

Dr. Stan Miller, 5/24/02  
Interviewers Josh Merrick and Moses Mendoza  
CHS Museum Series

The following interview was conducted on behalf of the oral history program of Century High School. The interviewee is Dr. Stan Miller. The interviewers are Moses Mendoza and Josh Merrick. The interview took place at Century High School on Friday, May twenty-fourth, at one o'clock.

Josh: I guess, first off, can you explain to us a little bit about what you did, how you were involved in Century High School?

Miller: Okay, well, basically I spent a chunk off my time as Deputy Superintendent from, actually starting in about 1990, which was the first time that we got a group of people together to start talking about the need for additional school space, until the end of 1995 when Phil Barnakoff took over the planning process. And during that time I was involved in two or three task forces that proposed bond issues, I mean I don't know how much background you guys have about all that occurred prior to the time that, you know, we had the money to build Century High School, but it took a while. It took three to four years. I was involved in the very beginning. I chaired the very first task force in 1990 when we began talking about the need for a new school facility, and then when the bond was approved, my primary responsibility became organizing and facilitating the planning for Century High School. As a matter of fact, I retired mid-year between the '94-'95 school year and then the district re-employed me on contract for the second half of the year, and all I did was work on the planning for this school. So, what part do you want to talk about?

Josh: Well, we've been told that you were Program Coordinator, is that the right title?

Miller: That's probably the title I had, you know, when the, when the bond was approved, the Superintendent said why don't you take this on as your responsibility and then let me know how much else you can do, and so it became my primary responsibility from that point on.

Josh: What are some problems that you had to overcome in, I mean organizing the whole thing must have been somewhat of a nightmare. What are some big issues that, maybe boundary issues or money issues, that had to be overcome?

Miller: Well the money issue was a big one. I don't know how familiar you are with the history of the effort, but we originally had a task force that proposed a, ah, a fifty-eight million dollar bond back in the early '90s that would have impacted all three high schools. In addition to building this school, it would have added on at Hilhi and it would have added on at Glencoe. Were you aware of that?

Josh: No, could you...

Miller: Well, I'll tell you what, I'll give you more propaganda than you ever needed...here's an explanation of it right in there, 58 million dollars tells you exactly what it would have paid for, ah that one was defeated by about 8,000 votes. And so the next time we set up a task force, that task force said we need to look at other ways of getting the job done without a new building. It's pretty obvious the district doesn't want to pay for a new building, and so we spent months looking at year round school. Went to year round school conferences, I spent a big chunk of time going to districts that were on year round schools. I mean we thought that going to year round school that takes 25% of all the students in the district and has them at school at any particular time so you increase the capacity of the facilities that you have by 25%. We went and looked at that, Phil Barnekoff and I went to conferences and we went to districts that were doing it. We looked at extended school days, we looked at renting space in the community, we looked at converting Thomas Jr. High, which as you know was at one time a high school back to a high school. I mean, we spent a lot of time "wheel spinning", if you will, looking at other alternatives. We had a public relations firm come in and do a survey, asking a lot of questions and I have a copy of that which I will give to you. So the big issue, and then the bond that was approved was approved in September of '94, so that was the biggest problem. And by the way, the initial school, here's the public survey results, we had Mark Nelson and associates come in to the district in the spring of '94 and do a public opinion survey. I'll just give you that.

Josh: Thank you.

Miller: The original school, you're familiar with the CIM & the CAM, well the original school, when we were talking about it in concept, we were going to organize around those 6 clusters that are a part of the certificate of advanced mastery. So there would be an area in the school dedicated to health careers, and there would be another one that would be dedicated to business careers and so on. And that kind of a format was going to drive the whole organization of the school. And of course, that was the part of the bond that went down. And we came back and started over again, basically bottom up, with a big, once the bond was approved so most of the planning for the school that actually was built, was done by staff. So the biggest problem was the money. We had some problems with the site, because it drained so poorly. We had to do a significant amount of tiling which cost some additional money, particularly over on the corner back here which was just a muck. What other significant problems?

Josh: How about the boundary issue? Bussing people?

Miller: You know the boundary issue, you mean reconfiguring the high school attendance area? Mr. Barnekoff --that wasn't part of, see I was early-on...construction hadn't begun yet but I got out of it at the end of '95. Although most of the planning that had been done that resulted in the school that was built was done during the time I was the program manager. Very few changes. Another problem was that we had to make some significant deletions because of finances. The largest of which was in

the main gym, there was supposed to be a teaching station behind where the bleachers are, that would have been at a floor level of about 20 feet you know that big high wall, there would have been a PE teaching station in there that would have been used by dance team and rally, and those groups and that was one of the eliminations we made and just made that wall solid and took that out. But those were the big ones, and once you get the money I think the rest of it went pretty straight forwardly. I was also involved in the building of Glencoe High school and I mean, other than some small challenges, I thought this went real well. We had a good architectural firm, the same one that designed Liberty High school.

Moses: Now on the other hand, what were some of the greatest achievements or satisfactions on the project?

Miller: There were a couple things that we did that were different. The biggest thing that we did that was different was that we de-centralized the science facility. As you know, you go to most traditional high schools, their science departments are someplace and there's a cluster of rooms there and we decided in our wisdom that science related to everything and that science labs needed to be dispersed throughout the building. That wasn't real popular with science teachers, in fact, they were not supportive of it at all because they felt if we fragmented them and took them out of contact with one another, it would be harder to do the supply part of what happens in chemistry and physics and biology. But we did that and I think it's worked well. The second thing was the technology lab. Remember, when we built Glencoe High School, we basically replicated Hilhi. There was a metal shop, a traditional metal shop, and a traditional automotive shop at Hilhi and we replicated those facilities at Glencoe and that was the state of the art as far as high school industrial education at that time. And when we came out here, we went completely away from that. There's no metal shop here, there's no wood shop here, no automotive shop here. What you have is the technology lab which is focused on 21<sup>st</sup> century technology. That was new, and I think it was well received and popular with students and I think it was very rewarding as part of the planning process. The other thing we did here I called CMGC. Have you ever heard of CMGC?

Josh & Moses: No.

Miller: Traditionally in building schools you did a traditional bid, in other words, the architectural firm drew up a set of specifications and then you went out and you had construction firms bid how much they would charge you to build a school to those specifications. Well what happens when you do that is you end up with the lowest bidder. The lowest bidder has always cut his profit margin down to about there, that's why he's the lowest. And you become an adversary with that contractor, because he's always wanting to submit change orders to get more dollars into the situation. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Josh: Yeah.

Miller: CMGC—it's called construction manager general contractor. And what we did here for the first time is we went out and interviewed a series of contractors before there were any specifications and just talked with them about their philosophy, about their track record and experience, about how much they would charge, and we hired a firm based on that process. And so they became part of our team. They became part of "our side" rather than part of the "other side". Even when we did it, there was a legal question about whether you could do that, but nobody ever challenged it. And now, all schools, that's the standard procedure, but at that time, that was cutting edge stuff. So once you get that out of the way, the contractor is working with you to minimize construction costs rather than looking for ways to charge you more, to get the profit margin increased. So that just makes the process a lot more smoother from that point on.

Moses: probably increases the quality of the school?

Miller: Oh I think no question about it. I think it's a better school without question, than it would have been, had we gone the traditional way.

Josh: As it all started coming together, what did you see, what was your vision of what CHS would be?

Miller: Here were the priorities and I'll give you these. We wanted to spend, here's what we thought would be a little different focus for this school as opposed to the other two: More emphasis on interaction between the school and the community and business. The whole time, we recognized the way of the future was for more involvement on the part of the community, particularly the business community. We talked about that as one of the things we wanted to build into the design. This school (Hilhi's designed for about 1450 I think and Glencoe about 1550) this one's designed for about 1850 although that doesn't include the computer labs so actually there's classroom space here for 2000 and you're probably close to that. How many do you have this year?

Josh and Moses: Around 2100.

Miller: Yeah, there you go, but we built it for 1850. So we said this school has got to be more designed around moving large numbers of people. You know, we talked about "grand avenues" and corridors down here and as we went to schools, we tried to find and visit schools that had dealt with the logistics of handling large numbers of kids because you know, this school is gonna have 3 or 400 more kids and now the way it's worked out, it's more than that. But that was a very important part of it. Interdepartmental communication. Hilhi's all built around departmental... Hilhi is a very departmentalized school, in fact every building out there is campus style and every building out there is basically a department. Everybody agreed over time that that compartmentalizes learning. That the social studies people sit over here and the business people sit over here and the language arts people sit over here, and there isn't a good flow of communication back and forth. And so here you've got

the large interdepartmental labs, all the teachers are together. And you don't have nearly as much compartmentalization of departments, where you have a clearly defined social studies department here and a clearly defined math department here. We really talked a lot about trying to break that down. Integrating conceptual learning with applied learning, getting labs closer to where they can support what was going on in the classroom. Everybody knew that the way of the future would be learning the theory in the classroom and you learn to apply it in the lab, and so having the labs way off in some area wasn't going to work, that they needed to be in where they could be used in conjunction with the traditional classrooms, and the best example of that is, as I said, the science classrooms. Integrate student services with administration. At Glencoe attendance and those functions are up on the second floor and the administration is downstairs and everybody wanted to break that down, and that's why you have administration, attendance, counseling right there in that concentrated little constellation there with a lot of opportunity for movement back and forth between the three. Those were the big ones.

Moses: I've heard about, or at least read in the original documentation, about basically comprehensive learning pods throughout the school. Like a certain wing would be... could you kind of explain that?

Miller: Well, that was the, remember, when we started planning this school, the state department of education was first coming out with school renewal, which at that time was the certificate of initial mastery and the certificate of advanced mastery. And so we decided that if that was going to be what the educational programming, you guys know what a CAM is, you gotta get out, to get a diploma, if it ever happens, you've got to be certified with a certain amount of course work in a certain vocational area, right, to go out and seek an entry level job in that area, or go on into advanced learning in that area. So, every student's going to be expected to have some specialization within their high school program, so we decided if that was the way of the future then that was the way high schools needed to be built. Like I said, the first conceptual model that we build, and I think you have a picture of it in there, said we'll take those six clusters, well there they are. See that was, you see this right down here, you've got these three clusters, you've got the humanities cluster, the applied science cluster, and a health cluster. Okay, that'd be on one floor. The other three, the business cluster and whatever the other two were, would be up on the second floor. You walk down the corridor, here'd be the health cluster, here'd be where the students specializing in health would hang out. Health and allied vocations. Here would be the Humanities and that would be the organizational learning that would drive the way this school was going to be set up. I mean that would really have been different. Well what we salvaged from that was the decentralized labs, otherwise we went back to something that looks more traditional. Although you're still much less traditional than Hilhi, and even less traditional than Glencoe, which is still pretty much a departmentalized school. A separate science wing and so on. That's what it was, it was going to be those six areas that were pretty much going to drive where students spent their time their junior and senior year.



Moses: Now were you worried perhaps about elitism or competition developing between groups specializing in one certain area, like obviously if you have an advanced placement history class, the intelligence caliber perhaps is a little higher than that of the regular junior English. Were you worried about...

Miller: Not really, and here's why. If you're taking six classes, then three or four of those are going to be academic classes and everybody's going to be taking those together, so you're gonna... In Your language arts, or your math, probably in math, you're gonna be with students specializing in any other cluster, but then for the other half day, you're gonna go over to the health area, or the humanities area, or to the whatever area. And some of the students in that cluster will be college bound, some will be looking to articulate right into community college, others will be looking to go right out into the job market. But They'll all be there because they're all interested in that cluster of jobs. Does that make any sense conceptually? In terms of how we were thinking?

Josh and Moses: Yeah.

Josh: We've talked quite a bit about how Glencoe and Hilhi are different from Century, how do you think the community has perceived that difference, when Century is compared to Hilhi or Glencoe?

Miller: You know, I can't answer that because I got out of it before Century was built and I don't think I've had enough... Plus the fact that what tends to happen is... Well I don't even know if that's true. I won't say that either. You know, people are so adaptable, you adapt to whatever's there. You know, I wonder, I really wonder how aware the Century constituency, the Parents even know about what's going on at Hilhi or Glencoe, what's really different. I mean, when my son was in high school, I knew what was going on at his school because I'd go there and talk to him and I knew his teachers, and so on. I didn't know a whole lot about the other schools. So I don't know if there could be a clearly definable community reaction, maybe there is, but I'm not aware of it. And the other thing is that I think we ended up with enough of a, ah, I mean we took a step, a major step away from a traditional layout, but there are some traditional things about Century high School, it's not a complete departure, it's sort of a baby step away. So I don't know if anybody would look out here, in terms of the way the school's turned out, and feel like there'd been a drastic departure from traditional.

Moses: If any, what were the original concerns regarding the socioeconomic status of Century High School, or potential SES compared to the other schools?

Miller: Minimal, because we felt that the geographic locations of the three schools were such that we could reorganize attendance boundaries just about any way we wanted. As a matter of fact Reedville, I think one of the things that happened was all of the Reedville parents figured they'd be out here, and that didn't happen. You know, some areas out here on the East side still go to Hilhi. But I think one of the things

that made the site attractive, and I was with the district when we came out here, I remember when we brought the school board out here one summer evening and drove around the site when we were thinking about buying it, one of the things we were talking to board members about was it was close enough we could still have pretty much any constituency we want or close enough to Hillsboro we can have a group of inner city kids come out here, ya know, the location of the three high in relation to how the district is laid out, will give us a whole lot of flexibility in terms of setting up those attendance boundaries. So I don't think that was ever a big issue that we were building a school of necessity would have to be socio-economically different from the other schools.

Moses: Are you involved in the planning of Liberty High School?

Miller: No.

Moses: Well, in your involvement in the planning of Century, say you were involved in planning Liberty, what advice would you give to the planning team?

Josh: What are some things you'd want to change about Century?

Moses: Because, the plan for Liberty is obviously based somewhat on the original plans for Century.

Miller: Well, I'll tell you the biggest thing I would have reservations about. We came out here with a changed school day format, we came out here with the block of time programs in place. And I think it put a lot of stress on staff. Just occupying a new building for the first time in the fall of the first year is a huge undertaking. When you superimpose on that a whole new way of organizing instruction, does this make any sense, for teachers, I'll tell you, that's a big, big... and it's one of those things that was most often mentioned by staff out here. What a stressful year the first year was, so I think, and I don't even know what they're planning at Liberty in terms of the school day format, but, well I guess everybody's supposed to go to trimesters, but I think that, I believe that I would strongly consider not imposing that additional change, leave it a year. You might decide something different, say you'll have a planning year, we'll open the school and run it just as we did...and that's easy to do because you don't typically come into a new school with a senior class. So you bring your freshman and sophomores over and if you've got block of time or whatever, make that a planning year for that. That's one thing that I would do different. What else would we do different? That's a good question. Let's see. Another thing that I might try and do different... You know most of the staff who were involved in planning this school did not get assigned to this school. I think it was less than half. We didn't select them on that basis. We selected them on the basis of good people who wanted to come help plan a new school. Now a lot of them came because they were interested in moving. But I'd think you'd be better off, I think there would be some good argumentation that could be made for selecting those staff who are going to occupy the building the following fall. So

you don't have teacher A. planning a facility, like Mr. Allen is a good example, because that's a very specialized area. Think about if he plans it and then here comes along teacher B to teach in that space saying how'd this get here and why's this here? Why isn't this this way. So I think that that's something I... When we had to make cuts, we weren't prepared to make them. We would have been better off, I'm going way back now, but we'd have been better off if we'd have prioritized some things all the way along in saying, if we have to give something up, here's what we'll give up. Because when the time came and we had to do that, it was tough to do because we'd bought into everything, we had ownership for every square foot. That could have been done better.

Josh: And when those cuts were made, maybe you could, you mentioned the gym...

Miller: That was the big one and I know there were a couple of others but that sort of happened when I was getting out and I don't remember. That was the major one. Well we had to make some changes in the exterior of the building. I think the, well the four foot contrasting color that's a different material down there. And we saved some dollars by not doing the brick all the way down to the ground. See what I'm saying, just those strips there.

Josh and Moses: Uh huh.

Miller: It saved some time, and I don't think they've detracted from the appearance of the building.

Moses: Oh not at all.

Miller: But they weren't there until we, and we had to cut a lot of windows. And we made some significant changes in the media center. But the real big loss was the loss of that additional teaching station in the gym.

Josh: You mentioned cutting windows. Mr. Barnakoff mentioned yesterday that one of the big goals was to have a lot of natural light throughout the building.

Miller: That's because of Glencoe.

Josh: Glencoe.

Miller: See at Glencoe you've got interior classrooms out there, about fifteen, that don't have any windows. And so, see, you've got to think about it guys. Here's what happens, you go to build a new school, you select staff who are in the existing two schools, so half of them come with all the biases about the building they're working in currently. Okay, so when we got people together, the big planning issues were, Glencoe staff said don't have any classrooms that don't have windows, and Hilhi staff said don't build these isolated departments where nobody interacts with anyone outside of your department, so those became overriding themes and that's



why, half those people were from Glencoe, and so that's why the natural light was major, and it was a major issue. We talked about that all the time. But we ended up reducing some windows as a cost saving device later on. I still don't think there are any classrooms out here that don't have some windows. Are there?

Moses: I think there's one computer lab. And that's it.

Miller: Yeah. That was a big, big thing.

Josh: Moses, you got something?

Moses: I had something, but I can't remember.

Josh: While Moses is trying to remember the question, is there anything we haven't asked you yet or that you haven't mentioned that you would like to tell us. Because we'd love to hear anything you've got.

Miller: I don't know that there was. Here, I'll leave you stuff that I'll never need again.

Moses: Thanks.

Miller: Oh I'll tell you what was a big deal in the planning for this that I forgot to mention. Computer labs. That was the other applied versus... that we did with all the computer labs out here. That was a big, big expense. But we, and we were really apprehensive about it while we were incorporating the whole, and I don't know how many there are, there's eleven or twelve aren't there. I mean there's a lot of computer labs at this school. Well you go to Glencoe and there's one. I guess now they've started another one but they had to rob class space to do it. But, I remember how strongly convinced we were that the school of the future that computer technology was going to relate to everything. So they just had to be there. And then the other one was having that lecture room up stairs, was having a flexible space for large group instructions. That was another one that teachers at both schools said. You know we did these simulations were we say to staff 'if you could add one feature to Glencoe High School, what would it be?' The you take the top three or four choices and start processing those. Well computer labs was probably number one, but another high priority was somewhere we could bring a speaker in and get three or four classes together, because you don't have that at either of the other high schools. Well, you could use the auditorium at Glencoe. At that time you didn't have an auditorium at Hilhi. But it was a lecture space where you could have overheads and all that. That was another something that was new and different and something of a departure from the tradition for us. The other thing we dropped was ninth and tenth grade neighborhoods. You know the whole issue of bringing ninth graders back into the high school was something we spent a lot of time talking about. And since we knew block of time programming was part of the future, we talked about ways where ninth and tenth graders could be in the same area together. In other words you come in as a ninth grader and be assigned to a

block of two-hundred and fifty ninth and tenth graders and you'd be in an area of the school, a neighborhood we called them where the same staff, the same staff teaching the ninth and tenth grade requireds would be in that area. So you'd have some continuity of instruction and you'd those students in an area where the other students in that they'd be in contract with would be the same over a two year period. And we had to drop that. We just couldn't make it work. I mean we decided that the decentralization of the science labs and the inclusion of the computer labs, those tied us in to a format, as far as how we needed to use space and we just couldn't make the other one happen. So we, but that conceptually was part of what we talked a lot about during the planning process. I can't think of anything else.

Moses: Well that concludes it.

Josh: Thank you very much.

Moses: Yes, thank you very much.

Miller: My pleasure.