

for Don Morris, Chair, Faculty-Staff Memories  
from Loren Nicholson

It was unlike my office mate, John Healey, to call me at home on a Sunday morning unless something serious demanded it. He was always deeply involved with his boys and their sports activities on weekends. He and Peggy lived with their three sons in Atascadero.

That Sunday was different. The afternoon before, Saturday, Oct. 29, 1960, the charter plane carrying Cal Poly's football team had crashed in take-off at the airport in Toledo, Ohio, killing 15 team members and its student manager. Nearly all others were injured. That afternoon, our team had played Bowling Green State University. To add to the tragedy, Cal Poly lost the game. Assistant Coach Howie O'Daniels was seriously injured and would be hospitalized for months. Assistant Coach Sheldon Hardin escaped unscathed, pulling players out as quickly as he could. He was hero of the day.

"We need to get out an issue of Mustang by tomorrow morning to inform the students, faculty and staff about what happened. Can you call some of our journalism majors and come over and help?" John said in a tired voice. John knew most of the players and all of the coaches well. In addition to his teaching duties, he still wrote sports stories for Cal Poly.

I had worked for newspapers and magazines before joining the teaching staff in the Journalism Department at Cal Poly. I had also dealt with crisis deadlines. So, I readily joined John, adviser to the editorial side of Mustang and former sports editor of the San Jose News. Journalism students came dribbling in after our calls, and we began a tough search to find head shots of all players, confirming their individual status.

We had to keep in mind that we were preparing a newspaper for distribution the next morning. I no longer have a copy of that issue, but I recall the start of our front page story, hoping to be up-to-the-minute. John dictated it. I wrote it. 'Campus flags flew at half-mast today.'

As we wrote, we also contacted the Telegram-Tribune for Associated Press and United Press updates out of Bowling Green and Toledo. The state of some players conditions, as reported, kept changing. We waited. We didn't dare be wrong.

The administration of the college informed us that there would be a memorial service on Tuesday in the gymnasium. We were also informed that calls were coming in from news media across the country. Our faculty offices, our darkrooms and the Mustang student newspaper office with typewriters were opened to all journalists needing it. Our students and faculty readily played host and guides to all comers. There were no computers. We still used mostly portable typewriters.

Out of all the collective grief that prevailed across the campus, our students were gaining experience that we could never offer in the classroom. Students trailed reporters and watched the

national media at work: Life Magazine, Associated Press, Los Angeles and San Francisco newspaper reporters were all present for the massive. Life magazine did an extraordinary campus-wide picture story of the event. Stern Magazine, a leading publication in Germany, also sent one of its photo-journalists.

Fresno State College played a memorial game with Hancock college on our team's behalf. Bowling Green State University also held a memorial service. As injured players recovered, one by one, they found welcoming friends on campus among both fellow students and faculty. It took years afterward to build another team. Cal Poly's 1960-61 yearbook, El Rodeo, was dedicated to those members of the team who were killed in the crash.

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Coaching the 1960 Mustang team were, left to right: Walt Williamson, Sheldon Hardin, Howie O'Daniels, and head coach Roy B. Hughes.



JOE COPELAND  
Center

GUY HENNIGAN  
Tackle

VIC HALL  
Halfback

CURTIS HILL  
End

MARSHALL KULJU  
Halfback





LARRY AUSTIN  
End

GARY VAN HORN  
Halfback



ROD BAUGHIN  
Tackle

WAYNE SORENSON  
Quarterback



JOHN BELL  
Halfback

BILL STEWART  
End

RAY PORRAS  
Fullback



DEAN CARLSON  
Halfback



YNN LOBAUGH  
Guard

JIM LEDBETTER  
Center

WENDELL MINER  
Manager

DON O'MEARA  
Fullback

