



ODYSSEY

CITY OF SAN BERNARDINO
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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EDITOR'S COLUMN

STURGES Junior High School, whose buildings still stand on the south-west corner of 8th & "E" Streets, was a veritable melting pot of races, creeds and colors, during its heydays in the late 1920's and 1930's. No segregation here -- everyone mingled together and its teachers laid down the law. You either studied and obeyed their commands or were out on your ear.

It was laughingly called "Sturges Penitentiary" when I attended from 1931-33. But looking back, one can see why it was so dubbed, for its two-story class rooms rather resembled cell-blocks, while the large rear playground was encircled by a 6-foot high chain-link fence whose gates were padlocked from the start of morning classes until the final buzzer sounded in the afternoon.

Grades ran from 7th through 9th and each one was broken down into groups designated "A", "B", and "C". The "A" classes were composed of the smarter kids -- scions of wealthy families and teacher's pets included -- while the others were filled with average students, with a few delinquents thrown in for good measure.

Many times we fought our way into school or out of it. My first black eye came as the result of an altercation inside its hallowed walls and although I was never a fighter, either then or now, one had to put up his dukes now or then or be ridiculed out of school.

Marble games erupted all over the playground between classes and lunch hour. Everyone participated -- most fair and square. But there were a few bullies who ran in "steelies" (ball bearings) which cracked and broke their opponent's glass or agate marbles and if one objected he chanced mayhem.

Sturges put out a monthly paper called the "Bee Hive," written by students, usually the 9th graders, but it often missed an issue now and then when one came out with a few shady words or a slur against one of the faculty members and its publication was suspended as a result.

Girls also attended Sturges, but oddly

(Continued on Page 26)