But, as I said, I had wonderful principals. He just commented about how it looked like everybody was excited and having fun.

Once we changed one of Shakespeare's Henry IV plays into a musical. The kids wrote the music for several of the scenes and performed them for us, and did things like that.

It was a result of things like that, things that we had done when I was in school, that, when I reached that turning point in my professional career, I became an English teacher specialist, and got involved in the California Association of Teachers of English.

I remember going to my first meeting and being absolutely amazed at the brilliance of the people there. Not only were they doing wonderful things, but they knew why they were doing them, something I had really never done. At that time, I became a fully professional teacher and not just an amateur. One of the books that I came across at that time was a book called "Drama: What Is Happening", about using Drama in the classroom. I had used drama, but I never knew what I was doing. One of the comments that this writer based the book on was that when you use Drama in the classroom, you're bringing the students all together into the Now. They are not looking at history. They are not looking at what happened in the past. They are not looking at fiction that never will happen, but they are doing something about Now. I felt much better about some of the things that I was doing.

One of the things that Drama did in the classroom, that became one of my keys in teaching, was student involvement. I wanted the students to become involved in what was happening in class and Drama did that. One of the other things I did from my very first day of teaching was that I refused to have the desks in a row in my classroom, because I didn't want students talking to the back of other students' heads. We put the desks into circles. I didn't stand or sit at a desk at the front. I stood with the students, where I was part of the group. Even better, if things went well, I would go over by the windows and disappear into the background and not even be there.

The key to that was to involve the students in what they were doing. In order to do that I borrowed a technique from my years at Swarthmore, the seminar program. In your last two years you could get in courses where you have a maximum of 10 students and a professor. You meet for several hours in the afternoon or evening and sit around in a circle. The major responsibility for presenting the content falls on the students. The students write papers every week that all the other students read. The professor, of course, is there to make sure things are going along well, but the key to that was letting the students be the teachers.

From the very beginning, I worked on this, on having seminars. I broke my classes into small groups. Most of the work during the year was done in the small groups. To show you how times were different then, one of the things I wanted was to have two hours for the seminars to meet and talk, instead of just one. I took the first period of my earliest class, which was from 8 to 9. When your seminar was meeting you had to come in at seven and your seminar group went from 7 to 9. When your seminar was not meeting, you didn't have to come to class at all. That was possible at that time, before busing and before all the problems that that would now bring.

It always worked well. I never got fired because of it, in spite of the fact that the Librarian occasionally made comments about how my students were wandering around the campus when they should've been in class. I still feel that education has to be

based on the involvement of the students. They have to be a large part of the process. This is one of the reasons why I am so supportive of the Common Core Curriculum. There are both very positive and very negative impressions of the Common Core Curriculum across the country these days. My take on the Common Core Curriculum is that it, more than anything else, makes students part of the process.

Teachers are guiders, but should be in the background. I recently read an article in the *Harvard School of Education Journal* about the Common Core. I wrote a letter to the Editor and pointed out in that letter that one of the things that I think that the Common Core Curriculum does is to take every teacher and make them into good teachers. I hope that's going to happen. However, it's gotten caught up in the educational bureaucracy and politics in Texas and other southern states, so there's no way to know what's going to happen there.

Punky Three: **Greatest Compliment to PLHS and teachers**

<https://youtu.be/gVFmRlGU1j0?si=AboqoyGX2rkjulWq>

At one point, we had some students who applied to Harvard for admission. When students apply to Harvard, the local Harvard alumni committee has an Education subcommittee. They interview all the applicants for Harvard. Afterwards, the Chair of the committee spoke to me. I was enormously pleased when she said that of all of the high schools in San Diego, Point Loma did the best job of preparing students for college. It was one of the greatest compliments that the whole Point Loma staff has ever received.