

**A HISTORY OF  
MANASSAS PARK CITY SCHOOLS**

by  
David Glenn Melton

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Patrick W. Carlton, Co-chairman  
Robert R. Richards, Co-chairman  
Glen I. Earthman  
Richard G. Salmon  
James E. Upperman

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David Glenn Melton

Committee Chairpersons: Patrick W. Carlton and Robert R. Richards

## **(ABSTRACT)**

The purpose of this study was to document the history of the development of the Manassas Park City School system. This study utilized historical research methods to preserve information that would otherwise be lost.

This was a study of local school history. It looked at how and why the school division began and how it has changed over time. It provides an understanding of how the school division evolved into its present state. This study examined the political, social and economic history of Manassas Park City Schools and the forces which influenced and shaped the school division. The study concentrated on political leaders, the residents who lived and worked in the city, and the financial difficulties experienced by the school division.

This study relied on historical research methods to document the history of the school division. Data for the study came from both primary and secondary source materials. Sources included letters, notebooks, memoranda, official papers and documents, reports, official minutes, newspaper articles, letters to the editor and editorials, and pamphlets. A major source for the study was interviews of the key individuals who had first hand information worth preserving.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank each member of my committee for their contributions to this study. I truly appreciate their input and comments and feel that their contributions have made this a successful and worthwhile project. I am especially grateful to my co-chairs, Dr. Patrick W. Carlton and Dr. Robert R. Richards. They kept me focused and on task. I appreciate the opportunity that I had to work with and get to know these two gentlemen.

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my wife Bonni and to my son Zachary. They both offered great support and encouragement to me as I went through this program. They also were understanding and helpful. I hope that by observing my progress and accomplishment, my love for learning will be instilled in Zachary.

I am also grateful to my parents, Garland and Ann Melton. They have always encouraged me in my academic endeavors and taught me the true value of education.

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## Chapter 1

### A HISTORY OF MANASSAS PARK CITY SCHOOLS

#### Introduction

Colonial settlers in the United States organized school districts as needed. The need for commercial development within colonial America and the belief that Bible reading and education were required for salvation both reinforced the importance of literacy in the community.<sup>1</sup> The responsibility for organizing, providing, administering, and operating the schools fell upon each individual community. Legislation passed in Massachusetts in 1789 placed educational responsibility and control in the hands of the town. Towns of fifty or more families were required to provide elementary education for the children.<sup>2</sup> As the country grew, residents were eager to develop and maintain their own schools and churches. Most communities wanted the authority to choose their own teachers, to determine and establish educational programs and to govern the schools. Therefore, schools soon came to reflect the philosophy of the communities being served. As local agencies of state government, schools became highly responsive to their communities, the people therein, and the values of these citizens.

Manassas Park was not unlike those early communities. As a newly created entity, Manassas Park struggled to find its own identity and to establish itself as a community. The people within the community desired to set their own course; establish their own governing body; build their own schools and to generate a local identity.

Manassas Park began as a housing subdivision of Prince William County in 1955 (see maps in Appendix F). The Manassas Park Citizens' Association petitioned the circuit court for authorization to become a town on January 7, 1957. The newly formed town government annexed 600 acres of land from Prince William County in 1974, and in 1975 Manassas Park became the last town in the Commonwealth of Virginia to become a city, just before the legislature imposed a one-year moratorium on such action.<sup>3</sup>

Upon becoming a city, Manassas Park was faced with the immediate task of educating its youth. Since the time when the first houses were built in 1955, Prince William County provided educational services to Manassas Park children as residents of Prince William County. Prince William County had experienced rapid growth in population and in school enrollment. The trend in Prince William was to build bigger schools to handle the growing school population. This trend appeared to mirror national trends of the period toward consolidating smaller schools and school districts into large schools and districts.

School consolidation has been considered to be the proper remedy for perceived academic weaknesses in small and rural school systems since the beginning of the 20th century. From the early part of the century through the 1970's, schools consolidated at a tremendous rate. In 1900,

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<sup>1</sup>Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> *A Community Guide and Handbook*, The City of Manassas Park, 1989, 1.



there were approximately 160,000 school districts in the United States. By the end of the 1970's the number of school districts had dropped to under 16,000.<sup>4</sup> During the period from 1945 to 1980, the total enrollment in elementary and secondary schools almost doubled, rising from 23 million to 40 million students.<sup>5</sup> By 1993-94, the 15,000 public school districts in the United States enrolled 43.2 million students.<sup>6</sup> The bigger is better philosophy was grounded in the notion that bigger schools provide a wider range of curricular and extracurricular offerings, and the belief that larger schools are more efficient.

By establishing its own school division, Manassas Park made the decision to discount the trend toward school consolidation. As a small school division, Manassas Park was not able to use staff and resources as efficiently as was possible in larger schools, such as those in Prince William County. Having fewer resources available for education than its neighbors forced Manassas Park to confront problems unimaginable in more affluent communities. This study looked at the reasons and motivations behind the moves toward becoming a city and toward establishment of a school division. Through this study, readers will gain a feeling of what people thought and felt in times that are different from their own.

This was a study of local school history. As such, it looked at how and why the school division began and how and why it changed over time. The link to the past came not only from written documentation in the form of newspapers and official documents, but also from the personal experiences of members of the community in which the school division was created.

This study examined the political, social and economic history of Manassas Park City Schools and the forces which influenced and shaped this history. As a political history, the study concentrated on political leaders, institutions, and political ideas by focusing on the actions of the “movers and shakers” in Manassas Park. As Lichtman and French said: “Men create, maintain, transform and destroy the social structures in which they live.”<sup>7</sup> Political history can be elitist in that it only focuses on a few influential individuals. These few people often have significant political influence in a community.

Social history serves to correct the elitist thrust of political history. As a social history the study looked at how the residents lived and worked together. It examined the experiences of those who were not considered “movers and shakers” but may better be described as “nameless and faceless.” The study also considered cultural history by examining the ideas, attitudes, values

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<sup>4</sup>J. Guthrie, “Organizational scale and school success”, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, [http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC\\_Digests/ed308062.html](http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed308062.html), 1979, p. 17-27.

<sup>5</sup>Diane Ravitch, “What We’ve Accomplished Since WWII,” *Principal*, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97529.html>, January 1984, p. 7-13.

<sup>6</sup>“Statistical Analysis Report: Characteristics of Small and Rural School Districts”, National Center for Education Statistics, [http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC\\_Digests/ed282346.html](http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed282346.html), May 1997, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Allan Lichtman and Valerie French, *Historians and the Living Past* (Arlington Heights, Illinois: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1978), 106.

and beliefs that shaped the culture of Manassas Park and the school division. Through social history a knowledge of how the schools were organized and how they functioned was gained.

The study also looked at the economic history of the city and its school division. It examined how wealth was produced, organized and distributed. The economic history included reliable reports about past economic conditions. Economic history is primarily descriptive, since it examines the effect of economics on ideas, politics and social relations.

As the school division enters its twenty-first year, new housing developments and increased enrollment have created optimism about future operations. This study documented the history of Manassas Park City Schools beginning with the formation of the town in 1957 and continuing until the end of the 1994-95 school year.

### **Need for the Study**

This study helps the reader to understand present conditions by providing an understanding of how the Manassas Park school division evolved into its present state. It is of interest to many of the residents and educators in Manassas Park, because it is a history that is both personal and relevant for them. This is the first comprehensive study of the history of the Manassas Park City Schools. This work examines the social, political and economic forces influencing the citizenry of Manassas Park to form and maintain a separate school division. The study informs those interested in the formulation of school policy and captures and preserves the history of Manassas Park City Schools for future reference.

Much of the data collected for this study came from primary source material gained through interviewing persons who have first hand information. But for this study, this knowledge could have been lost forever through the passage of time. Life stories of those who have lived their entire adult lives in Manassas Park have been preserved through these interviews. The personalities, motivations, thoughts and perceptions of the major players in the development of the school division are disclosed through this study.

### **Methodology**

This study relied upon historical research methods to document the history of the Manassas Park City Schools. "The past provides our only source of information for evaluating current affairs and making predictions about the future."<sup>8</sup> It is the nature of man to be curious and to hold a sense of wonder about the past. History is, of course, never complete. Historians describe and analyze, then re-describe and re-analyze. This study represents one student of history's attempt to describe and interpret the past and to document a particular period of time in the history of the Manassas Park City Schools.

### **Sources of Data**

Data gathered for this study came from both primary and secondary source materials.

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<sup>8</sup>Lichtman and French, *Historians and the Living Past*, 1.

Primary source materials are those that were produced at the time of the event, are original, or happened first in order of time.<sup>9</sup> Secondary source materials are those that are based upon or drawn from primary sources. It is recognized that certain materials do not fit neatly into either category.

This study utilized three types of sources: written sources, auditory sources and oral sources. Written sources included: letters, notebooks, memoranda, official papers and documents, reports, official minutes, newspaper articles, letters to the editor and editorials, and pamphlets. Auditory materials included tape recordings of school board meetings. Oral materials included the interviews of the major players.

### **Interview Protocol**

An interview protocol, or guide, was developed prior to conducting each interview. The interview protocol was individualized, taking into consideration the experiences of the interviewee. The protocol contained the topics to be covered during the interview, but did not limit the interview to those topics alone, thus allowing the interviewer and the interviewee the flexibility to pursue other pertinent topics.

### **Verification of Sources**

Sources of material were evaluated and analyzed by assessing the reliability and validity of the various sources. In considering the sources of information, the researcher looked for consistency (reliability) and accuracy (validity). Accuracy of the testimony was determined by the degree of conformity with multiple accounts based on primary sources.

If sources disagreed, three criteria were used to determine which information to report. First, the researcher attempted to determine which source was closest to the event in time, if not an actual observer or participant in the event. The competence of the source was the next criterion to be considered. A competent source is one that is most capable of understanding and describing a situation. Finally, the impartiality of the source was considered. The source without emotional involvement and with the least to gain from distortion of the facts was the one used in the study.<sup>10</sup>

Every attempt was made to corroborate sources of data. In a few cases the researcher was forced to rely upon secondary sources alone. Through triangulation, the researcher verified whenever possible, each source through official minutes, interview data and newspaper accounts. This made it possible to verify information through more than one source, allowing the researcher to gain the same information through different perspectives.

Since much of the information contained in this study comes from newspaper accounts written by Betty Curran, three “readers” were used to verify the information gained through the

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<sup>9</sup>Lester D. Stephens, *Probing the Past* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1974), 122.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas E. Felt, *Researching, Writing and Publishing Local History* (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1983), 47.

newspaper. Mary Sue Polk, Barbara Dellinger, and Jimmy Stuart were able to verify information where newspaper accounts only are cited.<sup>11</sup>

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is an introductory chapter outlining the need for the study, the methodology, the organization of the study and the limitations of the study. Chapter two focuses on the period from 1955 to 1969 and examines the social, political and economic forces that led to the formation of a separate city and subsequent school division. Chapter three begins with 1970 and proceeds to 1979, documenting the city's break from Prince William County and the development of the school division. Chapter four documents the events and issues occurring between 1980 and 1984. Chapter five covers the time period between 1984 and 1995. Chapter six provides an analysis of the study.

### **Limitations**

Historical studies often reflect the biases and interests of the researcher.<sup>12</sup> The information gathered through interviews may contain personal biases. Everyone, including the researcher, has preferences and dislikes. The researcher has a sense of loyalty and feels a strong attachment to the Manassas Park City School Division. The probability of bias also exists since the researcher will form the research questions and will constantly interact with subjects of the study. Although the possibility of bias exists, the intent of the researcher has been to present a clear and accurate account of the development of the Manassas Park City School Division.

Biases of the subjects give rise to another limitation of historical studies. Subjects may be unwilling to discuss mistakes or errors, even years after the fact. The interviewee may slant the story to make it interesting or more acceptable to the interviewer. Interviewees may also attempt to portray themselves in the best light possible.

Some interviewees may be unable to provide accurate accounts due to the limitations of the human memory. The ability to recall events or issues depends on the subject's health, the topic under consideration, the manner in which a question is asked, whether the memory being recalled is pleasant or painful, and on the willingness of the interviewee to participate in the interview.<sup>13</sup> It has been said that the memory can play tricks on us. This may be true even when

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<sup>11</sup>Mary Sue Polk and Barbara Dellinger both moved to Manassas Park in 1972. Both had children that were educated in Manassas Park Schools, and both are employees of Manassas Park City Schools. Jimmy Stuart was an administrator in Manassas Park City Schools from 1976-1989. Polk, Dellinger and Stuart all agreed that while they did not always agree with the way Curran reported the news, her reporting was accurate and factual.

<sup>12</sup>Stephens, *Probing the Past*, 97.

<sup>13</sup>Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History* (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994), 188.

the interviewee thinks that he or she can recall events accurately. As the length of time between an experience and its recounting increases, subjects may condense the sequence of events, lose track of chronology, or omit critical information. The researcher took these matters into consideration during both the data collection and writing processes.

## Chapter 2

### Early Growth: 1955 - 1969

Early in 1955, one thousand “low priced” homes were planned by builders Offutt and Register, on a tract of land known as the I. J. Breeden Farm.<sup>14</sup> By April sample homes were open, and the developers were pushing construction of the first section consisting of two hundred homes.<sup>15</sup> Included in the development were twelve acres of land donated by I. J. Breeden for the purpose of building a school. This housing development would come to be known as “Manassas Park.” The first homes sold for between \$7,000 and \$7,200. The homes were especially attractive to veterans, since they did not have to produce a down payment. Advertisements in the *Journal Messenger* were directed at veterans.<sup>16</sup> The ads claimed that the two bedroom homes were only a forty-five minute commute from Washington, D.C., and that they were affordable, offering thirty year mortgages and a \$43 monthly payment. Stanley Rowland Realtors handled the sales of the first units.

The modestly priced homes proved to be popular. Seventy two homes were sold during the first week of April 1955 and by the end of the month two hundred fifteen units had been sold. By September 1955, the Prince William County Board of Supervisors approved the construction of 820 additional homes, bringing the total to 1,571 approved units.

### Developing a Local Identity

Local identity quickly developed. The Manassas Park Citizens’ Association was formed in late 1955. The first meeting of the Citizens’ Association was held on December 9, 1955, when twenty-three Manassas Park families met to organize a civic association. This first meeting involved discussions about police and fire protection, public safety, recreational facilities and transportation. It was at this first meeting that the residents of Manassas Park discussed the need for a school in the community. A second civic association, known as the Property Owner’s League, was formed in 1957. This group formed primarily to oppose the incorporation of Manassas Park into a town.<sup>17</sup>

In the spring of 1956, the residents of Manassas Park approached the Prince William County School Board to discuss the need for a school. A meeting was held with a representative

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<sup>14</sup>A *Community Guide and Handbook*, The City of Manassas Park, 1989, 5; “New Homes Rapidly Taking Shape in Manassas Area,” *Manassas (Virginia) Journal Messenger*, 7 April 1955, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Roger Costello, interviewed by author, interview 32, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 28 January 1998, p. 1; *Journal Messenger*, 21 April 1955, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 1; *Journal Messenger*, 7 March 1957, p. 1.

of the school board on March 22, 1956 to discuss the school situation. Prince William County was, at that time, experiencing overcrowded conditions in many of its schools. The school board was considering several options, including building inexpensive temporary buildings, building new buildings and using split shifts for elementary (K-6) students.

### **The Community Becomes a Town**

The leaders of Manassas Park decided to initiate action to become incorporated as a town late in November, 1956. This was seen as a move to protect Manassas Park from possible acquisition by the town of Manassas or by Yorkshire.

Yorkshire had already drawn up an incorporation petition.<sup>18</sup> This action was taken after citizens were told that the only hope for future community improvement lay in incorporation, and by so doing, gaining control of the development of the area. If the petition had been granted the population of Yorkshire would fall somewhere between three thousand and five thousand residents, and the town of Yorkshire would encompass a much larger land area than Manassas.<sup>19</sup>

At a November, 1956, meeting of the Manassas Park Citizens' Association, residents approved a proposal to incorporate. The Citizens' Association justified the action by claiming incorporation would protect assets and was a logical and vital step for a growing community. "Let's not allow ourselves to be taxed to buy the facilities for others at our own expense" was the warning of association officials with reference to the paved streets, lights, sewers and gutters already a part of Manassas Park.<sup>20</sup> The decision regarding incorporation was to be made by the Prince William County Circuit Court on December 27, 1956.

There was unexpected opposition to Manassas Park's incorporation petition when it came before the court on December 27.<sup>21</sup> The opposition was voiced by the Prince William County Board of Supervisors and forced the court to reschedule proceedings to January 7, 1957. Once in court, Prince William County Circuit Court Judge Paul E. Brown ruled that incorporation was in the best interests of the residents of Manassas Park. As a town, Manassas Park boasted a population of 2,500.<sup>22</sup>

The challenge to incorporation was not over, however. Soon after the court ruled in favor of incorporation, the "Property Owner's League" challenged the town charter. The Property

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<sup>18</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 1; "Incorporation Petition To Be Considered," *Journal Messenger*, 15 November 1956, p. 1. Yorkshire was, and still is, a community that is contiguous to Manassas Park.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 2; "Incorporation Issues Boil As Communities Seek Local Control," *Journal Messenger*, 6 December 1956, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 1; *Journal Messenger*, 3 January 1957, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 1; *Journal Messenger*, 10 January 1957, p. 1.

Owner's League appeared in court, attempting to have the charter of the town repealed. The circuit court dismissed the petition on the grounds that the Prince William County Board of Supervisors not named as a defendant.<sup>23</sup>

### **The First School in Manassas Park**

By the beginning of 1958, the community's need for a school was realized. Prince William had four school construction projects set for completion during September, 1958. Two of the four projects were elementary schools to be built by Rust Construction under a joint contract for \$446,000. The construction costs came to only \$10.80 per square foot. One of the two schools was to be built in Dumfries. The second school was to be built in Manassas Park on the land donated by I. J. Breeden. Both schools were scheduled to open in September, 1958.

As plans for the new construction proceeded, parents in the community prepared for the opening of their new school. In the Prince William County Schools, when a new school was put into operation, parents often purchased textbooks for their children. After the children had finished using the textbooks, the parents would then donate the books to the school. In Manassas Park, a referendum for a school tax and trash and garbage removal was defeated.<sup>24</sup> This tax would have supported the purchase of textbooks for all children entering the Manassas Park School. The referendum called for a one-time, \$6 tax on every household. With the referendum defeated, Manassas Park parents began purchasing books for their children to use. Through the donated books, the school was able to establish a textbook rental system.

In August of 1958, the first principal of Manassas Park School was appointed by the Prince William County School Board.<sup>25</sup> Ernest Banks Hill was a thirty-five year old seventh grade teacher at Bennett Elementary School in Prince William County. He had received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Virginia Tech. Prior to teaching in Prince William County, Hill had taught in Carroll County, Virginia for nine years. While in Carroll County, he had served as the principal of an elementary school in Hillsville for two years. Hill was assigned temporary quarters in which to work at Bennett Elementary School until the new school in Manassas Park opened.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 1; *Journal Messenger*, 7 March 1957, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 1; "Town Tax Proposals Unfavorably Received In Manassas Park," *Journal Messenger*, 31 July 1958, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Manassas Park School was the official name even though the school was often referred to as "Manassas Park Elementary School." There was, however, at least one attempt to change the name of the school. In December of 1963, shortly after the assassination of President Kennedy, the Town of Manassas Park asked the Prince William County School Board to change the name of Manassas Park School to "John F. Kennedy Elementary School. The request was taken into consideration but the requested name change never occurred.

<sup>26</sup>Lois Steele, interviewed by author, interview 16, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 4 May 1998, p. 1; "New Principals Appointed To Two Schools In County," *Journal Messenger*, 28



Delays in construction first pushed the scheduled opening date back to October; then further delays pushed the date back to December, 1958. Once the school was scheduled to open it was necessary to move the Manassas Park students attending Bennett Elementary School to the new building. The move was accomplished in only two days. Grades three through five moved on the first day (December 8, 1958) and grades one and two moved on the second (December 9, 1958). The move involved sixteen teachers and five hundred pupils. Each of the sixteen classrooms was transferred as a unit. On Monday, December 8, 1958 the children checked into Bennett Elementary School as they would on any ordinary school day. At the appointed time, trucks and buses appeared at Bennett. The children carried books and personal belongings to the buses as the movers packed up the classrooms and placed items on the moving trucks. Once filled with children, furniture and other materials, the buses and trucks proceeded to the new Manassas Park School. Upon arrival at Manassas Park School, the children waited on the buses as the movers unloaded the trucks into the classrooms. After the trucks were unloaded, the teachers and children entered their rooms and unpacked.

Originally built to hold 510 students, the building quickly reached and exceeded its capacity. By the end of the 1958-59 school year, the school had grown to 526 students. At the beginning of the 1959 school year, the enrollment had swollen to 657 students, an increase of 131 students. The rapid growth created overcrowded conditions. To ease overcrowding, the school implemented half-day shifts for first and second grade students until an addition to the school could be built. In the summer of 1959 the Prince William County School Board prepared bids for six additional classrooms to house 180 additional students.

### **Challenges Associated with the Growth of the Town**

Manassas Park Town Council first considered annexing county land in 1961. The town wanted to annex a small two hundred foot extension beyond Route 28. The planning commission recommended annexing the property where the railway was located. The council passed a resolution, by a 3-2 vote, on April 17, 1961 to file an annexation suit in the Prince William County Circuit Court. Two opposing votes were cast on the grounds that annexation would place the town further in debt.<sup>27</sup> Council member James Byrd explained his opposition by relating that the per capita debt in Manassas park was \$257, as opposed to an average per capita debt in other Virginia towns of \$83. The split within the council, coupled with opposition in the community, caused Mayor Charles Lucas to delay the annexation suit. Lucas wanted all citizens to be able to voice their opinions on the issue and called for a referendum whereby citizens could express

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August 1958, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>Town Council Minutes, Town of Manassas Park, 17 April 1961, p. 2. After the town became incorporated in 1957 it took almost two years before the first tax was imposed. A tax rate of \$2.75 was established in September, 1959. Residents of the Town of Manassas Park were also required to pay the Prince William County Tax. In an editorial in the *Journal Messenger* on July 5, 1962 the paper reported that Manassas Park residents were required to pay a town tax of \$3.06 and a county tax of \$4.50.

approval or disapproval. By administrative decree, Mayor Lucas decided to withdraw the annexation suit pending the June council elections. Two council members were seeking the mayoral position. Theodore McLean supported annexation while Douglas Prysby opposed the annexation. Ted McLean won the election but the annexation suit was never revived.<sup>28</sup>

As the town and its school continued to expand, there was insufficient room for all the students, even though in 1959 an addition had been added to the Manassas Park School. While a new elementary school was under construction in the Loch Lomond subdivision, Manassas Park children were attending school in two shifts, the first shift being from 8:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M.; the second shift running from 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Manassas Park continued to establish an identity of its own. Due to the similarity in their names, the towns of Manassas and Manassas Park were often confused in the eyes of outsiders. The Manassas Park Citizens' Association sought to eliminate the confusion by proposing that the town of Manassas Park change its name. In the fall of 1961, the Manassas Park Citizens' Association scheduled a meeting to discuss this name change. The Citizens' Association selected five names as possible alternatives to Manassas Park. "Stonehaven" was offered because of the similarities in size between Manassas Park and a small town in Scotland named Stonehaven. "Redstone" and "Redrock" were chosen because of the earthen characteristics of Manassas Park. "Lomond Park" was offered as a combination of the town of Manassas Park and the community of Loch Lomond. "McLor" contained the initials of the people who had helped start the town.<sup>29</sup> Over three hundred votes were cast. The result of the Citizens' Association vote showed "Stonehaven" as the most popular alternative. Once the vote was held, the Citizens' Association approached the Town Council with the suggested name change. Council deferred action on the name change pending a study of the technicalities involved and the possible expense associated with a name change. The Town Council never took action on the proposed name change.

Manassas Park's second attempt at annexation occurred early in 1962. Manassas Park filed suit to annex 1,635 acres of adjacent territory containing 1,200 residents. A successful annexation would have quadrupled the town geographically from its present 515 acres and would have increased the population to 7,700. If approved, the annexation would have made Manassas Park twice the size of Manassas. The suit was immediately filed to avoid a two year moratorium on annexation that was then being considered by the Virginia General Assembly. The annexation suit was scheduled to be heard in February 1963 at a pre-trial hearing by a three judge annexation court. The annexation court recessed to April 11, 1963.<sup>30</sup>

The annexation court denied Manassas Park's request. In his decision, Circuit Court

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<sup>28</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 2; "Annexation Suit Held Up," *Journal Messenger*, 11 May 1961, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup>"M" for Mayor Ted McLean, "C" for Colonel George Carl, the town's first mayor, "L" for former mayor Charles Lucas, "O" for George Offutt, first builder of homes in Manassas Park, and "R" for Lindsey Rowland the real estate salesman for the first units.

<sup>30</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 2; "Annexation Denied," *Journal Messenger*, 18 April 1963, p. 1.

Judge Arthur Sinclair cited six reasons for the denial. Judge Sinclair's reasons were as follows: the town of Manassas Park lacked the usual attributes of a municipality; no one appeared requesting to be annexed; doubts existed as to the value of the services Manassas Park offered; there was no true community of interest, that is, no rapport existed between the areas to be annexed and Manassas Park; questions existed about the financial ability of Manassas Park to sustain services; and the town had not shown that the requested annexation was necessary.<sup>31</sup>

As a result of the denial, town leaders revealed that they might possibly apply for "second class city status" (a city of the second class). As a second class city Manassas Park would be free of county jurisdiction. Even though second class city status would allow this freedom, Manassas Park would be forced to negotiate with Prince William County to provide services that it could not make available on its own.<sup>32</sup>

During the 1963 fiscal year the town operated at a deficit. In 1962 taxes were lowered from \$3.11 to \$3.06, thus compounding the deficit. The lack of funds forced council to raise the real estate tax to \$4.35 per \$100 of assessed value for the 1964 fiscal year.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the town real estate tax, Manassas Park residents were still required to pay the county real estate taxes. One of the factors contributing to the town's financial difficulties was the fact that town revenue was based solely on property taxes. Manassas Park had no business tax base until the Manassas Park shopping center opened in 1963.

The 1960 census indicated that Manassas Park had a population of 5,228 residents, while Manassas had 3,529. From 1960 to 1966, Manassas Park's population grew 14 per cent to 6,098. During the same time period, Manassas grew much more rapidly, increasing its population by 137 per cent to 8,415. In 1967, Manassas Park had a population of 6,098, while neighboring Manassas had 8,703 residents. Prince William County was growing as well. The county had become the fastest growing county in Virginia, increasing its population by 100 percent since the 1960 census. The population in Prince William County had grown from just over fifty thousand residents in 1960 to over one hundred thousand by 1968.<sup>34</sup>

The population boom required Prince William County to provide more services, such as schools and police and fire protection. The school board could not build schools fast enough to meet its growing enrollments. The school board anticipated 2,500 new students in 1969, bringing total enrollment to 28,500. To alleviate overcrowding, students in Prince William were attending schools in double shifts.<sup>35</sup>

To raise funds to build needed schools, the school board turned to bond referendums. The

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>"Local Tax Rates," *Journal Messenger*, 4 July 1963, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>*A Community Guide and Handbook*, The City of Manassas Park, 1989, p. 3; *Journal Messenger*, 2 January 1969, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 1; *Journal Messenger*, 4 July 1968, p. 1.

first referendum was for a 25.7 million dollar bond for “super” high schools, built to house five thousand students. Through large schools the county could capitalize on the economies of scale large schools offered. More course offerings with fewer staff members were considered to be one advantage. The voters did not agree, striking down the referendum in March of 1968. The residents were not in favor of the super high school concept.<sup>36</sup>

The school board scaled the bond request down from 25.7 million to \$21.8 million for the November ballot. Super high schools were not emphasized, so this time the referendum passed.<sup>37</sup> The school board had decided to build high schools with more traditional enrollments of one-half the super high school enrollment. Residents of Manassas Park voted in favor of the bond.<sup>38</sup>

Efforts by Manassas to annex property were more successful than those of Manassas Park. In the fall of 1969, Manassas requested the annexation of a large tract of land adjacent to the town. The court approved the annexation, virtually tripling the size of the town. The annexation added over two thousand new residents to the town. The annexation also gave Manassas a small piece of land between Manassas and Manassas Park. In all, the annexation gave Manassas the property on which Prince William Hospital was built; it placed Marsteller Junior High and Parkside Junior High, the site of the future county library, and the IBM industrial site all within town limits.<sup>39</sup> The court awarded the area between Manassas and Manassas Park, known as “no man’s land,” stating that “it would result in the application of the town of Manassas Park to annex that corridor; a consequence, in the opinion of the court, to be avoided.”<sup>40</sup> Outraged by the court’s decision, Dr. H. J. Ferlazzo, of the county’s board of supervisors, is quoted in the *Journal Messenger* as saying:

“Are we to understand that annexation by Manassas is proper and the same annexation by the town of Manassas Park is wrong? Are the people of Manassas Park lesser, abnormal,

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<sup>36</sup>Richard Johnson, interviewed by author, interview 30, transcript, Loudon County, Va., 7 December 1998, p. 1; “County School Bond Issue Defeated,” *Journal Messenger*, 14 March 1968, p. 1. Manassas Park voted against the bond 147 - 107.

<sup>37</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 1; “Voters Endorse Schools” *Journal Messenger*, 7 November 1968, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 1; *Journal Messenger*, 7 November 1968, p. 1. Manassas Park residents voted in favor of the bond, 666-416.

<sup>39</sup>William Steele, interviewed by author, interview 2, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 13 January 1998, p. 1; Roger Costello, interview, p. 2. Manassas Park offered Prince William County \$100,000 if the county would agree to build the new library on a piece of property adjacent to Parkside Junior High School. The property was owned by Manassas Park. The town also agreed to provide water and sewer to the site.

<sup>40</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 2; “Moving County Seat Question Is Raised,” *Journal Messenger*, 21 August 1969, p. 1.

second class citizens that should not have the same rights of Manassas Citizens?”<sup>41</sup>

The Prince William County Board of Supervisors sought a reconsideration of the court’s decision. Upon challenge by Prince William County, the annexation stood, with changes. The court returned the proposed site for the library and Parkside Junior High School to the county.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

## Chapter 3

1970 - 1979

### Student Enrollment Grows Rapidly

Almost thirty thousand students were enrolled in Prince William County Schools in September, 1970.<sup>42</sup> This represented an increase of over two thousand students from 1969, and over twenty thousand more students than were enrolled in 1960. School officials estimated that by 1973 the county would have more than 38,000 students. The school board had requested a twenty-eight million dollar budget for 1971-72, which reflected an increase of eight million dollars over the previous year. The board of supervisors initially cut the school board budget by \$4.6 million, then later settled on a reduction of \$3.5 million. County taxes were high; the tax rate was set at \$7.00 per \$100 of assessed value.<sup>43</sup> The county also continued to experience rapid growth, as the population reached 111,000 residents.<sup>44</sup> Losing the taxes provided by IBM due to the annexation by Manassas was a blow to county revenues. An attempt by the county to appeal the annexation by Manassas was denied by the circuit court. Once again, the school board looked to the possibility of issuing bonds to provide needed funds for the construction of additional schools.<sup>45</sup>

After the school bond passed, the county school board searched for appropriate school sites. One site for a high school was found on what was known as the "Lewis Tract." This site was located between Wellington Road and Route 234 on Rixlew Lane. A second site was secured through an arrangement with the town of Manassas Park to purchase the Conner Farm. The Conner Farm occupied 110 acres of property near Route 28 and Manassas Park and was purchased for \$4,000 per acre. The school board agreed to purchase seventy acres of the property to build a high school to accommodate 2,500 students if Manassas Park would purchase the remaining property to use for recreational and park facilities. The purchase of this property and the subsequent construction of two high schools, one of which was to serve Manassas Park youth, would propel Prince William County into a controversy that would last for three years.

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<sup>42</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 2; "School Enrollment: Possibly Biggest One-Year Jump Yet," *Journal Messenger*, 3 September 1970, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid; "Tax Rate, School Budget Battle Boils," *Journal Messenger*, 23 April 1970, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid; "Final Census Figure Is 111,102 In County," *Journal Messenger*, 7 January 1971, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 1; *Journal Messenger*, 29 October 1970, p. 1. Citizens of Manassas Park had voted against the school bond. Of the total number of votes cast, 265 votes were for the bond and 349 were against.

## The Osbourn Park Controversy

The school board chose “Osbourn Park” as the name for the Conner tract school.<sup>46</sup> Manassas Park students were to attend Osbourn Park, as were students from Manassas and Prince William County. When the school board proposed the bond issue to construct two new high schools, it was originally planned that students from Manassas would attend the new school on the Lewis tract.<sup>47</sup> At first, Manassas Park residents were under the impression that the new school on the Conner tract would be named Stonewall Jackson High School and the Lewis tract school would keep the Osbourn High School name. The school on the Conner tract would replace the old Stonewall School on Lomond Drive and would house all of Manassas Park’s high school students.<sup>48</sup>

As the planning for the two new schools evolved, it was determined that the student body of the already existing Osbourn High School would be split among the two schools. Citizens of Manassas resisted the proposed changes. They insisted that all the students from Osbourn attend the new school on the Lewis tract and that the new school retain the Osbourn High School name. Manassas residents were proud of the tradition and history of Osbourn. Osbourn High School was originally named for Mrs. Fannie Osbourn Metz and Miss Eugenia Osbourn who, in 1934, founded the first private school that was accredited as a high school.<sup>49</sup> The *Journal Messenger* reported that on October 5, 1972, thirty-five area citizens “stormed board chambers requesting changes in previous board action.”<sup>50</sup>

The citizens were primarily concerned with four issues. First was the location of the new school. The concerned citizens wanted the Lewis tract school to be assigned to Osbourn High School as intended when the school bond was approved and the land was purchased. Secondly, the citizens wanted the Osbourn High School name retained at the new school. They cited Woodbridge High School, Gar-Field High School and Stonewall Jackson High School as recent examples in Prince William County where the new high school retained its name. Mr. O. G. Cramer, a member of the Osbourn booster’s club and a speaker at the meeting, was reported to

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<sup>46</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 1; Richard Johnson, interview, p. 1; *Journal Messenger*, 8 September 1970, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 1; Richard Johnson, interview, p. 1; “Treat Osbourn Equally,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 October 1972, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 2; “Treat Osbourn Equally,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 October 1972, p. 1. The maps in Appendix F show the location of Osbourn Park High School and Stonewall Jackson High School.

<sup>49</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 1; “Treat Osbourn Equally,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 October 1972, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 2; “Treat Osbourn Equally,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 October 1972, p.1.

have said:

The school should not be dishonored by changing its name to some other that has no foundation of fact or reason. The name of Osbourn is an honored name in Prince William County education and should not be changed. We are the only school so dishonored.<sup>51</sup>

During the controversy over naming the Conner tract, school letters written to the editor of the *Journal Messenger* insinuated that the Osbourn Park name was chosen as a compromise to appease Mayor Costello, since Manassas Park had worked with Prince William County to purchase Conner Farm and would be providing the water and sewer services to the new high school.<sup>52</sup>

The third issue of concern to the citizens involved school boundaries. Manassas citizens felt that the student body from Osbourn should remain intact and attend the new high school together. The fourth and final issue concerned equal facilities. In an attempt to save money, the school board had determined that both the Conner tract and Lewis tract schools could share the same athletic facilities. The stadium and track would be constructed on the site of the Lewis tract school and those facilities would also host events for the Conner tract school. Citizens wanted equal facilities to be built on both sites.

So intense was the controversy that the Prince William County School Board was forced to rethink its position and propose a compromise.<sup>53</sup> The school board decided that students in Manassas, Manassas Park and the area south of Manassas would attend the Conner tract school. The school board included funds for athletic facilities at the Conner tract school in the next school bond issue.<sup>54</sup> Finally, the school board established a six member committee charged with selecting three to five names for each school within two weeks. The committee proposed three names for the new school on the Conner tract: Osbourn Park High School, Prince William High School and Western High School.<sup>55</sup> In December the school board again selected the name of Osbourn Park for the school on the Conner tract. Manassas Park agreed to furnish sewer and water hookups for the new school. Five acres of property adjacent to the Osbourn Park site were donated by

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 2; William Steele, interview, p. 2; "Osbourn Boosters State 'Real' Position," *Journal Messenger*, 27 October 1972, p. 6A.

<sup>53</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 2; "Compromise Plan on High Schools Passed by Board," *Journal Messenger*, 15 November 1972, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid; "Stadium Bonds Passed," *Journal Messenger*, 7 November 1973, p. 1. Taxpayers overwhelmingly approved a \$594,284 bond issue which authorized the school board to build a stadium and athletic facilities at Osbourn Park.

<sup>55</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 2; "Decision on High Schools Postponed to Next Week," *Journal Messenger*, 29 November 1972, p. 1.



Manassas Park to the school board for a special education school.

Once the school board settled on the compromise position, Manassas Park voiced its displeasure. Roger Costello said that the decision by the school board “left us out completely.”<sup>56</sup> Bill Steele, a town council member from Manassas Park, said that Manassas Park wanted only two things: equal facilities and consideration of another name. Mr. Steele knew that both schools would be built from the same architectural plans but wanted to make sure each school was equal. Students from Osbourn Park should have their own athletic facilities and should not have to share facilities at Stonewall Jackson. Mr. Steele also wanted “Signal Hill High School” considered as a name for the new school on the Conner tract. He felt that there was no good reason to name the school Osbourn Park. Prior to the naming of the new school, Mr. Steele had received a telephone call from Prince William County School Board Member Tom Beane. Mr. Beane had asked which name Mr. Steele preferred, at which time Mr. Steele suggested “Signal Hill.”<sup>57</sup>

Nearly two years after purchasing part of the Conner Farm and understanding that their children would attend the new school on the Conner tract, Manassas Park residents wanted their 650 students to attend the new school on the Lewis tract. They were under the impression that they would attend the Lewis tract school even after Osbourn Park, which was geographically closer, on the Conner tract was completed. The school board finally decided that students from Manassas Park would attend the new Lewis tract school for one year and then transfer to Osbourn Park on the Conner tract during the second half of the following year (1975).

December 1972 signaled the end of a very hectic year for the Prince William County Schools. Financial woes plagued the school system as \$750,000 in school funds were cut from the budget in the spring. Enrollment had soared to over 34,000 students, creating overcrowding and forcing split-shifts in many schools. The school division attempted to solve the enrollment problems with the completion of eleven construction projects funded through school bond referendums passed in 1968 and 1970.

Stonewall Jackson High School, on the Lewis tract, opened to students on May 31, 1973. Construction of the Osbourn Park school lagged. After Stonewall Jackson opened, school officials projected that Osbourn Park would open in March, 1974. The original completion date had been set for December, 1973 but weather and soil problems pushed the opening date back. Foundation changes were necessary due to soil conditions, rock excavations and inclement weather. By June, 1974 the *Journal Messenger* reported that Osbourn Park had become a financial disaster.<sup>58</sup> A Prince William County School attorney said that a combination of factors made Osbourn Park “a financial disaster of a magnitude calculated to discourage the heartiest of

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<sup>56</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 2; “Costello Raps School Decision,” *Journal Messenger*, 8 December 1972, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 2; “Osbourn Park a Financial Disaster” *Journal Messenger*, 7 June 1974, p. 1.

contractors.”<sup>59</sup> By this time, construction was months behind schedule, even though the building plans were the same as those for Stonewall Jackson.

The school district had poured thousands of additional dollars into the project to satisfy the contractor, Ranger Construction of Atlanta. An attorney for the school board, Lloyd T. Smith, Jr. of Tremblay and Smith from Charlottesville, said: “Ranger’s low bid probably guaranteed them a loss from the outset.”<sup>60</sup> The bid from Ranger was about \$500,000 lower than the closest bid. Ranger became involved in disputes with subcontractors who had done faulty work which, in many cases, had to be ripped out and redone. Ranger’s failure to follow established procedures in purchasing early in the construction phase, and rampant inflation, combined to create a financial disaster.<sup>61</sup> In addition, Ranger had employed three different construction superintendents from December, 1971 to December, 1973, resulting in inadequate supervision of the project.<sup>62</sup> There were major delays in the subcontractors’ handling of grading and site work, concrete and masonry work, and mechanical and plumbing work. In fact, Ranger became involved in lawsuits with the mechanical and plumbing contractor and the electrical contractor for failing to make timely payments. Disputes also arose with suppliers of steel, windows, carpet and bleachers.

At the same time, while Ranger was working on the Osbourn Park project, they were also involved in litigation concerning other construction projects.<sup>63</sup> The school board attorney informed the board that Ranger had sub-contracted all work and attempted to make a profit by organizing the work of other companies. The attorney related that work rejected by the project architect caused Ranger to become bitter and to attack the architect rather than correcting the problems.<sup>64</sup> Even with the problems the school board was having with construction, the attorney recommended retaining Ranger as contractor, since securing a new contractor would further delay completion of the project.

The school board hired a consulting team to review the construction at Osbourn Park.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3; “Osborn Park a Financial Disaster,” *Journal Messenger*, 7 June 1974, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3; “Ranger Said Suit Prone,” *Journal Messenger*, 10 June 1974, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3; “Osborn Lag Investigated,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 June 1974, p. 1. The team was comprised of: James Y. Bruce, an architect from Macon, Georgia; Henn Rebane with the architectural and engineering firm of Watson and Company from Tampa,

The team found exterior brick walls incomplete, sections of the building still not under roof, and the need for corrective plumbing. Ranger became concerned about the negative publicity being received due to construction delays and criticism, and claimed that bad press contributed to delays in the project. By July of 1974 the project had fallen behind by seven months. It was doubtful that the school would be ready to open anytime during the 1974 school year. The school board scheduled a meeting with the bonding company to discuss options available to them. Ranger followed by filing a civil suit against Prince William County.<sup>66</sup> Ranger sued the county for \$13,640,300 for breach of contract and injury to their reputation as a contractor.

The legal battle between Prince William County Schools and Ranger Construction escalated. The school board sought arbitration through the U. S. District Court, in Alexandria, on August 16, 1974. If Ranger was found in default, the school board attorneys would request that the bonding company take over the project.<sup>67</sup> On Monday, September 9, 1974 with the building only 75 per cent complete, the school board dismissed Ranger Construction as contractor for the Osbourn Park project.<sup>68</sup> The board hoped to secure a new contractor within forty-five days in order to complete the project within six months.

The Prince William County School Board filed a Federal court action against Ranger in October, 1974.<sup>69</sup> In the suit, the board sought an injunction for liquidation damages at \$500 per day, retroactive to April 16, 1974. The estimated completion cost for the project was three million dollars with only \$1.7 million left in the construction fund.

By November, the school board had decided to act as its own general contractor and to resume work on the project. Several of the subcontractors employed by Ranger resumed work on Osbourn Park. In January, 1975 the school board hired C. M. Associates of Houston to serve as construction manager and to complete Osbourn Park.<sup>70</sup> C. M. Associates determined that many corrections in the project were needed. The building contained improperly poured slabs and incorrectly located columns. In addition, electrical wiring and plumbing needed to be redone; the building suffered from water seepage; the air conditioner chillers were rusted; and improperly

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Florida; and Fred Cline, the assistant superintendent for physical plant for the Dade County Public Schools in Miami, Florida.

<sup>66</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3; "County Hit With Giant Civil Suit," *Journal Messenger*, 24 July 1974, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3; "School Board Seeks Arbitration of Ranger Contract," *Journal Messenger*, 15 August 1974, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3; "School Board Dismisses Ranger," *Journal Messenger*, 10 September 1974, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3; "School Board Sues Building Firm," *Journal Messenger*, 11 October 1974, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*

stored materials had become unstable. In the meantime, the school board was forced to ask the supervisors for an additional \$2.24 million to complete the project. The supervisors responded by voting for a grand jury probe of the construction project, asking the circuit court to convene a special grand jury.

In September, 1975 Osbourn Park opened, even though problems still existed. Parts of the building, mainly in the vocational areas, were incomplete. While the county and the contractor were fighting in court, Manassas Park students had become comfortable in the new environment of Stonewall Jackson High School. Many had purchased class rings at Stonewall and expected to finish high school there. In May 1975, Manassas Park residents protested the forced relocation of their students from Stonewall Jackson to Osbourn Park. Once Osbourn Park opened, students from Manassas Park were split between the two schools. Only seniors were allowed to remain at Stonewall Jackson to graduate with their class.

In the end the school board won in court, when it was ruled that the termination of Ranger Construction was justified. It cost Prince William County \$12.5 million to complete Osbourn Park and \$10 million to complete Stonewall Jackson. Both projects were built using the same architectural plans and each was originally projected to cost \$10 million.<sup>71</sup>

### **A Successful Annexation Attempt and Taxpayer Revolt**

In August of 1974, Manassas Park made another attempt to annex property in Prince William County. The planned annexation would triple the size of the town, provided that the county cooperated in the annexation proceedings. Part of the property in question was an 800 acre parcel of land outside the corporate limits to which the town held title. In all, the town wanted 1,200 acres of land, which included prime industrial land.

In September 1974, the Town Council of Manassas Park voted 5-2 to increase the real property tax from \$3.45 to \$4.50 per \$100 of assessed value.<sup>72</sup> The \$1.05 increase would produce an additional \$80,000 in revenue that the council felt was needed due to inflation. By October, council voted unanimously to rescind the tax increase due to public outrage.<sup>73</sup> Councilman Robert Rowe, a leading advocate of the tax increase, said that the town would cope by cutting corners. Mayor Costello said that the town would tighten its belt by cutting personnel. The citizens of the town were appeased by the vote to rescind the tax, but they criticized council for its lack of communication.

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<sup>71</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 4; Betty Curran, "Litigation Ends: County Gets \$3 Million," *Journal Messenger*, 24 January 1980, p. 1. Seven years after filing suit, the court awarded Prince William County Schools a final judgement of \$2.3 million plus eight percent interest (\$760,749.35.)

<sup>72</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 3; Roger Neil, "Park Tax Increase Voted," *Journal Messenger*, 18 September 1974, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 3; William Steele, interview, p. 3; Joan Mower, "Park Council Drops Back Tax Rate Hike," *Journal Messenger*, 3 October 1974, p. 1.

Late in October, at a 1:00 P.M. meeting, Manassas Park Town Council passed a fifty-two percent increase in real property tax. Two members of council voted against the increase because of what they felt was improper public notice. At midnight of the same day, one hundred angry citizens gathered at the home of Mayor Costello to protest the newest tax increase and the secrecy surrounding the increase.<sup>74</sup> A midnight council meeting was hastily called by the mayor and council, by a 5-2 vote, once again rescinded the tax increase. At that meeting council member Bill Steele made a motion that the town look into the procedures necessary for Manassas Park to become a second class city. The motion passed by a 4-2 vote.

By the end of November 1974, Manassas Park had annexed the ninety acre Manassas Park Village subdivision. The town now owned 1,100 acres of land lying east of Route 28 and extending north to the Fairfax County line. Manassas Park had been “land banking” for several years. In 1963 the town was \$1.3 million in debt, largely due to sewer and water construction, and owned no land. From 1971 to 1974 Manassas Park had spent \$1.5 million on land, including the E. R. and Katherine Conner Property.

At least one member of the county board of supervisors opposed the annexation by Manassas Park. Neabsco supervisor Donald W. Turner feared that once the annexation was complete, Manassas Park would become an independent city, and therefore, Prince William would lose needed tax revenue.<sup>75</sup> Coles supervisor C. Scott Winfield, whose constituency included Manassas Park, supported the annexation bid. He felt that the town needed the land to survive through a broadened tax base. Mr. Winfield was not concerned that the town would become a city stating: “I’m sure you don’t have to worry about Manassas Park becoming a city in my lifetime or yours.”<sup>76</sup>

In December the supervisors gave permission for Manassas Park to grow by 549 acres, which included 275 acres of prime industrial and commercial land lying along the Southern Railway. Judge Arthur Sinclair signed the order officially allowing Manassas Park to annex the property to the town, making the order effective January 1, 1975.

### **Manassas Becomes a City**

In the fall of 1974, Manassas Mayor Harry Parrish said that the town of Manassas did not have a timetable for obtaining city status.<sup>77</sup> Mayor Parrish is quoted as saying: “Conceivably, the

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<sup>74</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 3; William Steele, interview, p. 3; Bennie Scarton, “Taxpayers Revolt,” *Journal Messenger*, 29 October 1974, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 3; “Park’s Annexation Bid Shelved,” *Journal Messenger*, 27 November 1974, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3; Roger Costello, interview p. 4; Kathi Keys, “PARRISH: No City Status At This Time,” *Journal Messenger*, 11 October 1974, p. 1. Under state law there were two types of cities. First Class cities had populations of over 10,000

council will have a study made and get the facts and figures to arrive at the necessary taxes. But I feel certain the council won't hastily take this step [voting to become a city] without a study."<sup>78</sup> Mayor Parrish went on to say that it would depend on whether the town could work out its problems with the county. Manassas paid \$2,865,000 in county taxes but felt that they did not benefit sufficiently from county services. Manassas received very little in the way of police, fire, or rescue services from the county.

On March 31, 1975 the town of Manassas delivered an ultimatum to Prince William County: either share county tax revenues with the town or cope with Manassas as a city by June 1. The move came on the heels of town attempts to block legislation continuing a moratorium on changes in local governments until July 1, 1976. The legislation had been signed one week prior by Governor Godwin.<sup>79</sup> Manassas produced 10.9 percent of Prince William County revenues but felt that they did not receive an equitable portion in services.<sup>80</sup> The town prepared two budgets: one based on retaining town status and the other on assuming city status.<sup>81</sup> Manassas also decided to conduct a feasibility study on becoming a city. A prior feasibility study had been conducted in 1967. In that study the consulting firm had recommended that, before seeking city status, the city must make provisions to impound water.

When the county rejected the town's plan for revenue sharing, the Manassas Town Council met to review a consulting firm's report on becoming a city.<sup>82</sup> The consultants determined that becoming a city would have minimal impact on city taxpayers. In fact, they informed town council that the tax rate would be lower than what residents paid in combined city and county taxes. In a straw vote, residents voted in favor of city status.<sup>83</sup> Council decided to hold a public hearing prior to making a decision.

The pieces appeared to be in place. Manassas had an airport built in 1962. They had impounded water in 1970. The key to financial feasibility was the 1970 annexation of the

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residents, while Second Class city status required a population of 5,000.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 3; Randi Deiotte, "Threatens City Move: Town Wants Tax Split," *Journal Messenger*, 2 April 1975, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 2; Randi Deiotte, "County Taxes Keep Industry Away," *Journal Messenger*, 14 April 1975, p. 1. In a state survey Prince William County ranked 95<sup>th</sup> of 95 Virginia counties as a potential industrial site.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 4; Peter Vandervanter, "Town Council Takes the Plunge," *Journal Messenger*, 18 April 1975, p. 1. The town used the firm of Hayes, Seay, Mattern and Mattern from Roanoke, Virginia as consultants.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

property on which IBM had been built. This property alone produced \$400,000 in tax revenues.<sup>84</sup>

Manassas filed a petition in the Prince William County Circuit Court on April 17, 1975 to become a city. The final vote was taken at a town council meeting that night. It appeared that the residents of Manassas were in favor of the move, since no one spoke against it at the meeting. The only concern that arose during the meeting was that of the education of Manassas children. Residents hoped for fair negotiations between Manassas and Prince William County for educational services. Coles District Supervisor and Chair C. Scott Winfield stated: "Our word goes as our bond. We won't let any child in the town or city go uneducated. We won't charge anyone anymore that anyone else."<sup>85</sup> Manassas Town Council decided to become a city. Mayor Harry Parrish signed the petition, which asked the Circuit Court to make the change to city status effective May 1, 1975.

The vote enabled the town to become a city just before a June 1 moratorium on such action was enacted. The move by Manassas was prefaced by a decade of growth and planning. The quick action by Manassas was made necessary by the impending statewide moratorium and by overwhelming citizen pressure to seek city status.<sup>86</sup> Once Manassas took the necessary steps, the largest expense the new city would incur was the establishment of a school system.

### **Manassas Park Explores Options**

A special town meeting was held in Manassas Park on April 23, 1975, barely one week after Manassas made the decision to become a city.<sup>87</sup> At the meeting a committee was appointed to draft a consolidation proposal to be sent to the Manassas City Council. The committee was comprised of Mayor Costello, Councilman Robert Rowe and Director of Community Development Gene Moore. According to Mayor Costello, the consolidation proposal was not a suit of annexation but a proposal for the town of Manassas Park and the city of Manassas to be consolidated, by mutual agreement, without court arbitration. The agreement was subject to a referendum following a series of public hearings.<sup>88</sup> There was community resistance in Manassas

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 4; Peter Vandervanter, "Court Gets Petition, City Vote Is Tonight," *Journal Messenger*, 17 April 1975, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 2; Richard Johnson, interview, p. 4. Recommendations made to the General Assembly included requirements that were prohibitive if a town sought city status including: assuming their per capita percentage of county debt, in addition to being required to negotiate for the purchase of county facilities needed for provision of necessary residential services.

<sup>87</sup>Town Council Minutes, Manassas Park Town Council, 23 April 1975, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 4; "Park Eyes City Merger," *Journal Messenger*, 24 April 1975, p. 1.

to the Manassas Park proposal. Citizens of Manassas, through the *Journal Messenger*, complained that Manassas Park consisted of “row upon row of cheap houses, sides bulging with children” and that “Manassas Park is a parasite.”<sup>89</sup> The city of Manassas subsequently rejected the merger proposal, citing insufficient information on Manassas Park’s assets and liabilities.<sup>90</sup> Once Manassas Park received word that its proposal had been rejected, the town council voted unanimously to seek to annex the greater Manassas area and its 35,000 people, establishing a population of 43,000 which included the residents of Manassas Park.<sup>91</sup>

### **Manassas Negotiates for School Services**

The per pupil cost of educating students in Prince William County, which included students from Manassas and Manassas Park, was calculated at \$1,233.<sup>92</sup> Prince William officials predicted that by losing Manassas their composite index would drop, thus requiring less local money. Due to the “wealth” of Manassas, the city would receive less state aid. Wayne Moore, Director of Finance in Prince William County Schools, projected tuition for the three thousand Manassas students at \$3.5 million, which included debt service. Manassas had twelve percent of the county’s wealth and eight percent of the county student enrollment.<sup>93</sup>

Manassas offered \$1.7 million for services through June 30, 1975. Manassas felt that this amount was equivalent to the taxes Prince William County would have received had they collected taxes from the city. In exchange, Manassas requested that all county services be provided to city residents. At the end of negotiations, Manassas agreed to pay its proportional share of local costs for education based on 1975 taxable resources. The city’s share was 11.616 percent of the local cost to the county based on a \$3.75 per \$100 tax rate.<sup>94</sup>

### **Manassas Park Attains City Status**

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<sup>89</sup>“Community Sound Off,” *Journal Messenger*, 30 April 1975, p. 4A.

<sup>90</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 4; “Park Eyes City Merger,” *Journal Messenger*, 24 April 1975, p. 1.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid. Upon learning of the annexation attempt, some Manassas Park residents thought that it was a joke; others were embarrassed by the town’s action; and others claim that it was just rumored.

<sup>92</sup>Virginia Education Association, Research Service, “*Virginia’s Educational Disparities*,” (Richmond: Virginia Education Association, 1976), p. 3.

<sup>93</sup>Wayne Moore, interviewed by author, interview 3, transcript, Manassas, Va., 14 January 1998, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 4, Wayne Moore, interview, p. 1.



With the June 1 deadline rapidly approaching, Manassas Park decided to take steps to become a city.<sup>95</sup> Some council members feared that, due to the loss of Manassas, county taxes would go “sky high.”<sup>96</sup> They reasoned that a large portion of county tax dollars would be lost, as IBM was in the city of Manassas. By becoming a city Manassas Park avoided the higher county taxes and could choose how the tax dollars were spent. To become a second class city, a town had to have at least five thousand residents.<sup>97</sup> The 1970 census had shown a population of 6,844 in Manassas Park.

The decision to become a city complicated Manassas Park’s bid to annex territory. At that time in Virginia, no city could annex territory and, therefore, once Manassas Park became a city it could not annex Manassas. With the June 1 deadline for becoming a city approaching, Manassas Park decided it could not wait for a decision on annexation, and therefore sought city status.<sup>98</sup>

On April 30, 1975, Circuit Court Judge Jennings rejected Manassas Park’s bid to become a city.<sup>99</sup> Judge Jennings cited 1970 census figures for Manassas Park (6,844) and Prince William County’s 1974 planning figure (6,308) as an indication of declining population in Manassas Park. In summation Judge Jennings stated: “I do think there is considerable difference between the Manassas order to become a city and the Manassas Park order to become a city.”<sup>100</sup> In response, Manassas Park’s attorney said that Manassas Park had not rushed into becoming a city and that the town council had worked “day and night for two weeks before making the decision.”<sup>101</sup>

Manassas Park did not give up. Judge James Keith signed an order establishing enumerators in Manassas Park to determine if at least five thousand people lived there. Judge Keith’s order allowed the Manassas Park bid to become a city to be reconsidered. Eight enumerators were named to go door to door in Manassas Park.<sup>102</sup>

The enumerators determined that the town’s population was 6,272 residents, which

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<sup>95</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 3; Roger Costello, interview, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 2; Richard Johnson, interview, p. 4.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 3; William Steele, interview, p. 2.

<sup>100</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 2; Peter Vandervanter, “Manassas Park’s City Bid Killed,” *Journal Messenger*, 1 May 1975, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 2; Lois Steele, interview, p. 2.

<sup>102</sup>Lana Conner, interviewed by author, interview 33, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 28 December 1998, p. 1; Lois Steele, interview, p. 2. Both Mrs. Conner and Mrs. Steele were named as enumerators.

qualified it for city status.<sup>103</sup> On May 15, 1975 Judge Keith signed the order which would become effective on June 1, 1975.<sup>104</sup> The new city council cited two primary reasons for becoming a city. First was the displacement of school children by Manassas' move to city status. The second reason was the continued addition of tax generating areas to Manassas without concomitant advantage to nearby urban areas.<sup>105</sup>

### **Negotiating for Educational Services**

Upon attaining city status, both Manassas and Manassas Park were faced with trying to decide how to provide adequate educational services for their children. Manassas would no longer pay county taxes after January 1, 1976. Manassas Park, on the other hand, would continue to pay taxes through June 30, 1976.<sup>106</sup> Manassas was the first to enter into negotiations with Prince William County for educational services since they would be paying for the education of their students beginning January 1, 1976. Manassas Park had more time before it needed to secure educational services prior to the opening of school in the fall.

The county derived a formula for tuition based on property assessment rather than per pupil expenditure. Under the Prince William County plan, Manassas would pay tuition based on the assessed value of the city's property in relation to the total assessed value of all city and county property. Based on the relative wealth of the city, the cost would be \$6.1 million, or 11.22 percent of the total school budget. Manassas offered to pay \$1,331.06 per pupil for a total of \$3.86 million. Manassas Park, which held 2.6 percent of the county's wealth, would pay \$1.4 million under the same plan. By paying tuition based on per pupil expenditure, Manassas Park would pay \$2.9 million. Since Manassas Park was a "poor" city and Manassas a "rich" city, Manassas Park would benefit by the plan based on relative wealth.<sup>107</sup>

Manassas Park named their first school board in January, 1976. In a special meeting on January 19, 1976, city council appointed three members to serve on the first school board in Manassas Park. The three new members of the school board met for the first time on January 29, 1976.<sup>108</sup> Robert C. Graver, Sr. was appointed to a three year term and was selected Chairman of the school board.<sup>109</sup> Mr. Graver held a B. A. in sociology from the University of Richmond and

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<sup>103</sup>Lana Conner, interview, p. 1; Lois Steele, interview, p. 2.

<sup>104</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 3; Roger Costello, interview, p. 4.

<sup>105</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 4; Lois Steele, interview, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid; William Steele, interview, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3; Schools, City At Impasse," *Journal Messenger*, 3 December 1975, p. 1.

<sup>108</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 29 January 1976, p. 1.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

was a former teacher. At the time of his appointment, Mr. Graver was the vice president and general manager of Park Brothers Moving Corporation in Alexandria. Edward Connolly, a sixteen year resident of Manassas Park, was appointed to a two year term. Mr. Connolly was a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh with an electronic engineering degree and was employed by General Research, Incorporated, of Herndon. Arthur Williams had extensive background in human relations, and was a graduate of Hampton Institute. He also had studied at the Boston University Human Relations center. Mr. Williams was appointed to a one year term.<sup>110</sup>

The new school board was immediately faced with whether or not the city should begin its own school system. The school board contacted the Virginia School Boards Association for advice. The VSBA's first advice was not to separate, but to attempt to negotiate with Prince William County for educational services.<sup>111</sup> In the opinion of the VSBA, Manassas Park would have a difficult time maintaining a separate school division since they were not a wealthy area and had virtually no financial base to support schools.

In March of 1976, as negotiations for school services continued, the Prince William County School Board took the position that residents of Manassas and Manassas Park should be taxed twice for the education of their students. The Prince William County School Board sent a letter with a bill to each city for educational services rendered.<sup>112</sup> The bill was not unexpected in Manassas, since they had stopped paying county taxes in December and knew that they would have to pay for educational services rendered by Prince William between January and June, 1976. Manassas Park, however, assumed that educational services would be provided by the county since it paid taxes to the county through June. For Manassas Park, the bill constituted a double payment for educational services.<sup>113</sup> The relationship between the county and the two cities further deteriorated when, in April, the county ordered that citizens of Manassas and Manassas Park could no longer use the county libraries, mental health services, public health services, county landfill, welfare and social services, animal control and building inspection services.<sup>114</sup>

In April a negotiated settlement seemed unlikely. Prince William County indicated that school services for Manassas Park would be discontinued in the fall. City officials in Manassas

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid; Deborah Leonard, "Park's City Council Names School Board," *Journal Messenger*, 20 January 1976, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup>Dr. Frank Barham, interviewed by author, interview 5, transcript, Charlottesville, Va., 3 February 1998, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup>Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3; William Steele, interview, p. 3; Kathi Keys, "City Handed Double School Bill," *Journal Messenger*, 5 March 1976, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 3; Roger Costello, interview, p. 3.

<sup>114</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 4; Deborah Leonard, "Costello Vows To Open Library," *Journal Messenger*, 7 April 1976, p. 1. Manassas Park had donated the property for Central Library and felt they had a right to its services. The city filed a petition seeking restoration of library services. Judge James Cacheris ordered Central opened to Manassas Park residents.

Park still held hope for striking a deal with the county. School Board Chairman Bob Graver said that Manassas Park was still negotiating for school services for the 1976-77 school year despite the announcement by Prince William County that school services would be terminated. The Manassas Park School Board felt that it would be in its best interests to continue to use schools in Prince William County. In mid-April Prince William offered to provide general and special education services to Manassas Park through June 30, 1977 at a cost to the city of five percent of the total Prince William school budget. The school board rejected the offer but continued to attempt to negotiate with the county.<sup>115</sup> School board meetings were held almost every night in an attempt to negotiate a settlement to provide an education for the students in Manassas Park.

### **Alternate School Plans Considered**

Since negotiations with the county were still in a state of flux, Manassas Park City Council hired Virginia Tech to provide consulting services for the school division.<sup>116</sup> Virginia Tech had an office that provided such educational services. Dr. Glen Earthman was responsible for in-state school divisions and was assigned to provide Manassas Park with assistance.<sup>117</sup> Earthman developed a plan for housing the city's 2,200 school children and turned it over to the school board.<sup>118</sup> The plan was very ambitious, offering different kinds of assistance, since no administration or staff was in place. A report on the buildings that were needed, educational specifications, the number of staff needed, and personnel policies was provided as part of the Virginia Tech service.<sup>119</sup> Earthman's plan called for a \$1.8 million budget using existing buildings, but also included plans in case no buildings were available. Alternate locations were explored since the school division had no buildings. Earthman went through moving and transfer companies, churches and warehouses looking for suitable space. His idea was to lease the buildings and make minimal adjustments such as lowering the ceilings, painting, and carpeting. There were no suitable spaces in Manassas Park, so buildings in Manassas and the surrounding area were explored. The plan laid out a strict timetable for the transition. Locations for schools were pinpointed by the city engineer. One of the sites considered was a forty acre tract of land near Manassas Park Elementary School. Gene Moore, the city manager, contacted firms which would guarantee pre-engineered buildings on site by September 7. Moore also told the board that

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<sup>115</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 April 1976, p. 1; Richard Johnson, interview, p. 4

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Dr. Glen Earthman, interviewed by author, interview 1, transcript, Blacksburg, Va., 30 July 1997, p. 1.

<sup>118</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 22 April 1976, p. 1; Deborah Leonard, "Manassas Park Studies Alternate School Plan," *Journal Messenger*, 16 April 1976, p. 1.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid; Dr. Glen Earthman, interview, p. 1.

enough teachers had been recruited to educate city children at a starting salary of \$7,500.<sup>120</sup>

By the end of April, 1976, the Manassas Park City School Board had hired a part-time superintendent. Two candidates had been considered for the part-time position. Dr. Frank Barham, Associate Director of the Virginia School Boards Association and a faculty member of the University of Virginia, declined consideration due to his responsibilities with the VSBA and at the University of Virginia.<sup>121</sup> Recommended by Dr. Earthman, Raynard Hale was appointed to work two days a week for an annual salary of \$9,600.<sup>122</sup> Mr. Hale previously had been a superintendent in Montgomery County, Virginia, and had joined the faculty at Virginia Tech after resigning as superintendent. Mr. Hale made it clear that he was only interested in temporary employment stating “I am eligible but not an applicant.”<sup>123</sup>

### **The School Plan is Unveiled**

Three hundred people attended a meeting at Manassas Park Elementary when the school plan was revealed to the public.<sup>124</sup> Board Chairman Bob Graver reported that May 23 had been set as the deadline for negotiating a contract for educational services with Prince William County. Throughout the two and one-half hour meeting, Mr. Graver emphasized that it would be clearly best if the county would continue to educate Manassas Park students for the next year. However, he explained that the contract offered by Prince William doubled what the city had paid during the 1975-76 school year. The city had paid 2.5 percent, or \$875,000, of the county school budget for 1975-76.<sup>125</sup> The county was asking five percent of the budget, or \$1.7 million for 1976-77. “We can build and operate our own schools for less than that. To establish a school system of our own, would not cost more but less.”<sup>126</sup> This figure was based on the fact that out of the total school population, five percent of the students came from Manassas Park.

Graver went on to explain that several potential school sites had been identified. The

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<sup>120</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 4; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 26 April 1976, p. 1.

<sup>121</sup>Dr. Frank Barham, interview, p. 1.

<sup>122</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 26 April 1976, p. 1.

<sup>123</sup>Raynard Hale, interviewed by author, interview 29, transcript, Blacksburg, Va., 7 December 1998, p. 1; Deborah Leonard, “Supers Job Strictly Temporary,” *Journal Messenger*, 30 April 1976, p. 1.

<sup>124</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 11 May 1976, p. 2; Kristy Larson, “Park Unveils Plan For School System,” *Journal Messenger*, 14 May 1976, p. 1.

<sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*

school board wished to build new elementary schools on Kent Drive and in a field near the Didlake Special School. Part of the Conner Tract was being considered for a new junior and senior high school. The board was also considering the purchase of Manassas Park Elementary School from Prince William County.

Citizens at the meeting questioned the wisdom of implementing the fledgling school system. They asked questions about the quality of education and other practical aspects of setting up a city school system. Some citizens felt that it would be best to pay whatever Prince William wanted in tuition because it was not wise to sacrifice the education of the children of Manassas Park due to politics. These same citizens urged the city to take one to two years to develop a plan for educating Manassas Park youth, rather than rushing to accomplish this during a single summer.<sup>127</sup> The meeting ended with Graver reading the Declaration of Independence. After reading the document, Graver was quoted as saying: “The United States became a nation in 1776 because the people had the courage to say we want to be free.”<sup>128</sup>

### **Plans, Problems Continue**

The people of Manassas Park had strong feelings about schooling. Some did not mind becoming a city but were concerned about the education of their children.<sup>129</sup> They felt that establishing a school system over the summer months could not be done properly and that it would take a long time to provide educational services equal to those provided by Prince William County. Other citizens and leaders felt that Prince William County treated the children of Manassas Park as “stepchildren.”<sup>130</sup> These same people felt that Prince William County considered the residents of Manassas Park as “rednecks” with children incapable of learning.<sup>131</sup> They felt that Manassas Park could provide a better education for their children and do it less expensively.

Some citizens began a letter writing campaign to legislators and to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Concerned about the uncertainty of the school situation in Manassas Park, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Dellinger wrote to U. S. Congressman Herbert E. Harris

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<sup>127</sup>Barbara Dellinger, interviewed by author, interview 4, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 27 January 1998, p. 5; Mary Sue Polk, interviewed by author, interview 6, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 9 February 1998, p. 1.

<sup>128</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 11 May 1976, p. 2; Larson, “Park Unveils Plan For School System,” p. 1.

<sup>129</sup>Barbara Dellinger, interview, p. 5; Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 1.

<sup>130</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 1; Roger Costello, interview, p. 2.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid.

asking for help.<sup>132</sup> In their letter to Congressman Harris, Mr. and Mrs. Dellinger wrote: “The city on the other hand rammed city status down our throats with no vote, and is now throwing together a school system and passing it off as equal to the present system, again no vote.”<sup>133</sup> The response by Congressman Harris offered little relief. Congressman Harris suggested that complaints should be addressed to Dr. W. E. Campbell, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Virginia. At the bottom of the letter, in his own hand, Congressman Harris wrote: “I know the local situation is very difficult.”<sup>134</sup>

Meetings to discuss the schooling issue were held at Manassas Park Elementary School and drew large crowds of concerned citizens. Citizens at the meetings debated the wisdom of remaining a city and operating their own school system. Members of the community felt so strongly about the issue that the debate often became loud and argumentative. At several meetings, threats of violence against the mayor and council were made.<sup>135</sup> Some spoke bitterly about not having a voice in decisions made by the city council. At one meeting Mayor Steele had to call a temporary halt to citizens’ comments so that the city council could address the agenda. Residents of the city went outside and argued so loudly that Mayor Steele had to request that the city manager go out to check into the disruption.<sup>136</sup>

Negotiations with Prince William County remained at an impasse. Without a negotiated settlement in sight, the city began to make plans for ground-breaking for the new schools. The major sticking point in the negotiations seemed to be Manassas Park’s right to annex property. The county wanted Manassas Park to agree never to annex property. Mayor Steele refused to give up the right to annex property that belonged to the city. Manassas Park did, however, agree to submit a specific annexation plan to Prince William County.<sup>137</sup>

### **Putting the School System into Operation**

The May 23 deadline passed without an agreement for school services between Manassas

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<sup>132</sup>Barbara Dellinger, interview, p. 1; Deborah Leonard, “Outside Aid Sought,” *Journal Messenger*, 14 May 1976, p. 1.

<sup>133</sup>Kenneth and Barbara Dellinger, to Congressman Herbert E. Harris II, 10 May 1976.

<sup>134</sup>Congressman Herbert E. Harris II, to Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Dellinger, 14 May 1976. As Congressman Harris suggested, the Dellingers wrote to Dr. Campbell, who never responded to their letter.

<sup>135</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 3; Deborah Leonard, “Mayor Vows School Settlement,” *Journal Messenger*, 19 May 1976, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid.

<sup>137</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 3; Deborah Leonard, “Mayor Vows School Settlement,” *Journal Messenger*, 19 May 1976, p. 1.

Park and Prince William County. On May 27, 1976 the Manassas Park City School Board voted to put a city owned school system into operation by September 7.<sup>138</sup> The school board asked the city council to provide the buildings, equipment and operating funds. The school board proposed a budget of \$2.2 million, of which \$1.6 million was expected in state and federal revenues.<sup>139</sup> Student cafeterias were not to be constructed until the 1977-78 school year. The school board also decided to ask the city to explore the possibility of purchasing Manassas Park Elementary School.

On Saturday, May 29, 1976, an informal ground breaking ceremony was held on the sites of the new schools.<sup>140</sup> One of the sites was at the end of Colfax Court, which ran perpendicular to Manassas Drive, and the other was behind the Prince William County Special Education School (formerly the Didlake School) on the old Conner Farm property and adjacent to Osbourn Park High School (see maps in Appendix F). These two sites were to house elementary schools, each containing fourteen classrooms and a library. Bids for the two new elementary school buildings were due on June 7, 1976.<sup>141</sup> The new junior/senior high school would be constructed on a nearly fifty acre “flat” section of the old Conner Farm. Bids for the junior/senior high school were due by June 10. Residents attending the ceremony were taken by bus to the sites. School Board Chairman Bob Graver and Mayor Bill Steele were the first to turn dirt.<sup>142</sup> The Mayor then urged all residents and their children in attendance to take their turn. The ceremony ended with a bus tour of city owned land.

At the end of May, City Manager Gene Moore released a proposed budget of \$4,053,289 and recommended a tax rate of \$6.25.<sup>143</sup> This proposed rate was five cents higher than it would have been had Manassas Park remained a town.<sup>144</sup> The largest expenditure in the proposed budget was \$2.1 million for education. City council unanimously adopted a \$6.15 tax rate, ten

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<sup>138</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 27 May 1976, p. 1; Deborah Leonard, “Groundbreaking Tomorrow: Park Schoolmen Vote To Go,” *Journal Messenger*, 28 May 1976, p. 1.

<sup>139</sup>Raynard Hale, interview, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 27 May 1976, p. 2.

<sup>140</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 3; Raynard Hale, interview, p. 1.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid.

<sup>143</sup>City Council Minutes, City of Manassas Park, 26 May 1976, p. 1.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid; Deborah Leonard, “\$4 Million Plus Budget Unveiled,” *Journal Messenger*, 31 May 1976, p. 1. If Manassas Park had remained a town, residents would have paid \$4.35 in county taxes and \$1.85 in town taxes for a total of \$6.20.



cents below the rate recommended by the mayor and the city manager.<sup>145</sup> The school board budget was raised from \$2.1 million to \$2.4 million dollars when city council approved a \$2,466,400 budget. Of that amount, \$762,365 was provided by the city. It was determined that one million dollars would be allotted for salaries. The starting teacher salary was set at \$8,000.<sup>146</sup>

On June 8, at a special city council meeting, the city awarded two contracts for the elementary schools.<sup>147</sup> Council awarded contracts to Continental Homes, of Boones Mill, for \$356,572 for each of the two schools and \$20,916 for each building for customized heating and air conditioning. At this meeting “screams of injustice, name calling, talk of forming a taxpayer’s association to fight city status in court, and threats to physically harm Mayor Steele were heard.”<sup>148</sup> Questions from the residents centered upon city status and the removal of students from Osbourn Park High School and Stonewall Jackson High School. School Board Chairman Graver told the crowd that the city had offered to pay the county the full per pupil cost, which amounted to \$150,000 more than it would cost the city to educate its own children.

On June 10, a \$662,604 contract was awarded to Nationwide Homes for the new junior/senior high school.<sup>149</sup> This building would include twelve classrooms and rooms for music, business, home economics and science. Not included in the bid were the gymnasium, offices, library and vocational areas. Nationwide bid to complete the job in eighty-one days. Other bidders were Continental Homes and J. K. Parker. J. K. Parker’s bid was the highest at \$975,720, with a guaranteed project completion in 180 days. Continental Homes bid to complete the job in ninety-five days at a cost of \$756,650. The two elementary schools and the junior/senior high schools were to be shipped in twelve pre-fabricated sections, put in place and bricked.

### **Summer School Opens**

On June 8, 1976, the school board appointed Andrew Carrington as summer school principal and assistant superintendent from June 8, 1976 through the end of August, 1976 at a salary of \$50 per day.<sup>150</sup> Carrington had just over one month to plan and implement the summer

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<sup>145</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 4; Deborah Leonard, “Park Overrides Mayor’s Veto,” *Journal Messenger*, 18 August 1976, p. 1.

<sup>146</sup>Raynard Hale, interview, p. 2; Leonard, “\$4 Million Plus Budget Unveiled,” p. 1.

<sup>147</sup>City Council Minutes, City of Manassas Park, 8 June 1976, p. 1.

<sup>148</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 4; Deborah Leonard, “Building Contract Let Despite Rowdy Crowd,” *Journal Messenger*, 8 June 1976, p. 1.

<sup>149</sup>City Council Minutes, City of Manassas Park, 10 June 1976, p. 1.

<sup>150</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 8 June 1976, p. 1; Andrew Carrington, interviewed by author, interview 31, transcript, Virginia Beach, Va., 17 December 1998, p. 1.

school program. Classes from the four week summer term were scheduled to begin on Tuesday, July 13, 1976, and end on Monday, August 9, 1976.<sup>151</sup>

The first summer school classes were held on July 13, 1976. Eighty-six students were enrolled in classes. The majority of those students enrolled in driver education classes.<sup>152</sup>

In addition to his duties as summer school principal, Carrington was responsible for supervising the construction of the high school, personnel, instruction, and student matters. As he was preparing to open summer school, he also was meeting with state Department of Education officials regarding the approval for high school construction, reviewing teacher applications and conducting interviews, and attempting to obtain student files from Prince William County for Manassas Park students.<sup>153</sup>

### **The City Hires a Superintendent**

The school board received thirty resumes from which to choose a superintendent. They chose Robert Strickland, from Pineville, Kentucky, to be the first superintendent of schools in Manassas Park for a salary of \$25,000. Chairman Graver remarked: "The State Board of Education knows him as a man that gets the job done and we have a big job to do."<sup>154</sup> At the time of his appointment Mr. Strickland was fifty years old. He had received Bachelors and Masters degrees from East Tennessee State College. Strickland had also done work toward a doctorate at the University of Virginia. Prior to accepting the position in Manassas Park, he had taught and coached in high school for ten years, been a principal, administrative assistant to the superintendent, and had served in the position of superintendent in Lee County, Virginia and Pineville City Schools in Kentucky. The school board asked Raynard Hale to help during the transition.<sup>155</sup>

### **The Schools Prepare to Open**

In late July, Manassas Park announced that schools would open on September 15, 1976. The construction consultant informed the board that all modular units for the elementary schools

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<sup>151</sup>Andrew Carrington, interview, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 13 July 1976, p. 1.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid.

<sup>154</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 June 1976, p. 1; Deborah Leonard, "Park Picks Kentuckian To Head School System," *Journal Messenger*, 25 June 1976, p. 1.

<sup>155</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 July 1976, p. 1; Raynard Hale, interview, p. 3.

were in place and that the last sections of the high school were expected in one week. Many preparations were under way in order to open school. The school board needed room to house the school administration and, upon recommendation of the superintendent, they rented a townhouse, on Sunnyside Court, as school board office space.<sup>156</sup> Principals had been hired and were in the process of hiring teachers and staff before the first day of school.

Teachers calling in for application packets were invited for interviews over the telephone before ever submitting application materials. Many teachers were hired on the same day that they were interviewed. Interviews were conducted at the school board offices in the townhouse, and in trailers on the construction site. Candidates waiting for interviews in the trailer were forced to stand or sit on the floor, as few seats were available. High school teachers were interviewed by the assistant principal, Kathy Lewis, and the principal, Bob Rose. Jimmy Stuart, principal of Manassas Park Elementary School, interviewed elementary teaching candidates. Strickland interviewed candidates only briefly, if he interviewed them at all. One teacher reported that, after she had waited for half an hour to see him, Strickland's secretary came out of his office and said "he saw you come in and said you look fine."<sup>157</sup> Some of the new teachers passed by the new Osbourn Park High School on their way to or from their interviews, and thought that it was the new high school in which they would be teaching.

While preparations for opening Conner and Independence seemed to be right on schedule, opening a high school was proving to be a bit more difficult. The high school intended to compete in fall sports and needed uniforms for the teams and the band. The booster club reported that it had \$93 in the bank and estimated that \$40,000 was needed to dress the football team and the band.<sup>158</sup>

Other high schools in the area already had coaching staffs, schedules and equipment in place. Manassas Park found itself trying to catch-up. The head football coach, Eddie Campbell, was not selected until August 3, 1976, with the beginning of practice just nine days away.<sup>159</sup> Coach Campbell was faced with assembling a football team that had no practice field, no equipment, no game facility and no schedule. School colors had not been chosen for the uniforms. In addition he had no assistant coaches, no knowledge of the players, and no athletic director.

By mid-August some progress had been made. The team would practice and play on the recreation fields in Manassas Park. Since there were no lights on these fields, the team had to

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<sup>156</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 29 July 1976, p. 1.

<sup>157</sup>Sandy Hammersley, interviewed by author, interview 7, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 18 February 1998, p. 1.

<sup>158</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 29 July 1976, p. 1; Deborah Leonard, "Park City Schools To Open Sept. 15; Money Needed For Football Uniforms," *Journal Messenger*, 30 July 1976, p. 1; Tom Haudricourt, "Playing Catch-Up Isn't Easy," *Journal Messenger*, 6 August 1976, p. 1.

<sup>159</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 3 August 1976, p. 1.

play daytime games. The recreation fields were also missing locker room facilities and bleachers. The schedule included only one district game; the rest of the schedule was filled with private schools. A team name and team colors were chosen. Manassas Park High School would be known as the “Cougars” and would wear black and gold uniforms patterned after the two-time Super Bowl Champion Pittsburgh Steelers. Still with only one coach, forty young men practiced with the team. Equipment was purchased from Staunton Military Academy, which had closed.<sup>160</sup>

As the end of August approached, the construction supervisors assured the school board that section A of the junior/senior high school would be completed by August 27 and section B would be finished by August 31. The elementary school on Kent Drive was receiving furniture, and the second elementary school would be finished by the end of the month. Work was also required at Manassas Park Elementary School before it could open. When Prince William County moved out of the school, they stripped the building.<sup>161</sup> Every salvageable piece of equipment, including wall clocks and kitchen equipment, was taken out of the school. Even with so much work left to be done, school officials promised that everything would be ready for school to open on September 15.

Barely one week before the opening of school, Manassas Park received some good news from Prince William County. Prince William agreed to educate some of the special education students in Manassas Park on a tuition basis.<sup>162</sup> Prince William also agreed to draw up a lease-purchase for Manassas Park Elementary School. Under this agreement, Manassas Park could lease Manassas Park Elementary from the county for \$55,000 per year, with an option to purchase the building for \$695,000. If Manassas Park purchased the building by February 1, 1977, a portion of the \$55,000 could be applied to the purchase price.<sup>163</sup>

### **School Opens**

Final arrangements were made. All teachers, except for several special education teachers, were hired. Arrangements for vocational education were made with Northern Virginia

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<sup>160</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 10 August 1976, p. 1.

<sup>161</sup>Lois Merritt, interviewed by author, interview 10, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 12 March 1998,; Jimmy Stuart, interviewed by author, interview 19, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 15 July 1998, p. 1. When Manassas Park became a city, Prince William County no longer needed Manassas Park Elementary School. Before Prince William County knew that Manassas Park was interested in leasing the building, they salvaged whatever equipment they could from the vacated building to be used in other Prince William Schools, if needed. Stuart remembered having a teacher crawl through a window on the first work day, to open the doors to the school, because they did not have a key to the building.

<sup>162</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 12 September 1976, p. 1; Richard Johnson, interview, p. 3.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid.

Community College. An editorial in the *Journal Messenger* announced the opening of the school division:

Tomorrow will mark the first day of instruction in the spanking new school system . . . Blazing new trails in school construction, they have set an example for other jurisdictions.<sup>164</sup>

The day schools opened, both students and bulldozers were present. At the high school, many rooms were without electricity and equipment. Generators were used to provide some electricity, and lighting in the hallways consisted of single strands of bare light bulbs, running the length of the hallway. Teachers periodically left their classrooms to refill the gas tanks on the generators. A picture in the *Journal Messenger* showed students sitting on the floor and standing along the walls in rooms devoid of furniture and without lights. Euclid Avenue, leading to the high school entrance, was a dirt road. It would not be paved until later that year.

The Principal, Bob Rose, had students and teachers all come to the home economics room. There was standing room only as Rose told the crowd what a wonderful school it would be. Rose claimed that a swimming pool and sports complex were planned. Channel 4 news reporter, Marjorie Margolis, was there taping the assembly and interviewing students and teachers.<sup>165</sup> High school and junior high school students only attended school for half of the day so that the entrance to the school could be paved.

The schools enrolled over 2,100 students by the end of September. There were 909 students in grades seven through twelve.<sup>166</sup> As October began, construction at the schools continued. At the high school, the library, office and gym were still under construction and not scheduled to be completed until later in the month.<sup>167</sup> Manassas Park Elementary still lacked kitchen equipment.

Adjustments were made so that the schools could remain in session. New equipment arrived daily. Notices were regularly placed in the *Journal Messenger* so that students knew that they were to bring their own lunches. Students ate brown bag lunches in their classrooms. Physical education classes ate in the locker rooms, many sitting in the showers. High school students were without lockers and attended school on a modified split shift schedule. Seventh and eighth grade students came to school at 10:00 A.M. and stayed until after the high school students

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<sup>164</sup>"But They Did It," *Journal Messenger*, 14 September 1976, p. 4A.

<sup>165</sup>Sandy Hammersley, interview, p. 1; Pam Taylor, interviewed by author, interview 11, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 14 April 1998, p. 1.

<sup>166</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 5 October 1976, p. 1.

<sup>167</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 26 October 1976, p. 1; "Type Of Gym Floor Is Center Of Controversy," *Journal Messenger*, 28 October 1976, p. 1. The school board and city council could not agree on the type of gym floor needed. The school board wanted a wooden floor, but city council wanted the floor to be vinyl tile since the gym doubled as an auditorium.

were released. Four physical education classes, with 120 students, were held in the home economics kitchen, which still lacked half of the equipment. The cheerleaders had home made uniforms and practiced in the math and English classrooms.<sup>168</sup>

Teachers had to be creative to contend with the lack of materials and equipment. There were no typewriters for the typing classes. Home economics students sat on a rug, working on crafts. The art teacher had no art supplies, so she had the students use the cardboard boxes in which school equipment was shipped to make cardboard and string sculptures. Cardboard was also used to make “insect mazes” in the science department. Physical education teachers had to make up games. They played a game

similar to handball with tennis balls on the sidewalks outside the building.<sup>169</sup> Students taking physical education would walk up and down Euclid Avenue for exercise. There were no playing fields, so they used the parking lot to run the fifty yard dash and to play softball. Sometimes they would cross the dirt road in front of the school to play in the fields belonging to the old farm.

Independence Elementary had its own special problems.<sup>170</sup> The school had 394 elementary students enrolled. Independence was located in a residential area with only two narrow streets leading to it. The streets had no sidewalks. All the students walked, or were transported by their parents, to Independence since the narrow streets did not provide room for buses to get in or out. Parents trying to pick up or drop off their children found themselves in a traffic jam. Without sidewalks for the children to walk on, the traffic presented a serious safety problem.

The three new schools in Manassas Park were officially dedicated on November 15, 1976.<sup>171</sup> Manassas Park had accomplished what officials believed to be a first in Virginia: the entire city school system, not just one school building, was dedicated.<sup>172</sup> State Attorney General Andrew Miller spoke at the dedication ceremony, which was held in the high school gym: “The message you have sent to Virginia is that very adequate educational facilities can be constructed for far less than imagined.”<sup>173</sup> The schools had been constructed for \$2.1 million.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>168</sup>Pam Taylor, interviewed by author, interview 11, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 14 April 1998, p. 1; Ellen Smith, “But Confusion At The School Waning After First Two Weeks,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 October 1976, p. 1.

<sup>169</sup>Sandy Hammersley, interview, p. 2; Michelle Hinegardner, interviewed by author, interview 25, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 12 June 1998, p. 1.

<sup>170</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 8 November 1976, p. 1; Jimmy Peters, “Sidewalk Lack Poses Problem at School,” *Journal Messenger*, 12 November 1976, p. 1.

<sup>171</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 8 November 1976, p. 1.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid; Jimmy Peters, “Park Dedicates 3 Schools,” *Journal Messenger*, 15 November 1976, p. 1.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid.

<sup>174</sup>Roger Costello, interview, p. 4; Peters, “Park Dedicates 3 Schools,” p. 1.

## Differences Between City Council and the School Board

The school board and city council had already disagreed over the type of floor that was to be installed in the gym earlier in the school year. By January the differences had become more public.<sup>175</sup> Officials scheduled a meeting on January 11 to discuss differences that had created friction among the city administration, departments and commissions. Most of the criticism was leveled at Gene Moore, the city manager. School Board Chairman Robert Graver cited the “lack of communication and failure to communicate with the city administration”<sup>176</sup> as a major problem. Graver complained that the school board had to go through the city government to order supplies, and that the city administration slashed the orders upon receiving them.<sup>177</sup>

The city manager was not present at the meeting, which was held behind closed doors. Officials stated that once they met, Mr. Moore was not the topic of conversation and that they were able to smooth out their problems.

## More Construction, Changes in Leadership and a New Budget

The school board proposed a new one million dollar vocational center in January 1977. The State Director of Vocational Education had suggested that the vocational center be a joint venture with the City of Manassas.<sup>178</sup> The board also requested that cafeterias be constructed at Conner, Independence and the high school for \$98,000.

Several personnel moves had an impact upon top leaders in the school division in early 1977. One involved the superintendent, Robert Strickland. On April 7, 1977 the school board reappointed Strickland to a four year contract. Strickland’s first appointment had been for a one year term.

At the regular school board meeting on February 21, 1977 the school board accepted the resignation of Bob Rose, the principal of Manassas Park High School, effective at the end of the 1976-77 school year, and reassigned him to the position of Director of Special Services.<sup>179</sup> To fill

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<sup>175</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 10 January 1977, p. 1; Jimmy Peters, “Officials To Consider Internal Differences,” *Journal Messenger*, 10 January 1976, p. 1.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid.

<sup>178</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 10 January 1977, p. 1; Jimmy Peters, “Park Board Seeks Vocational Center,” *Journal Messenger*, 11 January 1977, p. 1.

<sup>179</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 21 February 1977, p. 1; Bob Rose, interviewed by author, interview 23, transcript, Charlottesville, Va., 30 April 1998, p. 1. In February, Rose informed Strickland that he had been offered, and had accepted, a position in the central office of Manassas City Schools. According to Rose, Strickland told him that he had worked hard enough opening the new high school, and should move to the central office for the

the spot vacated by Rose, R. W. Richardson was appointed as high school principal. Richardson had been principal at Independence Elementary School. Richardson's spot was filled by Linda Walters, a sixth grade teacher at Independence Elementary, who was named as the acting principal for the remainder of the year.

On April 6, 1977, the school board accepted the resignation of its chairman, Bob Graver, who had served sixteen months on the school board. Mr. Graver's resignation became effective on April 15, 1977.<sup>180</sup> Graver explained that he had resigned in order to devote more time to his business. In his remarks, Mr. Graver said that he was proud of the fact that the schools had opened on time, and that they had received accreditation in only one year.<sup>181</sup>

For its second year of operation, the school board proposed a \$2.8 million budget. This budget reflected a \$707,000 increase in city funds that was destined for a hatchet job.<sup>182</sup> The school board's budget was part of the \$6.3 million budget proposed for the city. Tax rates to fund such a budget would have to rise significantly, to \$4.20 per one hundred dollars of assessed value based on full fair market value. The proposed rate was more than double the 1976-77 rate of \$2.06 and twice the projected tax rates in Manassas and Prince William County. Manassas had proposed a tax rate of \$1.75, while Prince William's rate was projected to be \$2.06.

A study conducted by the University of Virginia, and published in the *Journal Messenger*, reported that the per capita income in Manassas was sixth highest among Virginia's forty-one cities, while Manassas Park's per capita income was second lowest in the state. The study reported the per capita income in Manassas as \$6,558 and in Manassas Park as \$4,384. Only the city of Buena Vista ranked lower than Manassas Park.<sup>183</sup>

An editorial in the *Journal Messenger* questioned the wisdom of the town's decision to become a city, considering the economic conditions of the time. The editorial also suggested that the city should consider reverting to town status.

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remainder of his contract period.

<sup>180</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 6 April 1977, p. 1.

<sup>181</sup>Some were surprised at how quickly accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) was gained. Accreditation through SACS is a rigorous process whereby the school division conducts a self-study of its operation. Upon completion of the self-study, a review team of educators from other school divisions in the state evaluates the school division and makes recommendations for improvement as well as a recommendation for accreditation, if the school division meets all of the established criteria.

<sup>182</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 29 March 1977, p. 1; Jimmy Peters, "Park Gets \$6.3 Million Budget," *Journal Messenger*, 12 April 1977, p. 1.

<sup>183</sup>Associated Press, "Manassas Income Ranks High, Park Low," *Journal Messenger*, 10 June 1977, p. 1.



We have watched the new city, faced with seemingly unsurmountable odds and a limited amount of time, develop a working school system and plant. We have observed the determination of Park citizens to make their new city work. We have marveled at the dedication, spirit and enthusiasm with which the city has tackled every problem. However, we did wonder from time to time if the city's limited tax base could support the demands of an emerging independent city during a period of economic uncertainty.

If it fails to keep taxes within the citizens' ability to pay, the city might be forced to use the escape clause in its charter to revert to town status.<sup>184</sup>

Gene Moore, the city manager, wasted no time in cutting the budget to \$2.6 million.<sup>185</sup> Even by cutting the proposed budget by over fifty percent, the new tax rate was set at \$2.43. Residents quickly protested the higher tax rates. Some residents said that the higher tax rates would drive them out of Manassas Park and, once again, asked that the city consider reverting to town status.<sup>186</sup>

As the *Journal Messenger* had suggested, the school board was forced to do a hatchet job on their budget. On April 15, 1977 the school board and city council held a joint work session on the budget.<sup>187</sup> School Board Chairman Bob Graver presented \$200,000 in cuts from the capital outlay portion of the school budget. Council asked for an additional \$50,000 in cuts, making the total cut from the school budget \$250,000. The cuts that the school board had presented included the modular buildings intended for use as school board offices; tennis courts; football bleachers, and kitchen equipment. City council wanted deeper cuts in the operational budget. Graver took a firm stand stating, "I do not feel there is any room to cut any substantial amount from the operating budget without impairing the education of our children."<sup>188</sup> Graver added that teacher salaries in Manassas Park were below those of nearby school divisions. In explaining the importance of more competitive salary scales, he said, "The teachers in Manassas Park earned far less than common laborers in the metropolitan area last year."<sup>189</sup> After completing his comments and before the joint work session was

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<sup>184</sup>"Down To Size," *Journal Messenger*, 14 April 1977, p. 4A.

<sup>185</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 April 1977, p. 1.

<sup>186</sup>Barbara Dellinger, interview, p. 4; "Down to Size," p. 4A.

<sup>187</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 April 1977, p. 2.

<sup>188</sup>Ibid; Jimmy Peters, "Graver Seeks Ways To Trim School Budget," *Journal Messenger*, 15 April 1977, p. 1.

<sup>189</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 25 April 1977, p. 1; Kathi Keys, "City Teachers Begin at \$9,280," *Journal Messenger*, 2 May 1977, p. 1. Under the new budget, beginning teachers in Manassas Park would earn \$9280. Prince William teachers on the same step

completed, Graver walked out of the meeting without saying another word.<sup>190</sup> This was, of course, his last official meeting as school board chairman.

### **Cooperation Between School Divisions**

Manassas and Manassas Park worked out a cooperative agreement for the exchange of vocational education students. Manassas Park was in the process of constructing a vocational wing at Manassas Park High School. The cost of the new addition was \$1,041,000 and this space was tentatively scheduled to open on November 15, 1977. The new facility was, in fact, not ready to open until January, 1978.<sup>191</sup> The school staff used the Christmas holiday to move equipment into the new wing. On January 16, 1978, the new vocational wing was dedicated. The entire project cost \$1.2 million, with fifty percent being financed by the Federal government and fifty percent being financed through a state literary loan.<sup>192</sup> With the additional 240 student capacity that the new wing offered, the high school was able to eliminate the split shifts that had been necessary because of the previous lack of space.

Under the cooperative plan, Manassas sent forty three students to Manassas Park for classes in auto mechanics, auto body, food services, building trades and cosmetology. Manassas Park sent thirty-nine students to Manassas for typing, stenography, printing and electronics.<sup>193</sup> The agreement allowed the school divisions to exchange an equal number of students for no charge. If either school division had additional students, \$250 per student would be paid.

At the same time, Prince William County had continued to grow and, consequently, needed to build more schools. The school board decided to look at inexpensive ways to build their sixth high school. In exploring its options, the Prince William County School Board appointed a steering committee which toured Manassas Park High School. The steering committee compared the prefabricated and pre-engineered construction at Manassas Park to the more traditional construction methods.

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would earn \$9,659 while teachers in Manassas would earn only \$30 more than Manassas Park at \$9,310.

<sup>190</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 April 1977, p. 1; Peters, "Graver Seeks Ways To Trim School Budget," p. 1.

<sup>191</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 14 November 1977, p. 2; Betty Curran, "Vocational Building To Be Ready Jan. 3," *Journal Messenger*, 6 December 1977, p. 1. Construction was also underway at both Conner and Independence. Both schools had additions that would open early in 1978.

<sup>192</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 19 December 1977, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Park Dedicates New Vocational Ed Wing," *Journal Messenger*, 16 January 1978, p. 1.

<sup>193</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 6 September 1977, p. 2; Kathi Keys, "Cities Will Co-Op On Education Program," *Journal Messenger*, 16 September 1977, p. 1.

After touring the facility, James McCoart, a county supervisor and member of the steering committee, remarked that the construction at Manassas Park High School was not designed to hold high school students.<sup>194</sup> During the tour, the committee members saw places where students had made holes in the gypsum walls. They also noted that the floors of the building vibrated as students changed classes. Manassas Park's Director of Instruction, Alan Davis, informed the steering committee that the buildings were originally anticipated to last for twelve years, but that after only one year, the city had determined that five years of use was a more realistic expectation.<sup>195</sup>

### **The School Board Looks for Office Space**

When the city decided to build schools, no provisions were made to find or build offices for the school board and administration. The city had indicated that it would like to build offices to house both the city administration and the school administration; however, no definite plans were made. Meanwhile, the school administration was housed in three areas: a townhouse on Sunnyside Drive, Manassas Park Elementary School and the high school.

In November 1977, the school board was notified by the owner of the townhouse that it had been sold, and that the school board must find other office space by January 1, 1978.<sup>196</sup> The school board had a little more than one month to find a new home.

They first considered a four section pre-fabricated modular from Continental Homes that would cost \$47,846. Continental guaranteed delivery within thirty days.<sup>197</sup> To save money, the school board proposed that the foundation for the building be constructed by students in the building trades program.

By late December, no decision had been made. The school board was searching for a suitable site for the office building and had yet to receive approval for the building from the planning commission. The school board asked the owner of the townhouse for an extension on the lease, which was granted until February.

In January, a site was chosen. At a special meeting held on January 4, 1978, the school board announced that it had chosen a site for the new office building near the high school industrial arts building. They estimated that site development would cost between \$7,300 and \$9,200.<sup>198</sup> The city council, however, denied the request by the school board. Citing financial

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<sup>194</sup>Alan Davis, to Robert Strickland, 27 April 1977, p. 1; Kristy Larson, "Prefab School Leaves Impression," *Journal Messenger*, 29 April 1977, p. 1.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid.

<sup>196</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 11 November 1977, p. 3; Betty Curran, "Park Is Having Growing Pains," *Journal Messenger*, 24 November 1977, p. 1.

<sup>197</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 January 1978, p. 1.

<sup>198</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 4 January 1978, p. 1; Betty Curran, "School Office Site Is Chosen," *Journal Messenger*, 5 January 1978, p. 1.

concerns, Mayor Murphy cast the tie-breaking vote. He and several other council members wanted to wait for a financial forecast before committing to such a project.<sup>199</sup> With time running out, the school board was forced, once again, to rent space for \$350 a month in another townhouse. By February, city council had decided, based on the treasurer's report, to approve the project which now had grown to \$66,000. However, the school board decided to rent the new townhouse for another year, stating that it would be best to wait for the city administration to make a decision about whether to build a city complex to house both the city government offices and the school board.

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<sup>199</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 26 January 1978, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Park Council Denies Office Site," *Journal Messenger*, 11 January 1978, p. 1.

## Problems for Superintendent Strickland

Early in his second year, Superintendent Robert Strickland faced public relations problems. Two parents in Manassas Park claimed that he was lying to them and that he was running a “dictatorship.” Mary Sue Polk and Diane Bahr leveled the charges at the

superintendent at a city council meeting in October.<sup>200</sup> Accusations against Strickland by the parents and published by the *Journal Messenger* included:

1. He told Bahr, a school bus driver, to keep her mouth shut about what went on in the school system.
2. Stating that “Teachers are at the bottom of the totem pole and students are below that.”
3. Principals were stripped of their authority and could not make a move without Strickland’s permission.
4. Strickland said that all teachers in the system are certified, but one was not.
5. The superintendent did not want an education association formed in Manassas Park
6. Students did not have enough supplies<sup>201</sup>

The parents were also concerned that there were not enough workbooks for each elementary child to have his or her own. Each classroom teacher was issued ten workbooks to be shared by the children. The parents felt that Strickland had not been truthful with them when, at a school board meeting, he was asked about the workbook issue.<sup>202</sup> Strickland told the parents that the teachers did not want enough workbooks for each child to have one. The parents, however, talked with the teachers, who indicated the need for each child to have his or her own workbook.<sup>203</sup> With this information, the parents were able to force the school board to purchase the additional workbooks so that, by the beginning of the second semester, each child had one.

Strickland announced his budget for the 1978-79 school year in late February. The \$3.1 million budget reflected a sixteen percent increase over the \$2.6 million budget of 1977-78. Of that increase, \$117,000 was earmarked for increasing teacher salaries and adding life insurance and retirement benefits. The superintendent proposed a 4.3 percent salary increase for teachers. By March, the budget was trimmed to \$3,053,486, with teachers scheduled to get a four percent

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<sup>200</sup>Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 1; Jimmy Peters, “Superintendent Denies Parents’ Claim He Is Running a Dictatorship,” *Journal Messenger*, 13 October 1977, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 17 October 1977, p. 1. At the school board meeting, the school board rendered a vote of confidence to Robert Strickland, Jr., Superintendent, for a job well done.

<sup>201</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 17 October 1977, p. 1-2; Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 1.

<sup>202</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 6 September 1977, p. 1.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid; Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 3.

salary increase. Even with an increase of over \$400,000, and despite promises by the city and school officials to offer the same subjects as offered in Prince William County Schools, cutbacks in programming had to be made. Not only were some courses found in Prince William not offered, but also there would be fewer course offerings at the high school in 1978-79 than there were in 1977-78. Strickland claimed that they could not afford to support courses such as physics and chemistry every year.<sup>204</sup>

R. W. Richardson, the high school principal, recommended the non-renewal of the contracts of six high school teachers in March 1978. Three of the teachers, Tim Zich, Charlean Heitchew and Floyd Land, claimed that they were being dismissed because of their efforts to organize an education association. The Virginia Education Association became involved by defending all three teachers. According to the VEA, one of the three teachers had gained tenure and, under the Code of Virginia, was entitled to a continuing contract, thus making non-renewal a more complicated process. The VEA also claimed that another of the three was being dismissed because he had been recently elected president of the newly formed Manassas Park Education Association.<sup>205</sup>

The school board met on Sunday, June 4, 1978, and voted unanimously to offer contracts to both Floyd Land and Charlean Heitchew.<sup>206</sup> The board had learned that both had continuing contracts with the school division and could not be dismissed under the provisions used for dismissal of a probationary teacher. By giving contracts to Land and Heitchew, the board avoided litigation.<sup>207</sup>

In May 1978, the Manassas Park Police began an investigation of child abuse charges against Edward Hayes, the principal of Conner Elementary School.<sup>208</sup> Mr. Hayes had been called before the school board to discuss the charges.<sup>209</sup> The child abuse complaint was originally

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<sup>204</sup>Bob Rose, interview, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Park Students To Face Fewer Courses In Fall," *Journal Messenger*, 30 May 1978, p. 1.

<sup>205</sup>Marcia Contatore, interview by author, interview 12, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 3 June 1998, p. 1; Betty Curran, "VEA Will Defend 3 Park Teachers," *Journal Messenger*, 16 May 1978, p. 1.

<sup>206</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 4 June 1978, p. 1.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid. Neither Zich or Heitchew returned to teach in Manassas Park. Zich did not have tenure. Heitchew returned her contract, unsigned, and accepted a position in another school division.

<sup>208</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interviewed by author, interview 19, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 15 June 1998, p. 3; Wanda Kerns, interviewed by author, interview 20, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 24 April 1998, p. 2; Noreen Slater, interviewed by author, interview 26, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 22 June 1998, p. 1.

<sup>209</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 22 May 1978, p. 2.

lodged in the fall of 1977 and remained open.

The charges stemmed from an incident in which Mr. Hayes paddled a fourth grade boy for throwing a tennis ball at a school bus. Police records indicated that four days after the paddling another boy admitted to throwing the tennis ball. The Manassas Park Social Services Department had investigated the complaint, dated September 22, 1977, and had reported the charges as “unfounded.” Since the charges against Hayes were unfounded, social services did not contact the police department with their findings.<sup>210</sup>

In September, when the incident occurred, Strickland visited the mother of the child. Strickland told the mother that the boy had received a “hard” paddling after the mother exposed the boy’s buttocks to reveal marks left by the paddle. Strickland also told the mother that the principal’s actions were not serious enough to warrant dismissal, but that if she felt further action was necessary she should contact her lawyer. The mother did not contact an attorney at that time because she did not have the fifty dollars needed to retain one.<sup>211</sup>

The accusations created controversy within the community and resulted in people voicing uninformed opinions of Mr. Hayes’ action. The school board decided that, in the future, principals could only paddle students with the permission of the parents. When Strickland met with the mother of the child, he promised that Mr. Hayes would not paddle any more students, but at least five parents came forward to say that their children had been paddled since September.<sup>212</sup>

Parents began to complain that Mr. Hayes’ disciplinary measures were too harsh. Even the bus driver, Pauline Chapman, publically stated that she felt the punishment was excessive, and that she had not referred other students to Hayes for misbehavior because she feared severe punishment for the children.<sup>213</sup> Neither the school board nor the superintendent showed any support for Mr. Hayes. Ed Connolly, the school board chairman, said that even though Mr. Hayes had already been reappointed for the following year, steps would be taken to remove him from the principalship, if necessary. Connolly also said that the school board did nothing concerning the incident in September, because they thought the matter was settled when social services notified them that the case was closed.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>210</sup>Noreen Slater, interview, p. 1; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 2.

<sup>211</sup>Noreen Slater, interview, p. 1; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 2; Jimmy Peters and Betty Curran, “Police Investigating Child Abuse Charges Against Principal,” *Journal Messenger*, 22 May 1978, p. 1.

<sup>212</sup>Ibid.

<sup>213</sup>Wanda Kerns, interview, p. 1; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 2. Mr. Hayes, in addition to being an elementary principal, was director of transportation. He and Chapman had disagreed before.

<sup>214</sup>Noreen Slater, interview, p. 2; Jimmy Peters and Betty Curran, “Police Investigating Child Abuse Charges Against Principal,” p. 1.

The police file on the case was finally closed when Thomas Yowell, the Prince William County Magistrate, refused to issue a warrant. Mr. Yowell said that there was no basis to issue a warrant and that the principal was just doing his job. The *Journal Messenger* ran an editorial calling Mr. Hayes an innocent victim.<sup>215</sup> The paper blamed a lack of communication between the police and social services for the problem. The police claimed that they had not closed the case, because social services had not notified them that the charges were unfounded. Social services had claimed that the police were not notified of the disposition of the case, since they were not the party filing the claim.<sup>216</sup>

The controversy did not end there. A legal fund was started by residents and friends of the family of the child that had been paddled. The fund provided enough money for the parent to file a \$200,000 lawsuit against the school board and the principal for “unmercifully beating a child without due process.”<sup>217</sup> While the school board had insurance which covered its legal expenses, the insurance company would not pay for Mr. Hayes’ expenses, because paddling a student was a “willful” act not covered under the policy. To help with Mr. Hayes’ expenses, members of the community set up a legal defense fund. The school board also voted to help cover some of Mr. Hayes’ expenses. The case was finally scheduled to be heard in April, 1979. Fifteen jurors were summoned, but on April 17, 1979, the parent, through her attorney, requested that the motion against Mr. Hayes be dismissed.<sup>218</sup>

### **The Community Wants Superintendent Strickland Out**

On Sunday, June 4, 1978, fifty parents, students, teachers and administrators met at Costello Park to air their feelings and facts about the school division. Parents with signs saying “Strickland Must Go Now” set the tone for the meeting.<sup>219</sup> At the meeting, teachers complained about the lack of supplies for their classrooms. Other teachers complained that the average student was two grade levels behind and needed more academic, not vocational, offerings. School Board Chairman Ed Connolly attended the meeting with a legal sized notebook and a

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<sup>215</sup>“Big Foul-up Produces Innocent Victim,” *Journal Messenger*, 24 May 1978, p. 1.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid; Noreen Slater, interview, p. 1.

<sup>217</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 29 August 1978, p. 1; “School Board Claims Immunity,” *Journal Messenger*, 31 August 1978, p. 1.

<sup>218</sup>Noreen Slater, interview, p. 1; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 1. A member of the mother’s family had died and she was the beneficiary of the life insurance policy. She moved from Manassas Park, and did not pursue the lawsuit.

<sup>219</sup>Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 2; Betty Curran, “Residents Want Strickland Out,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 June 1978, p. 1.



bulging briefcase.<sup>220</sup> Connolly attempted to explain why the school division had reduced the academic curriculum in favor of vocational education, which was funded by the federal and state governments. Parents abruptly stopped Mr. Connolly from continuing his remarks, refusing to accept the contention that a majority of students in Manassas Park would not continue their education past high school. Former School Board Chairman Bob Graver was there as a spokesman for the crowd:

It's the same story we heard in Prince William County, these are Park kids and you can't expect too much out of them, right? You are trying to run everybody into vocational education because you get more state money - that's rotten.<sup>221</sup>

Other parents spoke out against Strickland. Melanie Jackson said that Strickland had mismanaged schools and viewed parents as a personal threat. She related how she felt intimidated when she asked for a copy of the school budget and had to sign for it. A petition requesting the removal of Strickland circulated at the meeting. Once again Graver spoke, summing up the feelings of the crowd:

If our school system is not going to do any better than the county, then we have no more reason for being a city. I helped bring him [Strickland] here and I am going to sign the petition to get him out.<sup>222</sup>

Thursday, June 8, 1978, just four days after the Costello Park meeting, R. W. Richardson, the former high school principal, claimed through the media, that he had been harassed by Strickland.<sup>223</sup> Richardson resigned his position as principal in March. At the time of his resignation, he said that he was requesting a position in the central office, and that he was tired of being a high school principal.<sup>224</sup> When asked about Richardson's resignation, Ed Connolly, the school board chairman, said that he was not certain if Richardson resigned because he wanted to or because he was asked to. Strickland denied asking Richardson to resign.

Richardson claimed that he had been chastised for ineptness when students petitioned city

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<sup>220</sup>Ibid.

<sup>221</sup>Ibid.

<sup>222</sup>Ibid.

<sup>223</sup>Bob Rose, interview, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Harassment Claimed By School Principal," *Journal Messenger*, 8 June 1978. p. 1.

<sup>224</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 2; Bob Rose, interview, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Principal Won't Return But His Advice Followed," *Journal Messenger*, 22 May 1978, p. 1.

council.<sup>225</sup> He said that if students protested or petitioned city council, he was accused of not being able to control them. Richardson's first reprimand came when students took a petition to the city council, because they did not want the Lion's Club to have a dance on the new gym floor. Richardson said that the students were doing what they felt was right, and while they were publicly applauded, Strickland severely reprimanded him.<sup>226</sup>

Richardson also claimed that Strickland wanted to keep the community uninformed about what was going on in the schools.<sup>227</sup> According to Richardson, the main reason that only a few teachers who lived in Manassas Park were hired was Strickland's desire to keep the community uninformed. Richardson said that he personally knew of several instances where qualified candidates living in Manassas Park were denied employment because of Strickland's fear that they might become sources of "inside" information to the community.<sup>228</sup>

Richardson also claimed that the non-renewals at the high school came at the direction of Strickland.<sup>229</sup> According to Richardson, Strickland directed him, during a late night automobile ride, to recommend non-renewal of specific teachers.<sup>230</sup> If Richardson refused to honor the superintendent's request, he believed he would be fired. Richardson honored the request, but lost his job anyway.

Richardson also related stories about how he was forced to use student activity funds to pay for items and services usually covered through the operating budget, and how he had never seen a copy of the 1977-78 or the 1978-79 budget. The money that the high school made from yearbook sales and coke machine proceeds was used to pay debts incurred before Richardson became principal. Activity funds were also used to pay for classroom instructional supplies and cleaning supplies. The school began the year with only one-half of a can of cleanser.<sup>231</sup>

In order to raise funds, the school often stopped the instructional day to show movies. The receipts were used to buy paper and repair buses. A clutch for one of the school buses, costing \$515, was purchased with activity funds. Paper also was purchased with activity funds. The school used at least one case of paper per week. Since the school had only been issued ten cases of paper for the entire year, the supply was quickly exhausted.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>225</sup>Ibid; Curran, "Harassment Claimed by School Principal," p.1.

<sup>226</sup>Ibid.

<sup>227</sup>Ibid.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid; Wanda Kerns, interview, p. 1; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 2. Employees of the school division were told by Strickland: "Don't talk to parents about school business."

<sup>229</sup>Raynard Hale, interview, p. 3; Bob Rose, interview, p. 4; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 2.

<sup>230</sup>Bob Rose, interview, p. 4; Curran, "Harassment Claimed By School Principal," p. 1.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid.

<sup>232</sup>Ibid, A 3.

On June 9, 1978, two petitions were presented to the school board.<sup>233</sup> One supported the school system and was delivered by Frank Jesse, a vocational education teacher at the high school. Jesse's petition had 208 signatures, but made no mention of Strickland. Jesse refused to comment about how a petition that supported the school division also supported Strickland. The second petition, signed by three hundred citizens, requested that the board fire Robert Strickland. Upon receiving the petitions, the school board promised to hold a weekend executive session to consider firing Strickland. The school board never met over the weekend, and no action was taken on the petitions.

The complexion of the school board was about to change. The Virginia State Legislature had approved changes to the Manassas Park charter which allowed for the expansion of the school board from three to five members.<sup>234</sup> The new members of the school board would not officially begin their duties until July 1, 1978. Ed Connolly, the only member left from the original school board, chose not to return to the board; therefore, three new members were appointed. City council interviewed eight candidates and chose Elizabeth Pope, John Thornton and Roland Mills to Manassas Park's new five-member board.<sup>235</sup>

### **More Financial Problems**

In July 1978, the *Journal Messenger* revealed that the City of Manassas Park had been operating at a deficit for four years.<sup>236</sup> To cover the deficit and balance the budget, the city had siphoned off money collected in the city's separate water and sewer fund. No provision had been made to repay the fund. An audit in 1977 showed that the city had collected \$98,969 less in revenue than it had budgeted. In 1976, property tax collections were \$131,000 less than anticipated. Three hundred thousand dollars were transferred in January, 1978, to erase a budget deficit of \$287,658. City officials blamed the deficit on the cost of constructing schools, even after the school division had returned \$60,000 to the city to help defray the 1977 budget deficit of \$98,969.<sup>237</sup>

An editorial in the *Journal Messenger* on July 5, 1978, accused city officials of

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<sup>233</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 8 June 1978, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Petitions: One Supports Park System; One Wants Strickland Fired," *Journal Messenger*, 9 June 1978, p. 1.

<sup>234</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 10 July 1978, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Open Records, Park Told In Letter From Coleman," *Journal Messenger*, 16 June 1978, p. 1.

<sup>235</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 10 July 1978, p. 1; Jimmy Peters, "Manassas Park Appoints 3 To School Board," *Journal Messenger*, 21 June 1978, p. 1.

<sup>236</sup>William Steele, interview, p. 4; Betty Curran, "Park Siphons Off \$700,000 in Fees," *Journal Messenger*, 5 July 1978, p. 1.

<sup>237</sup>*Ibid.*

mismanagement: “Mismanagement has done much to place the City of Manassas Park in its current predicament.”<sup>238</sup> The editorial went on to say that the same officials faced a rebellious public burdened with the highest tax rate in northern Virginia.<sup>239</sup>

In August 1978, for the second consecutive year, the school board voluntarily returned money to city council. A school surplus of \$105,000 went to the city’s general fund to offset the shortfall in assessments of \$100,965. The money represented one-sixth of the local funds in the school operating budget. Strickland remarked: “I don’t know of a single request from teachers that wasn’t approved. We have not denied any requests for supplies.”<sup>240</sup> Strickland felt that it was beneficial politically to return money each year to the city council. He would not release money from the budget for the principals to order supplies. He believed that the principals should raise their own money for whatever was needed.<sup>241</sup>

Employees of the school division lamented over what the surplus funds could have done for them. The school buses were dirty because of the lack of cleaning supplies, and they were not regularly maintained. Mechanics worked on the buses in the school parking lots; there was no garage in which to work. Drivers were expected to check and fill their own oil, as well as perform other minor mechanical tasks.<sup>242</sup> Teachers in the new vocational wings once again pointed to the lack of cleaning supplies and complained about having to purchase their own supplies and about cleaning the restrooms themselves. The money also could have been used to pay for additional teachers to alleviate overcrowding in some classes, it was suggested. In fact, high school math classes had students in them who were taught two different levels of math.<sup>243</sup> Teachers also said that the money could have been used to buy ditto masters and paper. Instead, they were forced to use left-over computer print-out paper that had been donated to the school. Administrators had wanted a bell system at the high school. To dismiss class, the administrators walked the halls with whistles. When it was time to change class the whistles were blown.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>238</sup>“More Budget Cuts For Manassas Park,” *Journal Messenger*, 5 July 1978, p. A4.

<sup>239</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 July 1978, p. 1. Even with the criticism of the city’s financial status, the school board asked the city for permission to apply for a \$500,000 Literary Loan to fund a “cafetorium” at Manassas Park High School. The addition would have a platform stage at one end, and double as a cafeteria. The city refused, citing its high debt.

<sup>240</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 July 1978, p. 1; Betty Curran, “Park Schools Turn \$105,000 Back,” *Journal Messenger*, 3 August 1978, p. 1.

<sup>241</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 1; Bob Rose, interview, p. 2.

<sup>242</sup>Wanda Kerns, interview, p. 1; Curran, “Park Schools Turn \$105,000 Back.”

<sup>243</sup>Pam Taylor, interview, p. 3; Curran, “Park Schools Turn \$105,000 Back.”

<sup>244</sup>Gary Broadwater, interview by author, interview 13, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 17 May 1998, p. 1; Pam Taylor, interview, p. 2; Betty Curran, “Park Makes Changes In School

In August Betty Curran, a reporter for the *Journal Messenger*, began a series of articles on the condition of Manassas Park's school system.<sup>245</sup> Curran accused the city fathers of relentlessly taxing the 1,900 homeowners in Manassas Park. She said that the city lacked the taxable resources to pay for the schools, much less the operation of a "full-blown" city government. The article also targeted the academic achievement of students in Manassas Park Schools.

According to the article, the test scores of students in Manassas Park showed that students were not learning any more in the city school system than they did in the county schools. In fact, in some areas of study, students were learning less. Curran based her comments on the SRA test results for students in grades four, six, eight and eleven.

After receiving the results of the test the first year, Manassas Park school officials attributed the low scores to the county's educational system. According to school officials in Manassas Park, the county had not taught the students what they needed to know prior to their enrollment in the newly created schools.<sup>246</sup> The *Journal Messenger* related that the school officials made no mention that the Manassas Park teaching staff was new and inexperienced, that there was a lack of textbooks and adequate lighting; or that there was an unwillingness on the part of some students to be where the city fathers had hastily put them, because educating the students in Prince William County was too expensive.<sup>247</sup>

Manassas Park spent \$861 to educate each pupil in 1976-77.<sup>248</sup> That amount, next to Bland County Schools, was the lowest per-pupil-expenditure in the state.<sup>249</sup> In order to save money, the city hired mostly first year teachers at entry level salaries and assigned them large classes. Curran wrote: "The promises of city officials to take care of their own does not seem to include the children."<sup>250</sup> Subsequent articles revealed that the city debt topped \$6.6 million. An audit revealed that it had cost \$4.1 million for the land and construction of Conner, Independence,

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System," *Journal Messenger*, 4 September 1978, p. 1. The new principal at the high school, James W. Moyers, Jr., was able to have a new bell system installed at the beginning of the 1978 school year. Moyers also saw that the classrooms and halls received a new coat of paint. Sixteen of the forty teachers on staff were new, hired by Moyers over the summer.

<sup>245</sup>Betty Curran, "Like Alice in Wonderland, City Has Taken Unexpected Fall," *Journal Messenger*, 14 August 1978, p. 1.

<sup>246</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3; Curran, "Like Alice in Wonderland, City Has Taken Unexpected Fall." p. 1.

<sup>247</sup>Ibid.

<sup>248</sup>Virginia Education Association, Research Service, "*Virginia's Educational Disparities*," (Richmond: Virginia Education Association, 1978), pp 1-2.

<sup>249</sup>Ibid.

<sup>250</sup>Curran, "Like Alice in Wonderland, City Has Taken Unexpected Fall." p 1.

and Manassas Park High School, and for the purchase of Manassas Park Elementary.

By early September, the issues in Manassas Park intensified. Ruth Streeff, the new school board chairperson, verified that the school board had met hastily, and secretly, in executive session to learn that Strickland was thinking of resigning. Strickland was unavailable for comment as he was on leave for an undetermined amount of time in order to have surgery.<sup>251</sup>

### Athletic Controversy

Athletics came to the forefront of controversy in Manassas Park in October, 1978. After losing a football game at Colonial Beach, a Manassas Park player confronted the coach of the Colonial Beach team, shouting obscenities and grabbing the coach by the arm. Fans, including a reporter from the *Journal Messenger*, witnessed the incident which was subsequently reported in the newspaper.<sup>252</sup> Jim McDonald, a sportswriter for the *Journal Messenger*, called for Chet Bourne's resignation as head football coach at Manassas Park High School. McDonald's editorial sharply criticized the Manassas Park Booster's Club:

It seems the Manassas Park Booster's Club likes to blame the problems of the Cougar football team on everyone but those who are responsible for those problems.<sup>253</sup>

In addition to the Colonial Beach controversy, Manassas Park was caught with discrepancies in its athletic eligibility lists. Jim Moyers, principal at Manassas Park High School, declared five football players ineligible, and the team forfeited three games in which those players had participated.<sup>254</sup> One player admitted to the *Journal Messenger* that he had only passed one subject in two years. Because of these incidents, the Cougars gained a reputation as an "outlaw" team. Manassas Park coaches blamed the former principal, R.W. Richardson, for the eligibility problems.<sup>255</sup> Area coaches refused to believe claims of ignorance, stating that Manassas Park

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<sup>251</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 6 September 1978, p. 2; Betty Curran, "Manassas Park School Issues Boil," *Journal Messenger*, 8 September 1978, p. 1.

<sup>252</sup>Jim Rowe, interviewed by author, interview 15, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 19 April 1998, p. 2; Jim McDonald, "This Week," *Journal Messenger*, 20 October 1978, p. B1.

<sup>253</sup>Jim McDonald, "Controversy Continues at Manassas Park," *Journal Messenger*, 24 October 1978, p. B1.

<sup>254</sup>Robert Carpenter, interviewed by author, interview 34, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 30 December 1998, p. 1; McDonald, "This Week," p. B1.

<sup>255</sup>*Ibid.*

knew what they were doing and “they just didn’t think anybody would check on them.”<sup>256</sup> The newspaper quoted an anonymous coach from another team:

I don’t want to call them outlaws, but it’s hard not to. It’s pathetic to watch them warm up. I saw them once when the coach wasn’t even on the field. He was off to the side leaning against a pole. They had no spirit and no organization.<sup>257</sup>

Coach Bourne implied that the Virginia High School League and the Northern Neck District simply did not like Manassas Park. Bourne spoke of his disrespect for the VHSL, how other schools cheated, and how everyone was out to get the “Park.” A comparison of the 1977-78 and 1978-79 eligibility lists found that the player information appeared to be inaccurate.<sup>258</sup>

As a result of the Colonial Beach incident and the ineligible players, it was possible that Manassas Park would be shunned by the district. Because of the mistrust created by the situation, there was discussion about whether or not to admit Manassas Park into the league. Mr. Moyers diverted some of the criticism from coach Bourne when he assured everyone that Bourne’s job was safe, because there was no indication of intent to do anything wrong.<sup>259</sup>

The criticism of Manassas Park athletics continued. The *Journal Messenger* wrote that the Manassas Park boosters were more concerned with who had accused them, than with acknowledging that the team used ineligible players.<sup>260</sup> The paper also accused the residents of exhibiting symptoms of “Manassas Park Paranoia,” believing that the world outside of Manassas Park was against them.

Jim Moyers, principal of Manassas Park High School, assured the VHSL that he would become involved in checking athletic eligibility. Moyers blamed the eligibility mistake on ignorance of the rules, and on the confusion that occurred when student records were transferred to Manassas Park from Prince William County. Based on Moyers’ explanation and assurances, the Virginia - Maryland Independent Football Conference voted unanimously to readmit Manassas Park as a member for 1979 - 1980.

### **The School System is Investigated**

At the request of the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Virginia

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<sup>256</sup>Robert Carpenter, interview, p. 2; Jim McDonald, “Cougar Explanation is Questioned,” *Journal Messenger*, 24 October 1978, p. B1.

<sup>257</sup>McDonald, “Controversy Continues at Manassas Park,” p. B1.

<sup>258</sup>Robert Carpenter, interview, p. 2; Jim Rowe, interview, p. 2.

<sup>259</sup>Ibid.

<sup>260</sup>Dave Roman, “It’s Time For The Cougars To Look Inward,” *Journal Messenger*, 25 October 1978, p. B1.

State Police began an investigation of Manassas Park City Schools in November, 1978. The investigation resulted from a summer meeting held between Special Agent Theodore Chang, of HEW, and several Manassas Park parents, regarding complaints the parents had against the school division.<sup>261</sup>

The meeting with Chang was the culmination of several months of activity on the part of the parents. Wishing to remain anonymous for fear of possible reprisals against their children, the parents visited Chang at his office in the summer of 1978.<sup>262</sup> They felt that the school board did not respect parents or children. They were concerned that only one school board member, Ed Connolly, had attended the June meeting of concerned parents at Costello Park. After that meeting, the parents met privately, further discussing their concerns, and then deciding to address those concerns to the appropriate state and federal officials.<sup>263</sup>

Letters and packets of pertinent news articles went to U. S. Representative Herbert Harris, Virginia Delegates Brickley, Bagley and Bell, State Senator Charles Colgan, State Attorney General Marshall Coleman, individual state school board members, Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction in Virginia William Cochran and to representatives of the Virginia Education Association. After the packets and letters were mailed, the parents began calling the offices of the officials. Their telephone calls finally led them to Special Agent Chang.

Two Virginia State Police investigators visited the school board offices, the schools, and parents in Manassas Park. The investigators questioned issues such as the lack of textbooks, and where fund raising money went.<sup>264</sup> Questions were also raised about the financial practices of one unnamed school administrator.<sup>265</sup>

The investigation of the schools constituted the third time in seven months that state police were called to examine irregularities in Manassas Park. In May, the Commonwealth Attorney's office called upon the state police to explore Mayor Murphy's use of a city purchase order in order to get a discount on a hot water heater for his home.<sup>266</sup> Paul Ebert, the Commonwealth Attorney, concluded that a crime was not committed. In August, the state police looked into embezzlement of volunteer fire department funds. A former volunteer was arrested for embezzlement in that case.

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<sup>261</sup>Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 4; Barbara Dellinger, interview, p. 3.

<sup>262</sup>Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 3; Barbara Dellinger, interview, p. 3. Betty Curran, "Parents Responsible For Park Investigation," *Journal Messenger*, 24 October 1978, p. 1;

<sup>263</sup>Ibid.

<sup>264</sup>Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Park Schools Under Investigation," *Journal Messenger*, 23 November 1978, p. 1.

<sup>265</sup>Ibid. Mrs. Polk received a nighttime visit from the state police asking her questions about Strickland.

<sup>266</sup>Lois Merritt, interview, p. 2; Lois Steele, interview, p. 3.



While the investigation was continuing, problems arose with the activity funds at the high school. In January, 1979, creditors threatened to sue Manassas Park High School for failing to pay \$2,400 in outstanding debts. In its third year of operation, the high school had incurred the debts in the first and second years. The athletic accounts had some bills that were between seven months and two years overdue. The financial problems began in 1976, when the athletic department had to outfit varsity teams in four sports by purchasing equipment, uniforms and supplies.<sup>267</sup> The athletic department also had to contract with officials' associations. Former principal R. W. Richardson blamed Strickland, saying that the superintendent had directed that the athletic department be self-sufficient.<sup>268</sup> The school had kept the current year's bills up-to-date, but had decided to ignore previous debts. The school board denied any liability for the bills and directed the principal to pay off the older bills first.<sup>269</sup> The booster club helped the high school pay the bills.

By February, the school division realized the possibility that there could be a budget shortfall. A combination of inflation and declining enrollment caused the school board to look to the city council for money with which to finish the year. The budget had been built on an enrollment of 2,055 students, but only 1,825 were then in school, a circumstance which triggered a reduction in funding. The budget reduction caused the school board to consider reducing staff, along with imposing a spending freeze.

Questions surrounding the superintendent's conduct continued as the school board approved an extended leave in March for Strickland, and the state police investigation also continued. Norma Lester was named acting superintendent in Strickland's absence.<sup>270</sup> Strickland requested ninety leave days, which were to be counted as sick leave. The board denied that the leave was granted as a result of the state police investigation. On Tuesday, March 13, 1979, the school board and city council held a closed door session to discuss school personnel. The press was not notified of the session and subsequently accused the board and council of conducting business in secrecy.<sup>271</sup> One week later, John Thornton resigned as a school board member.

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<sup>267</sup>Bob Rose, interview, p. 1; Robert Carpenter, interview, p. 2.

<sup>268</sup>Robert Carpenter, interview, p. 2; Dave Roman, "Creditors May Sue School," *Journal Messenger*, 2 January 1979, p. 1.

<sup>269</sup>Ibid.

<sup>270</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas City Schools, 6 March 1979, p. 2; Jan Puckett, interviewed by author, interview 9, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 19 June 1998, p. 1. Ms. Lester was the Director of Instruction for Manassas Park City Schools. She was only employed by the school division for one year, 1978-79. She resigned as acting superintendent on May 8, 1979. She completed the year as Director of Instruction while Charles Long, assistant superintendent, assumed the title of acting superintendent.

<sup>271</sup>Betty Curran, "Park Council Conducts Executive Session Without Giving Notice," *Journal Messenger*, 14 March 1979, p. 1.

Thornton was the second school board member to resign in a six month period.<sup>272</sup>

Early in April, the state police investigation led to Lee County, Virginia. Former employees of Lee County Schools, and records from the period when Strickland served as superintendent there (July 1, 1969 - February 9, 1973) indicated that Strickland resigned five months prior to the expiration of his four year contract. Records showed that a special grand jury had been convened to consider an indictment for misappropriation of funds against him just prior to his resignation.<sup>273</sup> Four people were summoned to appear before the grand jury, but they never testified, since Strickland resigned the same evening the grand jury met. Strickland tendered his resignation, by telephone, to Russell P. Cooper, the then chairman of the Lee County School Board.<sup>274</sup> Glen M. Williams, a U. S. District Judge and a school board member at the time, said the evidence against Strickland was six years old and “rusty.” Williams also said:

At the time a strong prosecutor would have had a good case, but a weak prosecutor might have lost it. One of the other school board members offered Strickland the option of resigning and, when he did, we did not prosecute.<sup>275</sup>

George Hensley, one of the four witnesses called, was a member of the schools’ maintenance department. Hensley claimed that he witnessed the unloading of electrical supplies to Strickland’s home when it was under construction. Hensley recalled taking the invoice from the truck driver and noticing that it showed the supplies were to be charged to Lee County Public Schools. Strickland’s home, constructed by Continental Homes of Roanoke, apparently was part of a package deal in which the school system bought several other modulars to be used as classrooms at the same time. Hensley turned the invoices over to the school board. He said that the following morning, an identical order was delivered to the school board office, even though the school board had no use for the supplies. The clerk of the board, H. M. Williams, became suspicious when an invoice came for other supplies that were more appropriate for homebuilding than classroom use. The supplies included light fixtures, plug-ins and outside water heads. These experiences were relayed to the school board in executive session. The grand jury convened shortly thereafter. Strickland claimed that he was not aware of the special grand jury, and that he

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<sup>272</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 20 March 1978, p. 1; Betty Curran, “Park Board Member Thornton Resigns After Nine Months,” *Journal Messenger*, 21 March 1979, p. 1. Board member Roland E. Mills, Jr. had also resigned after serving only six months of a three year appointment.

<sup>273</sup>Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 4; Betty Curran, “Park School Probe Leads Policemen To Lee County,” 3 April 1979, p. 1.

<sup>274</sup>Ibid. Williams, also a school board member at the time, confirmed convening a special grand jury and the timing of the resignation.

<sup>275</sup>Ibid.

resigned to accept a better job in Pineville, Kentucky.<sup>276</sup>

Even though approved for ninety days of leave in February, by April Strickland claimed that he had not used any of the approved sick leave. Lee County Board members said that Strickland had also used extended leave when the going got tough while employed there. Dr. Beryl H. Owens, a Lee County School Board Member, said that Strickland had used approximately one month of sick leave there. Lee County School Board minutes from February 13, 1973, showed that the board had approved a motion giving Strickland two months salary in lieu of sick leave.<sup>277</sup>

The controversy over Strickland proved to be divisive to the board. Ruth Streeff and Glen Egri staunchly supported Strickland. The split was apparent on April 13, 1979, when the board voted on the reappointment of personnel. Strickland did not attend the meeting, nor did he send a representative. The school board deadlocked 2 - 2 on the superintendent's recommendation for personnel. The tie vote represented a split between the board's oldest members, who consistently supported Strickland, and the newest members, Elizabeth Pope and Gene Curry, who openly questioned him.<sup>278</sup> Since this was the third year of existence of the school system, many teachers who began teaching in Manassas Park were about to gain continuing contracts under Virginia law. The deadlock ensured that all teachers in Manassas Park with three years experience were given a continuing contract and were automatically rehired.<sup>279</sup>

The budget process also suffered during the controversy surrounding the superintendent. At a work session in April, city council trimmed the school budget to \$3 million. Council had received no concrete revenue figures from the school, since no school administrators attended the budget meeting. The city manager attempted to contact Strickland, but was unsuccessful. The proposed cuts further divided the school board. Now with five members, the board argued over the first cuts recommended by Strickland. On April 25, 1979, the board met in special session. Board members Curry, Pope and Cooper, voted successfully to reconsider the superintendent's

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<sup>276</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3; Betty Curran, "Strickland Dabbed In Politics," *Journal Messenger*, 10 April 1979, p. 1. Manassas Park school officials did not contact Lee County for a reference on Strickland. He told the board that he was a victim of politics in Lee County. After this information was published, Strickland and Streeff hand carried receipts for Strickland's Lee County home to the State Attorney General's office.

<sup>277</sup>School Board Minutes, Lee County Public Schools, 13 February 1973, p. 2; Betty Curran, "Strickland Says He Hasn't Used Any Sick Leave Yet," *Journal Messenger*, 4 April 1979, p. 1.

<sup>278</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 13 April 1979, p. 1, Betty Curran, "Teachers Likely To Get Tenure," *Journal Messenger*, 16 April 1979, p. 1.

<sup>279</sup>*Ibid.*

budget.<sup>280</sup>

More negative stories about Manassas Park school circulated. Strickland and Ruth Streeff were criticized for going to Florida together to attend a conference at the taxpayers' expense. Parents once again circulated petitions demanding Strickland's resignation. The state reported that Manassas Park's dropout rate was one of the highest in the state at ten percent.<sup>281</sup> Not only was the dropout rate high, but the school division had also retained twenty-two percent of its students. Enrollment also dropped dramatically, from 2,177 students in September, 1976 to 1,883 students by June, 1978.

### **Superintendent Strickland Resigns**

While in Florida with Board Chair Ruth Streeff, Strickland wrote a letter of resignation. The letter, dated April 23, 1979, gave no reason for the resignation and noted May 11, 1979 as Strickland's last day of employment. The school board would not consider superintendent's resignation until their meeting on Monday, May 14, 1979.

When the board met in the high school library on May 14, 125 people were in attendance. Strickland's resignation was not listed on the agenda, and four of the five members had not seen the resignation letter. Even though he had written the letter while in Florida with Streeff, Strickland did not deliver the letter to her until he returned to Manassas Park. Just before the May 14 meeting, he delivered the letter to Streeff at her home, and she contacted each board member by telephone to notify them of the resignation letter. Streeff did not bring the letter to the board meeting. Board member Gene Curry insisted that the resignation be acted upon in open session, and refused to vote until he saw a copy of the letter. Streeff argued that the resignation need not be an agenda item since she had polled the board by telephone, which was sufficient. School Board Attorney Thomas Palmer insisted that the board hold an executive session to consider the resignation before taking a public vote. Streeff was forced to call a recess so that she could go home to retrieve the letter. When she returned to the board meeting with the letter at 9:15 P.M., the board voted unanimously to accept Strickland's resignation.<sup>282</sup>

With Strickland gone, the board had to finalize the budget without the superintendent's direction. They met with the city council on May 16, 1979, just two days after accepting Strickland's resignation. The mayor and the school board chair used the public meeting to air their differences. The Mayor was determined not to raise taxes, and reduced the school budget by \$60,000. The \$60,000 reduction was to be held in contingency, with the understanding that, if

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<sup>280</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 25 April 1979, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Alternative Budget Cuts Proposed By New Board Members In Park," *Journal Messenger*, 26 April 1979. Carla Cooper became the fifth member of the school board.

<sup>281</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3; Betty Curran, "Park Has One of State's Highest Dropout Rates," *Journal Messenger*, 8 May 1979, p. 1.

<sup>282</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 14 May 1979, p. 4. The vote to accept Strickland's resignation was 4-0. Glen Egri was not present.

the schools could prove that they needed the money between August 30, 1979 and September 7, 1979, it would be returned to the school board budget.<sup>283</sup> The mayor accused the board of being unable to accurately prepare a budget, since it had returned money to the city in each of its first two years. Mayor Murphy said that returning money to council was a mistake, and predicted that the school board would return money again. Murphy's criticism of the school board brought an emotional response from Ruth Streeff: "You don't need the school board. You don't need the superintendent either. You got rid of him."<sup>284</sup>

At least twenty-five citizens spoke in favor of funding the school budget at the meeting. Parents criticized the budget presented by the school board, complaining that cuts would affect the quality of the educational program. Acting Superintendent Charles Long apparently had never seen the budget.<sup>285</sup> A petition was presented to reinstate elementary guidance counselors, the school nurse and to restore music and art programs. Several citizens criticized the council, accusing them of using school board appointments to execute the wishes of council. The appointments of Cooper, Pope and Curry were seen by some as an effort to get rid of the superintendent.<sup>286</sup>

After the public session with the city council, Ruth Streeff resigned her position on the school board. Her resignation was effective May 17, 1979, but would not be received by city council until June 5. She claimed that her resignation was not connected to the superintendent's resignation. In her letter to the school board she said: "Lately it has become impossible to get through a simple procedure like a board meeting without having it turned into a side show."<sup>287</sup> Also in her letter, she charged that a game titled "who can deliver the most cheap shots" was being played, and as a result, the school system was being torn apart.<sup>288</sup> She claimed to have made the decision six weeks prior to that time, but said that she had been encouraged by teachers

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<sup>283</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 May 1979, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Council and School at Odds," *Journal Messenger*, 14 May 1979, p. 1.

<sup>284</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup>Jan Puckett, interview, p. 1; Curran, "Council and School at Odds," p. 1. Charles Long, assistant superintendent of Manassas Park, was appointed as acting superintendent upon Strickland's resignation. On June 1, 1979, Long resigned to accept the superintendency in Russell County, Virginia. Andrea (Bonnie) Chiswick was appointed acting superintendent upon Long's departure. Strickland had deleted Long's position in the superintendent's proposed budget, but the board refused to cut the position.

<sup>286</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3; Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 3; Curran, "Council and School at Odds," p. 1.

<sup>287</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 May 1979, p. 1; Jimmy Peters, "Streeff Resigns," *Journal Messenger*, 17 May 1979, p. 1.

<sup>288</sup>*Ibid.*

to stay on the board.

After Streeff resigned, the *Journal Messenger* published an editorial questioning her leadership. The editorial claimed that the handwriting was on the wall when the mayor and Streeff had argued publicly at a city council meeting. The paper also wrote that Streeff had problems presiding over her own board, and that consideration of important issues was hampered by the presence of divisive factions, which allowed little progress to be made. On occasion, meetings called by Streeff were canceled because only Streeff and Egri attended; therefore, the school board did not have a quorum. Many citizens attending the meetings attested to the unnecessary theatrics that were regularly staged.<sup>289</sup>

### **The Search for a New Superintendent**

As the school board prepared to search for its new leader, the city faced economic uncertainty. Before June 30, 1980, the city had to convert \$3.5 million in anticipatory notes to permanent bonding.<sup>290</sup> A favorable bond rating depended on political and financial stability. The city still had the option of reverting to town status, if city officials chose to do so by 1981. The city had continued to renew notes at 6.25 percent annually. Beginning in 1975, interest payments cost the taxpayers of Manassas Park \$800,000. By comparison, the city only anticipated \$3.1 million in revenue for fiscal year 1980. The city owed \$227,000 in land obligations and realized a \$100,000 shortfall in tax revenue because of incorrect property assessments in 1979. By May of 1979, the city revenues were \$630,000 short, almost twenty-five percent of the revenue projected for fiscal year 1979.<sup>291</sup>

As July 1, 1979 passed, the school board had not named a new superintendent, and the city council had not found replacements for school board members Glen Egri and Ruth Streeff. There were two well qualified possible candidates for the superintendency within the school division. Andrea Chiswick, the acting superintendent, was on the state eligibility list but publicly stated that she was not interested in the job. James Moyers, the high school principal, was also eligible and was in the final stages of a doctoral program through NOVA University in Florida.

A total of seven local candidates applied for the superintendency in Manassas Park. None of the applicants had prior experience as a superintendent. The three- member board interviewed

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<sup>289</sup>Barbara Dellinger, interview, p. 4; Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 3.

<sup>290</sup>Lana Conner, interviewed by author, interview 33, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 28 December 1998, p. 1. Betty Curran, "Park To Fight for Financial, Political Life in Fiscal 1980," *Journal Messenger*, 17 May 79, p. 1. The city had secured anticipatory notes, or short term loans, until they could secure a favorable bond rating. The anticipatory notes were secured as bridge loans until they were able to get permanent bonding.

<sup>291</sup>Ibid; Lois Merritt, interview, p. 1. After the city realized the magnitude of the shortfall, Mayor Murphy went to the school board offices demanding that the schools return \$100,000 to the city to help offset the deficit. The finance department scrambled to find the money, anticipating a budget deficit for the schools.

four candidates, one of whom was an internal candidate. The board never revealed the names of the four candidates who were interviewed. On July 16, 1979, the *Journal Messenger* predicted that Robert Lewis, former principal of Stonewall Jackson High School in Prince William County, would be named as superintendent in Manassas Park.<sup>292</sup>

The prediction in the *Journal Messenger* proved to be true, when Robert Lewis was appointed superintendent of Manassas Park Schools on July 16, 1979.<sup>293</sup> Having been principal at Stonewall Jackson, Lewis was familiar with the students of Manassas Park, since many of them had attended his school. Additionally, Lewis' wife, Leena, was a teacher at Manassas Park Elementary during its first year as a Manassas Park School. Lewis was scheduled to be on the job within a few days.

### **The Lewis Administration Begins**

Robert Lewis had established himself as an effective educator while in Prince William County. His task as superintendent would not be an easy one. He faced many challenges in his first few months as superintendent. Enrollment in the schools had dropped to 1,747 students. While the overall enrollment had decreased by twenty-one percent, the enrollment of special education students had risen to fifteen percent.<sup>294</sup> For the third consecutive year, the high school was found deficient in five areas by the Department of Education and received an "accredited and advised" rating.<sup>295</sup> Two of the biggest challenges Lewis faced were the mistrust between city council and the school board, along with the financial crisis that the city and the school division faced.

For the third consecutive year, the school board returned money to city council. Despite a projected \$200,000 in revenue shortfalls due to mistaken enrollment projections, the board returned \$132,000 to city council. The city used the money to offset its own revenue shortfall.

Lewis inherited a system that, while only three years old, was experiencing deterioration in

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<sup>292</sup>School Board Minutes, 16 July 1979, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Lewis Expected To Be Named Superintendent of Schools," *Journal Messenger*, 16 July 1979, p. 1.

<sup>293</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 July 1979, p. 1.

<sup>294</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 13 August 1979, p. 3; Betty Curran, "Special Education Program Jumps," *Journal Messenger*, 27 December 1979, p. 1. The six year projection in Manassas Park showed the special education population growing to 17.6 percent. Nine percent of the Prince William student population were special education while the national average was twelve percent.

<sup>295</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 13 August 1979, p. 1; Betty Curran, "High School Will Receive Accreditation," *Journal Messenger*, 20 August 1979, p. 1. The "accredited and advised" rating meant that the school division was accredited, but that the deficiencies had to be addressed in a corrective action plan that was submitted to the state. The deficiencies were entirely in personnel.

its buildings. The buildings suffered neglect since money was not available for maintenance.<sup>296</sup> The maintenance problems were so severe that the school board was forced to divert money from budget lines designated for employee fringe benefits in order to repair leaky roofs. Lewis also had to contend with a city council that wanted to strip the school board and superintendent of any financial responsibilities. City council planned to turn over all accounting to the city treasurer, Jerry Davis. The only financial responsibility that the school board would have would be to send bills to Davis for payment.<sup>297</sup>

In August, the state police investigation of former superintendent Robert Strickland ended. According to Prince William Commonwealth's Attorney, Paul Ebert, the nine month investigation was complete.<sup>298</sup> Ebert did not place any criminal charges against Strickland, but said that several school policies had been violated and that accounting procedures should be tightened.

One of Lewis' first accomplishments was to bring a hot lunch program to the high school. The high school was the only school in Manassas Park without a lunch program. Lewis planned to satellite the lunches from the cafeteria at Conner Elementary School.<sup>299</sup> Through a \$37,000 grant from the Department of Education, and with the board agreeing to transfer \$20,000 from the special education tuition line, hot lunches began to be offered at Manassas Park High School in January, 1980.<sup>300</sup> Since there was no cafeteria, the students ate in the gym at tables placed on the vinyl tile floor.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>296</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3; "Schools Lose Again In Manassas Park," *Journal Messenger*, 24 July 1979, p. 1.

<sup>297</sup>Lois Merritt, interview, p. 2; "Schools Lose Again In Manassas Park," p. 1.

<sup>298</sup>Ibid; "State Police End Park Investigation," *Journal Messenger*, 10 August 1979, p. 1.

<sup>299</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 10 September 1979, p. 1.

<sup>300</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 10 December 1979, p. 1-2.

<sup>301</sup>Sandy Hammersley, interview, p. 2; Pam Taylor, interview, p. 2.



## Chapter 4

1980 - 1984

### Building the 1980-81 Budget

It appeared that in 1980-81, adequate funding for the school budget would again become an issue. Energy prices skyrocketed, gasoline climbed from \$.96 in previous months, to \$1.15 per gallon. The city still had one of the highest tax rates in the state of Virginia. Student achievement, maintenance and teacher salaries were the focal points of the budget.

It was revealed early in 1980 that eighth graders at Manassas Park High School were having problems in math and reading. According to the principal, Jim Moyers, the majority of eighth grade students at Manassas Park High School needed remediation. All principals in the system emphasized the need for “massive” remedial math and reading programs that would require funding for more teachers and materials in grades K-12.<sup>302</sup> Moyers requested immediate help for the students who fell behind and warned that many students were at risk if immediate steps were not taken. In 1980, eighth grade math classes routinely enrolled more than thirty students. Moyers wanted to hire an additional math teacher to reduce class size. He also wanted to provide “pull-out” services for students diagnosed as having particular needs. Unfortunately for the students, there was no money in the budget to provide for such remedial programs. Students would have to wait until the fall of 1980 for help, and then only if money could be built into the budget.

Moyers wanted to improve the instructional programs at the high school by purchasing new and updated materials and supplies. He requested more instructional supply money for subject areas, such as science, that did not have basic supplies like beakers and microscopes. The high school was in need of maintenance work. The high school principal’s budget included funds for reinforcing the gypsum walls and for the renovation of six restrooms. Listed under capital improvements for the high school were bleachers and light poles for the football field.<sup>303</sup> Other schools were also in need of repair. The bell systems at Conner and Independence had been inoperable for some time and needed repair. Each of these two schools had also developed roof leaks.

Teachers in Manassas Park claimed that they ranked 115<sup>th</sup> of 130 in salary among Virginia school divisions. The teachers requested a seventeen percent salary increase for 1980-81. A

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<sup>302</sup>Gary Broadwater, interview, p. 2; Betty Curran, “Park Eighth Graders Having Math Problems,” *Journal Messenger*, 11 February 1980, p. 1.

<sup>303</sup>Pam Taylor, interview, p. 3; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3. The MPHS football team played home games in the city of Manassas at Osbourn High School. Manassas replaced its light poles on the Osbourn football field and gave the old poles to Manassas Park.

twelve percent increase would make Manassas Park salaries comparable to those in Manassas.<sup>304</sup>

Superintendent Lewis presented his budget in February, 1980.<sup>305</sup> Even though enrollment in the schools was steadily declining, the new budget asked for \$1 million more in local funds, which was an increase of thirty-nine percent over the previous year. The budget included money for remedial math and reading programs, a fifteen percent salary increase for all employees, an in-school-suspension program for the high school and roof repair for Conner and Independence schools. For the first time, the budget also included money for field trips.<sup>306</sup>

Lewis asked the community to support what he called a realistic budget. He explained that teachers and administrators in Manassas Park were the lowest paid educators in northern Virginia. The superintendent claimed that secretaries in Manassas Park made twenty-eight percent less than their peers in the other jurisdictions. He emphasized that \$260,121 was needed to bring the buildings up to standard and to begin a preventive maintenance program.

### **The City Makes a Fourth Quarter Cut**

At a special meeting on March 6, 1980, the Manassas Park City Council cut \$37,000 from of the school's 1979-80 budget.<sup>307</sup> The cut was made to help cover unbudgeted, but scheduled, land payments.<sup>308</sup> The cut was a devastating blow to the schools, coming on the heels of an enrollment loss that would cost the schools \$75,397 in state revenue. The budget was built on an enrollment of 1,820 students, but only 1,761 had arrived by September. To make matters worse, only 1,728 students were enrolled in March.<sup>309</sup>

### **Budget Rhetoric**

The budget battle was raging. The City Officials claimed that taxes in Manassas Park would top \$5.00 per \$100 of assessed value, which was double the current rate, if they fully

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<sup>304</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 January 1980, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Manassas Park Teachers Seeking 17 Percent Hike," *Journal Messenger*, 17 January 1980, p. 1.

<sup>305</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 11 February 1980, p. 1-3.

<sup>306</sup>Ibid; Betty Curran, "School Budget Jumps," *Journal Messenger*, 12 February 1980, p. 1.

<sup>307</sup>City Council Minutes, City of Manassas Park, 6 March 1980, p. 2.

<sup>308</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 17 March 1980, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Park Makes \$37,000 Cut," *Journal Messenger*, 7 March 1980, p. 1. School officials threatened to curtail bus runs and close schools when the money ran out.

<sup>309</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 17 March 1980, p. 5; Betty Curran, "Fewer Students Hurt Park," *Journal Messenger*, 18 March 1980, p. 1.

funded the school budget. Residents of the city, however, were in support of the school budget. At a public hearing on Tuesday, March 25, 1980, 160 residents attended a public meeting and indicated their support for the school budget. Parents claimed that their children were getting the “short end of the stick” in Manassas Park.<sup>310</sup> In addition to the school’s budget request, the parents supported an expenditure of \$90,000 to construct and equip a football stadium at Manassas Park High School.<sup>311</sup>

Council ignored the parents’ request and declared that any tax increase was unacceptable. They returned the school budget to the school board with directions to present a more realistic plan, one that would not require any tax increase. The schools were expected to present a revised budget by cutting \$473,693.24. Even though 140 of 160 eighth graders needed remediation in math, the remedial programs were eliminated. Also eliminated were: middle school athletics, field trips, lights and bleachers for the football field, salary increases and programs in thirty-two other areas.<sup>312</sup> The school board made the necessary cuts, bringing the total local appropriation to \$1.6 million, and adopted the budget.

### **A Plan for a Football Stadium**

In June, 1980, the city found \$57,350 to help build a football stadium. The money was left over from school construction debt payments, because the city had acquired a permanent bond rating and had, therefore, saved some interest. Neither superintendent Lewis and city manager Richard Arbore were aware of the idea, which had been proposed by Mayor Murphy. The booster club became involved in the project by selling medallions for \$25 each to raise funds.<sup>313</sup> Light poles were secured from Manassas and lights and bleachers were purchased. Community volunteers lent expertise by constructing a concession stand, press box and bleachers. The cheerleaders even helped by assembling portions of the bleachers.<sup>314</sup> The stadium opened on September 19, 1980.

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<sup>310</sup>Lois Merritt, interview, p. 2; Betty Curran, “Tax Rate of \$5 Foreseen in Park,” *Journal Messenger*, 26 March 1980, p. 1.

<sup>311</sup>Barbara Dellinger, interview, p. 4; Curran, “Tax Rate of \$5 Foreseen in Park,” p. 1. Manassas Park played home football games at Osbourn, in Manassas, for four years.

<sup>312</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3; Betty Curran, “Park Schools Will Have To ‘Make Due’ [sic] Another Year,” *Journal Messenger*, 23 April 1980, p. 1.

<sup>313</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 1; Bill Steele, interview, p. 3.

<sup>314</sup>Pam Taylor, interview, p. 2; William Money, interviewed by author, interview 28, Manassas, Va., 26 August 1998, p. 2.

## Student Achievement Questioned

In June, 1980, the *Journal Messenger* reported that more than fifty percent of the eighth grade class had failed English or math. Sixty-three of 126 English students and sixty-two of 117 math students failed.<sup>315</sup> The newspaper reported that parents and teachers had complained about the high failure rate, and that, as a result, the *Journal Messenger* had requested that Lewis investigate.

Even though principal Jim Moyers had warned earlier in the year that the students were at risk and needed immediate intervention, Lewis considered the high failure rate to be a teacher problem. "I am embarrassed by these failure rates. I can guarantee that steps will be taken to correct this problem."<sup>316</sup> Lewis vowed that he personally would visit those teachers' classrooms, and that standards would be set. Teachers would be expected to meet appropriate standards, or they would not be allowed to return to Manassas Park. Lewis' theme became "effective instruction with competent teachers."<sup>317</sup>

Shortly after the failure rates were reported, on July 18, 1980, Jim Moyers resigned as principal of Manassas Park High School. Moyers cited "philosophical differences" with the superintendent as his reason for resigning. Lewis remarked to the press that Moyers was a man of high integrity, very competent, and that he would recommend Moyers very highly "for many situations." Lewis went on to say "It's just a philosophical thing. He is a very pleasant, very, very, nice man."<sup>318</sup>

Almost immediately, Lewis appointed Moyers' replacement. Sidney Faucette, formerly the principal of Central High School in Lunenburg, Virginia, was on the job within a few days after Moyers' resignation. Faucette became the fifth principal of Manassas Park High School in four years. Lewis stated that he and Faucette were of the same philosophy.

Faucette's impact was felt immediately. He said that teachers would know that there was a change: "I expect them to be 100 percent kind of committed. I don't expect anyone to back up to the counter to get his paycheck."<sup>319</sup> It was obvious that Faucette was confident in his own abilities. He said that, even after accepting the job in Manassas Park, he was offered two jobs in

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<sup>315</sup>Gary Broadwater, interview, p. 2; Betty Curran, "Two Manassas Park Teachers Failed More Than 50 Percent," *Journal Messenger*, 24 June 1980, p. 1.

<sup>316</sup>Ibid.

<sup>317</sup>Ibid; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3. The two teachers in question were tenured. Moyers supported the teachers, emphasizing the need for extra help for students who were behind.

<sup>318</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 17 July 1980, p. 3; Betty Curran, "Moyers Resigns," *Journal Messenger*, 18 July 1980, p. 1. Moyers told Jimmy Stuart that he was asked to do something "against his conscience" by Lewis.

<sup>319</sup>Sandy Hammersley, interview, p. 4; Pam Taylor, interview, p. 3; Betty Curran, "Principal Making Improvements," *Journal Messenger*, 4 August 1980, p. 1.

much larger, triple-A sized high schools in Virginia. Faucette said: “How you get along with the man you work for makes all the difference. I was pursued for this job and it will be easier for me because I was completely up front.”<sup>320</sup>

One of Faucette’s first tasks was to hire a coaching staff. Since May, 1980, four of the varsity coaches at the high school had departed, taking jobs in other divisions. The four were the head coaches of six varsity sports. Faucette needed head coaches in baseball, boy’s and girl’s basketball, boy’s and girl’s track, and wrestling. The coaches cited a lack of support for athletics from the faculty and administration as their reason for leaving.

### **Budget Deficit**

In September, the school budget showed a deficit. At first it was unclear just how large the deficit was, but it was thought to be approximately \$33,000. Lewis blamed extremely high energy costs, his predecessor, enrollment losses, and the fact that advance purchases for the 1980-81 school year had been made in June of 1980.<sup>321</sup> Lewis announced plans to reduce his current budget in order to cover the deficit.

The city had taken control of the school’s bookkeeping following Robert Strickland’s departure. Lewis claimed that it was impossible to properly account for expenditures and revenues if the schools did not control their own finances. He claimed that the actual deficit was closer to \$10,000, and that the \$37,000 the city cut during the fourth quarter had put the school budget in the red. Lewis and the school board asked council to return control of the books to the school division. City council denied the request, retaining control of school finances.

Richard Arbore, the city manager, sought legal advice from the city attorney about possible code violations by Lewis. Arbore reported to council that Lewis was subject to legal action and possible removal from his position as superintendent of schools. The city manager also said that he would stop payroll checks if the school division operated at a deficit in the future.

The city established an Audit Committee to investigate the school deficit. Mayor Wendall Hite, Councilmen Charles Miller and John Alvarez, City Manager Richard Arbore and Treasurer Jerry Davis served on the committee. The task of the committee was to report to council with a recommendation regarding the school deficit.

In October, 1980, the Audit Committee reported to the city council. Based on the committee’s recommendation city council agreed to consent to the deficit.<sup>322</sup> They issued a stern

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<sup>320</sup>Ibid.

<sup>321</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 18 September 1980, p. 1; Betty Curran, “Park School Fund Shows Deficit,” *Journal Messenger*, 11 September 1980, p. 1. Not only were enrollment estimates wrong for the 1979-80 school year, but it also became clear that school officials had incorrectly projected enrollment for the 1980-81 year. The budget was built on an enrollment of 1,725 students, but only 1,678 had enrolled by September 6, 1980.

<sup>322</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 3; Betty Curran, “School Deficit Covered; Warning Is Issued Against Recurrence,” *Journal Messenger*, 29 October 1980, p. A6.

warning that they would neither tolerate nor condone any further over-expenditures by the schools. No action was taken against Lewis. Council member John Alvarez was the lone dissenting vote. He felt that the deficit was “an over expenditure with the full knowledge of all parties.”<sup>323</sup> The Audit Committee reported a final deficit of \$33,905.72.<sup>324</sup>

### **Student Failures and Teacher Unrest**

The same eighth-grade students that had failed English when Moyers was principal, also struggled as high school freshmen. In need of remedial help since being in the eighth grade, fifty-three percent of the freshmen failed English at the end of the first grading period.<sup>325</sup> Many of these students attended summer school. Parents were concerned, because they had not received any notice of the impending failures. Faucette claimed that he was not pleased about nor proud of the failure rate. He eliminated the interim reports to the parents, and scheduled parent-teacher conferences in the afternoons, rather than in the evenings as Moyers had done. Parents were unable to make appointments with the teachers, since most of them worked and could not leave their jobs in the afternoons. Without feedback from the interim reports and conferences, parents were unaware of their children’s progress.

Lewis blamed Moyers and the prior high school administration for the failures. He claimed that he had replaced the entire high school administration, allowing Moyers to resign, and demoted the assistant principal to a classroom position to solve the problem. He blamed the student failures on the system, and vowed to correct the failure rate and to institute remedial programs.

Faucette began to have morale problems among the staff. During his first two months as principal, three grievances were filed against him. Faucette estimated that as many as ten to twelve teachers, out of the staff of forty, would not be invited to return. He intended to “smoke out” about nine of those teachers.<sup>326</sup> He explained that “smoking out” the teachers meant that he would allow them to resign, rather than be nonrenewed. The teachers were enraged, accusing Faucette of playing favorites. Teachers felt that he favored the teachers that he had hired and that he wanted teachers hired by previous administrations to leave. Faucette’s comments to the press created such an uproar among the staff that he held a faculty meeting to denounce the articles in the newspapers.

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<sup>323</sup>Ibid.

<sup>324</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 18 September 1980, p. 1.

<sup>325</sup>Gary Broadwater, interview, p. 2; Betty Curran, “53 Percent [sic] Park Freshmen Fail English,” *Journal Messenger*, 31 October 1980, p. 1. During the same grading period, twenty-nine percent of the eighth grade failed math and English.

<sup>326</sup>Sandy Hammersley, interview, p. 4; Pam Taylor, interview, p. 2; Betty Curran, “Teachers Pull Away From PWEA,” *Journal Messenger* 1 November 1980, p. 1.

## A Second Budget For Superintendent Lewis

The second budget built by Lewis included a thirty-one percent increase in local funds. Lewis asked for \$2.4 million in local revenue, some of which was to hire more teachers for fewer students and for repairs to school roofs.<sup>327</sup> Lewis based the budget on an enrollment of 1,600 students. Enrollment in Manassas Park had dropped by over five hundred students in five years. The student teacher ratio in Manassas Park was 15:1.

After Lewis presented his proposed budget, the city manager suggested that Manassas Park get out of the school business.<sup>328</sup> Due to the expense of operating its own school division, Arbore suggested that the city consider contracting for high school services. City council did not accept his recommendation and told the school board to cut its budget by \$200,000. The school board was forced to cut six teachers and projected roof repair work from the budget.

## Fire Code Violations

As 1981 began, Bob Lewis asked that Brown and Ryon, Associated, Ltd., an architectural firm from Alexandria, conduct a facilities study of Manassas Park High School. Lewis was familiar with the work of Brown and Ryon, since they had built Gar-Field High School and Woodbridge High School in Prince William County, and were also the architects for the renovation of Osbourn High School in Manassas. William Phillips Brown, of Brown and Ryon, submitted the confidential written report to Lewis in February. Somehow, the *Journal Messenger* obtained a copy of the report and published parts of it. The report said that the academic wings of Manassas Park High School were “a potential fire bomb ready to go off at any time.”<sup>329</sup> Brown went on to say that the building was constructed of combustible materials, that the electrical panels emanated heat, and that the fire warning systems were inoperable and, in some places, non-existent. Brown wrote:

...because if there were a fire, it would be such a fast-moving, intense inferno, feeding on the light combustible framing materials, plywood decks and wall sheathing, that it probably would jump the fire walls and quickly spread by roof and direct heat and flame to the library-office-gym building, and perhaps down the corridor to the vocational wing if the wind and draft conditions were directed that way.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>327</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 2 February 1981, p. 1; Betty Curran, “Park’s School Budget Faces 31 Percent Increase,” *Journal Messenger*, 3 February 1981, p. 1.

<sup>328</sup>Ibid.

<sup>329</sup>Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 4; Betty Curran, “School Called Potential Fire Bomb,” *Journal Messenger*, 16 February 1981, p. 1.

<sup>330</sup>Ibid.

The report set off a flurry of activity and accusations. Craig McCormick, director of public safety in Manassas Park, never saw the report, but called the state Fire Marshall's office to assist in an inspection of the facility along with the city's building inspector, Melvin Young, and the city Fire Marshall, Tildon Brown. McCormick intended to report to the school board what measures needed to be taken to make the structure safe for occupancy.

City council member Douglas Parks accused the architect of drumming up business. Mr. Parks said that the architect was not familiar with modular construction. He claimed that the required repairs were minor, and that they would take a "couple of people a couple of weeks."<sup>331</sup> Parks also said: "Personally, I think there is a movement underfoot to move our kids out of the high school and into the county. I personally would not support that."<sup>332</sup>

Lewis claimed that he asked for the study as a way to justify the \$150,000 in the budget intended for maintenance. The superintendent accused Brown of "over-dramatizing" the fire conditions at the high school. Brown responded that \$150,000 could not begin to cover needed repairs. His estimate was closer to \$2 million. The architect said that the building was showing signs of wear. The modular pieces were settling unevenly and pulling away from the fire walls, creating roof leaks. The same types of leaks were found at Conner and Independence, which were also modular structures. Under Brown's \$2 million renovation plan, the prefabricated wings would be demolished and rebuilt with conventional materials. Brown felt that replacing the prefabricated wings with block and concrete would be more energy efficient. According to Brown:

It is obvious that the light, temporary wood construction and relatively soft interior finishes are deteriorating faster than you can possibly hope to patch back into shape. Many areas have been patched-replaced many times and are in a disgraceful condition. Unfortunately, high schools must be designed to take even more abuse than jails.<sup>333</sup>

Manassas Park officials conducted their own inspection of the facility. Craig McCormick said that he was prepared to close the schools, if necessary; but after completing the inspection, he felt that the building was in better shape than expected. However, the state Fire Marshall, Kenneth R. Frese, cited the school for nine safety violations.<sup>334</sup> Even when originally built, the school did not conform with the Uniform Statewide Building Code requirements. According to Frese, the school needed an access road encircling it, more pull fire stations, better inside wall

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<sup>331</sup>Ibid.

<sup>332</sup>Ibid.

<sup>333</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 19 February 1981, p. 1; Betty Curran, "School Buildings Showing Wear," *Journal Messenger*, 17 February 1981, p. 1.

<sup>334</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 19 March 1981, p. 3; Betty Curran, "Fire Marshall Cites MPHS For Nine Safety Violations," *Journal Messenger*, 11 March 1981, p. 1.



materials, sprinklers in storage areas, self-closing fire-resistant inside corridor doors, fire stops in the attics and proper exit signs.

Until the necessary improvements were made, the city's building inspector, Melvin Young, required the placement of monitors in the academic wings of the building at all times when the building was occupied, including during after-school activities. Young required that the monitors attend a one-hour training session conducted by the department of public safety. School officials were ordered to make the necessary repairs to bring the building up to code, and to submit a plan for doing so within thirty days.<sup>335</sup> Public safety officials made daily inspections.

### Costly Repairs

Shortly after the fire marshal's report, the school board began to interview architectural firms to develop a plan to correct the problems and bring the building up to code. The board decided to build a road around the building at a cost of \$14,000. In lieu of installing sprinkler systems, the school board decided to build a fire road between the academic wings, which met the fire code. The school board also considered suing Nationwide Homes, the company that had furnished and constructed the high school.

In order to finance the needed repairs, the board asked city council for permission to apply for a state literary loan.<sup>336</sup> The board hoped to get between \$500,000 and \$1 million from the literary loan. The money would be used to make repairs to all buildings. At Manassas Park Elementary, the three old oil-fired boilers would be replaced by new, efficient gas boilers. Also, new drop ceilings would be installed, the roof would be replaced, plumbing would be upgraded and the sidewalks would be replaced.<sup>337</sup> Conner Elementary needed roof repair, fire door closures and carpet replacement. Money from the literary loan would also be used to remodel the academic wings of the high school, repair the roof, convert the boilers from oil to gas and remodel the administrative offices.

In May, the school board received an estimate of \$600,000 to make necessary repairs to Manassas Park High School. The school board was still considering legal action against Nationwide Builders to help defray the repair costs. They also discovered that the floors at Manassas Park High School were not strong enough to bear the weight of students. Eighty pounds per square foot were required for school buildings. The floors at the high school could

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<sup>335</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas park City Schools, 19 March 1981, p. 1; Betty Curran, "Hall Monitors Ordered Posted; Daily Inspections To Be Made," *Journal Messenger*, 11 March 1981, p. 1.

<sup>336</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 10 April 1981, p. 2; Gary Rhodes, "Park May Apply For Literary Loan," *Journal Messenger*, 22 April 1981, p. 1.

<sup>337</sup>Ibid. The boilers were the original ones installed when the school was built in 1957. They had been converted from coal-fired to oil-fired boilers when Prince William County owned the schools. The same oil-fired boilers remain in the school at the present time.

only bear forty pounds per square foot.<sup>338</sup> Floor repairs alone were estimated to cost \$245,000.

By early June, the prospects of securing a literary loan were not good. The state informed Manassas Park that such loans were only authorized for capital projects with the purpose of erecting, altering, or enlarging a school. School officials also realized that the summer months did not provide enough time to bring the building into compliance. They decided to delay the opening of school to make the repairs. Schools were scheduled to open September 14, 1981, two weeks after the opening of schools in Manassas and one week after Prince William County Schools opened. They also considered an alternate plan which would make the building “temporary fire safe” for one year. Repairs would be completed during the following summer.<sup>339</sup>

The board chose Peake-Howell Architects to plan the work. After completing the study, the architects devised a two phase plan.<sup>340</sup> Phase one of the plan included constructing a fire access road behind the school and between the academic wings. It also made provisions to correct the electrical deficiencies and to add attic fire stops. Additionally, in phase one of the project, sprinklers would be added to designated areas, and the floors would be reinforced underneath with steel jacks rather than concrete footings. Phase two, which included pouring concrete footers to reinforce the floor, would be completed during the second summer.

After the school board threatened legal action, Nationwide Builders claimed that they had tried to warn school officials about serious maintenance needs. Nationwide claimed that they had conducted an inspection six months after the high school opened. They put their concerns about poor maintenance practices in writing to the city engineer and general contractor R. B. Thomas, as well as eight city officials: city manager Gene Moore, Mayor Bill Steele, council members John Alvarez, Jerry Davis, Peggy James, Frank Murphy and Arthur Williams, and city

building official Bobby Fewell.<sup>341</sup> Nationwide President James Severt warned that poor maintenance would create problems in the future. Nationwide contended that a majority of access doors to crawl spaces were missing, allowing freezing temperatures and water direct access to the plumbing, foundation and pier footings. Severt also noted that a down spout was missing, allowing water to run under the building. Workers found standing water in some areas, and in

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<sup>338</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 21 May 1981, p. 1; Gary Rhodes, “School Repairs Put at \$600,000,” *Journal Messenger*, 30 May 1981, p. 1.

<sup>339</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 8 June 1981, p. 4; Betty Curran, “Ways Sought To Keep Park School ‘Safe,’” *Journal Messenger*, 9 June 1981, p. 1.

<sup>340</sup>Ibid; The Peake-Howell Partnership, “Feasibility Study for Minor Improvements and Correction of Building Code Deficiencies in Manassas Park High School” (Falls Church, Va.: Peake-Howell Partnership, 1981), passim. Peake-Howell charged \$5,000 to do the facilities study.

<sup>341</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 18 June 1981, p. 1; William Steele, interview, p. 4; Betty Curran, “Builder Warned Park Officials,” *Journal Messenger*, 11 June 1981, p. 1.

other places, the water had frozen. Water had made the foundation settle unevenly. Nationwide also said that “excessive” amounts of water were used to clean the floors, causing deterioration of the subflooring.<sup>342</sup>

It turned out that during its four years of operation, an occupancy permit was never issued for Manassas Park High School. The school was first issued a three month temporary permit by Bobby Fewell, the building inspector at the time. Once the first permit expired, a second three month permit was issued. It too had expired. The last permit issued was for six months, and had expired in 1977.

Officials in Manassas Park decided to seek loans in the amount of \$250,000, considerably less than the \$600,000 in repairs recommended by the architect. C. William Hartman, of Bealeton, was awarded the bid to make repairs. Hartman’s bid was \$204,000 with guaranteed completion by September 9. City council and the school board still hoped to secure a literary loan with the support of state superintendent of public instruction, S. Jack Davis. Even with Davis’ support, the city was only able to get \$90,000 from the literary fund.

### **Independence Elementary School Closes**

As enrollment steadily declined in Manassas Park, it was no longer necessary or efficient to keep three elementary schools open. Lewis planned to close Independence Elementary, as it had four fewer classrooms than Conner Elementary.<sup>343</sup> Under the plan, Lewis proposed to close Independence and divide the students between Conner Elementary and Manassas Park Elementary. All kindergarten students would attend Manassas Park Elementary School. By absorbing the one hundred ninety additional students, teachers at Conner and Manassas Park Elementary expected between twenty-five and twenty-seven students in their classrooms, rather than the twenty to twenty-two students to which they were accustomed.

Students in grades one through six on Kent Drive and all points east would attend Manassas Park Elementary. Students living west of the stream that ran behind Kent Drive were bused to Conner. Lewis claimed that the school division would realize \$110,353 in savings by closing Independence Elementary. He felt the savings were significant, since the school system had lost twenty-eight percent of its students in five years, and he had built the budget on 1,550 students.

Lewis also proposed an intermediate school configuration to be housed at Manassas Park High School. At that time, seventh graders attended classes in the elementary schools. The plan

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<sup>342</sup>Ibid. When the building opened, the students tracked in large amounts of red mud. Custodians used garden hoses to wash the construction mud out through the exit doors.

<sup>343</sup>Betty Curran, “Declining Enrollment Closes First Local School,” *Journal Messenger*, 22 May 1981, p. 1; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 5. Stuart suggested closing Independence as a cost saving measure to Lewis. Stuart also suggested a reconfiguration of grade levels. He felt that putting K-3 students at Manassas Park Elementary and K-5 students at Conner Elementary could result in even more savings since there would be no duplication of materials and supplies for each grade level. Stuart, upon becoming superintendent in 1985, would fully implement his plan.

was for the seventh and eighth grades to occupy ten classrooms in the one of the academic wings of the high school. The new middle school would continue the elementary curriculum.

City council was concerned about the future of Independence Elementary School. Under state law, if the building was no longer used for school purposes, the loan balance of \$308,000 became due immediately. Council at first considered moving the entire city government, including the school board, into the vacated building. They hired a Falls Church architectural firm, LBC & W, to determine what measures should be taken to re-open the building as offices.

LBC&W estimated that \$200,000 in repairs were necessary for the building to be occupied.<sup>344</sup> A new entry roadway and expanded parking were required. The architect estimated that it would cost \$35,000 to repaint, recarpet, replace doors, clean, solve erosion problems, repair storm windows and refinish toilets. The building also needed electrical and telephone outlets and structural repair for the sagging floors, at an estimated cost of \$75,000. The rest of the \$200,000 estimate would be used for sprinklers and for repartitioning the building.<sup>345</sup>

### **School Spending in the Red for a Second Year**

For a second consecutive year, Manassas Park City Schools incurred a deficit. Lewis blamed the deficit, which he estimated to be \$10,000, on a loss of state revenue. In fact the school division had, for the second consecutive year, incorrectly estimated student enrollments, resulting in the receipt of fewer state dollars.<sup>346</sup> City council demanded that the school board account for the deficit, which ultimately grew to over \$50,000.

Lewis suggested that the school board reduce its 1981-82 budget to cover the deficit.<sup>347</sup> Lewis planned to garner money from salary lines by hiring inexperienced teachers to replace departing experienced teachers. City council, however, made a midnight appropriation of \$57,413 on June 30, 1981, to balance the school budget. To cover the deficit, city council

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<sup>344</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 October 1981, p. 3; Betty Curran, "Mayor Opposes Precinct Move," *Journal Messenger*, 30 November 1981, p. 1.

<sup>345</sup>Ibid.

<sup>346</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 18 September 1981, p. 1. The budget was built on 1,725 students, but only 1,678 were in school on September 6, 1980.

<sup>347</sup>Betty Curran, "Manassas Park Reduces Budget To Cover Deficit," *Journal Messenger*, 29 June 1981, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 19 November 1981, p. 2. The June school board minutes did not reflect the agreement between the city council and the school board to reduce the budget by \$57,413.14 to cover the deficit. The minutes of the November 19 school board minutes reflect the reduction as part of Lewis' presentation of the amended 1981-82 budget.

deducted the money from the 1981-82 school budget.<sup>348</sup>

### **Manassas Park Searches for its Third Superintendent**

On October 15, 1981, Robert Lewis announced that he was leaving Manassas Park to take a superintendency in Louisiana. He assumed the new position on December 1, 1981, with a salary of \$40,000.<sup>349</sup> As Lewis departed, the future of the city, and the school system was in doubt. The school division had operated “in the red” for two consecutive years. The buildings were deteriorating and the enrollment was declining.

In an editorial dated October 21, 1981, the *Journal Messenger* said that the city had failed.<sup>350</sup> The paper noted that the city had seen twenty-six council members come and go in its six and one-half year history. It was also noted that, during the same time period, five city managers had come and gone. Enrollment in the schools dropped by almost six hundred students. Declining enrollment had forced the school board to close one elementary school, even though they were still making payments on it. Less than five years after opening, the high school was cited for nine safety violations and structural deficiencies. Instead of properly repairing the building, the city took a piecemeal approach by repairing the building over a two year period.

Manassas Park owned forty percent of the property in the city, all of which was tax exempt.<sup>351</sup> As a result, sixty percent of the property owners in the city were supporting the city government. Manassas Park still had the highest tax rate in northern Virginia, at \$2.30 per \$100 of assessed value. The editorial closed by saying: “call it quits as a city and ask the 1982 General Assembly to take back its charter.”<sup>352</sup>

Even with the status of the city in question, the school board searched for a new superintendent. The board reported that twenty-seven candidates applied for the job.<sup>353</sup> The

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<sup>348</sup>Betty Curran, “Board Must Trim Budget \$110,000,” *Journal Messenger*, 24 November 1981, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 19 November 1981, p. 2. Of the \$110,000 cut, \$57,400 covered the deficit from the previous year and \$52,600 met reduced revenue expectations.

<sup>349</sup>Betty Curran, “Superintendent Lewis Leaves Manassas Park,” *Journal Messenger*, 16 October 1981, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 October 1981, p. 1. Lewis left the school system in Louisiana before he completed one term. He took a job in education in North Carolina. Shortly after he began his duties there, he committed suicide.

<sup>350</sup>“Call It Quits,” *Journal Messenger*, 21 October 1981, p. A4.

<sup>351</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>352</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>353</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 3; Betty Curran, “27 Apply for Park School Post,” *Journal Messenger*, 7 December 1981, p. 1.

school board decided to conduct conference calls with the candidates, then choose finalists for interviews.

In January, 1982, the school board announced that thirty-seven year old Gary Smith had been chosen to fill the superintendent's post in Manassas Park. Smith, a former resident of Manassas, had begun his teaching career in Prince William County, at Brentsville High School, in 1966. He had also taught at Stonewall Jackson High School before becoming principal of Windsor High School, in Isle of Wight County, in 1976.<sup>354</sup>

### **The Smith Administration Begins**

The first task confronting Smith was the development of the 1982-83 school budget. In just over six weeks, Smith put together his first budget as a superintendent of schools. By a 3-2 vote, the school board approved the budget, characterized by Smith as "below bare bones."<sup>355</sup> The budget of \$4,214,857 reflected a \$144,000 cut by city council. To reduce the budget, Smith proposed cutting positions, as well as reducing the starting salary for teachers from \$13,500 to \$13,300. Smith's salary was also reduced, from \$37,060 to \$35,700.

The proposed budget included the reduction of administrative staff. Johnnie Owens, principal of Manassas Park Elementary School, was released from his position, which was filled by Jimmy Stuart, a central office administrator.<sup>356</sup> Stuart's position was not refilled.

In April, after learning of his impending release, Owens did not return to Manassas Park Elementary. Owens claimed that he was never notified of his release, and that he only found out when the reduction-in-force letter was delivered to him. He was quoted as saying: "I will not be a lame duck principal."<sup>357</sup> Owens complained that the school system consistently promoted students, at a rate of eighty-five percent, whose performance was below grade level. Owens said that the children were doomed to fail at the high school level. Smith originally had hoped that Owens would return to finish his contract. In May, Smith filled the position by assigning Stuart as principal.

### **The Debate over Independence**

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<sup>354</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 26 January 1982, p. 1; Ray Glier, "Smith To Fill Position," *Journal Messenger*, 27 January 1982, p. 1.

<sup>355</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 April 1982, p. 7. School board members Murphy and Curry voted against the budget. They both opposed cutting staff. Ray Glier, "Bare Bones Budget Approved," *Journal Messenger*, 16 April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>356</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 4; Betty Curran, "Owens Walks Off From Job," *Journal Messenger*, 17 April 1982, p. 1. This was the second time in three years that Owens had been released from a school position.

<sup>357</sup>*Ibid.*

Independence became the target of vandals after it closed, with several break-ins reported. School and recreation officials met to consider ways to re-open the building in order to curtail vandalism. Located in a residential area, the property was not commercially attractive; thus attempts to sell it were unsuccessful. City council decided that it was too expensive to reopen the building as city offices.

Council proposed closing Conner Elementary School and reopening Independence Elementary School by Christmas, 1982.<sup>358</sup> Located on Manassas Drive near the Conner Industrial Park, Conner Elementary was attractive as a commercial property. City council felt that the Independence Elementary property was only good for a school building, and that Conner had a higher re-sale value. The school board, however, argued that Conner was the larger of the two schools, and that due to the number of students that were housed at Conner, Independence would have to be expanded to accommodate those students. Independence had only fourteen classrooms, compared to eighteen at Conner. Independence also had inadequate parking facilities and access roads. Council proposed placing trailers at Independence to house the additional students.

The 1982-83 school year started with the city council and the school board unable to resolve the Independence Elementary issue. In December, 1982, city council and the school board scheduled a joint session to discuss the matter. The city still wanted to reopen Independence and sell Conner Elementary School. The school administration agreed that Independence should reopen, but only to provide additional space due to projected increases in enrollment.<sup>359</sup> They also argued that Conner Elementary was larger and would be the logical choice to remain open.

The school administration developed three “housing plans” for the school division, each including use of Independence Elementary as a school. The plans were presented to city council in a joint session on January 10, 1983. “Plan A” called for the reopening of Independence Elementary and the sale of Conner Elementary. The cost of preparing Independence to open was estimated to be between \$105,000 and \$245,000.<sup>360</sup> Of that amount, \$20,000 to \$90,000 would be needed for renovation, and \$80,000 to \$150,000 was needed for modular classrooms to house 456 students in kindergarten through grade six. This plan did not take into account any new growth in the city.

“Plan B” involved the city’s selling Conner Elementary and purchasing eight relocatable modular classrooms for Independence Elementary. This plan did not include the renovation of Independence Elementary. “Plan C” involved simply reopening Independence Elementary and

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<sup>358</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 4; Betty Curran, “Park Considers Closing Conner,” *Journal Messenger*, 16 April 1982, p. 1.

<sup>359</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 20 January 1983, p. 1-2; Betty Curran, “Student Housing To Be Reviewed,” *Journal Messenger*, 10 January 1983, p. 1. New town homes were under construction in the Conner Elementary attendance zone.

<sup>360</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 6 January 1983, p. 1-3; Betty Curran, “Three Housing Plans Adopted,” *Journal Messenger*, 11 January 1983, p. 1.

maintenance of Conner Elementary as a school. This was the plan favored by the school administration. The total cost for plan C was \$67,000.<sup>361</sup> Under this plan, one of the three elementary schools could be converted to a middle school.

City council suggested that the school board consider a fourth option: using the high school to house the sixth grade. Council reasoned that moving the sixth grade to the high school would allow Independence Elementary and Manassas Park Elementary to accommodate all students in grades kindergarten through five. Council was convinced that selling Conner was the best option available at the time. They subsequently decided to sell the property, and move some of the modular portions of the building to Independence School to create more classroom space.

Later in January, the school board recommended that city council delay the sale of Conner for one year, until enrollment could be verified. The school board still wanted to open all schools, claiming that increased enrollment would require more space.<sup>362</sup>

### **Racial Discrimination Charged**

In September, 1982, the school board paid Tim Donley, a former assistant principal at Manassas Park High School, \$10,000 to settle a racial discrimination charge. Donley, who had married an African-American woman in the spring of 1982, told the *Journal Messenger* that he had been offered \$11,500, and a favorable job rating, if he resigned and did not go public with his marriage.<sup>363</sup> The school board and administration had not been happy with Donley's performance since he joined the staff in September, 1981.<sup>364</sup> Donley secured legal counsel through the American Civil Liberties Union.

According to Donley, after he was married he was instructed not to bring his new wife to the high school prom.<sup>365</sup> He chose not to attend the prom, and was reprimanded for not being there. Donley resigned, effective September 1, 1982, after only one year at Manassas Park High School.

Council became aware of a grievance filed by Donley in May, 1982, and directed the school board to investigate. The board failed to report back to city council until after the charges became public. Superintendent Smith finally reported the charges to city council on September 6, 1982. City council members were concerned that allegations of racial discrimination by Donley

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<sup>361</sup>Ibid. This estimate included \$10,000 for the kitchen, \$17,000 for custodians, and \$40,000 for a new roof.

<sup>362</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 January 1983, p. 3; Betty Curran, "Conner School Sale Put on Delay," *Journal Messenger*, 25 July 1983, p. 1.

<sup>363</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 2 September 1982, p. 1; Ray Glier, "Racial Charge Prompts \$10,000 Settlement," *Journal Messenger*, 7 September 1982, p. 1.

<sup>364</sup>Ibid; Lois Steele, interview, p. 3.

<sup>365</sup>Ibid; Pam Taylor, interview, p. 2.



were hurting the image of the city.<sup>366</sup> Members of city council questioned whether or not the racial discrimination were true. Bill Wren, chairman of the Republican party, called for an organized fact-finding effort. Wren wanted to know why there was a financial settlement if the school administration was convinced that Donley was a poor administrator.<sup>367</sup> Superintendent Smith explained that the \$10,000 was in no way an admission of guilt on the part of the school division, but was given in exchange for a written guarantee from Donley that he would not sue the board later. Smith also claimed that the school board did not wish for the matter to remain unresolved through the 1982-83 school year and, therefore, made an “adjustment” to Donley’s contract, after which he resigned.<sup>368</sup> The superintendent denied any allegations of racism.

City council was not satisfied with Smith’s explanation, and passed a resolution appointing council members Dorothy Bello, Bob Maitland and Thomas Calomeris to an independent committee with full investigatory powers to look into the charges. The committee was given full subpoena power so that personnel files would be open to them. A report was expected by the city council within ninety days.<sup>369</sup>

On Tuesday, January 18, 1983, the special subcommittee issued its report. The subcommittee stated that the allegations by Donley were unfounded:

. . .substantial evidence on the record does not support the allegation that Mr. Donley’s recommended termination was racially motivated, or that his civil rights were violated.<sup>370</sup>

The subcommittee explained that it had asked fourteen witnesses, school board members and Donley’s attorney, Michael Marino, to testify. The names of the witnesses were not released, and the report did not include any direct testimony. The subcommittee felt that the settlement of \$10,000 was given to Donley to avoid a drawn out legal battle.

### **Tension Between the Superintendent and School Board**

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<sup>366</sup>Lana Conner, interview, p. 3; Ray Glier, “Council Members Say Racial Case May Be Hurting Image of City,” *Journal Messenger*, 7 September 1982, p. 1.

<sup>367</sup>Ibid.

<sup>368</sup>Ibid; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 2 September 1982, p. 1. After meeting in executive session, the school board moved to accept the resignation of Donley, effective September 1, 1982, “according to the understanding reached in executive session.”

<sup>369</sup>Lana Conner, interview, p. 3; Ray Glier, “Council Votes To Probe Racial Charge,” *Journal Messenger*, 10 September 1982, p. 1. Bob Maitland resigned from the committee because of his personal relationship with the Donleys. City council member Donald Tickner replaced Maitland.

<sup>370</sup>Lana Conner, interview, p. 3; Ray Glier, “Probe Absolves Park Officials,” *Journal Messenger*, 19 January 1983, p. 1.

In January, 1983, school board member Alma Dunn criticized the lack of communication between the school board and the school administration. Dunn felt that the board should receive regular, daily information.<sup>371</sup> On January 20, 1983, the school board deferred payment on seventeen bills, until the administration provided more information about the bills. Five of the bills were for travel reimbursement for administrators, which the board questioned. The school board decided to hold a special meeting on January 24, 1983 to allow the administration to provide pertinent information on the bills that had been withheld.

Dunn proposed two resolutions to the board. The first resolution was with regard to travel regulations. The travel resolution included specific procedures for employee travel. Each month, the administration was required to submit a detailed list of anticipated travel for the coming month, including an explanation of each trip. Another regulation required the administration to submit to the school board a written report of travel, stating the purpose of the trip and benefits of the trip to Manassas Park City Schools.<sup>372</sup>

The second resolution addressed the establishment of a five-section file rack in the central office for school board members. Item one of the resolution stated:

There shall be placed within the receptionist's area of the School Board Offices some type of five section file rack. All information, of whatever nature, as may be relevant to the School's operations, facilities, personnel, to include information pertinent thereto, shall be placed in the file for all Board Members on a daily basis.<sup>373</sup>

Dunn's resolution also required that all board meetings be tape-recorded, and that the board have authority to add or delete agenda items after the call to order and roll call. The resolution also limited citizens' comments to three minutes and added board member comments to the agenda.

At the special meeting on January 24, Smith voiced his opposition to the resolution concerning administrative travel. He reprimanded the board for questioning the honesty, integrity and intentions of the school administration.

I'm getting pretty sore about apparent pointed remarks and comments which seem to impugn the integrity of the staff and, yes, I take this personally, particularly me. I've worked seventeen years for my reputation, for integrity and honesty.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>371</sup>"Board to Get More Involved," *Journal Messenger*, 24 January 1983, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 20 January 1983, p. 5.

<sup>372</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 20 January 1983, p. 7.

<sup>373</sup>Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>374</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 January 1983, p. 3; Betty Curran, "Smith Tackles Park Board," *Journal Messenger*, 25 January 1983, p. 1.

Smith went on to argue that the school board should leave decisions about travel expenses to the superintendent. He distributed highlighted copies of the state code, with marked passages showing the authority of the superintendent. Board member Gene Curry apologized to Smith, stating that he should have done a better job of informing new board members about travel policies and regulations.<sup>375</sup>

Alma Dunn, the board member who proposed the travel regulations, remarked that she was simply asking questions to which she wanted answers. She told the board that she would continue to do so. Dunn also told the board, and the audience, that she was not placed on the board to undermine the staff for city council.<sup>376</sup> She also chastised the superintendent for his remarks, saying:

Just because you have a Ph.D. behind your name, or a M.A., or a B.A., or a B.S., I could tell you what I call that one, but I won't, doesn't give you the corner on smarts.<sup>377</sup>

### **An Administrative Review**

The Virginia Department of Education conducted an Administrative Review of Manassas Park City Schools in November, 1982. The review team found the school division in non-compliance in several areas. The state cited Manassas Park for using teachers who did not have valid certificates; teachers teaching outside their area of endorsement; and teaching with expired certificates.<sup>378</sup> The review team also cited the school division for not revising the policy manual, not including attendance as part of high school students' permanent records, and not setting goals and objectives for the operation of the school division. The school division was also cited for operating science labs that did not meet science graduation requirements and not having fume

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<sup>375</sup>Ibid; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 January 1983, p. 3.

<sup>376</sup>Ibid.

<sup>377</sup>Ibid. Teachers also remarked to the author that Ms. Dunn, in remarks made to the entire staff during an opening session of school, made similar remarks to them. She said that just because they had degrees, they should not think that they were "hot stuff." Dunn said that she got her degree from the "school of hard knocks," and that she did not care if you had a doctorate or not, she had more wisdom than anyone in the room.

<sup>378</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 January 1983; Betty Curran, "State Finds Faults in School System," *Journal Messenger*, 25 January 1983, p. 1. There were fourteen teachers who lacked proper state credentials. These fourteen teachers had met the requirements for state certification since the November review and prior to January, when the article was published.

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On February 1, 1983, the school board held a special meeting to hear a report on the Education Administrative Review. Superintendent Smith reported that he had hoped that the administrative staff would have had time to review the report prior to presenting it to the board. By having an opportunity to review the report, the administration could have prepared a detailed report for the board, complete with the state's findings of non-compliance, and the measures the school division had taken to correct the deficiencies. He explained that the report was released by the press in January, prior to review by his staff, and that the press had unfairly reported the true situation.<sup>380</sup>

Smith reported that the report by the Administrative Review team was generally favorable. He said that the team was pleased with the school division and its staff. Most of the deficiencies cited had already been corrected. Of 461 areas that could be rated, 26 were not applicable to Manassas Park. The school division had received a "Yes" (or satisfactory) rating in four hundred of the listed areas.<sup>381</sup>

Smith and his staff reviewed the indicators that did not receive a "Yes" rating, and explained what corrective action had been taken. The staff explained that a committee was working on updating the policy manual, and that a new policy manual would be ready prior to the beginning of the 1983-84 school year. The staff also explained that many of the teachers' credentials had been at the Department of Education certification office when the review team arrived. Those teachers in question were endorsed by the time the report was released. Smith finally reported that no experiments requiring fume vents were being conducted in the science labs until the new fume vents arrived.<sup>382</sup>

### **The School Board and City Council Agree to Sell Conner Elementary**

At a special joint meeting held on February 9, 1983, the school board and city council agreed to close Conner Elementary in June, 1983. The two bodies also agreed to enlarge Manassas Park Elementary and refurbish Independence Elementary. A public hearing on the issue was scheduled for February 24. There was also an agreement to reopen Conner Elementary if the March enrollment figures reflected a significant enrollment increase.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>379</sup>Ibid.

<sup>380</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 February 1983, p. 1.

<sup>381</sup>Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>382</sup>Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>383</sup>Betty Curran, "Park Plans Site Change," *Journal Messenger*, 10 February 1983, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 3 March 1983, p. 2. The school board and city council met to develop plans and determine funding for the addition of at least four classrooms and renovation at Manassas Park Elementary School, renovation and opening of

Sixty parents and teachers attended the public hearing. Most of the people in attendance opposed closing Conner Elementary School. The PTO president at Manassas Park Elementary also opposed the plan saying: “Are we to become Manassas ‘Trailer’ Park Elementary?”<sup>384</sup>

Even though parents and teachers opposed the move, the city council and school board agreed that Conner Elementary would close on June 8, 1983. Independence Elementary required extensive work before it could reopen. Having sat vacant for two years, vandals had broken out many windows, floor tiles had become loose and displaced and the multi-purpose room had incurred water damage from flooding. Board member Gene Curry, council member Dorothy Bello, city manager Jerry Davis, and school superintendent Gary Smith formed a committee to oversee the refurbishment of Independence.<sup>385</sup>

Five objectives were to be met before Independence could open. First, the drainage problem, which caused the multi-purpose room to flood, had to be corrected. Second, since access to the building was limited, Colfax Drive had to be extended so that buses could drive around the school. In addition, the entire inside and outside had to be refurbished and playground equipment, materials and supplies had to be moved to Independence from Conner.

Finally, a sewage disposal pond in front of the building had to be filled to provide a play area.<sup>386</sup>

The debate over selling Conner and reopening Independence ended abruptly, however, when estimates for moving portions of Conner came in much higher than anticipated. City manager Jerry Davis badly misjudged the cost of moving a portion of Conner to Independence. The bid came in seventy thousand dollars higher than Davis had predicted. The city could not afford to make the move, and therefore, could not close Conner Elementary.<sup>387</sup>

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Independence, and the addition of a multi-purpose room at the high school, all to prepare for the closing of Conner Elementary.

<sup>384</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 17 February 1983, p. 4; Betty Curran, “Parents Fail To Show Up,” *Journal Messenger*, 25 February 1983, p. 1.

<sup>385</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 17 February 1983, p. 4; Betty Curran, “Conner School to Close June 9,” *Journal Messenger*, 9 March 1983, p. 1. To facilitate communication between the two bodies, a “Liaison Committee” was established. The committee was comprised of the city manager, school superintendent, school board chairman and a city council member. The committee still exists as this is being written, though it has been expanded to include all members of city council and the school board.

<sup>386</sup>Ibid; Lois Steele, interview, p. 2. Independence Elementary was built on a site that the town had used for sewage treatment. Even though not active, the sewage treatment pond remained in front of the school until after it closed.

<sup>387</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 28 April 1983, p. 1; Betty Curran, “School Closing Still in Doubt,” *Journal Messenger*, 25 April 1983, p. 1. Almost seven months passed before any decision was made on Independence Elementary.

The future of Conner Elementary and Independence Elementary remained in doubt until November, 1983. The school board finally determined that Independence Elementary would re-open in September, 1984, to house kindergarten classes, pre-school handicapped classes, school board offices and the city's department of parks and recreation. Even then, the school board was not in total agreement, passing the measure by a margin of 3-2.

### **Teachers Vote to “Work-to-the-Contract”**

In the spring of 1983, Governor Robb announced that he was making teachers' salaries a priority. His budget reflected his commitment to improving teachers' pay throughout the state. The state provided Manassas Park \$240,000 in revenue for salary increases.<sup>388</sup>

City council, after learning of the increased revenue from the state, reduced its contribution to the school budget by 5.6 percent. Council decided that the teachers' salary increase would be two percent, rather than the ten percent that superintendent Gary Smith had proposed.<sup>389</sup> City council approved the budget, with a two percent salary increase, in spite of objections from the Manassas Park Education Association.

The teachers in Manassas Park decided to protest city council's action by “working-to-the-contract.” This meant that teachers would only work the hours specified in their contracts. They would not come to school early or stay late, they would not take work home; and they would not sponsor extra-curricular activities such as clubs. Teachers in Manassas Park also removed all of their personal articles from the classrooms, in order to demonstrate how much of their own money they had to spend on classroom supplies.<sup>390</sup>

### **Council Expresses Dissatisfaction with School Division**

Five members of city council expressed their concern that the school system had gotten away from teaching the basics, that it was disorganized and that it should be able to do more with less city money.<sup>391</sup> Manassas Park still had a high tax rate; \$1.90 per \$100 of assessed value. Council members said they were not getting their money's worth from the school board and that

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<sup>388</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 4; Betty Curran, “Teachers Work-to-the-Rule,” *Journal Messenger*, 11 May 1983, p. 1. The \$240,000 in state revenue would have allowed a 9.7 percent salary increase for all teachers as long as city council did not cut its appropriation to the school budget.

<sup>389</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 5 May 1983, p. 1. Smith proposed a seven percent increase plus a three percent step adjustment.

<sup>390</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>391</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 4; Ray Glier, “Park Council Dissatisfied with School Division,” *Journal Messenger*, 15 June 1983, p. 1. Council members Doug Parks, Dorothy Bello, Donald Tickner, Bob Maitland and Frances Embrey expressed concerns.

the board was not spending its money wisely. Council also said that the school system was placing too much emphasis on computer learning.<sup>392</sup>

Council was then considering the reappointment of school board members Alma Dunn and Kenneth Dellinger and was interviewing candidates. City council member Doug Parks said of the reappointments: “We’re trying to put someone in there who fits our ideals. It would be foolish not to.”<sup>393</sup>

Once council finished interviewing candidates, they reappointed Alma Dunn, but decided against reappointing Kenneth Dellinger. Instead, they appointed Grant Jones to take Dellinger’s place. Jones was an attorney for the Internal Revenue Service, who chose to send his only child to a private school outside of Manassas Park.

Tired of criticism from city council, board members spoke out. They invited council to take over the school board if they were not satisfied with the way the school division was operated. School board member Gene Curry stated that he resented city council’s criticism of school board members. He also rebuked city council for inadequately funding the schools.<sup>394</sup>

### **A Divided School Board**

On July 7, 1983, Grant Jones, the newest school board member, was selected by the school board to serve as chairman for the 1983-84 school year.<sup>395</sup> Board member Gene Curry nominated Jones, stating that Jones had the leadership skills necessary to be a board chairman. The board selected Gene Murphy to serve as vice chairman of the school board.

Jones immediately made his presence known. At his first school board meeting, he questioned the need for special education teachers.<sup>396</sup> Jones said that he did not want to see so much money spent on students who would not be contributing members of society. He said that average students carry the “weight of society,” and that only the gifted and talented students should have extra opportunities.<sup>397</sup> He also objected to paying the superintendent for business related travel, even though such travel was stipulated in his contract. Jones also proposed four policy objectives to guide the school board on policy matters.<sup>398</sup>

Over the next several months, Grant Jones succeeded in alienating parents, community

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<sup>392</sup>Ibid.

<sup>393</sup>Ibid.

<sup>394</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 June 1983, p. 4.

<sup>395</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 7 July 1983, p. 2.

<sup>396</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>397</sup>Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>398</sup>Ibid. Jones proposed the following as school board “Policy Objectives:” non-discretionary spending, discretionary spending, resource allocation, and revenue reliance.

leaders, administrators and fellow board members through his words and deeds. Following a presentation in August by Melanie Jackson, Manassas Park's representative on the Northern Virginia Community College Board, Jones stated that citizens who wished to speak to the board should put their comments in writing and submit them three to four days prior to the board meeting.<sup>399</sup> School board member Gene Curry disagreed with Jones. Curry stated that many citizens would not speak if they had to present their remarks in advance of the meeting. He also felt that any citizen had the right to speak at school board meetings.

At a special school board meeting on August 11, 1983, Curry and Jones again disagreed. Curry asked that Jones refrain from directing the superintendent to do things without the consent of the entire board. He also suggested that Jones relinquish the chair to the vice chairman, if he wished to make motions. Curry claimed that he had received inquiries from the community as to whether Jones was speaking for the entire board. Jones replied that it was not necessary for him to relinquish the chair in order to make motions.<sup>400</sup>

When the time came for the board to vote to adopt the agenda, four members voted yes. Chairman Jones immediately announced that the motion had carried. However, Curry objected, stating that he had not had the opportunity to vote no, and that he wanted his vote recorded in the minutes. Jones responded, saying: "There is no necessity for a non-record vote for an agenda motion, sir. The ayes have it."<sup>401</sup>

Teachers became angry with Jones when, on September 1, 1983, Jones remarked: "We all have attended classes that weren't worth attending."<sup>402</sup> At a school board meeting on September 15, 1983, Marion Rambo, President of the Manassas Park Education Association, expressed the teachers' concern with Mr. Jones' comments. Jones attempted to clarify his remarks by stating that he was speaking of classes at the college level, and that his comment was a general one, based on his own experiences.

By October, tempers flared as Jones used the gavel to silence those who disagreed with him.<sup>403</sup> At the school board meeting on October 4, 1983, Jones used the gavel to silence board

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<sup>399</sup>School Board Minutes, Special School Board Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 4 August 1983, p. 1. Jones publicly apologized to Mrs. Jackson for his remarks at the school board meeting on August 18, 1983.

<sup>400</sup>School Board Minutes, Special School Board Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 11 August 1983, p. 1.

<sup>401</sup>Ibid.

<sup>402</sup>School Board Minutes, Special School Board Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 September 1983, p. 4.

<sup>403</sup>Betty Curran, "Board To Consider Controversial Issues," *Journal Messenger*, 6 October 1983, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 4 October 1983, p. 2. At his first meeting as chairman, on July 12, 1983, Jones requested that a gavel be provided for the chairman. No other chairman had ever used one in Manassas Park.



members Gene Curry and Donna Lane and superintendent Gary Smith, perceiving them as a threat to the chair. Curry objected to the way Jones conducted the school board meetings. He did not want the chairman to criticize the administration, teachers and employees. Donna Lane remarked that she thought Jones allowed some board members to speak at length, while limiting the remarks of others by saying that they were out of order.

Also at the October 4 meeting, Jones insisted that superintendent Smith should know at the beginning of the school year how many custodial supplies were needed, and that he would not approve “piecemeal” orders. Smith retorted: “I guarantee you that none of our principals are stealing toilet paper.”<sup>404</sup> Jones is quoted in the school board minutes as saying: “As long as I am board chairman, I will not tolerate anyone challenging the authority of the chair.”<sup>405</sup>

At the same school board meeting, board member Alma Dunn read a proposed directive to the board. When she finished reading the directive, she immediately moved to adopt and implement the directive as read. Curry and Lane both objected to the directive, stating that more information was needed. By calling for the question, Alma Dunn effectively ended the discussion and brought the directive to a vote.<sup>406</sup> Gary Smith interrupted, saying that a call for question required a second and a vote. Jones immediately used the gavel to silence Smith, saying: “I don’t need coaching on Roberts’ Rules.”

Gene Curry became infuriated with Jones. He started by saying: “Let’s do this by the rules and regulations . . .” but Jones used the gavel. Curry exploded: “Wait a minute. I’m a board member by golly and if I’ve got something to say I’m damn well going to say it.”<sup>407</sup> Curry called Jones a “little Hitler,” and said that Jones acted like “King Kong.”<sup>408</sup>

Later in October, in an effort to address their differences out of the public eye, the school board called an executive session to discuss personnel issues.<sup>409</sup> The discussion became so loud that people outside the room could hear board members’ voices. The school board had brought

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<sup>404</sup>Betty Curran, “Board To Consider Controversial Issues,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 October 1983, p. 1; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 4.

<sup>405</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 4 October 1983, p. 2.

<sup>406</sup>Ibid, p. 2. Dunn often brought directives and resolutions to the board, sometimes as many as five at one time. She also used the call for the question to end discussion on issues. Mrs. Dunn’s approach was, of course, incorrect. The correct method to end debate is to “move the previous question”. Under Robert’s Rules, such a motion takes precedence over others and, if passed, serves to cut off debate on a motion.

<sup>407</sup>Ibid, p. 3; Betty Curran, “Board To Consider Controversial Issues,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 October 1983, p. 1; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3.

<sup>408</sup>Ibid.

<sup>409</sup>Betty Curran, “Board Ignores FOI,” *Journal Messenger*, 21 October 1983, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 20 October 1983, p. 4.

so much attention to themselves that city council members publicly expressed their concern about the raised voices and abusive language.

Grant Jones did not reserve the use of the gavel for the staff and administration only. In November, 1983, Jones used his gavel to silence a parent in the audience. Jones accused the parent of taking “cheap shots” at the school board. At the same meeting, Jones debated with superintendent Smith about administrative travel.<sup>410</sup> Jones claimed that, since the central office was short on staff, they could not afford to spend days away from the office at conferences. Smith contended that conferences were important, since they provided assistance to the school division, and that they provided information about educational policy changes before the changes became effective. Jones responded that too much time was spent “hobnobbing,” and that nothing was really learned.<sup>411</sup> Jones criticized professional travel by saying that there was no follow-up to the conferences, since board members were not briefed about the outcome of these conference. He expected that, in the future, information would be disseminated to the staff through written reports, and not by attending conferences. Chairman Jones also said that he did not want the school division to bring in outside consultants for inservice sessions. He felt that the inservices should be conducted by employees of Manassas Park.

On December 1, 1983, the school board held a special meeting at which two controversial issues were discussed. The first issue was a letter, written by Grant Jones, to the teachers of Manassas Park.<sup>412</sup> Jones’ letter conveyed his expectation that the teachers trust the school board instead of expecting more money from the community “piggy bank.” School board members and the superintendent immediately criticized the letter. Board members Gene Curry and Gene Murphy objected to the letter, saying that it was not appropriate.<sup>413</sup> “The letter is contradictory to school board intentions regarding salaries” said Gene Curry.<sup>414</sup> Superintendent Gary Smith had two objections to the letter. His first objection was that it was a communication from an individual board member without approval of the entire school board. Smith also said that the job of motivating staff was his, and not the school board’s, responsibility.<sup>415</sup> Due to the criticism, Jones withdrew the letter from board consideration.

The letter was also criticized in a *Journal Messenger* editorial.<sup>416</sup> The editor criticized

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<sup>410</sup>Betty Curran, “Chairman Criticizes Staff Travel,” *Journal Messenger*, 4 November 1983, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 3 November 1983, p. 2.

<sup>411</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 3 November 1983, p. 2.

<sup>412</sup>Betty Curran, “Jones Asks For Trust,” *Journal Messenger*, 1 December 1983, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 December 1983, p. 3.

<sup>413</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 December 1983, p. 3.

<sup>414</sup>Ibid.

<sup>415</sup>Ibid.

<sup>416</sup>“Question Of Trust,” *Journal Messenger*, 1 December 1983, p. A4.

Jones as the “Lone Shepherd of Manassas Park Schools,” and said that the letter was a weak attempt at writing parables about the need for blind faith and trust from non-thinking sheep.<sup>417</sup> The paper also pointed out that trust was a two way street. The editorial took the position that Jones did not trust the school division with his own child, and therefore, his plea for trust lacked credibility.<sup>418</sup> “Put the letter in the round file,” the *Journal Messenger* proclaimed.<sup>419</sup>

The second controversial issue discussed at the meeting was that of the superintendent’s evaluation form. Grant Jones had developed the evaluation form and presented it to the school board for approval. Alma Dunn moved that the form be approved as written. Gene Murphy seconded the motion for discussion, but remarked that a better form could be developed. Superintendent Gary Smith made suggestions for improving the form. Donna Lane recommended that Smith’s suggestions be taken into consideration. Gene Curry, the most outspoken and vocal opponent of Jones, said that by “coming up with all these brainstorms,” Jones was creating the impression that the school board had never considered any of these issues, and that everything had been in “shambles” when Jones took over the school board as chair.<sup>420</sup> Jones responded:

My only intention in serving on this board is to serve the community I am a part of. The money is inconsequential. I don’t need the headache. I don’t need the heartache. Anytime this board sees fit to relieve the mantle of chairmanship from me, it can do so, now or anytime. Anytime a majority of the city council asks me to tender my resignation, I will do so - forthwith.<sup>421</sup>

Curry accused Jones of “rambling.” He said “You came up with this brainstorm as if nobody has tended the school system before you got here and it bothers me.” Jones retorted: “Mr. Curry, if it bothers you I suggest the proper form of the motion is to relieve me of the chairmanship and see how it flies.”<sup>422</sup> Curry replied “I so move.” The motion died for lack of a second. At that point, the board decided to indefinitely table approval of the form for evaluation of the superintendent.

### **A Bad Situation Grows Worse**

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<sup>417</sup>Ibid. The letter told the story of a man who sacrificed his child to save a passenger train.

<sup>418</sup>Ibid. Grant Jones sent his child to a private school.

<sup>419</sup>Ibid.

<sup>420</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 December 1983, p. 4.

<sup>421</sup>Ibid.

<sup>422</sup>Ibid, p. 5.

At the school board meeting on January 19, 1984, tempers erupted over statements made by Grant Jones. During a discussion on procedure, responsibility, and personnel and safety issues in inclement weather, Jones made a comment that stunned the school board and incensed the audience. Gene Curry expressed his support for the superintendent to make decisions regarding closing schools in bad weather, and said that “if one child is killed, it is not worth opening schools.” Before Curry could finish his comments, Jones said, “Kids get run over every day.”<sup>423</sup> Looks of disbelief quickly turned to anger as the audience and the school board exploded at the same time. The reaction by the audience and the school board caused Jones to pound the gavel and exclaim:

I will not tolerate that kind of behavior - absolutely not! This is a public meeting and there is no reason in the world why we can't conduct ourselves as adults. We have a student here and I would think that as parents and adults we would want to provide a certain minimum patina of decorum so that they would see that as adults we can conduct ourselves as adults.<sup>424</sup>

Due to Jones' remarks, parents demanded his resignation at subsequent school board meetings. At a meeting on February 2, 1984, Mrs. Melanie Jackson addressed the school board as a concerned parent. She read a prepared statement which outlined the board's individual and collective responsibilities. She charged that Jones frequently incensed the public with impulsive and insensitive generalizations. She pointed out that, in a seven month period of time, Jones had violated the Freedom of Information Act on at least two occasions. Jackson also suggested that Jones consider the negative effect of his continued service on the school board. Mrs. Jackson ended her comments with a request for Jones' resignation.<sup>425</sup>

Several actions by Jones in February raised the ire of the city council, school board, and the public. Jones became involved in a controversy with city council when he refused to sign school board checks deciding, instead, to use a rubber stamp. When directed by council to sign each and every check, Jones said that he would sign only with a straight line. The city council referred the matter to their attorney, who found that Virginia law allowed stamped signatures. Council demanded that he sign the checks anyway.<sup>426</sup>

On February 16, 1984, Gene Curry and Donna Lane advocated a resolution to keep board

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<sup>423</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 19 January 1984, p. 6.

<sup>424</sup>Ibid. Jones wrote a letter to the editor of the *Journal Messenger* on January 27, 1984 explaining his position, but never apologizing for his remarks.

<sup>425</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 2 February 1984, p. 1.

<sup>426</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 5; Betty Curran, “Rubber Stamp Usage Hit,” *Journal Messenger*, 13 February 1984, p. 1.

members “out of the way of administrators until the regular board meeting.”<sup>427</sup> Donna Lane introduced the resolution, which came from the Virginia School Board Manual. In effect, the resolution required that school board members not request information, reports or other services unless the majority of the board agreed with such requests. It reminded board members that they were individuals unless sitting on the board, and that no individual carried the power of the full board. As discussion ensued, Alma Dunn used her favorite strategy for eliminating discussion by calling for the question, which Gene Murphy seconded. Curry objected, saying that the public was interested in the discussion and that it should continue. Jones responded that he had no option but to call for the vote when the motion was made and seconded. The motion did not carry, as only Curry and Lane voted for it.<sup>428</sup>

In a letter to the editor, published in the *Journal Messenger* on February 21, 1984, Grant Jones charged that Manassas Park Schools were a travesty and were inferior to other schools in the area.<sup>429</sup> He called upon the community to support him, or to call for his resignation.

If Manassas Park cannot or will not afford to provide its youth an education comparable with that of surrounding communities, why must the exercise continue?<sup>430</sup>

Jones suggested that the city of Manassas Park assess whether or not they could afford to remain a separate government. He also accused the superintendent of spending “more time and energy playing local politics than in performing those tasks which would bear more credibility [sic] on his record.”<sup>431</sup>

Because of Jones’ letter, more than one hundred people attended a special school board meeting on February 21, 1984. At the meeting, Jones read a letter from Mayor Wendall Hite, requesting Jones’ resignation.<sup>432</sup> Stating that he respected the mayor’s opinion, he noted that the letter was not written on city letterhead. Jones indicated that if three more council members would come forward to request his resignation, he would comply with their request. He also said that if someone could collect the signatures of fifty-one percent of the electorate asking for his resignation, he would step down.

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<sup>427</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 February 1984, p. 4; Betty Curran, “Motion Stops Curry’s Talk,” *Journal Messenger*, 17 February 1984, p. 1.

<sup>428</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 February 1984, p. 5.

<sup>429</sup>Betty Curran, “Jones Calls Manassas Park Education a Travesty,” *Journal Messenger*, 21 February 1984, p. 1.

<sup>430</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>431</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>432</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 21 February 1984, p. 2; Betty Curran, “Pride Mixes With Politics,” *Journal Messenger*, 22 February 1984, p. 1.

Citizens in attendance at the meeting questioned Jones' accusations against Gary Smith. Other citizens expressed their support of the superintendent. Jones replied that he had kept a catalog to back up his criticisms of the superintendent, and offered to share it.<sup>433</sup> Gene Curry stopped Jones from sharing his comments by saying that it was not proper to discuss the superintendent's performance in a public meeting.

Superintendent Smith accused Jones of trying to be superintendent and read a prepared statement to rebut Jones' criticisms.

Most people accept the fact that to be a leader as superintendent, particularly in the Manassas Park situation, and to make tough decisions, that one can't be expected to satisfy everyone all the time. Therefore, it is with great dismay that I find it necessary to publicly disavow the statements in the newspaper today, but I have to do so lest anyone think that we don't have the guts and loyalty to cry 'Foul' . . . There is considerable evidence that the educational program in this school system is sound and is improving year by year. This is not, and I quote from the newspaper, 'an unbridled and inexperienced administration' but a seasoned blend of people who are competent, bright, enthusiastic, innovative and effective.<sup>434</sup>

Smith concluded his remarks by saying "The 'travesty' is the disruptive and damaging effects of the actions of someone who doesn't share our pride or our commitment."<sup>435</sup>

Marion Rambo, president of the Manassas Park Education Association, expressed the Association's displeasure with Jones. Rambo said that the teachers in Manassas Park had done much to improve the image of the school system, and that education in Manassas Park was not a travesty. Rambo related how many students had continued their education in prominent colleges and universities, which reflected the quality of the education they had received.

### **Chairman Jones Quits**

The school board held a special meeting on March 1, 1984. Immediately after the meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m., Jones announced that the board would go into executive session. The board returned from executive session at 7:35 p.m.

Upon returning to regular session, Jones said:

The purpose of the executive session was to ask for my resignation as chairman of this board. I will not impose my leadership on this board against the will of its constituent members; furthermore, I take this to be an expression of the will of the community and I therefore resign from this board effective immediately. My resignation will be tendered to

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<sup>433</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 21 February 1984, p. 2.

<sup>434</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>435</sup>Ibid.

city council probably by tomorrow. I turn the gavel to vice chairman Mr. Murphy and hope everything goes well.<sup>436</sup>

Immediately after making his statement, Jones turned the gavel over to Murphy, picked up his things and left the meeting. Several days later, Jones publicly stated that he had resigned, because he thought that was what both the school board and city council wanted. He said that Gene Murphy had requested the executive session, and during that private session, informed him that both the school board and city council wanted him to step down.<sup>437</sup>

### **Bickering Over the Budget**

The school board prepared a 1984-85 school budget that requested an increase of only 2.27 percent over the previous budget. The board built in a ten percent salary increase for professional personnel.<sup>438</sup> City council did not accept the school board's budget, however, and returned it to the board for cuts. Council reduced the budget from \$4,887,925 to \$4,567,796.<sup>439</sup> Council made the cuts in categories, eliminating the board's flexibility in determining where the cuts should be made. City council wanted a line by line accounting of all expenditures. Council also determined that employees' raises should be lowered from the ten percent requested by the school board, to six percent.<sup>440</sup> Superintendent Smith said that the \$320,000 in budget cuts were unacceptable.<sup>441</sup>

After returning the budget to the school board for reconsideration, the city council reconsidered its position on raising teachers' salaries only six percent and decided to retain the ten percent salary increase for teachers. City Manager Jerry Davis researched teachers' salaries in the area and found that Manassas Park teachers were the lowest paid teachers in northern Virginia. Council decided to fund the teacher salary increases by taking funds from the street repair budget.

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<sup>436</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 March 1984, p. 1.

<sup>437</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 March 1984, p. 1; "Jones Ties Move To Council," *Journal Messenger*, 10 March 1984, p. 1. Alma Dunn was subsequently selected to succeed Grant Jones as Chairman.

<sup>438</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 28 March 1984, p. 1.

<sup>439</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 April 1984, p. 1.

<sup>440</sup>City Council Minutes, City of Manassas Park, 10 April 1984, p. 2; Julie Boyd, "Park School Budget Returned for More Cuts," *Journal Messenger*, 11 April 1984, p. 1. Council reduced the salary increase to six percent, which included a three percent step increase and a three percent cost of living increase.

<sup>441</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 3 May 1984, p. 4.

Council made it clear that the ten percent increase was for teachers only.<sup>442</sup>

The school board could not agree where to make the \$320,000 in cuts and sent their original budget back to the city council. Superintendent Smith claimed that if council did not accept the original budget, cuts would be made by eliminating all athletic programs, as well as severely cutting vocational and instructional lines, including the elimination of two teaching positions.<sup>443</sup>

The city council, faced with a deadline, was forced to cancel a special meeting scheduled for April 28, 1984. The meeting had been scheduled to set the city tax rate, but without an adopted school budget, the tax rate could not be set. Council was angry that the school board had returned the budget and had refused to acknowledge the cuts imposed by the city. The city council also charged that the school board had allowed the superintendent to publicize line item cuts that it did not agree with. City council members felt that it had been made clear that budget cuts were not to be made in areas where the students were going to suffer.<sup>444</sup>

In a surprise move at a meeting on May 2, 1984, city council voted 5-1 to reappoint Grant Jones to the school board position from which he had resigned.<sup>445</sup> Jones accepted the reappointment, saying that he had resigned only because he thought council wished him to do so. Jones also said that he would accept the position of board chair, if he was asked to do so. Some felt that this move by council was an attempt to “get even” with the school board due to the differences over the budget.<sup>446</sup>

On May 3, 1984, the school board again met in an effort to adopt a budget. Still unable to cut the \$320,000 out of the budget as requested by council, the board came up with \$134,000 in budget cuts. The school board decided to hold a special meeting on Saturday, May 5, 1984, so that all board members could see the new budget before it was sent back to city council.<sup>447</sup>

At the meeting on May 5, the board discussed the city council, how school board members voted, and superintendent Smith. Much of the discussion concerning Smith involved his salary. Several board members did not want to give him a raise, but instead wanted to put him on a merit

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<sup>442</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 April 1984, p. 1; Betty Curran, “10% Teacher Pay Hike Safeguarded,” *Journal Messenger*, 14 April 1984, p. 1.

<sup>443</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 April 1984; Julie Boyd, “Uncut Budget Returned To Council,” *Journal Messenger*, 26 April 1984, p. 1.

<sup>444</sup>Lana Conner, interview, p. 3; Betty Curran, “Manassas Park Council Cancels Saturday Meeting,” *Journal Messenger*, 27 April 1984, p. 1.

<sup>445</sup>City Council Minutes, City of Manassas Park, 2 May 1984, p. 2; Julie Boyd, “Grant Jones Reappointed,” *Journal Messenger*, 3 May 1984, p. 1.

<sup>446</sup>Ibid.

<sup>447</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 3 May 1984, p. 5.



pay system for acceptable performance.<sup>448</sup> Mayor Hite attended the meeting and indicated that city council would agree to cutting \$134,000 from the budget, rather than the \$320,000 originally suggested. The school board, after Hite promised cuts in the budget of \$134,000, voted 3-2 to adopt the budget and send it back to city council.<sup>449</sup>

### **More Debate over Independence Elementary**

In November, 1983, the school board had voted to reopen Independence Elementary in September, 1984. By June, 1984, the school board had decided against reopening Independence, voting instead to return Independence to the city as surplus property. The board made known its intent to declare the school as surplus in a letter to city council dated April 25, 1984.<sup>450</sup> At the time when the school board met on June 20, 1984, city council had not responded to the letter. As a result, the school board voted to declare Independence Elementary School as surplus property and returned it to the city.<sup>451</sup> The school board also passed a resolution to maintain Conner Elementary School as a fully operating elementary school for 1984-85 and for each subsequent year that it was needed.<sup>452</sup>

The school administration proposed a realignment of the schools and the school board set a public hearing to receive input. The administration had recommended, and the school board concurred, that grades kindergarten through two attend Manassas Park Elementary, while grades three through six would attend Conner Elementary.

At the public hearing, Assistant Superintendent Crayton Buck presented the administration's plan for the realignment of grades at Conner Elementary and Manassas Park Elementary. School board chair Alma Dunn asked city manager Jerry Davis to present "Plan B" to the audience.<sup>453</sup> Davis came prepared, walking to the front of the room carrying a large piece

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<sup>448</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 5 May 1984, p. 2. Alma Dunn and Grant Jones wanted to cut the superintendent's salary to \$34,000 and hold \$6,000 in reserve. The reserve would be paid in quarterly installments if Smith's performance was acceptable. The rest of the board disagreed, however, and set Smith's salary at \$40,529, which was in line with the raise that the teachers were receiving.

<sup>449</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>450</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 20 June 1984, p. 1.

<sup>451</sup>Ibid, p. 3. Once the property was officially returned to the city, the balance of the loan became immediately due. One board member, Alma Dunn, expressed her fear that the city would default on the loan and voted against returning the property to the city.

<sup>452</sup>Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>453</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 18 July 1984, p. 2; Karen Fallen Rhodes, "Council Presents School Housing Plan," *Journal Messenger*, 19 July 1984, p. 1.

of cardboard, on which a map of Independence Elementary was drawn. City council did not want the title to Independence, because they would have to pay the balance of the loan. Therefore, they devised a plan whereby the school board would retain title to the school and lease it back to council, which would be responsible for maintenance. Council proposed using one “wing” of the building for kindergarten and pre-school classes, while the rest of the building would house school board offices, social services, and parks and recreation. Under the city’s plan, Jimmy Stuart would serve as principal for both Manassas Park Elementary and Independence Elementary.

At the regular school board meeting on July 24, 1984, the school board voted 3-1 to adopt “Plan B” for student housing.<sup>454</sup> The school board would retain title and lease parts of the building to the city. Parents were concerned about reopening the building, since it had recently been condemned by the city.

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<sup>454</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 July 1984, p. 1. Gene Murphy voted “Present.”

## Chapter 5

1984 - 1995

### The 1984-85 School Year Begins

Shortly after school began in September, 1984, Gary Smith announced that he did not wish to be reappointed as Superintendent of Manassas Park City Schools. Smith said that he would allow his contract to expire on June 30, 1985. He gave no specific reason for his decision, but said:

To give you my early notice so you can prepare for an efficient selection process, I respectfully inform you, herewith, that I will not be a candidate for reappointment.<sup>455</sup>

By the beginning of October, 1984, the school division was ready to move its offices to Independence School. On October 4, 1984, the moving trucks were loaded and ready to depart for Independence. Just before the trucks left, a phone call came into the office for the superintendent. Smith came downstairs and took the phone, then sat down on the floor.<sup>456</sup> He had been notified that floor joists at Independence had cracked, and the floor had sagged under the weight of a group of sixty kindergartners who were touring the facility.<sup>457</sup> Fortunately, no students were injured, but parents again voiced concerns that the renovated building was poorly constructed.

School board plans to relocate the central offices were put on hold. City inspectors found that only seventy-five floor joists were in place, where almost three hundred were needed.<sup>458</sup> The school board had to place all the office furniture in storage while repairs were made. Employees in the central office were forced to “work out of boxes” until the building was ready.<sup>459</sup>

At the school board meeting on October 4, 1984, board member Donna Lane criticized the city and the school administration for the problems at Independence. She pointed out that the city had issued a temporary occupancy permit for Independence Elementary, which expired September 20, 1984. The permit indicated that many improvements were needed, including the

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<sup>455</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 11 September 1984, p. 3; “Smith Resigns Post,” *Journal Messenger*, 15 September 1984, p. 1.

<sup>456</sup>Lois Merritt, interview, p. 3. Because all of the furniture had been loaded on moving vans, the only place Smith could sit was on the floor.

<sup>457</sup> School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 4 October 1984, p. 4; Suzy Miller, “Floor Cracks a ‘Fluke’ Say City Officials,” *Journal Messenger*, 4 October 1984, p. 1.

<sup>458</sup>Lois Merritt, interview, p. 2; Miller, “Floor Cracks a ‘Fluke’ Say City Officials,” p. 1.

<sup>459</sup>Lois Merritt, interview, p. 2.

repair of floor joists. The city had issued a second temporary permit after the first expired, yet no improvements had been made.<sup>460</sup> Lane said:

What upsets me is that the Chairman and Clerk and all of us thought that this was taken care of. It wasn't taken care of. And, really, it is still not taken care of. There is a lot of work that has to be done down there. And I just wanted to bring it to the parents; I hope the parents are concerned. It concerns me.<sup>461</sup>

After making her remarks, Lane tendered her resignation as a school board member.

Because of the deception and things that have happened in the past, I tender my resignation on the school board tonight. At this time it's just been too many things that have either not been told us or it's been hidden. I'm sorry that this had to come about, but with the things that have happened lately, I believe that we cannot be held responsible for the children that are in those buildings now. I think the parents and the press and everyone should know what has transpired.<sup>462</sup>

### **Policy Revisions and Personnel Moves**

City manager Jerry Davis blamed the problems of the school board on a lack of set policies and procedures. The policy manual the school division then used had been developed by parents, school principals, representatives from the education association, school board members and central office administration. Both the city council and the school board agreed that the manual should be revised by a professional organization with extensive experience in writing policy.<sup>463</sup> City council decided to appropriate funds to hire consultants to develop a policy manual for the schools.<sup>464</sup>

In a joint work session on November 27, 1984, city manager Jerry Davis introduced two consulting firms to the joint body. The first firm to address city council and the school board was Robinson, Farmer and Cox Associates.<sup>465</sup> They were a certified public accounting firm that

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<sup>460</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 4 October 1984, p. 4.

<sup>461</sup>Ibid.

<sup>462</sup>Ibid.

<sup>463</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 18 October 1984, p. 2.

<sup>464</sup>Ibid.

<sup>465</sup>David Wren, "Manassas Park Reviews Policies," *Journal Messenger*, 27 November 1984, p. 1; School Board Minutes, Special School Board Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 27 October 1984, p. 1.

could give expert advice on financial management, including recommendations on fiscal policies. They stated that policies dealing with instruction, personnel and community relations should be developed by the superintendent and the school board.

The second group to address the joint body was from the Department of Public Affairs at George Mason University.<sup>466</sup> They proposed a four stage operation. Step one would be fact-finding, problem diagnosis and priority setting. Step two would be to review current policies and procedures. Step three would be an implementation phase. Step four would be a follow-up and evaluation of the implementation. George Mason University estimated that it would take nine months to conduct the study, and that the cost would be \$15,000.

Since neither firm had experience with school policy, the school board looked elsewhere. Board members were anxious to implement a new policy manual before the 1985-86 school year. Upon recommendation by the school administration, the school board decided to ask with the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) to review the policy manual.

Upon review of the existing policy manual, the VSBA discovered many inconsistencies with Virginia Law. The VSBA felt that extensive review was necessary to bring the policy manual into compliance, but needed school board direction before proceeding.<sup>467</sup> The school board voted unanimously to ask the Virginia School Boards Association to complete the review of the policy manual.

The VSBA submitted a proposal for a complete review of the policy manual on June 6, 1985. The school board decided to accept the proposal and signed a contract with the Virginia School Boards Association for \$5,500.<sup>468</sup>

In January, 1985, the unexpected resignation of two top administrators caused the school board to “reshuffle” personnel.<sup>469</sup> Crayton Buck, the assistant superintendent for instruction, tendered his resignation, effective January 30. Cathe Hockenberry, the school division’s director of special education, offered her resignation, effective June 30. No reason was given for either resignation.

The board moved quickly to fill Buck’s position. Jimmy Stuart was named to become the assistant superintendent for instruction, effective January 9, 1985. His position as elementary principal was filled by Bob Horn, the high school assistant principal. The board advertised the vacant assistant principal’s position. The school board also decided to contact the Virginia Department of Education to get an extension of time in which to appoint a new superintendent.

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<sup>466</sup>Wren, “Manassas Park Reviews Policies,” p. 2; School Board Minutes, 27 October 1984, p. 1.

<sup>467</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 7 February 1985, p. 2.

<sup>468</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 6 June 1985, p. 1. The policy manual was ready for a first reading by the school board on October 1, 1985. It was formally adopted by the school board at the regular meeting on October 17, 1985.

<sup>469</sup> School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 8 January 1985, p. 3; David Wren, “City School Personnel Reshuffled,” *Journal Messenger*, 9 January 1985, p. 1.

In February, 1985, the school board selected a replacement for Gary Smith. At a special school board meeting on February 27, 1985, board member Allen Newcomb moved that the school board appoint Jimmy Stuart as superintendent effective July 1, 1985.<sup>470</sup>

The school board held another special meeting on March 13, 1985. After a two hour executive session, the board accepted the early resignation of superintendent Gary Smith, effective March 31, 1985. Jimmy Stuart was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Smith. Stuart would assume the duties of superintendent on April 1, 1985.<sup>471</sup>

### **Superintendent Stuart's First Budget**

Jimmy Stuart's first budget proposal included a ten percent salary increase for all employees. The total budget exceeded five million dollars, an amount which city manager Jerry Davis said was too inflated.<sup>472</sup> Davis immediately proposed a \$260,000 cut in the school budget. Davis claimed that to fully fund the budget, city taxes would have to be raised by nineteen cents. In order to avoid a tax increase, Davis proposed a six percent salary increase instead of the ten percent proposed by Stuart.

City council ordered the school board to cut the budget by \$242,000. The school board and teachers objected, saying a six percent salary increase would not bring them in line with their neighbors' salaries. Superintendent Stuart vowed not to cut the salary increase. Council member and vice mayor Donald Tickner infuriated the teachers when he questioned their abilities and skills as professional educators.

The teachers keep threatening that they'll move out of the city's school system and get jobs in other jurisdictions. Well, I don't think our teachers could go to a school system like Fairfax County's. I'm not sure they have the qualifications. Maybe they can't get any

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<sup>470</sup> School Board Minutes, Special School Board Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 27 February 1985, p. 1; David Wren, "Stuart Named Superintendent," *Journal Messenger*, 28 February 1985, p. 1.

<sup>471</sup> School Board Minutes, Special School Board Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 13 March 1985, p. 1. Stuart would bring Jim Moyers, former high school principal, back into the system as Director of Support Services. Moyers had worked in the construction industry since his resignation as principal of Manassas Park High School.

<sup>472</sup> School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 3 April 1985, p. 1; David Wren, "Teachers Fight For Higher Pay," *Journal Messenger*, 4 April 1985, p. 1. The \$5.1 million budget asked for \$1.8 million in city money. The tax rate in Manassas Park was \$1.80, compared to \$1.18 in Manassas and \$1.45 in Prince William County. Before accepting the position as superintendent, Jimmy Stuart met with Jerry Davis to discuss school finance. Davis pledged his support if Stuart would accept the position.

farther than Manassas Park.<sup>473</sup>

In order to make the necessary budget cuts, Stuart proposed a realignment plan for the elementary schools.<sup>474</sup> Stuart said that the plan would save money, since four elementary teaching positions could be cut. The new configuration would place grades one through three at Manassas Park Elementary School and grades four through six at Conner Elementary School. The school board held a public hearing on the realignment on May 16, 1985.<sup>475</sup> The board heard only minimal opposition to the plan, so they voted in favor of the realignment. The school board was able to make the \$242,000 in cuts, while still maintaining an eight percent salary increase.

### **An Annexation Agreement Draws Near**

Manassas Park and Prince William County had been negotiating for four years, beginning in 1981, for Manassas Park to annex seven hundred acres of land that it had purchased when Roger Costello was mayor. A committee of city council members and county board of supervisors met to discuss the proposed annexation. Prince William County was one of ten counties in Virginia that were immune to annexation. Any annexation attempt required a mutual consent agreement between the city and the county.<sup>476</sup> Before Prince William agreed to the annexation, Manassas Park had to make concessions.

Prince William County wanted Manassas Park to construct two public parks. One was to be located on 270 of the 700 acres of annexed land and would be designated Union Mill Park. The other was on 106 acres of land that would remain in Prince William County and would be known as Signal Hill Park. Manassas Park would also have to promise to make improvements on existing roads, to participate financially in support of the Senior Citizen's Center, and to allow the county to buy sewer capacity. The city and county would be in and out of court over the next few years until a final agreement could be reached.

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<sup>473</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 4; David Wren, "City Council Orders School Cuts," *Journal Messenger*, 5 April 1985, p. 1.

<sup>474</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 4; David Wren, "Realignment Plan Urged For Schools," *Journal Messenger*, 19 April 1985, p. 1. This was the same plan that Stuart had proposed to Gary Smith, when Smith was superintendent of schools.

<sup>475</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 May 1985, p. 2; Paul Morales, "Board Seeks Comments on School Realignment," *Journal Messenger*, 15 May 1985, p. 1.

<sup>476</sup>John Foote, interviewed by author, interview 18, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 7 June 1998, p. 2; Paul Morales, "Manassas Park, County Close to Agreement," *Journal Messenger*, 25 June 1985, p. 1.

## Changes on the School Board

Even though he had sought another term on the school board, Gene Murphy was not reappointed by the city council. Instead, council chose Martin Cogan. The board elected Allen Newcomb as its chair for the 1985-86 school year.<sup>477</sup>

Early in the new year, the school board members disagreed on academic expectations for athletes. Dunn and Jones proposed that athletes be required to maintain a “C” average in all courses in order to be allowed to participate. The remaining members of the school board felt that the Virginia High School League (VHSL) regulations were sufficient. Board members Newcomb, Cogan and Mullins felt that the school board expectations should not exceed those set by the VHSL.<sup>478</sup> At the school board meeting on August 1, 1985, board member Cogan moved that the “C Average Program” proposed by Dunn and Jones be rescinded in its entirety for a period of one year, to enable the new administration time to review the program.<sup>479</sup> Alma Dunn opposed the motion saying: “This board shows little concern with respect to the curriculum and educational process of these students.”<sup>480</sup>

Dunn and Jones both resigned, effective September 1, as school board members, protesting the board’s position on the “C” average. Jones’ resignation marked the second time that he had stepped down as a board member.<sup>481</sup> He said that he did not agree with the direction of the board on the “C” average issue. He criticized the school board for providing an “expensive baby-sitting service.” Dunn simply said that she was protesting the way the school board handled the “C” average issue.

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<sup>477</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 2 July 1985, p. 1; Paul Morales, “Board Appoints New Chairman,” *Journal Messenger*, 3 July 1985, p. 1. Grant Jones nominated Alma Dunn for the chairmanship, but Dunn declined the nomination.

<sup>478</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 27 November 1985, p. 3; In November, 1984, the school board passed requirements that all students wishing to participate in extra-curricular activities must maintain a “C” average. The Virginia High School League required that a student maintain a “D” average and that they pass four of six subjects.

<sup>479</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 August 1985, p. 2.

<sup>480</sup>Ibid, p.3.

<sup>481</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 August 1985; Paul Morales, “Board Member Resigns Again,” *Journal Messenger*, 9 August 1985, p. 1. Jones missed twenty of fifty-two school board meetings during his tenure. Rocky Hopchas, “Manassas Lawyer Charged,” *Journal Messenger*, 2 June 1987, p. 1. Jones’ life became fraught with personal difficulty. He later was charged with two counts of obstruction of justice for attempting to intimidate a witness and for procuring a female to make an obscene display of her person. The charges were thrown out of court, but Jones claimed that because his reputation was damaged, he could no longer practice law and would have to leave the area, which he did.



City council, once again, was faced with appointing school board members. It would take almost two months to appoint the first new board member. Five members of the community expressed interest in the two vacant board positions. Former board member Kenneth Dellinger and citizens David Murphy, Edward Brown, Kenneth Doll and Robert Anderson all applied for the posts. Dellinger was the first appointee.<sup>482</sup> Council could not agree on a second appointee, so they again had to go through the entire process of interviewing candidates and holding public hearings.<sup>483</sup>

### **A Land Exchange**

Manassas Park High School was located on a fifty-nine acre tract of land adjacent to the new Conner Industrial Center. An 8.7 acre parcel of the high school property was very valuable to the city as commercial property. City council proposed exchanging the 8.7 acres of valuable property for 8.7 acres of less valuable, wooded and severely sloped land. The city wanted the exchange, since the piece of property they held was too sloped to be developed. Former board member Alma Dunn requested that the school board carefully consider the city's request. Dunn pointed out that the land was not of equal value. She said that the land should be appraised and that the city should make up the difference in land value.<sup>484</sup> Dunn cited the need for a multi-purpose room and cafeteria at the high school, as well as the replacement of leaky roofs as possible concessions.

Superintendent Stuart addressed the board:

You folks live in the community and you know what the financial situation is; you know what the city is trying to do in terms of the industrial development. You also know we have problems financially in terms of a building program for next year.<sup>485</sup>

Stuart went on to explain that in discussions with the city, there had been reference to a new multi-purpose room, two new buses, plus the possibility of a bond referendum in the spring. Stuart said that it was up to the school board whether or not to have the land appraised and ask the city to pay the difference, or to make the exchange and hope the city's word was good on

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<sup>482</sup> City Council Minutes, Manassas Park City Council, 15 October 1985, p. 3; Paul Morales, "Manassas Park Council Makes One Appointment," *Journal Messenger*, 16 October 1985, p. 1. Dellinger was appointed on a 5-1 vote. Council member Doug Parks was the lone dissenting vote.

<sup>483</sup>Ibid. Council had to choose from the same four candidates that it previously had dismissed, as no new candidates came forward. Robert Anderson was finally chosen for the last position on the school board on December 18, 1985.

<sup>484</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 17 October 1985, p. 1.

<sup>485</sup>Ibid, p. 2.

supporting the school division.

The school board agreed to trade the land to the city without first having it appraised. Board members said that they felt the land exchange was in the best interests of the city and the schools.

### **The Quest for Annexation Continues**

Negotiations with the county were strained. In December, 1985, talks between the county and city were at an impasse, and appeared ready to disintegrate. By January, 1986, the talks had ended. Council member Douglas Parks issued a public statement attacking the Brentsville District supervisor, without actually mentioning his name. Joseph Reading, the Brentsville District supervisor, opposed the annexation because of the poor roads, which he said the city was not interested in upgrading. Reading also claimed that residents in the area were not supportive of the annexation.

Reading declared: "There will be no more negotiations."<sup>486</sup> Manassas Park city council asked local legislators Harry Parrish and Charles Cogan to sponsor legislation to resolve the annexation dispute. No such legislation was ever introduced.

### **The School Board Passes a New Budget**

In February, 1986, superintendent Jimmy Stuart presented a \$5.3 million budget. This budget was \$450,000 higher than the previous budget, even though the school division continued to experience declining enrollment.<sup>487</sup> Included in the budget were funds for an eleven percent salary increase for all employees.

Jerry Davis, the city manager, presented his budget in March. He proposed a five million dollar budget for the school board, which included a five percent cost of living increase. Davis was critical of the school division, saying that the schools should reduce the number of staff employed, because of the loss of five hundred students from the previous year. As a result, the city council decided to cut \$488,000 from the school budget.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>486</sup>John Foote, interview, p. 1; Kyra Scarton, "City Continues Boundary Fight," *Journal Messenger*, 18 January 1986, p. 1. Manassas Park asked the Virginia Commission on Local Governments to appoint a mediator to resolve the situation. John Foote, the county attorney, rejected the request for mediated negotiation, stating that the county was immune from any annexation lawsuit.

<sup>487</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 20 February 1986, p. 2; Cynthia Donehoo, "City School Board Passes New Budget," *Journal Messenger*, 21 February 1986, p. 1. The 1985-86 budget was based on 1,500 students while the 1986-87 budget was built on 1,400 students.

<sup>488</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3; Cynthia Donehoo, "Schools Face Budget Cuts," *Journal Messenger*, 21 March 1986, p. 1.

The school division made drastic cuts to bring the budget in line with council's request. The school board decided to eliminate the middle school by making the high school a 7-12 school, cut salary increases from eleven percent to seven percent, and to eliminate all athletics.<sup>489</sup>

The severity of the budget cuts caused outrage in the community. On March 24, 1986, after rumors of a student "walk-out" circulated around the high school, principal Karl Leap held a meeting with the student body, warning them not to leave school property. In spite of Leap's warnings, over two hundred high school students left school in protest of the cuts by city council. In their haste to leave school, three cars driven by students were involved in an accident on Euclid Avenue. Manassas Park Police were asked to respond to the disturbance.

Sixty of the students proceeded to city hall, where they carried signs and marched in front of the city's offices to protest the budget cuts.<sup>490</sup> Principal Leap visited the students' picket line and pleaded with them to return to school. The students blamed Jerry Davis for the loss of their athletic programs and wanted him to speak with them. Davis would not come out of the city offices. When he did leave, he left through a rear entrance to the building. When students saw Davis leaving in his car, they shouted at him. The students claimed that, as Davis drove by, he made an obscene gesture toward them.<sup>491</sup>

That same night, the school board and city council held a joint work session on the budget. The meeting was to be held in the high school library; but when over one thousand students, teachers and parents showed up, the meeting was moved into the gymnasium. The meeting turned into a citizen forum, as forty people spoke out against the city council and, specifically, against Davis. By the time the meeting finally began, the rumor of Davis' obscene gesture had spread throughout the crowd. The focus of the meeting was on Davis, and not on the cuts to the budget.<sup>492</sup>

Parents and students demanded an apology from Davis. Davis denied making an obscene gesture, and said that students had seen him lighting his pipe, which they misinterpreted as an obscene gesture.<sup>493</sup> Mayor Robert Maitland tried to restore order, but was heckled by the crowd.

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<sup>489</sup>Ibid. By eliminating the middle school, the board projected saving money from administrative and secretarial positions that would no longer be needed.

<sup>490</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 2; Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 5; Cynthia Donehoo, "Students Picket City Hall Offices," *Journal Messenger*, 25 March 1986, p. 1. The students obtained a two day permit to picket from the city offices.

<sup>491</sup>Barbara Dellinger, interview, p. 4; Mary Sue Polk, interview, p. 3; Lois Merritt, interview, p. 2.

<sup>492</sup>Lois Merritt, interview, p. 2; William Money, interview, p. 2.

<sup>493</sup>Ibid.

Maitland expressed his frustration and anger, as he shouted: “If you can’t listen, leave!”<sup>494</sup> Maitland later told the crowd that he expected that the city council would be able to find more money for the schools.

On March 26, 1986, the city council finalized the budget. Council member Doug Parks attempted to build a school board budget on his own, which he presented to the city council. Parks’ budget eliminated a payroll clerk, one assistant superintendent, an assistant principal, and a maintenance supervisor. Parks also proposed a six percent salary increase for every school employee except teachers, who would receive a ten percent increase under his plan. Parks also tried to eliminate school psychologists and therapists, positions required by the state.

Council did not adopt the budget by Parks, but rather approved a \$4,913,979 school budget. This was still four hundred thousand dollars less than what the schools had requested. The school board did not eliminate athletics. Forty of the students who had walked-out in protest were suspended, and city manager Jerry Davis got an eighteen percent salary increase.<sup>495</sup>

### **A New Strategy for Annexation**

Manassas Park thought they had solved the annexation problem when they entered into a contract with Signal Hill Developer for the sale of the 404 acres in dispute with Prince William County. A condition of the sale was for the developer to petition the court for annexation, to which Prince William was not immune. County attorney John Foote asked the court for a permanent injunction to prevent the annexation of the 404 acres of land. The court granted a temporary injunction. On March 27, 1987 Prince William Circuit Court Judge Frank Hoss issued an opinion in favor of Prince William County. Hoss ruled that the county had a right to question the contract between Manassas Park and the Signal Hill Corporation, citing the 1982 circuit court order which declared Prince William County immune from any city initiated annexation.<sup>496</sup>

### **Cold Food Causes Controversy**

A letter written by a middle school student to the United States Secretary of Education, William Bennett, caused quite a stir in Manassas Park. The student, as part of a class assignment in English, wrote the letter to Bennett complaining about cold hamburgers in the cafeteria. As a result, Bennett referred the letter to the Virginia State Superintendent for Public Instruction, S. Jack Davis, who authorized an audit of the cafeteria in Manassas Park.

The teacher, Leigh Hauter, was reprimanded by the school board for failure to teach

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<sup>494</sup>Lois Merritt, interview, p. 4; Cynthia Donehoo, “Manassas Park Residents Protest Budget Cuts,” *Journal Messenger*, 25 March 1986, p. 1.

<sup>495</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3; Cynthia Donehoo, “Council Proposes New School Budget,” *Journal Messenger*, 26 March 1986, p. 1.

<sup>496</sup>John Foote, interview, p. 2; Lisa Gilley, “Judge Rules Against City,” *Journal Messenger*, 28 March 1987, p. 1.

students about the proper chain of command. A letter of reprimand, written by assistant superintendent James Moyers, was placed in his personnel file.<sup>497</sup> The letter said: “The crucial issue here seems to be that your lesson objectives were not in agreement with the general educational philosophy of the school system.”<sup>498</sup> The administration and school board were concerned that the letter was full of spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors, but was sent anyway.

The parents of the student were disturbed that their daughter’s name had been released to the media. They were also concerned that her class had been identified as a lower level class of students. Even so, the community was united in their support of Hauter.

As a part of the grievance procedure, Hauter asked for a public hearing on the matter. He wanted the letter written by Moyers to be removed from his file. Teachers spoke on his behalf, criticizing the school board for allowing the letter from Moyers to be placed in the personnel file. During the hearing, Hauter explained that the purpose of the assignment was to teach students the value of writing and how to write a business letter. He did not tell the students what they should write about, nor did he know what they were writing about. Hauter wanted the students to send the letters, hoping for a response. The letters were sealed and mailed without Hauter correcting them. Even with a show of support from the community, Hauter’s grievance was denied by the school board.<sup>499</sup>

### **A High School Brawl**

In November, 1987, three male high school students were charged with two counts of assault and battery after a fight at Manassas Park High School.<sup>500</sup> Between twenty and twenty-five students were involved in the altercation. During the fight, which sent six students to the hospital, one teacher was assaulted.

The fight began during lunch, when one student grabbed at another student’s girlfriend. The two young men squared off, but the confrontation was quickly broken-up by several teachers

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<sup>497</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3; Michael Cooney, “Student Letter Causes Flap,” *Journal Messenger*, 5 June 1987, p. 1.

<sup>498</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 4 June 1987, p. 3; Charles Davenport, “Letter Controversy Continues in City,” *Journal Messenger*, 8 June 1987, p. 1.

<sup>499</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 4; Margo Turner, “Teacher Clashes With Board Again,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 November 1987, p. 1. Hauter filed a second grievance with the school board after he was not chosen to teach summer school at the middle school. He claimed that he was not hired because he had filed the grievance over the student letter. The board also denied his second grievance.

<sup>500</sup>William Money, interview, p. 2; David Steinberg, “3 Arrested in MPHS Affray,” *Journal Messenger*, 21 November 1987, p. 1.

who were nearby.<sup>501</sup> The students were taken to the principal. The principal met with the two students, had them shake hands and return to the lunch room. On the way to the lunch room, they exchanged words. Instead of returning to the cafeteria, the two went to the parking lot, where the fight broke out. The fight moved into the cafeteria, where more students became involved. Because school administrators were unable to bring the students under control, the police and rescue squads in Manassas Park were called to the scene. With the help of the police, the fight ended, and order was restored.<sup>502</sup>

The school board took immediate action. Less than a week after the fight at the high school, six students were suspended and four of the six were recommended for expulsion. Of the four recommended for expulsion, three were boys and one a girl. On December 10, 1987, after a two hour executive session, the school board voted unanimously to expel the four students.<sup>503</sup>

### **Annexation Talks Resume**

In February, 1988, the city and county appeared ready to resume talks about the possible annexation. The discussions were to be “informal,” but were still necessary since the stop order obtained by the county would expire in April, 1988.<sup>504</sup> The county was concerned that its legal expenses would exceed one million dollars.

By March, with the expiration of the stop order fast approaching, talks between Prince William County and Manassas Park accelerated. Manassas Park had to consider a number of concessions before Prince William would consent to any annexation agreement. Included in the concessions were: an annexation ban placed on Manassas Park, the establishment of a park site, upgrading roads, and Manassas Park would be required to sell one million gallons of sewage capacity per day to the Prince William County Service Authority.<sup>505</sup>

In May, the two governing bodies appeared to have reached an agreement. The county board of supervisors revealed an eight-page document, which outlined the conditions to which the city and county must adhere. Under the terms of the agreement, Manassas Park promised not to annex any property in Prince William County for twenty-five years. Manassas Park also agreed to improve Blooms Road, develop Signal Hill Park, sell sewage capacity to Prince William County,

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<sup>501</sup>Shirley Bazdar, interviewed by author, interview 22, transcript, Manassas, Va., 17 June 1998, p. 2; Rob Ewing, interviewed by author, interview 27, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 26 June 1998, p. 2.

<sup>502</sup>Ibid.

<sup>503</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 10 December 1987, p. 2.

<sup>504</sup>John Foote, interview, p. 1; Edward T. Hearn, “Annexation Ban Tops List in PW, Park Bargaining,” *Journal Messenger*, 17 March 1988, p. 1.

<sup>505</sup>John Foote, interview, p. 1; Hearn, “Annexation Ban Tops List in PW, Park Bargaining,” p. 1.

and to pay the county \$15,500 for dismissal of the county initiated lawsuit.<sup>506</sup> Following a June 7 public hearing, at which no opposition to the pact was heard, the agreement was finalized.<sup>507</sup> City officials predicted that once the property was developed, the population of the city would double. School officials also predicted that the school population would double, which would create a problem for student housing. The school division was about to experience rapid growth, and they did not have the facilities to handle the new student population.

### **School Expansion Urged**

School officials moved quickly to plan for the new student growth. Concerned that the buildings were approaching the end of their life expectancy, and not knowing how quickly the growth would occur, the school administration called upon the state department of education for advice.<sup>508</sup>

A five member committee of administrators from different divisions in Virginia and Virginia Department of Education officials toured the buildings in June to survey building needs in light of the annexation agreement. The committee recommended that the city's dependence upon obsolete and substandard facilities be eliminated through the renovation of existing schools, the construction of a new elementary school, and the construction of a new high school. Under the committee's plan, Manassas Park Elementary would be renovated; a new elementary school would be built on property in the annexed area replacing both Independence Annex and Conner Elementary; the old high school would be renovated and used for a middle school; and a new high school would be built on the same site.<sup>509</sup>

Superintendent Stuart said that, while converting Manassas Park High School into a middle school and building a new high school on the same site was "food for thought," he preferred the recommendation his staff had made. Stuart proposed reopening Independence Annex as an elementary school to house students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Manassas Park Elementary and Conner Elementary would also be K-5 schools. Instead of building a new high school, Stuart proposed building a new middle school and adding a cafeteria and multi-purpose room to the existing high school.<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>506</sup>John Foote, interview, p. 1; Paul Dinucci, "Manassas Park-County Land Feud Ends in Pact," *Journal Messenger*, 18 May 1988, p. 1.

<sup>507</sup>Ibid.

<sup>508</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 3; Pat Burns, "Panel Urges MP School Expansion," *Journal Messenger*, 8 August 1988, p. 1.

<sup>509</sup>Ibid.

<sup>510</sup>Ibid. The multi-purpose room was built during the 1989-90 school year, after Stuart left the school division. Construction of a new high school began on the same site in July, 1997.

## Council Chastises the School Board for Low Test Scores

In October, 1988, city council called a special meeting to discuss Manassas Park's low scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). The city council had expressed its concern over the low test scores at its regular meeting in October, and decided a joint meeting was needed to discuss student achievement.<sup>511</sup> School board chairperson Flo Mullins said: "We are on the firing line."<sup>512</sup>

Other school board members were concerned with the short notice council had given prior to the meeting. The administration had only three working days to prepare for the meeting. Principals were given two days to submit reports to the Director of Instruction, Dellas Chastain, and he was charged with assembling all the information for the board. City manager Jerry Davis had delivered a letter to the board, asking for a "plan of action" for improving test scores to be submitted to council.<sup>513</sup> School board members were angry that council should make such demands on short notice. Board member Dick Chichester did not like the way council was handling the situation. "It is presumptuous on the part of city council to order us around like this. Perhaps this might be conveyed to them in letter form or we might tell them Monday night. Unless someone has a magic wand, how can they remedy a condition like this?" said Chichester.<sup>514</sup>

The meeting was held in city council chambers on Monday, October 24, 1988. Council members sat on the dais, while board members sat at a small table in front of council. All of the school principals and other school administrators sat in the audience.<sup>515</sup> City council announced that only school board members would be allowed to speak; no school administrative input would be allowed.

The meeting began with school board chair Flo Mullins making a presentation.<sup>516</sup> She explained that each school was developing a plan of action for the improvement of test scores. She gave reasons for the low test scores which included: administrative turnover; teacher

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<sup>511</sup>City Council Minutes, City of Manassas Park, 19 October 1988, p. 5; Margo Turner, "Officials To Parley On Low Test Scores," *Journal Messenger*, 19 October 1988, p. 1. Manassas Park scores on the ITBS were lower than other northern Virginia localities.

<sup>512</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 20 October 1988, p. 7.

<sup>513</sup>Ibid.

<sup>514</sup>Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>515</sup>School Board Minutes, Joint School Board/City Council Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 October 1988, p. 1; Ralph Moore, interviewed by author, interview 21, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 9 June 1998, p. 1.

<sup>516</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 5 July 1988, p. 1. At the school board's reorganization meeting Mullins was selected by the school board to serve as the school board chairperson.



turnover; classroom management; inexperienced teachers, and unfamiliarity with the new tests. Mullins told council that in-service would be provided for teachers, software would be purchased, test preparation kits would be supplied, and the school division would continue to improve salaries so that Manassas Park would be more competitive.<sup>517</sup>

Following the presentation by Mullins, council members directed questions and remarks at the board. Council accused the school board members of not being concerned enough about poor test performance, and they demanded to know why scores in Manassas Park were as much as forty percentile points below Prince William County and Manassas on the Iowa Tests. For the second consecutive year, Manassas Park students had the lowest scores in northern Virginia; and for the second time in sixteen months, the school board was called before council to explain the results.<sup>518</sup>

School board member Dick Chichester expressed his concern over the short period of time the school board was given to prepare for the meeting. City council member Ernest Evans replied that the short notice was given on purpose to capture attention. He said: "We are going through this a second time. This thing is more serious that I think people in this room realize. Our school system is at stake."<sup>519</sup>

Council member Douglas Parks was the most critical and animated of the city council members. Often pounding his fist on the desk and speaking loudly, Parks called for the resignation of all five school board members if the scores did not improve.<sup>520</sup> He said:

You put our kids in a category that they will never get a better education. You will never look further than the front of your nose because you don't think you've got a problem, and you've got a problem. You have a problem and you don't realize it. Let me tell you how I feel and I won't say no more tonight. If these things don't change by next year I expect to see five names, letters of resignation on this table. You've got a problem, go straighten it out. I want to see improvement. Don't come back with the same dumb, pathetic excuses we heard last year.<sup>521</sup>

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<sup>517</sup>School Board Minutes, Joint School Board/City Council Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 October 1988, p. 2-3.

<sup>518</sup>Ibid, p. 3; Ralph Moore, interviewed by author, interview 21, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 9 June 1998, p. 1; Pat Burns, "Wren to School Board: Boost Test Scores or Resign," *Journal Messenger*, 25 October 1988, p. 1.

<sup>519</sup>School Board Minutes, Joint School Board/City Council Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 October 1988, p. 5.

<sup>520</sup>Ralph Moore, interview, p. 2; Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 4.

<sup>521</sup>School Board Minutes, Joint School Board/City Council Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 24 October 1988, p. 9.

By early November, the school board took action. At the regular school board meeting on November 3, 1988, the board approved a plan of action to improve test scores.<sup>522</sup> The plan called for the creation of a better learning atmosphere at the secondary level, for better cooperation between teachers and students, and for added remedial programs. In-service training, teaching students test-taking skills, the improvement of teachers' salary scales and more concentrated instructional time were also part of the plan of action.

### **Controversy Surrounds the Middle School Principal**

On July 7, 1988, William Minehart was appointed by the school board as the new principal of Manassas Park Intermediate School. Mr. Minehart assumed his duties on August 1, 1988.<sup>523</sup> By early in December, Minehart was at the center of a controversy.

To his supporters, Bill Minehart was a strict disciplinarian who was putting the "animal house" reputation of Manassas Park Intermediate to rest. To his detractors, he was an insensitive bully who did not care about children.<sup>524</sup> Teachers and parents went public with their complaints, accusing him of screaming at teachers in front of their classes, making sexist and racist jokes, ignoring the needs of special students, and treating parents rudely. A substitute teacher and a secretary entered the fray, claiming Minehart had fired them; and two teachers complained about letters that were placed in their files. Minehart explained his actions by saying he was only trying to run a safe and orderly building. Superintendent Stuart said that he was appalled that the teachers would air their complaints publicly, when there was a process in place to handle grievances.

The first complaints voiced by a parent at a school board meeting were on December 1, 1988. The parent accused Minehart of ignoring her complaints and calling her child a liar. Minehart was in the audience. He asked: "May I say something. I want to say for the record I did not call this lady's child a liar. I did not say that. That is not quite what happened."<sup>525</sup> Mr. Minehart and the parent engaged in a discussion about what had transpired. The school board chairman ended the discussion by saying, "This will be discussed further, but not at this time."<sup>526</sup> At 9:50 p.m., the school board went into executive session. The board returned to regular session

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<sup>522</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 3 November 1988, p. 6.

<sup>523</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 7 July 1988, p. 6. Minehart came to Manassas Park from another school division outside of Virginia. His original appointment was as assistant principal of Manassas Park High School, on June 29, 1988. Nine days later he was appointed as principal of Manassas Park Intermediate School.

<sup>524</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 3; Ralph Moore, interview, p. 3; Pat Burns, "Dispute Swirling Around Principal," *Journal Messenger*, 5 December 1988, p. 1.

<sup>525</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 1 December 1988, p. 2.

<sup>526</sup>*Ibid*, p. 3.

at 12:07 a.m., but made no mention of the controversy surrounding William Minehart.

School board chairperson Flo Mullins lashed out at her colleagues in the press. Mullins was frustrated that the school board took no action on Minehart after the two hour executive session on December 1. She stated that the school division was worse off than it had ever been, because a majority of the members of the school board gave no credence to what citizens and employees had to say. Mullins said, "I'm quite angry and disgusted. I think it's an embarrassment to this city."<sup>527</sup> She said that she had received complaints from at least four teachers and one parent. Superintendent Stuart claimed he had received no complaints about Minehart.

Again on December 15, 1988, during the school board meeting, complaints about Minehart were brought before the school board. Glen McLain, husband of middle school teacher Barbara McClain, accused Minehart of harassing his wife, saying that Minehart had said, "Either Barbara or I are going out on a stretcher and it isn't going to be me."<sup>528</sup> McLain said that because of the stress of the situation, his wife had been admitted to the hospital. He said that Minehart had "called his wife on the carpet" over disciplining a student. McLain was also upset that the superintendent, Jimmy Stuart, had visited his wife at the hospital to "discuss the problem."<sup>529</sup> Three other citizens spoke to the board, all complaining about the way Minehart ran the school.

After the citizens had made their comments, the school board went into executive session. The school board did not return to regular session until after 11:00 p.m., almost three hours after they began. While the board was in executive session, Minehart and McClain argued in the school board meeting room. The argument became so heated that Minehart invited McLain into

the parking lot to settle the matter. McClain did not respond to Minehart's invitation.<sup>530</sup> Upon returning to regular session, board member John McLaughlin moved that the school board re-assert its support of Bill Minehart as principal of Manassas Park Intermediate School, and encourage his continued interaction with the faculty. The motion carried by a 3-2 vote, with

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<sup>527</sup>Jimmy Stuart, interview, p. 4; Pat Burns, "Mullins Lashes Out At Board," *Journal Messenger*, 14 December 1988, p. 1.

<sup>528</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 December 1988, p. 2.

<sup>529</sup>Ibid, p. 1; Lois Steele, interview, p. 4. Mrs. Steele said that Stuart asked her to go to the hospital with him to visit Mrs. McClain. Mr. Stuart never discussed the problem. He was there out of concern for Mrs. McLain and only asked her how she felt.

<sup>530</sup>Ralph Moore, interview, p. 3. This event was also witnessed by the author. The school board held executive session in another room at the building. Several people, including Mr. Moore, remained in the board meeting room during the executive session and witnessed the exchange between Minehart and McLain.

Mary Arnold and Flo Mullins voting no.<sup>531</sup>

The Minehart case received so much publicity, that city council asked the school board to conduct a full investigation of the alleged incidents. At a December city council meeting, parents asked city council to request an investigation. Vice Mayor Doug Parks said, “There are enough issues, problems and tensions to warrant an investigation.”<sup>532</sup> Council member Bill Wren also supported the investigation saying, “We need immediate action.”<sup>533</sup>

### **Superintendent Stuart Refuses Reappointment**

On December 15, 1988, at the same meeting where the school board voted 3-2 in support of Minehart, the board considered Jimmy Stuart’s reappointment as superintendent of Manassas Park City Schools. The school board voted, again 3-2, to reappoint Stuart to a four-year term. The three men on the school board voted affirmatively, while both women voted against Stuart’s reappointment.<sup>534</sup> Board member Mary Arnold admitted to the press that her negative vote was influenced by the recent turmoil over William Minehart at Manassas Park Intermediate and Stuart’s support of Minehart. Two weeks later, Stuart refused the reappointment. He indicated publicly that he felt it was time to move on to something new.<sup>535</sup>

### **The Intermediate School Probe Begins**

Early in January, the school board voted unanimously to appoint an independent panel to investigate the allegations at Manassas Park Intermediate School. For the duration of the investigation, principal William Minehart was reassigned to the central office. Dellas Chastain, the school division’s director of instruction, was assigned the responsibilities of the intermediate school principal, as well as those of director of instruction. Ralph Moore, a guidance counselor at Manassas Park High School, was assigned to handle the day-to-day operation of the school, so

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<sup>531</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 December 1988, p. 2; Pat Burns, “Minehart Backed By Close 3-2 Vote,” *Journal Messenger*, 16 December 1988, p. 1.

<sup>532</sup>City Council Minutes, City of Manassas Park, 20 December 1988, p. 4; Margo Turner, “MP to Probe Principal Issue,” *Journal Messenger*, 21 December 1988, p. 1.

<sup>533</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>534</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 December 1988, p. 2; Pat Burns, “Stuart Rehired,” *Journal Messenger*, 16 December 1988, p. 1.

<sup>535</sup>Ralph Moore, interview, p. 2; Pat Burns, “Stuart to Vacate School Position,” *Journal Messenger*, 4 January 1989, p. 1. Stuart indicated to his administrative staff that he would not return unless he had the unanimous support of the school board. He felt that a 3-2 vote did not provide adequate support to run the school system.

that Chastain could be based at the central office.<sup>536</sup>

The controversy divided the teaching staff at Manassas Park Intermediate School. Those teachers who supported Minehart were ostracized by their colleagues.<sup>537</sup> Sam Kirk, a social studies teacher, resigned his position at Manassas Park Intermediate School, because of the harassment he received from his colleagues for supporting Minehart.<sup>538</sup>

Several months passed without an investigation. Other accusations surfaced at the intermediate school. A parent volunteer claimed to have been sexually harassed by Charles Rehfus, a guidance counselor in the school. She said that she had lodged her complaint with Minehart earlier in the year, but that nothing had been done. According to the volunteer, Minehart dismissed her complaint and barred her from entering the building.<sup>539</sup>

In March, both Minehart and Rehfus announced their resignations. Minehart's resignation was effective April 30, 1989. Rehfus' resignation was effective at the end of the contract period on June 20, 1989. The independent panel had never been chosen, due to legal questions by the school board. The legal issues were never revealed, but were only discussed by the school board in executive session.<sup>540</sup>

Rehfus decided to tell his side of the story. In March, he blasted board chair Flo Mullins through the press. Rehfus said:

Never at any time have my due process rights been considered. Never have I had a hearing. I have been condemned in the newspapers as guilty until proven innocent, not innocent until proven guilty as the Constitution and the Bill of Rights provide. Read my lips, Mrs. Mullins, the school board through the attorney found insufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations.<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>536</sup>Ibid, p. 1. The panel was never appointed. Several times, in the newspapers and in school board minutes, the school board members cited legal reasons for not appointing the independent panel. These legal issues were never revealed.

<sup>537</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>538</sup>Ibid; School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 19 January 1989, p. 1; Margo Turner, "Educator Resigns Over School Flap," *Journal Messenger*, 20 January 1989, p. 1. Donna Goins, who also taught at the intermediate school, requested a transfer to Manassas Park High School for the same reasons.

<sup>539</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 5 January 1989, p. 3; Pat Burns, "MP Intermediate School Probe Launched," *Journal Messenger*, 6 January 1989, p. 1.

<sup>540</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 2 March 1989, p. 9; Margo Turner, "Minehart, Rehfus Resign," *Journal Messenger*, 3 March 1989, p. 1.

<sup>541</sup>Shirley Bazdar, interview, p. 2; Margo Turner, "Rehfus: 'Read My Lips, Mrs. Mullins,'" *Journal Messenger*, 10 March 1989, p. 1.

Rehfus denied all charges of sexual harassment and said that the charges were trumped up to ruin him. He felt that he was a pawn, used to get at Minehart and Stuart.

The controversy had a further negative effect on the morale of the staff. Teachers began to criticize the schools, even suggesting once again that Manassas Park incorporate with Manassas or Prince William County. They said that many wanted to leave because of the low salaries and unprofessional treatment. The teachers would not reveal their names to the press for fear of reprisals.<sup>542</sup> Many felt that if they spoke out, they would not receive good job references.

### **Council Suggests a Needs Assessment**

In January, 1989, mayor Melanie Jackson urged the school board and school administration to contract with George Mason University's Center for Applied Research and Development (CARD) for a school division needs assessment. Hugh Sockett, the director of CARD, agreed to conduct the needs assessment. According to Sockett, collaborations between public school systems and higher education were highly regarded by the United States Department of Education. Sockett said, "I think it's important for Manassas Park to realize that we could bid for federal funds for a developmental program."<sup>543</sup>

City council offered to fund the study, and accepted a proposal for a needs assessment to be conducted by the Center for Applied Research and Development. CARD proposed a two-phase professional development project. Phase I would cost the city \$12,900. It would determine the scope of the professional development needs for the school division; define the central issues of curriculum policy; and obtain opinions from teachers, residents and officials in Manassas Park.<sup>544</sup> Phase I was to last four to five months and, upon completion, CARD would provide a report, along with a strategic plan, to the school board.<sup>545</sup> On February 16, 1989, the school board voted to accept the proposal by CARD to conduct the needs assessment.<sup>546</sup>

### **Jim Moyers Named to the Superintendency in Manassas Park**

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<sup>542</sup>Ralph Moore, interview, p. 3; Margo Turner, "Teacher: MP Schools Run in 'Mickey Mouse Fashion'," *Journal Messenger*, 13 March 1989, p. 1.

<sup>543</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 12 January 1989, p. 4; Pat Burns, "MP Seeks To Raise Scores," *Journal Messenger*, 13 January 1989, p. 1.

<sup>544</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 2 February 1989, p. 5; Margo Turner, "Park Probes School Needs," *Journal Messenger*, 8 February 1989, p. 1.

<sup>545</sup>Ibid. Several board members were concerned that the evaluation would disrupt operation of the schools. Flo Mullins felt that the study was a waste of money, and that the funds could be put to better use elsewhere.

<sup>546</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 February 1989, p. 4.

On February 9, 1989, assistant superintendent James Moyers accepted Manassas Park's superintendency after meeting with the school board in a lengthy executive session. Moyers had been offered the job on January 20, 1989, but had delayed his decision until he could speak with the school board.<sup>547</sup>

After Moyers accepted the position, board members Flo Mullins and Mary Arnold sharply criticized Jimmy Stuart. Early in March, they asked for Stuart's immediate resignation, claiming that a change in leadership would help reduce the animosity between the teachers and administrators in Manassas Park.<sup>548</sup> Mullins felt that there was poor management by the administration under Stuart, and asked that he take a leave of absence so that Moyers could assume the duties of superintendent earlier.<sup>549</sup>

As they had done in the past, city council expressed concern over school board squabbling. Council asked the school board not to argue in public about school issues. Board members Mullins and Arnold said that they would continue to state their opinions openly. Mullins said, "If I've got something to say, I will."<sup>550</sup>

### **The Annexation Dispute Ends**

In late April, after almost twelve years of dispute, Prince William County and Manassas Park settled their differences and decided on an annexation agreement. After a public hearing, on May 9, 1989, the two jurisdictions signed the agreement. Prince William agreed to allow Manassas Park to annex 404 acres that it had purchased under Mayor Costello's leadership, and Manassas Park agreed not to attempt to annex any more property for twenty-five years. The city also promised to make improvements to both Blooms Road and Quarry Road and to develop Signal Hill Park. Manassas Park was also expected to construct a commuter rail station and parking lot in Manassas Park, and to make drainage improvements in the Yorkshire area.<sup>551</sup>

### **A Bold Attack Needed to Upgrade the Schools**

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<sup>547</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 9 February 1989, p. 1; Rene Rodgers, "Moyers Tapped For School Post," *Journal Messenger*, 9 February 1989, p. 1.

<sup>548</sup>Jan Puckett, interviewed by author, interview 9, transcript, Manassas Park, Va., 19 June 1998, p. 1; Margo Turner, "MP Board Members Flay Stuart's Administration," *Journal Messenger*, 8 March 1989, p. 1.

<sup>549</sup>Ibid. Stuart completed his term.

<sup>550</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 5; Margo Turner, "Park School Board Muzzled?" *Journal Messenger*, 25 March 1989, p. 1.

<sup>551</sup>John Foote, interview, p. 1; Margo Turner, "12 Year Land Dispute Ends," *Journal Messenger*, 26 April 1989, p. 1.

The Center for Applied Research and Development of George Mason University (CARD) revealed the results of Phase I of the needs assessment in October, 1989. The report urged the school division to undertake a “bold attack” to upgrade the school system through increased salaries and an improved curriculum.<sup>552</sup> Hugh Sockett, representing the CARD team, addressed the school board and city council on October 4, 1989 with the results of the nine month study. The report said that the school system suffered from low self-esteem, poor public perception, lack of public involvement, and the need for strong leadership. CARD also recommended that the school division re-organize, and that relations between the city council and school board improve.

Sockett asked city leaders not to be offended, that if the criticism seemed harsh, it was because the school system was being compared with the best school systems in the nation. He explained that one hundred people had been interviewed between January, 1989 and May, 1989. He found that teachers in Manassas Park had negative attitudes about teaching there. Sockett said, “Some teachers report that they are shamefaced when they tell professional colleagues where they work.”<sup>553</sup> The report suggested that the community’s expenditure on schools reflects its priorities, and pointed out that Manassas Park spent the least on a per-pupil basis of any northern Virginia school division. When the report was released, Manassas Park spent \$800 less per-pupil than Prince William County, and the starting salary in Manassas Park, at \$22,000, was less than any other northern Virginia school division. Sockett said, “A teacher would have to be a saint to stay in the Manassas Park system for twenty years with the low pay.”<sup>554</sup>

Staff turnover in Manassas Park was high also. Of the 114 certificated staff members employed on September 26, 1988, only twenty-five percent had been employed on June 17, 1985. In its first thirteen years of existence, Manassas Park had seen five superintendents, ten high school principals and twelve elementary school principals come and go.<sup>555</sup>

The report recommendations included:

1. A five year development plan.
2. Increased salaries, with priority funding for administrative salaries.
3. Improved relationships between city council and the school board.
4. Community involvement in all aspects of schooling.

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<sup>552</sup>Center for Applied Research and Development in Education, “Manassas Park City Public Schools Professional Development Project Phase One Report” (Fairfax, VA.: Mason University, September 1989), p. 1-4. (cited hereafter as CARD Report, Phase One.) Margo Turner, “‘Bold Attack’ urged for MP schools,” *Journal Messenger*, 5 October 1989, p. 1.

<sup>553</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 5 October 1989, p. 7; Margo Turner, “\$12,000 school study called a waste of money,” *Journal Messenger*, 5 October 1989, p. 1.

<sup>554</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>555</sup>Card Report, Phase One, p. 16; Will Nash, “Low Report Card for M. Park Schools,” Manassas, Virginia, *Weekly Gazette*, 5 October 1989, p. 1; “Manassas Park Schools Need More Funding,” *Journal Messenger*, 6 October 1989, p. 1;



5. Relocation of school board offices to city hall to promote a closer working relationship.<sup>556</sup>

The report offered three options for funding the school division. The first option was for Manassas Park to consider consolidation with a neighboring school division. Option two was to continue to support the school division at existing per-pupil expenditures. The third option, and the option favored by CARD, was to use the tax revenue from the recently annexed 404 acres to increase the per-pupil expenditures.<sup>557</sup>

Reaction to the report was mixed. School board members differed over the report, with Flo Mullins and Mary Arnold stating that the report was a waste of money. They argued that the money would have been better spent if it had been used for maintenance on the school buildings. Mullins complained that nothing could be accomplished without the city's appropriating additional money.

### **A New Administration Begins**

James Moyers began his duties as superintendent of Manassas Park City Schools on July 1, 1989. He faced high student drop-out rates of 8.5 percent, high teacher turnover of almost twenty-five percent, low test scores and declining enrollment. An indifference toward academics was pervasive in a community that placed little emphasis on school related activities. Moyers also faced a city manager who was not at all supportive of the school division. City manager Davis said that the school system was more to blame than the community for the schools' woes. Davis said, "It could be the school system's fault as much as it is the community's."<sup>558</sup>

Moyers was undaunted by the task before him. He began by visiting classrooms at the high school. Moyers spoke with each student at Manassas Park High School and Manassas Park Intermediate School through his visitations to their English classes. He asked them what could be done to improve their education. He was surprised when he heard the students say that they were not challenged enough. Students told him that they resented attending school in buildings that resembled warehouses.

After meeting with all the students, superintendent Moyers instituted the school division's first attendance policy. Under the policy, students missing more than twenty days would not get credit for the year's work. They were given the opportunity to make up missed days by attending school on Saturdays.<sup>559</sup>

By December, 1989, Moyers had presented the school board with a list of seven school

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<sup>556</sup>CARD Report, Phase One, p. 7 - 30.

<sup>557</sup>Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>558</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 21 December 1989, p. 6; Paul Dinucci, "Superintendent's Goal: help city schools make the grade," Manassas, Virginia, *Potomac Plus*, 21 December 1989, p. 1.

<sup>559</sup>Ibid: Ralph Moore, interview, p. 2.

division objectives and with a mission statement for Manassas Park City Schools. The mission statement emphasized student self-esteem: “To raise the level of self-esteem among Manassas Park Students.”<sup>560</sup>

The seven objectives proposed by Moyers and approved by the school board included:

1. To develop an effective attendance policy and the administration of that policy in a fair, consistent manner;
2. To raise the school division’s expectation level for student achievement;
3. To strengthen the coordination and planning necessary to effect instructionally sound transitions between organizational levels;
4. To develop and maintain a faculty and staff with positive attitudes and who relate well to the students’ needs by conducting staff development and selecting personnel who promote this objective;
5. To expand and restructure the extra- and co-curricular program to encourage greater participation;
6. To improve public perception through a positive publicity campaign; and
7. To plan and conduct a facilities construction program.<sup>561</sup>

The CARD report emphasized the need for more funding for the school system. City manager Davis, however, informed the superintendent and school board how much money would be appropriated by the city for the 1990-91 school budget, before Moyers could even prepare his budget for the board. In light of CARD recommendations for funding, school board members attacked the \$2.2 million proposed appropriation by the city, complaining that the needs of the school division were not being considered.<sup>562</sup> Davis said that the city could not spare more money for the school board budget. He accused the school board of being “frivolous” with the money they were given, and he said that Manassas Park City Schools were administratively “top-heavy.”<sup>563</sup> Board member Mary Arnold said:

I don’t see why we have to accept the city figure. I don’t think this is enough for what we need. Let city council say they can’t adequately fund the school system.<sup>564</sup>

With the annexation of the new property, Moyers and the school administration were

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<sup>560</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 21 December 1989, p. 6; Neal Snyder, “Park School Board adopts objectives,” *Journal Messenger*, 26 December 1989, p. 1.

<sup>561</sup>Ibid.

<sup>562</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 7 February 1990, p. 4; Claudia Sandlin, “Manassas Park Schools Budget Proposed,” Washington, D.C., *The Washington Post*, 8 February 1990, p. B1.

<sup>563</sup>Ibid.

<sup>564</sup>Ibid.

concerned that the school division needed to expand. Immediate growth was seen at the high school, based on the recently completed facilities study done by the Department of Education under Jimmy Stuart's administration. The school board wanted to take a pro-active approach so that they would be prepared for the influx of new students when the 404 acres were developed. The school board wanted to construct a 17,000 square foot "multi-purpose" room. The new room would have a stage and dressing rooms and a kitchen. It would also be used as the school cafeteria. The plans also called for the addition of two classrooms, which were to be used for the band and choral programs.<sup>565</sup>

City council, on the other hand, was not convinced that expansion was needed. Council wanted to wait for enrollment numbers from the annexed property. The school board requested that council allow them to hire an architect for a new high school, but council decided to take a wait and see approach.<sup>566</sup>

### **A Partnership with George Mason University**

In July, 1990, Hugh Sockett, director of the Institute for Educational Transformation (IET) at George Mason University, proposed a partnership between Manassas Park and IET. Sockett was familiar with the school division as a member of the CARD team that had done a comprehensive study of the school system, and proposed a four year partnership with plans that would turn the school system into a laboratory of public, private and non-profit participation in the education process.<sup>567</sup> The ultimate goal was to improve student achievement. The first year would be used to complete a needs assessment.

City council was skeptical of the plan, expressing concerns over issues of funding and control of the school division. Several school board members had the same concerns, especially over control of the school division. The school board, however, approved the proposal in July, 1990. By approving the proposal, Manassas Park became one of several partners that were included in the project. The Institute for Educational Transformation would draw upon the resources of the partners, which included the George Mason University College of Education and Human Services, Fairfax County Public

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<sup>565</sup>Shirley Bazdar, interview, p. 3; Laurie Kellerman, "M'Park growth pushes school expansion," Manassas, Virginia, *The Prince William Journal*, 11 April 1990, p. 1. Until 1987, students at Manassas Park High School and Intermediate School ate lunch in the gym. The food was prepared at Conner Elementary and brought to the gym. In 1987, the building trades lab was used for the cafeteria. It was not air conditioned. There were two large garage doors which were opened when it was hot. The dumpsters for the building were located just outside the doors, and when the doors were open, bees and flies made their way into the room.

<sup>566</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 18 April 1990, p. 6; Laurie Kellerman, "M'Park council: Go slow on schools," *Prince William Journal*, 25 April 1990, p. 1.

<sup>567</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 5 July 1990, p. 2; Neal Snyder, "MP schools eye partnership with GMU," *Journal Messenger*, 28 June 1990, p. 1.

Schools, IBM, and the Signal Hill Development Corporation.<sup>568</sup> IET intended to use the lessons learned in Manassas Park as a model that would improve education in other jurisdictions around the country.

Once the partnership was formed, the school division qualified for and accepted a four year federal grant for \$716,000. The grant was one of eighteen awarded by the United States Department of Education, and funded the “Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” project to “transform” education in Manassas Park and to develop new programs useful in school systems nationwide.<sup>569</sup>

### **The Death of a Superintendent**

In August, 1990, James Moyers fell gravely ill. Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, Moyers had surgery in the fall. After the surgery, Moyers tried to work from his home, but was unable to continue. Berchard Hatcher, the associate superintendent, assumed the responsibilities of superintendent in Moyers’ absence.<sup>570</sup>

The school division was devastated. Moyers was respected by teachers and administrators, as well as the public.<sup>571</sup> Moyers was credited with giving the school division a mission. On January 16, 1991, Moyers resigned as superintendent of Manassas Park City Schools.<sup>572</sup> He died on February 6, 1991.

Moyers’ death threw the school division into a state of flux. Hatcher was officially named acting superintendent, and the school board decided to conduct a search for a new superintendent. Hatcher immediately ran into problems.

Less than two weeks after his appointment as acting superintendent, Hatcher was involved in a serious car accident. Hatcher and school board members John McLaughlin and Richard Chichester were on their way to Richmond. McLaughlin was driving his personal vehicle, and did not realize that a flatbed trailer was stopped in front of him. Before he could stop,

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<sup>568</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 5 July 1990, p. 2; Neal Snyder, “GMU merger OK’d,” *Journal Messenger*, 5 July 1990, p. 1. Signal Hill Development Corporation was the company city council selected to develop the 404 acres. Both Signal Hill and IBM later withdrew from the partnership. IBM in Manassas closed, and Signal Hill became a victim of the recession.

<sup>569</sup>David Martin, interviewed by author, interview 8, transcript, San Diego, California, 1 March 1998, p. 2; Neal Snyder, “GMU and Park seal merger for schools,” *Journal Messenger*, 4 October 1990, p. 1; Mike Fuchs, “City Schools See Light at End of Tunnel,” *Manassas Weekly Gazette*, 30 January 1991, p. 1.

<sup>570</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 January 1991, p. 2; “Manassas Park Schools Superintendent Resigns,” *Prince William Journal*, 23 January 1991, p. 1.

<sup>571</sup>Ralph Moore, interview, p. 4; Shirley Bazdar, interview, p. 3.

<sup>572</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 16 January 1991, p. 2.

McLaughlin collided with the the truck. McLaughlin escaped the accident unscathed, but Hatcher and Chichester sustained more serious injuries. Hatcher broke his right arm and his left wrist. He also sustained nerve injuries to his arms that required surgery. Both of Hatcher's arms would remain in casts for several months. Chichester had internal injuries. He had been wearing only a lap belt during the collision. His injuries required immediate surgery to repair a torn spleen and other internal injuries. He would remain hospitalized for weeks.<sup>573</sup>

Hatcher survived an attempt to fire him in April. Flo Mullins and Mary Arnold were unhappy with the way Hatcher managed the school division. They both were upset that the school division might be faced with a \$62,000 deficit by the end of the year. After Mary Arnold suggested that Hatcher resign, the school board went into executive session, and upon returning to regular session, voted to retain Hatcher as acting superintendent for the remainder of the year. Arnold and Mullins voted against Hatcher.<sup>574</sup> Arnold said that Hatcher just was not getting the job done. Board member Richard Chichester defended Hatcher, saying that he had "performed as well as could be expected under adverse circumstances," which included the death of superintendent Moyers and the automobile accident, which left him with two badly broken arms.

The school board was also struggling with a budget for the 1991-92 school year and was looking for areas in which to make cuts. The school board decided to cut administrative personnel as part of the process. On the same night it voted to keep Hatcher, the board eliminated the position of director of instruction, a move which they predicted would save \$93,000 in the upcoming budget. John McLaughlin and Dick Chichester voted against the cut, stating that the position was needed.<sup>575</sup>

### **J. David Martin Accepts the Superintendency in Manassas Park**

The Manassas Park City School Board held a special meeting on April 27, 1991. The purpose of the meeting was to appoint the new superintendent for Manassas Park City Schools.<sup>576</sup>

Robert Maitland, the school board chairman, opened the meeting with remarks about the general characteristics the school board was looking for in a superintendent. He said that the school board was looking for a person to carry on the vision and mission of James Moyers.<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>573</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 5; Christopher Hinders, "Two Manassas Park school officials injured in wreck," *Journal Messenger*, 31 January 1991, p. 1; Christine Riedel, "City officials hurt in crash," Manassas, Virginia, *The Potomac News*, 31 January 1991.

<sup>574</sup>School Board Minutes, Special School Board Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 10 April 1991, p. 1.

<sup>575</sup>Ibid.

<sup>576</sup>School Board Minutes, Special School Board Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 27 April 1991, p. 2.

<sup>577</sup>Ibid, p. 1.

Dick Chichester moved that the school board appoint J. David Martin as superintendent of Manassas Park City Schools. Mary Arnold seconded the motion, which carried with a 5-0 roll call vote. Martin's term was to be for two years, beginning July 1, 1991 to June 30, 1993.<sup>578</sup>

Martin was one of twenty-two applicants for the position. The school board interviewed eleven of the candidates for the job.<sup>579</sup> Martin came to Manassas Park from Clarke County, Virginia, where he had served as assistant superintendent of Clarke County Public Schools. In his remarks, Martin told the audience that he prided himself on his communication skills and on being a team player. Martin said that he wanted to prepare the children of Manassas Park for the year 2000 and for whatever challenges came their way.

After Martin's appointment, Hatcher continued to be criticized by some members of the school board. He was criticized for not informing the board of the impending deficit earlier in the school year. Hatcher said the problem stemmed from accounting processes and inaccurate revenue figures for the state. Flo Mullins was especially critical, accusing Hatcher of poor management. Mullins said, "There is no justification for the financial situation we are in now, except for poor management."<sup>580</sup>

### **Superintendent Martin Assumes Control**

During the interview process, David Martin was never informed of the Manassas Park Educational Partnership, and the grant that went with it. Nor was he aware of the CARD report and the recommendations that came from the report. However, he felt that the information contained within the report and the funding from the grant fit nicely into his plans for Manassas Park City Schools.<sup>581</sup>

Shortly after he assumed the duties and responsibilities of superintendent, he had a visit from members of the Manassas Park Educational Partnership. At the meeting, he was given the impression that the Institute for Educational Transformation planned to make most of the decisions concerning the operation of schools in Manassas Park. Martin felt that he was expected to sit back and let the IET make all the decisions about the direction of the school division. Superintendent Martin was eventually able to refocus and redirect the grant money into programs

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<sup>578</sup>Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>579</sup>Ibid, p. 1; Christopher Hinders, "Schools have a leader," *Journal Messenger*, 27 April 1991, p. 1; Christine Riedel, "Manassas Park's school chief picked," *Potomac News*, 30 April 1991, p. 1. Berchard Hatcher, the acting superintendent, and Jeanette Pillsbury, principal of Conner Elementary, were two of the eleven candidates interviewed for the job.

<sup>580</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 15 May 1991, p. 3.

<sup>581</sup>David Martin, interview, p. 3.

that he felt should be implemented to improve the school division.<sup>582</sup>

Martin brought with him an extensive background in the Effective Schools processes and felt that the partnership was a natural starting point for him to implement those processes. He believed that, through the Effective Schools processes, he could bring all staff members on board, not just a select few. His hope was that these processes would close the gap between minority and majority test scores, as well as provide a better all-around education for each and every student. He promoted site-based management, teacher empowerment, and shared decision making, all strategies that he believed could take a profession and raise it to another level.<sup>583</sup> Martin spoke of the “art and science” of teaching, and began to send teachers away to be trained in the strategies of Madeline Hunter, and then expecting them to come back to train others.

The grant money was directed into staff development, sending staff to conferences, paying for travel, and purchasing books. Teams were sent to Saratoga Springs, New York, and to Phoenix, Arizona for training in Effective Schools Processes. Some teachers and administrators went to New Jersey to be trained in the strategies of Madeline Hunter. Those attending the conferences came back to train their colleagues on Saturday mornings. Participants in the training received \$50 a day for their attendance. Administrators and teachers became excited about the prospects offered by the new programs.<sup>584</sup>

### **A Question of Ethics**

Even though Martin was successful in implementing new programs, he had his share of problems. The first arose when, during a school board discussion on ethics in January, 1992, an argument erupted and board member Mary Arnold walked out of the meeting.<sup>585</sup>

Just after Martin assumed the superintendency, he asked the clerk of the school board, Lois Steele, to refer all calls from school board members to him. Being a new superintendent, he felt that this would give him the opportunity to open lines of communication with school board members, and that they would get to know one another better. Board member Mary Arnold took exception to Martin’s approach, and in open session at a school board meeting, accused Martin

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<sup>582</sup>Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>583</sup>Ibid.

<sup>584</sup>Ralph Moore, interview, p. 4; Shirley Bazdar, interview, p. 2.

<sup>585</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 8 January 1992, p. 4; Frank Jones, interview by author, interview 17, transcript, Manassas Park, VA, 18 May 1998, p. 1; Beth Bachelder, “Member walks out on ethics discussion,” *Potomac News*, 9 January 1992, p. 1. Board members were concerned that Arnold had taken an adversarial relationship with them and the superintendent. The discussion on ethics was supposed to address the roles of the school board and the superintendent.

and Steele of withholding information from her.<sup>586</sup>

Immediately after Arnold made remarks about Martin and Steele, board member Frank Jones, objecting to Arnold's bringing up the names of staff members in open session, moved to go into executive session to discuss personnel. After board member John McLaughlin seconded the motion, Arnold said:

Well, I'm leaving because this is not covered under the Freedom of Information Act that this kind of thing can be discussed. You can discuss staff personnel, you can discuss me, which is what you are really wanting to do. This will not be a legal item.<sup>587</sup>

Arnold gathered her things and left the meeting. Outside of the school board meeting room, while the rest of the board was in executive session, Arnold met with members of the press. She claimed that the executive session was illegal, and that she was not "going to participate in another illegal executive session."<sup>588</sup> Arnold continued her remarks saying:

They were just waiting for me, or someone, to mention a name so they could have an excuse to go into executive session so that they could bully me into not ever disagreeing with Martin again.<sup>589</sup>

School board chairman Bob Maitland, upon returning to regular session said:

Due to the mention of inequities of our superintendent and the secretary, the board chose to go into executive session and Miss Arnold chose not to participate in the executive session to discuss personnel and she made a public statement. And in the executive session the board, due to the investigation in executive session without Miss Arnold, the board has full confidence in the superintendent and the clerk of the board and is convinced that there is [sic] no adverse or inappropriate actions which have transpired. The comments made by Miss Arnold does [sic] not represent the position of the school board and has [sic] not been reviewed by the school board nor has Miss Arnold discussed these things with the school board. The school board is accountable or liable for the decisions

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<sup>586</sup>Ibid.

<sup>587</sup>Ibid. Frank Jones, interview, p. 1. Jones felt uncomfortable when Arnold named Steele and Martin in the "tone and context in which the statement was couched."

<sup>588</sup>David Martin, interview, p. 2; Colleen T. Horn, "School board member storms out of meeting," *Journal Messenger*, 10 January 1992, p. 1.

<sup>589</sup>David Martin, interview, p. 2; Beth Bacheldor, "Closed meeting legal, says Manassas Park School Board," *Potomac News*, 10 January 1992, p. 1.



made by the board as a whole and not Miss Arnold acting on her own.<sup>590</sup>

One motion came out of executive session. John McLaughlin said:

Based on tonight's unacceptable level of conduct, I move that this board censure Mary L. Arnold for conduct unbecoming to a school board member."<sup>591</sup>

Board member Frank Jones seconded the motion which carried 4-0 by roll call vote.

Frank Jones was asked by the press to explain why he called for an executive session of the school board. Jones said:

You have to understand that part of my decision to call for executive session was the emotion of the moment and the concern that those kind of comments can get out of hand. I will not stand to have this school division pulled apart by defamatory comments and things that come down to personality conflicts.<sup>592</sup>

Mary Arnold's term as a school board member was to expire in June. She had expressed her interest to city council in being reappointed to the position. When the time for reappointments neared, she had only attended two board meetings, since the censure in January. Four days before the appointments were to be made, on June 12, 1992, Arnold withdrew her name from consideration for the school board post. She told a reporter from the *Journal Messenger* that she intended to move to New Jersey before the three year appointment would expire.<sup>593</sup>

### **Another Architectural Study**

In July, 1992, attention turned toward an architectural study of the school system. The school board chose the architectural firm VMDO, of Charlottesville, Virginia, to conduct the study. VMDO completed the study in October, 1992.

The school board met in a work session on November 9, 1992, to discuss the facilities study. Robert Moje` of VMDO, reviewed the study with the school board. Moje` told the board that the review of the condition of the facilities was stage one of the study. He said that during

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<sup>590</sup>School Board Minutes, Manassas Park City Schools, 8 January 1992, p. 5.

<sup>591</sup>Ibid. Frank Barham, Executive Director of the VSBA, said that he believed this was the first time in Virginia that a school board member was censured by her own board.

<sup>592</sup>Frank Jones, interview, p. 1; Beth Bacheldor, "Closed meeting legal says Manassas Park School Board," p. 1.

<sup>593</sup>David Martin, interview, p. 2; Dave Kramer, "Arnold withdraws name from reappointment consideration," *Journal Messenger*, 13 June 1992, p. 1.

stage one they would discuss the problems with the facilities. He explained to the board that the condition of the facilities was poor, particularly the prefabricated structures. Moisture had created problems by causing deterioration of the wooden structures.<sup>594</sup>

Moje` told the board that the buildings presented a safety hazard, particularly due to the susceptibility to fire. He told the board that the fire stops in the attic were ineffective, because they had been filled with holes in which wires and conduit ran. According to Moje`, the electrical system in the high school was overtaxed, and electrical panel boxes were hot to the touch. Moje` said:

It is very possible for a fire to get going particularly in a concealed location such as the attic or crawl space without being detected and the fire could quickly spread throughout a classroom wing.<sup>595</sup>

Bob Moje` presented the remainder of the architectural report at a special meeting on December 17, 1992. He pointed out that a comprehensive building plan was needed to accommodate the city's growth during the next ten years. Due to the annexation of property, the city could expect the student population to double, to 2,700 students.<sup>596</sup>

Moje` presented the school board with two options. The first option included adding classroom space to Manassas Park Elementary and to Manassas Park High School, building a new elementary school and a new middle school, and finally, renovating the old high school. The total estimated cost for option one was \$19,153,200. Option two included building new elementary and middle schools on the same site as the existing high school, and renovating the existing high school. This plan took advantage of common facilities and would save some money. The total estimated cost for option two was \$18,960,000.<sup>597</sup>

The school board and city council held a joint work session on the building program. Based on VMDO's recommendation, the school board wanted to build an elementary school on the high school site as the first step in the building program. The board was convinced that student growth from the annexed property would first be realized in the elementary schools. The school board also liked the advantages a single campus provided. It would eliminate the problem of dividing the city into geographic areas, free up three parcels of land which could be returned to the city for sale, consolidate services such as food service and technology, and utilize common facilities such as gymnasiums and play fields.

City council, however, did not agree and wanted to build a new high school first. Council

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<sup>594</sup>School Board Minutes, School Board Work Session, Manassas Park City Schools, 9 November 1992, p. 1.

<sup>595</sup>Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>596</sup>School Board Minutes, "Architectural Report on Manassas Park City Schools," Manassas Park City Schools, 17 December 1992, p. 1.

<sup>597</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

members were skeptical about the single campus plan, citing problems in scheduling, transportation and utilities.<sup>598</sup> City council directed the school board to come up with more options for building. Council also said that the price tag was too high.

In May, 1994, following months of debate, the school board and city council agreed on a building plan. It was decided that a new high school would be built on the fifty-nine acre site that the old high school occupied. Once the new high school was built, the old high school would be renovated for a middle school. Construction was planned to begin in 1997 and be completed by September, 1999.<sup>599</sup>

### **Controversy over Special Education**

Manassas Park participated in a regional special education program with Prince William County Schools and Manassas City Schools. Under the program, children with disabilities that are considered “low incidence” are sent to schools which may not be within the jurisdiction in which they live. The program is cost effective, in that a school does not have to support a program involving only one or two students. One of the regional programs serves students with emotional disturbances.

During the 1994-95 school year, Manassas Park hosted a regional special education program for emotionally disturbed students at Independence Elementary School. Called PACE, (Positive Attitude and Commitment to Education), middle school aged children attended classes at Independence Elementary School.

Parents in Manassas Park were highly critical of superintendent Martin and the PACE program because Independence Elementary School housed the kindergarten programs in Manassas Park. Parents of the kindergartners were concerned about the older students being in contact with their young children. They claimed that the safety of their children was not considered in allowing the PACE program to be run at Independence Elementary.

The school board had taken every precaution to allay their fears. PACE students were housed at one end of the building, while the kindergartners attended classes at the other end. The PACE program was divided from the kindergarten by doors, which remained locked and alarmed. Motion sensors were also installed to notify the kindergarten teachers if PACE students came into their part of the building.

Parents became even more concerned when the media published police records of calls from PACE. In November, 1994, the *Journal Messenger* reported that the police had been called

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<sup>598</sup>David Martin, interview, p. 3; John Keilman, “Park Council wants more school choices,” *Journal Messenger*, 12 February 1994, p. 1.

<sup>599</sup>David Martin, interview, p. 3; John Keilman, “Consensus reached on Park school,” *Journal Messenger*, 16 May 1994, p. 1. Construction on the new high school began on July 1, 1997. The building is scheduled to open in December, 1998. The building plan changed, and an elementary school will be built next on property found in the 404 annexed acres.

to Independence Elementary nine times, arresting three students for assault.<sup>600</sup> The parents accused Martin of hiding criminal reports and minimizing the potential for violence.

In November, 1994, a cartoon in the *Journal Messenger* depicted the PACE program as a monster with four long claws protruding under a door held shut by Martin. Parents immediately complained to Martin that their children were depicted as monsters. Martin indicated that he wrote to the editor of the *Journal Messenger*, chastising the paper for portraying children in this manner.<sup>601</sup>

By January 1995, the furor died down, and the PACE program continued at Independence Elementary. However, the contract was not renewed for the 1995-96 school year. The program was moved from Independence Elementary to another site in Prince William County.

### **Superintendent Martin Resigns**

On March 11, 1995, J. David Martin announced his resignation as superintendent of Manassas Park City Schools.<sup>602</sup> Martin resigned the superintendency in Manassas Park to accept a similar position in Henry County, Virginia, a school division with nine thousand students.

School board members and administrators praised Martin as the catalyst for improvement in Manassas Park. They noted improved test scores and improved morale as examples of his leadership. Martin said that his decision “has been an emotional one because of the team spirit and family atmosphere we have created together.”<sup>603</sup> Manassas Park was, once again, faced with the challenge of finding a new superintendent, its seventh since the school division began in 1976.

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<sup>600</sup>David Martin, interview, p. 3; Vonda Wolcott, “Too close for comfort,” *Journal Messenger*, 1 November 1994, p. 1.

<sup>601</sup>David Martin, interview, p. 3.

<sup>602</sup>School Board Minutes, Special School Board Meeting, Manassas Park City Schools, 11 March 1995, p. 1.

<sup>603</sup>David Martin, interview, p. 4; Mike Fuchs, “Manassas Park Schools chief to resign,” *Potomac News*, 12 March 1995, p. 1.

## Chapter 6

### Analysis

As Manassas Park City Schools begins its twenty-third year, questions concerning the future of the school division persist. Construction of a new high school is well underway and is scheduled to be completed before January, 1999. Plans are currently being developed to build a new elementary school to house one thousand elementary school students. As more new families move into Manassas Park, the need for additional services becomes apparent. Not only are new schools needed, but so are increased fire, rescue and police protection. Unlike business development, residential development requires more services, and the financial burden is shouldered by the taxpayer.

The school division is placed in the position of facing increasing enrollment with buildings that are unable to accommodate growth. The construction of the new elementary school will allow the city to consider closing both Independence Elementary School and Conner Elementary School, but will also push the city to its debt limit. After that, it may be years before any other construction projects could begin. The problem remains that the school division would still be “stuck” with a middle school that, at most, was built to last twenty years, and with Manassas Park Elementary School, which is forty years old.

### Political Influences

Over the past twenty-two years, the relationship between the city council and the school board has been strained, at best. Many of the subjects who were interviewed felt that they were disconnected from politics in the city and did not view the city council as part of a participatory process. These people describe a culture of resistance, bitterness and adversarial relationships.

No matter how many parents we got to attend a meeting, or how prepared we were, we were always told that the majority of the taxpayers did not have school children and, as senior citizens, were on fixed incomes. Yet, the main reason we went to city status was because our children were short-changed in the county schools. Some “city fathers” apparently never saw the inconsistency in that!<sup>604</sup>

Negative perceptions about the city council and the school board have reinforced perceptions of poor education in Manassas Park.

The media has contributed to the negative perceptions of the town and its school system. Reporters are influential, yet indirect participants, in the governance of the school division. The media chooses which items will be reported, making news through articles and editorials about education in Manassas Park. Public opinion is a critical factor in the governance of the school division, and public perceptions are clearly influenced by the media. Over a period of years, Betty Curran, of the *Journal Messenger*, wrote many of the news articles about Manassas Park City

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<sup>604</sup>Barbara Dellinger, interview, p. 5.

Schools. Most interviewees, especially Jimmy Stuart, Barbara Dellinger, and Mary Sue Polk, reported that Curran's articles were accurate. While they often did not like what was reported, they agreed that Curran did not distort the facts. Mary Sue Polk said that Curran was truly interested in the education of the children of Manassas Park, and that she attempted to ensure, through her writing, that students in Manassas Park would have opportunities equal to those available to students in Manassas and Prince William County. Unfortunately, Curran died before this study began.

The political structure in Manassas Park is changing. Over the past six years, the school board has experienced little turnover in membership and, therefore, has remained stable. Recent elections have placed new members on city council who are supportive of the school division and of public education. At the time of this writing the city was searching for a new city manager.<sup>605</sup> The relationship between the city council and the school board has improved, and a collaborative culture is emerging between the two governing bodies.<sup>606</sup>

Unfortunately, the ongoing volatility of the political climate in Manassas Park could destroy the collaborative relationship at any time. Unlike most school divisions in Virginia, and in the United States as well, the school board in Manassas Park is appointed, not elected. At times, this has caused school board members to make decisions based on the political climate, and not on what is best for children. Board members who have taken a position which is in opposition to the city council have not been reappointed. There have been times when school board members refrained from rocking the boat, succumbing to the wishes of city council. It is understandable that the school board should take such a position, since city council controls the purse strings. As long as the city council continues to appoint school board members, there is a chance that the appointed members will feel obligated to carry out the agenda of city council, and not govern the school division by making decisions based on best educational practice.

### **Economic Influences**

The development of the four hundred acres annexed from Prince William County continues. Development of the property is expected to be completed within ten years. With these new homes comes a more diverse population. Many of the new homes are larger, more expensive units than the old Cape Cod style homes built in the 1950's. These new homes have attracted young, professional, families interested and involved in the education of their children. The problem, however, is that no new businesses have located in Manassas Park. The burden of services rests on the shoulders of the residential taxpayers. At \$1.44, Manassas Park still has one of the highest real estate tax rates in the state of Virginia.

In Manassas Park, educators are expected to do more with less. In 1995-96, Manassas

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<sup>605</sup>October, 1998.

<sup>606</sup>Frank Jones, interview, p. 3.

Park spent \$5,290 per pupil.<sup>607</sup> This compares unfavorably with the \$6,453 Manassas spent and the \$6,546 Prince William County spent to educate its youth.<sup>608</sup> In 1995-96, Manassas Park ranked 104<sup>th</sup> out of 132 school divisions, while Prince William ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> and Manassas ranked 35<sup>th</sup>.<sup>609</sup> Even so, some members of city council expect Manassas Park City Schools to offer programs and produce test scores that are competitive with its neighbors.

Contributing to the problem is the high teacher turnover rate in Manassas Park. Since the school division began in 1976, Manassas Park has hired mostly young, inexperienced teachers. Low salaries are the issue. The CARD study in 1989 reported that Manassas Park paid relatively low salaries compared to its neighbors; \$2,000 to \$16,000 lower, depending on degree and years of experience. In 1994-95 Manassas Park's average teacher salary was \$30,100, which ranked 78<sup>th</sup> in the state. Prince William ranked 6<sup>th</sup> with an average salary of \$37,711 and Manassas ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> with an average of \$33,689.<sup>610</sup>

The financial problems experienced in Manassas Park are similar to many school divisions in Virginia, where the school board is fiscally dependent upon the governing body. School boards in Virginia cannot levy taxes upon the citizens. It makes no difference if the board is elected or appointed, school boards across the state struggle with governing bodies over funding.

### **Social Influences**

Manassas Park suffers from a problem of perception. There are some in Manassas Park who believe that they are considered "second class" citizens and are treated differently by their neighbors in Manassas and Prince William County. In all of the interviews conducted for this study, not one person reported being discriminated against because of residing in Manassas Park. Some, however, reported knowing of others who were, or who felt they were.

All of the educators interviewed for the study reported that they were treated

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<sup>607</sup>Virginia Education Association, Research Service, "*Virginia's Educational Disparities*," (Richmond: VEA, November 1996), p. 23 - 24. This figure is a per pupil disbursement based on total disbursements. This figure differs from the total operational cost per pupil due to capital outlay disbursements which are included in the \$5,290. The total operational cost per pupil for Manassas Park in 1994-95 was \$4,987 which ranked 79 of 134 localities. Prince William's total operational cost per pupil was \$5,573 and Manassas' was \$5,721, ranking them at 29 and 33 respectively. The total cost of operation includes regular day school, school food services, summer school, adult education and other educational programs but does not include facilities, debt service, and capital outlay additions.

<sup>608</sup>Ibid.

<sup>609</sup>Ibid.

<sup>610</sup>Ibid, p. 32-35. In Fairfax county the average salary was \$41,715. The neighboring cities and counties of Spotsylvania, Stafford, Fauquier, Falls Church, Loudoun, Alexandria, and Arlington all ranked higher than Manassas Park.

professionally and with respect by their colleagues in neighboring school divisions. They did report, however, that students in Manassas Park were embarrassed to be recognized as being from Manassas Park. Visiting athletic teams were said to have made derogatory remarks about the facilities at Manassas Park High School, calling it a “warehouse.”<sup>611</sup> Interviewees reported that student athletes at Manassas Park would not wear their athletic letter jackets to the mall in Manassas, for fear of being recognized as Manassas Park High School students.<sup>612</sup>

This perception has been perpetuated through the press and even the report published by CARD in 1989.

Few regret the break with Prince William County. People who lived in Manassas Park at the time, we were told, were treated like “dirt.” Socially, the stigma of Manassas Park residence was exemplified by the experience of a prominent person interviewed who had the difficulty of getting a check accepted in Prince William County with a Manassas Park address. This image of Manassas Park people has apparently persisted. For instance, we were told of a neighboring high school student magazine containing derogatory descriptions of the Manassas Park student. Manassas Park residents justifiably object to this kind of stereotyping and it reinforces their commitment to independence.<sup>613</sup>

The report did not identify those interviewed for the study, and therefore, attempts to verify this statement were unsuccessful. Many of the interviewees for this study had heard the story of the prominent person who had difficulty getting a check accepted at a local business, but could not identify that person nor verify that it actually happened.

Over the years, articles in the newspaper accurately reported the facts. Editorials and letters to the editor, however, helped create negative perceptions about Manassas Park. References to the people of Manassas Park as “second class citizens” and “parasites” were published in the *Journal Messenger* and have been cited in this study.

### **Strong Leadership Needed**

The annexation of 400 acres of land from Prince William magnified the difficulties of the school division as major expansion and development took place. Manassas Park City Schools are growing rapidly. The growth being experienced has created the need for more and better space and, therefore, an increased need for funding from the city. Strong school leaders, able to build effective communication with the community and the governing bodies, are needed to manage the schools during this time of growth and expansion.

Along with the financial difficulties Manassas Park has experienced, there has been a problem in attracting and retaining high quality administrative staff, which has resulted in lack of

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<sup>611</sup>Pam Taylor, interview, p. 4; William Money, interview, p. 2.

<sup>612</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 3; Pam Taylor, interview, p. 4.

<sup>613</sup>CARD Report, p. 1.



administrative continuity. Since its inception in 1976, the school division has had seven superintendents, twelve high school principals and fifteen high school assistant principals. There have been seven middle school principals since the school was created in 1981, nine principals at Conner Elementary School, seven at Manassas Park Elementary School and eleven at Independence Elementary (which was closed from 1981 to 1984.)

The instability of the administrative staff has had a negative effect. This instability has fostered a lack of public and student confidence in the schools. Administrators leave before they establish any form of public identity and support, and no continuity is created as principals and superintendents come and go. Without the support of established principals new teachers leave, which exacerbates the problem of continuity. With constantly changing personnel, it is difficult to integrate short term decisions with long term goals and policy.

Stability in leadership begins with the superintendent. The leadership problems Manassas Park has experienced are similar to those in other school divisions with frequent leadership changes. In order to choose strong leaders, school divisions must exercise care in developing the selection criteria for a superintendent. The superintendent must have a vision for the school division. He or she must be an effective communicator, with strong public relations skills and must be a “people person,” who is visible in the schools and active in the community. The superintendent must be willing to listen to the concerns of the public, and be an articulate spokesman for the school division. Without these attributes it is difficult, if not impossible, to communicate a vision to the community.

Manassas Park, like most school divisions, accomplished more in periods where there was a good relationship between the school board and the superintendent. The problems Gary Smith (in 1983) and Jimmy Stuart (in 1988) experienced with the Manassas Park City School Board illustrate this point. The ongoing battle between Smith and Grant Jones, and between Stuart and Flo Mullins and Mary Arnold, created a rift in the community and in the schools. People chose sides in the controversy. Board members publicly criticized the superintendent and the press publicized it. Negative perceptions were formed of a school division that already suffered from an image problem.

A superintendent must also establish a positive working relationship with the school board. Superintendents walk a fine line in relating to their boards. They must effectively communicate with the board, and the board must communicate all concerns, or criticisms of the school division to the superintendent. The board must also refrain from “micro-managing” the school division by following procedures agreed upon by the board and the superintendent. By establishing procedures and following them, problems like those experienced in Manassas Park can be avoided.

### **“Unique in its Smallness”**

When asked to describe the successes of the Manassas Park school division, Barbara Dellinger replied that it was “unique in its smallness.”<sup>614</sup> That perception is shared by most who were interviewed for this study. Interviewees commented that small size was one attribute that

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<sup>614</sup>Barbara Dellinger, interview, p. 2.

they most appreciated in Manassas Park. They talked about the school division as a family.

The teachers and parents interviewed for this study agreed that students experienced a much greater sense of belonging in Manassas Park than they did in Prince William County. Students also had high quality interpersonal relations with their teachers. Another advantage of the “smallness” of Manassas Park that was cited by the interviewees, was the collaborative atmosphere. They talked of instances of cooperation and collaboration among teachers, administrators and the community.

### Summary

Schools are basic elements of small communities. Not only do children receive their education and interact with other children from different backgrounds, but schools also serve as centers of community activity. A community takes pride in its schools. Even with all of the problems that Manassas Park has experienced in its school division, the people there are proud that they were able to establish their own school system, and they are proud of what their school division has become.

Before establishing its own school division, some residents of Manassas Park were frustrated with Prince William County Schools. They did not identify with the county’s school division, feeling that their children were discriminated against. They wanted their children to have the same opportunities given to the children of Prince William County, and felt that they could provide more and better opportunities for them by establishing their own school division. What they did not realize was that as a small school division, the cost of providing comparable programs and opportunities would be significantly higher. As a result, Manassas Park is still unable to provide many of the programs found in neighboring school divisions.

Progress is being made. Manassas Park works cooperatively with Prince William and Manassas in a regional special education program. Students at Manassas Park High School are allowed to take courses at neighboring Osbourn Park High School. Also, Northern Virginia Community College and Manassas Park City Schools work together to provide college level physics and English courses.

Even with all of the progress, the question still remains: can the school division survive? The people of Manassas Park would say that it can, based on what they have gone through to achieve their current status. But there are regrets. Some wonder if they really did what was best for kids.

The following quote from an interview with Lois Steele is an appropriate ending to this study:

The only thing that makes me sad is that we promised that our kids would have the same programs as Prince William. In some ways we met that, but in other ways we haven’t due to the lack of facilities and the smaller number of students. In that way, we haven’t kept our promise.<sup>615</sup>

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<sup>615</sup>Lois Steele, interview, p. 6.

## Appendix A

### Methodology

This study relied heavily on primary source material gained through interviewing persons who have information worth preserving. Interviews, or “Oral History” have long been employed by historians as a data gathering technique. The Greek historian Thucydides wrote in *History of the Peloponnesian War*:

And with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have described or else I heard of them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible.<sup>616</sup>

Good interviews provide background information, personal insights and stories that may not be found in newspaper articles or official minutes. An interview gives a subject the freedom to answer questions as he or she chooses, opportunities to attribute meanings to his/her experiences and to interject additional topics where appropriate. Through interviews, the researcher may discover something not previously considered. Interviews allow the researcher to learn the underlying reasons for a decision, since motivation is rarely apparent in official written records. Oral history, through interviews, is an essential means for preserving information that may otherwise be lost.<sup>617</sup>

### Interview Questions

After researching the newspapers and minutes, gaps or inconsistencies became apparent. Questions clarifying or confirming these records were employed during the interviews. Interviewees were given the opportunity to discuss relevant matters that had not been considered by the interviewer. It was also viewed as appropriate for the interviewer to ask for the names and addresses of any other individuals that should be interviewed as part of the study.

Questions were designed to elicit detailed responses. Direct questions helped avoid confusion. Follow-up questions helped subjects recall specifics that may be otherwise overlooked and clarified contradictions of earlier statements. An interview format, or guide, was developed prior to conducting each interview. Since each interviewee had the latitude to discuss different topics, the format was individualized for each. This format provided structure for the interview. The format contained the topics to be covered during the interview but did not limit the interview

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<sup>616</sup>Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. by Rex Warner, (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 11.

<sup>617</sup>Stephen Everett, *Oral History Techniques and Procedures* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1992, 4.

to those topics. The interviewee had the flexibility to pursue topics of relevance to him or her. The guide contained open-ended questions phrased so the interviewee could answer in a number of ways. The interviewee could follow a different order that made more sense to him or her. The format provided a strategy for following a line of questioning. The flexibility of the format allowed unanticipated issues and topics to emerge and to be explored.

Several questions were asked of each interviewee to jog his/her memories and to determine which issues and events had significance for the respondent. The following are examples of these types of questions:

- If you were writing this history, which events would you include?
- What people stand out in your mind?
- Who knows a lot about this story?
- Who do you think should be interviewed?

### **Topic and Interviewee Selection**

Over the past twenty years, many people have worked for and attended Manassas Park City Schools. The school division has employed seven different superintendents and two acting superintendents, eleven high school principals, fifteen high school assistant principals, seven middle school principals and twenty four elementary school principals over the past twenty years. In addition to the administrators, many teachers, school board members, students, parents, city council members and other school employees have come and gone.

While the pool for interviewee selection was large, it is important to remember that not everyone had a story suitable for this study. Key considerations for interviewee selection were the usefulness, the significance, and the quality and quantity of the resources of each subject. Once the project was approved by the dissertation committee, a list of prospective interview candidates and prospective topics and questions for each was prepared. Research was conducted on the backgrounds of each subject to help determine which candidates offered the best return for the effort invested in the study.

### **Contacting Interviewees**

One of the most important steps in the interview process was requesting an interview.<sup>618</sup> A potential interviewee may be dissuaded from participation if a poorly planned approach is made. After the candidates were selected, they were contacted to explain the goals of the study. The author introduced himself, the purpose of the interview, the potential product and the key topics for discussion. The author also informed the candidate of the approximate length of the interview session and arranged an interview date and time. This dialogue also provided the opportunity to discuss the study. Candidates learned what information was to be gained through the interview and why it was important.

### **Conducting Background Research**

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<sup>618</sup>Everett. "Oral History Techniques and Procedures." 11.

For an interview to be successful, thorough preparation was essential. Knowledge of important events in the history of the school division was essential for developing a meaningful list of questions. In-depth research on the candidates and on significant events was required. Sources of information for this phase included local newspapers and minutes of meetings.

## Appendix B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

#### I. Background

1. When and how did you become employed by Manassas Park Schools
  - a. Describe the personnel process by which you were selected.
  - b. How long between when you interviewed and when you were hired?
2. Describe the school when you were first employed.

#### II. Social

1. As a professional educator in Manassas Park, how do you feel you are perceived by colleagues in other school divisions?
  - a. Have you always felt that way?
  - b. Has this perception changed over the years?
  - c. What events or issues have made you feel that way?
  - d. Do others have the same feelings or share the same experiences?
2. How do you feel Manassas Park Students are perceived by students and others in neighboring communities?
  - a. Others who visit Manassas Park for athletic events or other activities?
3. What are some of the notable successes of the school division?
4. What are some of the failures or weaknesses of the school division?
5. What do you like most about the school division?
6. How do you remember the community assisting the school division?
7. How do you feel about the type of buildings the school division is housed in?
8. What problems have the buildings presented?
  - a. Instructionally
  - b. Socially

### **III. Political**

1. Describe the first few days of school as it opened in 1976.
  - a. Physical condition of the building - was construction complete?
  - b. What problems did the ongoing construction present?
2. With the facility incomplete, how did you go about teaching your classes?
3. What improvements have been made and when were they made?
4. What problems arose during those first few days of school and how were they resolved?
5. Newspaper reports said that the school was without equipment or supplies - what do you recall about this?
6. What opposition has the school division had to overcome? How was the opposition addressed?
7. Who were some of the leaders involved in the planning and initial stages of the school development?
8. How have the school board and city council gotten along over the years?
  - a. Do you remember the student “walk-out” over the budget?
  - b. What do you know about the city manager’s response?
  - c. What was the outcome?
9. How have the school board and professional staff gotten along over the years?
10. Could you talk a little about each of the superintendents the school division has had?
11. Why have so many high school principals come and gone?
  - a. Bob Rose did not last for a year - why did he leave?
12. Could you talk a little about each of the superintendents in the school division?
  - a. Was Strickland “dictatorial?” - why did he leave?
13. What are the biggest obstacles the school division has had to overcome?

### **IV. Economic**

1. How has the city’s economic situation impacted the schools?

**V. Other**

1. What other issues or events stand out in your mind?
2. Is there anything I haven't asked you that I should have?
3. If you were writing this history, what would you include?



**Appendix C**

**HISTORY OF MANASSAS PARK CITY SCHOOLS**

**Literary and Property Rights Agreement**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby give David G. Melton for scholarly and educational use the tape recorded interview(s) recorded with me as an unrestricted gift; and transfer to David G. Melton legal title and all literary and property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude any use which I may want to make of the information in the recordings myself.

This agreement may be revised or amended by mutual consent of the parties undersigned.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of person interviewed**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed name of person interviewed**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Street Address (line 1)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Street Address (line 2)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**City, State & Zip**

**Appendix D**  
**A History of Manassas Park City Schools**  
**Topical Matrix**

	<b>Social</b>	<b>Political</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>School Facilities</b>	<b>Key Persons</b>	<b>Sources of Information</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b>	Introduction, need for the study, methodology, sources of data, organization of the study, limitations					Historiographies Oral Histories
<b>Chapter 2 1955-1969</b>	Incorporation Citizens Association The first school	Incorporation Citizens Association Failed Annexation	Incorporation Population Growth Tax Base	Building of Manassas Park School	George Carl Charles Lucas Roger Costello	Newspapers Interviews Court Records
<b>Chapter 3 1970-1979</b>	Teacher Turnover Establishing Identity	Annexation City Status School Board Formation Donation of Property Conflicts with PWC	Annexation Conflicts with PWC Struggle to provide Services Increasing enrollment	3 schools built Litigation	Roger Costello William Steele Barbara Dellinger Mary Sue Polk	Newspapers Interviews Official Minutes Official Documents
<b>Chapter 4 1980-1984</b>	Teacher Turnover Lack of support: Parents Community Annexation	Board/Council Relations Administrative turnover Instability Annexation	Declining enrollment Rising taxes Business development Budget cuts Budget deficit Annexation	Closing of Independence Building Conditions	Lois Steele Jimmy Stuart Mary Sue Polk Barbara Dellinger	Newspapers Interviews Official Minutes Official Documents
<b>Chapter 5 1984-1995</b>	Transient Community Residential Development “Haves and have nots”	Board/Council Relations Change in Superintendents	Rising enrollment Rising taxes Budget cuts Annexation Agreement New housing	High School Expansion Facilities study Architectural RFP Building Plan	J. David Martin Francis Jones Mary Sue Polk Barbara Dellinger Jimmy Stuart William Steele	Newspapers Interviews Official Minutes Official Documents
<b>Chapter 6 Summary</b>	Summarizes all social, political, and economic issues the school division has faced as well as a description of the schools facilities.					

**Appendix E**

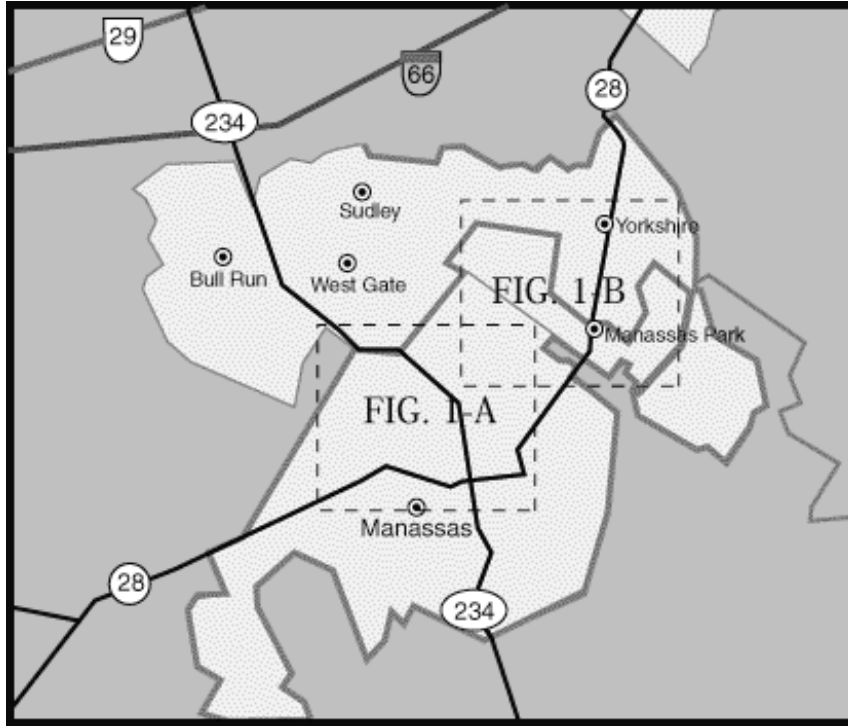
**List of Interviewees**

<u>#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1	7/30/98	Dr. Glenn Earthman	Consultant to school board and city council, member of faculty at Virginia Tech
2	1/13/98	William Steele	Resident, former city council member, former mayor and parent
3	1/14/98	Wayne Moore	In 1976, Director of Finance in Prince William County
4	1/27/98	Barbara Dellinger	Resident, parent and school system employee
5	2/3/98	Dr. Frank Barham	Executive Director, Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA)
6	2/9/98	Mary Sue Polk	Resident, parent and school system employee
7	2/18/98	Sandy Hammersley	P.E. teacher at Manassas Park High School since 1976
8	3/1/98	Dr. J. David Martin	Former superintendent, Manassas Park Schools
9	6/19/98	Jan Puckett	Administrative assistant to superintendent and associate superintendent
10	3/12/98	Lois Merritt	Assistant Director of Finance, Manassas Park Schools, resident and parent
11	4/14/98	Pam Taylor	Math Teacher, Manassas Park Schools
12	6/3/98	Marcia Contatore	Teacher and Education Association President, Manassas Park Schools
13	5/17/98	Gary Broadwater	Social Studies Teacher, Manassas Park Schools
14	5/15/98	Becky Stephens	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, Manassas Park Schools

<u>#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Comments</u>
15	4/19/98	Jim Rowe	Resident, parent, and school employee
16	5/4/98	Lois Steele	Parent, resident, former school board member and chair, clerk of the school board
17	5/18/98	Frank Jones	Parent, resident, School Board Chairman, Manassas Park Schools
18	6/7/98	John Foote	County Attorney, Prince William County, VA
19	6/15/98	Jimmy Stuart	Former superintendent, Manassas Park Schools
20	4/24/98	Wanda Kerns	Parent, resident, school employee
21	6/9/98	Ralph Moore	Principal, Manassas Park Intermediate School
22	5/29/98	Shirley Bazdar	Former teacher and assistant principal, Manassas Park Schools
23	4/30/98	Bob Rose	First principal of Manassas Park High School
24	2/20/98	Lois Dingus	Secretary to the Superintendent, Manassas Park City Schools
25	6/12/98	Michelle Hinegardner	Former student and teacher at Manassas Park Schools
26	6/22/98	Noreen Slater	Director of Social Services, Manassas Park
27	6/26/98	Rob Ewing	Math teacher, Manassas Park Schools
28	8/26/98	William Money	Former teacher, Manassas Park Schools
29	12/7/98	Raynard Hale	The first superintendent of Manassas Park City Schools
30	12/7/98	Richard Johnson	Former superintendent, Prince William County Public Schools
31	12/17/98	Andrew Carrington	First Assistant Superintendent, Manassas Park City Schools
32	12/28/98	Roger Costello	Former Manassas Park Mayor
33	12/28/98	Lana Conner	Manassas Park City Clerk 1968 - present
34	12/30/98	Robert Carpenter	Former teacher and coach in Manassas Park

# Appendix F

## Map 1

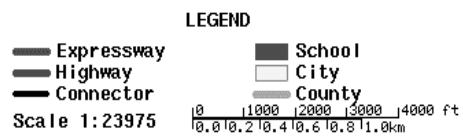
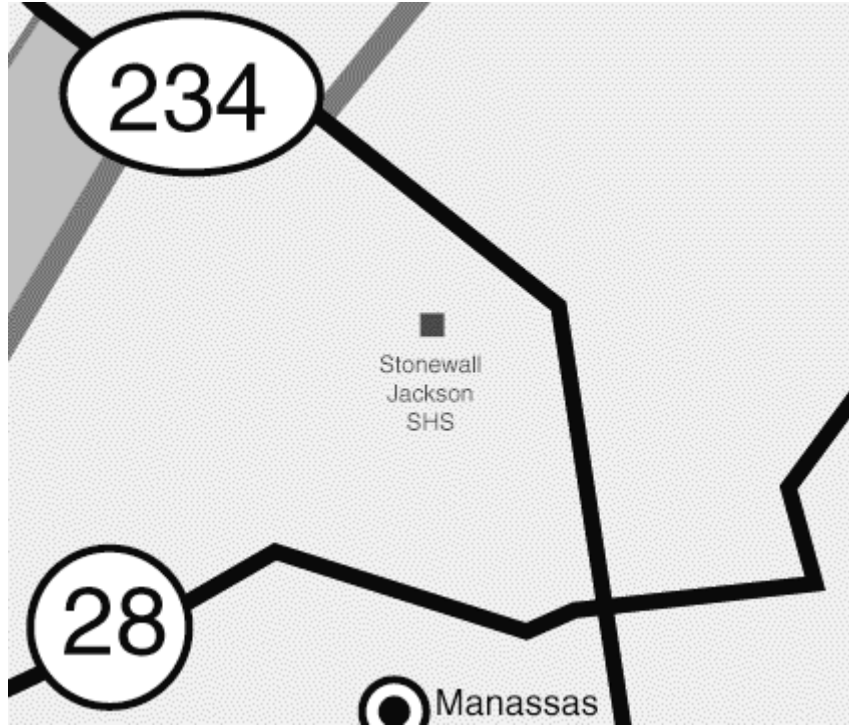


### LEGEND

- Expressway
  - Highway
  - Connector
  - School
  - City
  - ▨ County
- Scale 1:96885
- 0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 mi  
0 1 2 3 4 5 km

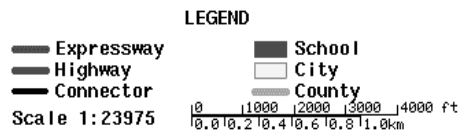
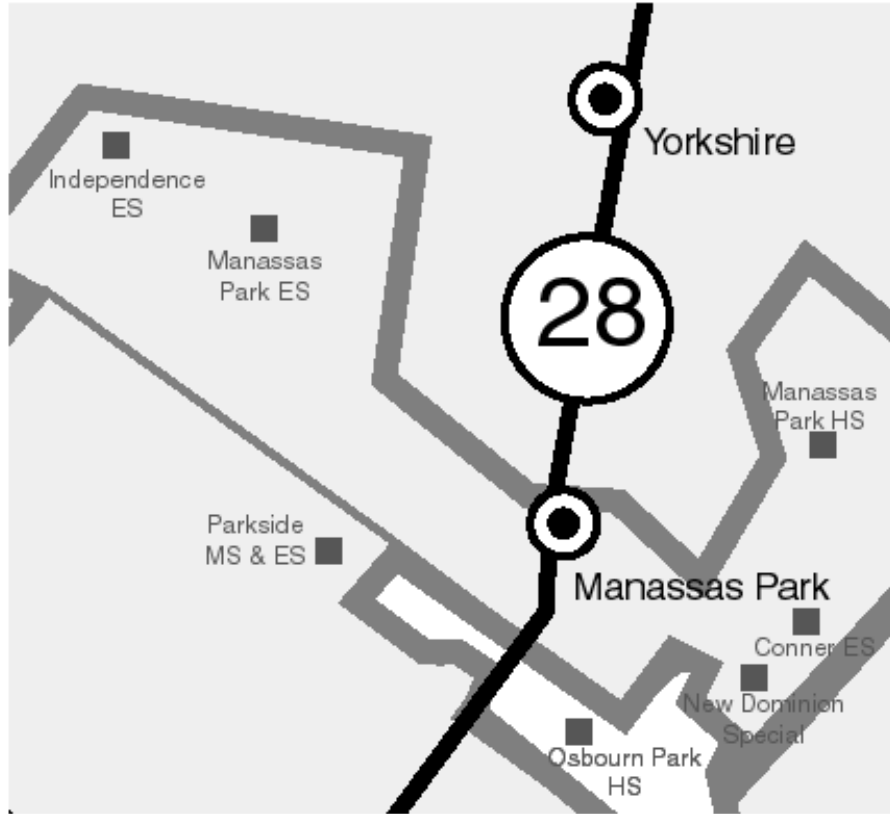
# Appendix F

## Map 1-A



Appendix F

Map 1-B



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**DAVID G. MELTON**  
**71 Rhett Butler Drive**  
**Bumpass, Virginia 23024**

**Education:** Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies  
August 1997  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

M.Ed. School Administration  
Graduated August 1987  
James Madison University, Harrisonburg Va.

B.A. Health and Physical Education  
Graduated August 1976  
Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, Va.

**Educational Experience:**

Superintendent of Schools  
Louisa County Public Schools - 1998  
Mineral, Virginia

Associate Superintendent of Schools  
Manassas Park City Schools - 1992-1998  
Manassas Park, Virginia

Acting Superintendent  
Manassas Park City Schools - June 1995 - August 1995  
Manassas Park, Virginia

Assistant Principal, Gar-Field Senior High School  
Prince William County Schools - 1991-1992  
Manassas, Virginia

Principal, Manassas Park High School  
Manassas Park City Schools - 1989-1991  
Manassas Park, Virginia

Classroom teacher and coach, Lexington High School  
Rockbridge County Schools - 1980 - 1988  
Lexington, Virginia

Classroom teacher and coach, Natural Bridge High School  
Rockbridge County Schools - 1977 - 1980  
Lexington, Virginia

**Certification:**

Commonwealth of Virginia Division Superintendent License  
Effective July 1, 1997 to June 30, 2002

Virginia Postgraduate Professional Certificate with endorsements: secondary principal; elem  
health & P.E. 8-12; driver education.  
Good through 7/1/2001.

**Professional Organizations:**

National Association of Secondary School Principals - 1988-1995  
Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals - 1988-1995  
Virginia High School League, Bull Run District Principals - 1988-1991  
Chairman, Bull Run District Principals - 1990-1991  
Vice Chairman, Bull Run District Principals - 1989-1990  
Leadership Team, Manassas Park City Schools 1992-present  
Region IV Key Instructional Leaders - 1992-present  
Northern Virginia Test Directors - 1992-1995  
Virginia Association of Test Directors - 1992- present  
Virginia Association of School Business Officials - 1992-1994  
Virginia Middle School Association - 1992-1994  
Advisory Board, M.D.-IPA Health Insurance Company - 1992-1996  
Virginia Association of School Personnel Administrators - 1992-present  
American Association of School Administrators - 1992-present  
Virginia Assoc., Supervision and Curriculum Development - 1994-present  
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development - 1994-present  
Coordinating Committee, George Mason University School Based Masters Program  
- 1992-present

**Workshops Conducted:**

Cooperative Learning  
Critical Thinking  
Whole Language  
Hazardous Materials Awareness Training  
Drug Awareness  
Effective Schools  
Bus Driver Training

Interpretation of Virginia State Assessment Program  
School Safety and Security

**Publications:**

Technical Reports and Manuals

**Community Service:**

Manassas Church of the Brethren Church Board - 1994-1997  
Manassas Area Soccer Association Coach -1993-1994  
Greater Manassas Baseball League Coach - 1998  
Baldwin Elementary School PTA - 1992-present  
United Way of Prince William County,  
    Campaign Coordinator for Manassas Park City Schools - 1992-present  
    Campaign Coordinator for Manassas Park High School - 1988-91  
Prince William County Youth Services Board - 1992-present  
Baldwin Oaks Homeowner's Association - 1989-present  
Prince William County Personnel Appeals Board Chairman - 1995-1996

**Leisure Interests:**

Reading  
Physical Fitness and sports  
Family Activities  
Woodworking

**Awards and Honors:**

Deans List, Bridgewater College  
Lambda Society, Bridgewater College  
Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award - 1991