where I was taught.
“The Polygram is now entering upon the second year of its existence with the question, shall it live and become the official school paper, or shall it die a lingering death from the disease of non-support,” wrote Raymond Herr, editor of the first student newspaper on Cal Poly grounds. The year was 1916 and Herr’s goal was to keep the small publication afloat.

The Mustang Daily’s predecessor, the Polygram, was a four-page publication filled with jokes, announcements and editorialized reports. The paper reflected its readership: high-schoolers. Its pages tell the story of how the Central Coast high school became a polytechnic university and how the nature of the writers, students and teachers changed along with the institution.

Even though the 1910s through 1920s were decades of war and depression, there was no direct coverage in the Polygram of news events. But history was reflected with every story, joke, poem, letter and cartoon published.

But as the U.S. involvement in the war intensified in the 1910s, staple stories on football games and campus antics gave way to profiles of students who had joined up in the military effort.

Arthur Mooney’s obituary in the Polygram, marked the beginning of a mourning period in the Polytechnic’s history. Many students had voluntarily joined the war efforts, and although none died in battle, they were consumed by influenza and pneumonia in the training camps. Illness soon spread throughout the state affecting the entire population.

“In almost every town in California, schools have been compelled to dismiss their students for periods ranging from two, to six, or even seven weeks...the (preventative) masks have been a discomfort...but they are necessary in periods of quarantine,” an article read in the Polygram issue of Nov. 27, 1918.

Influenza finally reached Poly after the winter break of 1919. For a few publications, sections of the front page were devoted to those who had died at war or at home due to illness.

By the early 1920s, the school had been officially declared a California Polytechnic. The paper made wide use of pictures, ads, a full editorial staff. Subscriptions increased from 5 to 10 cents per year.

One event that was announced with importance in the Polygram was the school’s switch to a vocational junior college. The banner headline read “Poly to be first Vocational J. C.,” (Polygram, April 28, 1927), the first vocational junior college in California.

Women at Cal Poly were an acknowledged presence on campus, but were truly treated as the weaker sex.

Quick notes in the Polygram often complimented the “misses” on their latest picnic or on their support for the war effort: “Girls in the domestic science classes have been doing a lot toward conserving fruits and vegetables,” (the Polygram, Oct. 9, 1918).

Simple rhymes included in the paper for entertainment reflected the cultural attitudes of the time.

The following rhyme appeared in the Jan. 21, 1920, issue of the Polygram: “How about this?/A boy, a book/A girl, a look/Books neglected/Flunk expected.”

Another rhyme, “Bit o’ Life/A kiss, a sigh, a long goodbye, and he is gone/A glance, a curl, another girl, and life goes on.”

Cal Poly felt the effects of the unstable economy several times throughout the decade, but not as much as towards the end of the 1920s, when female students were banned and the school almost shut down.

“As the Great Depression lingered and deepened after the stock market crash in October 1929, Cal Poly was at the most precarious points of its short history. The academic courses were eliminated and the junior college abolished,” (Cal Poly, The First Hundred Years, pg. 35-36).

By the first day of class in June 1930, the state legislature and Gov. C.C. Young had banned females from enrolling and studying at the school. This move eliminated the need to improve female dorms or maintain a household arts curriculum. The motivation was to reduce expenses at all cost.

None of the articles in the paper after the 1929 legislature reflected the decision to ban a portion of the student body. Neither was there news in the Polygram about the failing economy and possible budget cuts.

The decision was repealed in 1937, but most women did not find out about their eligibility until the 1950s, when a Polygram headline read “Enrollment expected at 4,000, Skirts 250.”

The Mustang Daily's predecessor, the Polygram, was a four-page publication filled with jokes, announcements and editorialized reports. The paper reflected its readership: high-schoolers. Its pages tell the story of how the Central Coast high school became a polytechnic university and how the nature of the writers, students and teachers changed along with the institution.
The stock market crash of 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression placed Cal Poly at the most precarious time in its history. In 1932, the college was given the ultimatum to either prove itself as an institution that distinguished itself from other schools or be shut down altogether. Ultimately, it would be the “learn by doing” philosophy that solidified Cal Poly’s place among the other California institutions.

The “Suzzallo Report” to the legislature recommended that Cal Poly be abolished as an educational institution. It stated, “...not only was the cost per student excessively high at [Cal Poly], but the institution was not performing functions which differed from those carried out by many California junior colleges and high school.”

President Benjamin Crandall resigned out of frustration. His successor, Julian A. McPhee, fought to keep Cal Poly open, but this time, as a vocational school with a unique philosophy.

But while administrators struggled to keep Cal Poly open, insufficient funds and no advisor led to the shut down of the school’s newspaper, The Polygram, in the spring of 1932. The absence of a school newspaper for six years made getting campus news a challenge. Many important events were relayed to students through word of mouth or through other off-campus, local publications.

Former President Robert Kennedy said that since McPhee had kept his job at the bureau the whole time, he was also able to lobby on the school’s behalf.

“McPhee was very good at lobbying,” Kennedy said. “He was able to encourage the state legislature to support the institution in a way that they had not done before.”

McPhee was ultimately able to convince the legislature that Cal Poly was different from any other school in the state for another reason: the “learn by doing” philosophy. According to “Cal Poly, The First Hundred Years,” a book chronicling the history of the college, McPhee also remained committed to the “...upside-down” approach, which in the 1930s meant class instruction in the mornings and hands-on work in the afternoons in field, shops, or labs.

In his state office, McPhee helped to legalize pari-mutuel wagering at horse racing tracks in California in 1933. Kennedy said McPhee understood that the profits were needed for both the public and the school. The “first balance” went to finance the state and county fair, and then the “second balance” was split between the Davis and Cal Poly campuses.

According to the “State of California Budget for the Biennium,” between 1937 and 1939, 55 percent of Cal Poly’s funds came from pari-mutuel receipts. According to “Cal Poly, The First Hundred Years,” despite the on-going Depression that reduced enrollment on most college campuses, under McPhee’s leadership, Cal Poly’s student body grew from 117 in 1933 to 493 by the 1937-1938 year.

In 1936, McPhee began talking to members of the Board of Education about granting Cal Poly the right to offer a four-year bachelor’s degree, Kennedy said.

“It had become pretty obvious that a bachelor’s degree was a necessary thing to have for a certain level of employment,” Kennedy said.

But while McPhee favored offering bachelor’s degrees, he didn’t favor letting the school’s newspaper begin printing again. Kennedy said McPhee...
was reluctant to let the students criticize him. Still, on Nov. 4, 1938, a headline proclaimed, “Cal Poly Publishes First Newspaper In Six Years.” Originally called The Polygram, the newspaper was now called El Mustang.

One article read, “Today... is a memorable day in the history of the California State Polytechnic; for with this student body publication to aid in the realization of greater things for the school and the student body in general, there is nothing to stand in the way of ‘Poly’s Progress.’”

According to the El Mustang, it was student body president Harry Wineroth who ultimately convinced McPhee to approve the re-publication of the newspaper.

One of the first missions of the El Mustang was to inform Cal Poly students of the unprecedented changes that had taken place on campus over the six years of its absence. For example, the first Poly Royal was sponsored by the Future Farmers of America in 1933, and Amelia Earhart visited the campus in 1936 - two events Cal Poly students had not yet read about in the pages of their school publication.

El Mustang also informed students that Cal Poly had received its first million-dollar donation from Charles B. Voorhis “that established a southern unit that is in the heart of the citrus industry, teaching agriculture inspection and deciduous fruits.” It was the only campus at the time to have a southern branch: Cal Poly Pomona.

In 1939, El Mustang headlines included, “Aeronautics department will train airplane pilots,” “Sigma Phi Kappa fraternity to build first house at Poly as final plans take effect,” and “Largest enrollment in the history of Cal Poly.”

One Jan. 5, 1940, headline was especially significant. It was a direct result of McPhee’s actions on behalf of the school. It read, “School seeks power to give B.S. degree.” It was finally authorized in 1942.

The 1930s was a time of persistence and dedication to keep the school alive. It was a time when Julian McPhee chased the vision of an institution that would remain solid and would not falter in its quest to differentiate itself from other schools. His vision was that of a “learn by doing” philosophy, which other schools had not touched. In the end, McPhee saw his vision become a reality.

“We’ve always pushed the idea that Cal Poly was different,” Kennedy said. “Different in the sense of differences that make a difference.”

THERE was a time in Cal Poly history when male students had to leave campus to find dates. They even had to leave campus to find a queen for Poly Royal. For nearly 30 years, women were barred from enrolling at Cal Poly.

Considering the presence of women on campus today, this may sound surprising. Since the school opened in 1903, though, the role of women on campus has seen many changes.

From the first day of school in October 1903, women were an integral part of the institution. In 1906, four women made up 50 percent of the first graduating class. Today, 7,024 women make up 44.3 percent of the student population.

According to the book “Cal Poly, The First Hundred Years” by Nancy Loe, when Cal Poly opened in 1903, the attitude toward women started on a positive note. Leroy Anderson, the first director, tried to clarify the school’s position on the matter in the “San Luis Obispo Breeze,” a community publication.

...I trust that this will make it clear to all that girls will be fully welcomed in the school this first year, and I am sure we will be disappointed if no girls attend,” he said.

In the beginning, female students had to find housing off campus in boarding houses, while males lived in on-campus dorms. There were, however, activities on campus for women, such as basketball and women’s clubs. They also often worked in the library and as cooks on campus.

But, by 1928, enrollment, especially for women, had decreased so much that it was not considered economically feasible to support female programs. This prompted the state legislature to ban women from enrolling in 1929. For the next 27 years, women were absent from the campus.

There were some exceptions, including women who participated in war production training programs during World War II. Wives of male students and some staff and faculty members added to the list.

Former Cal Poly president Robert E. Kennedy said that the women in wartime programs took short courses such as welding, and that they surprised some of the males.

“The men on campus got a kick out of these women,” Kennedy said. “They weren’t the coeds they were expecting. Most were in their 30s or 40s and had husbands or boyfriends who were in the war.”

When husbands graduated, the school had a special distinction for their wives. These women received a PHT, or “Pushing Hubby Through,” degree for their support of their spouses.

Kennedy said no one took any great measures to allow women back into the school.

“At least 30 percent of all institutions of higher learning were all male or female at that time, but it was unusual for there to be a public, tax-supported institution that discriminated against women,” he said. “I think if a woman at that time had taken an action against it, there would have been a very interesting situation.”

He added that it was mainly local teachers who went to their legislator to change things. Most women at that time had to leave San Luis Obispo for their credentials, and the teachers thought Cal Poly should reinstate its programs.
Kennedy said some people thought allowing women to enroll once again would be disruptive.

"I had started asking Julian McPhee in 1940 how soon he was going to have girls here," he said. "One problem was the best way to keep the emphasis on the occupational side of the school was to keep it all male. McPhee thought if you had liberal arts for more girls, that would change the emphasis."

In 1947, legislation was signed that allowed women to enroll at Cal Poly again. However, those who knew about the policy change did not announce it.

"The repeal was one of the least publicized actions of the legislature, and McPhee didn't announce it," Kennedy said. He added that McPhee was waiting for additional money for more programs from the state before he officially let women return.

It wasn't until 1956 that McPhee was ready. That year, 197 women, mostly local, enrolled in the fall.

The presence of women on campus again brought some changes and concerns. Howard Brown, who graduated from Cal Poly in 1943 and went on to become a faculty member in the Ornamental Horticulture department, witnessed the changes.

"There was concern on the part of wives of students on campus," Brown said. "There was also the feeling that the boys might dress a little better and use better language. As it turned out, the girls dressed worse and used worse language."

But in the classroom, things worked out well, Brown said.

"The girls didn't expect any special treatment," he said. "They grabbed a wheelbarrow or shovel and did whatever needed to be done."

Marjory Martinson was hired in 1955 to plan the Home Economics department for the anticipated enrollment of female students.

"It was an opportunity for me, as well as the girls," she said. "I didn't think I had sense enough to start the department, but I really did. We grew to be one of the largest departments in the state. We had about 400 women when it was terminated in 1996."

Martinson said she thought the school benefited tremendously from women being there. She also said she thought most of the males were glad, too.

After the admission of those first women, their presence increased and changed greatly. By 1960s, people began witnessing some major changes in attitudes regarding women's behavior on campus.

During that time period, female students abided by guidelines for appearance and behavior that have since been abandoned.

"Campus Cues" was an informational pamphlet that instructed women on what to wear for specific occasions and for certain hours of the day. For example, the 1963-64 handbook gave suggestions such as:

"Dresses that are extreme will get you stares but few dates on the Poly campus," and "Remember, being casual is different from being careless about your dress."

In 1963, one of the most controversial events on campus was the suspension of three female students after they attended an off-campus fraternity party. According to an El Mustang article from Oct. 15, 1963, they were disciplined "because they went into a men's residence without their parents or college-approved chaperones," something they agreed not to do when they signed their residence hall contracts.

The event sparked huge debates on campus, as evidenced by newspaper articles and editorials from that year.

Over the course of the years, rules relaxed as social norms changed. The number of women also steadily increased.

Today, the numbers of women and men are much closer to equal. Women outnumber men in some of Cal Poly's individual colleges. According to Cal Poly statistics from 2000, women make up nearly 70 percent in the College of Liberal Arts. In the College of Science and Mathematics, women make up nearly 57 percent, and in the College of Agriculture, about 55 percent of students are women.

The role of women on campus has changed tremendously over the century. Today, women in leadership positions are a stark contrast to the times when women were not even allowed to take classes here. Along with the evolution of this institution from a high school to a highly respected university is the transformation in attitudes and behavior toward women.
The WAR That Changed US

JANA LARSEN

The 1940s began on an explosive note, with local news services relaying the horror of the war overseas. San Luis Obispo’s own military presence was increasing at Camp San Luis and Camp Roberts. To house the soldiers, Camp San Luis employed 2500 men to build a large expansion of the camp. Camp Roberts was in full swing as an Army base, and the California State Polytechnic School adapted to war times by including defense training for the military.

Suddenly, Cal Poly wasn’t just an “Ag” school anymore.

The tumultuous decade saw a small agricultural school double, then triple and then explode with students. At the beginning of the war, Cal Poly had approximately 300 students, and it grew steadily in size from there. Because the GI Bill provided many veterans the opportunity for a college education, enrollment hit a new high in January 1946 with 700 students. By spring term in 1946, enrollment more than doubled with 1500 men at Cal Poly.

Enrollment continued to increase and by September of 1947, there were 2500 men enrolled at Cal Poly. The class of 1949, with 272 graduates, was the largest graduating class in campus history. By the end of the decade, there were 2909 students enrolled and half of them were veterans, most of them obtaining a degree in agriculture or industrial science.

War notwithstanding, the decade began on a positive note for Cal Poly. Still a two-year school, students here had to leave San Luis Obispo in order to receive a four-year degree. In April 1940, Cal Poly was approved by the State Board of Education to become a four-year school, placing it on an equal rank with the state colleges.

On Dec. 7, 1941, the world changed forever with the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Cal Poly’s newspaper, El Mustang, rarely published world news, but the Dec. 8, 1941, issue was dedicated exclusively to the war, with the presidential address printed in full on the second page. The paper printed the blackout orders for Cal Poly students. The blackout signal was a three-minute blast on the fire siren.

On a lighter note, the El Mustang staff held a contest to rename the school newspaper in February 1941. With no entries, the editor decided to rename the paper, “The Polytechnic Californian.” The name lasted only a few terms, and by September, the staff decided to return to the name El Mustang.

In 1942, the El Mustang was forced to decrease publication because of the rationing of ink and paper. The newspaper was replaced by the Mustang Roundup Magazine throughout the war.

In fall term 1945, El Mustang returned with a new advisor; Robert E. Kennedy. By the end of the year, photography had been added to the El Mustang. The new college printing department and shop was up and running in 1947, with Bert Fellows as department head. For the first time, the El Mustang was printed on campus.

The El Mustang reported that President Julian A. McPhee was awarded the highest honor given in the field of vocational education in 1948, by being elected the national president of the American Vocational Association.

Another honor reported by the paper was the first honorary degree, given to State Senator Chris Jespersen in 1948.

The 1940s changed the world and the generation that lived through it. Soldiers returned home and immediately began the task of rebuilding their lives. Through the GI Bill, more of them were able to attend college than ever before.

In April 1947, the 57th Session of the California State Legislature changed California State Polytechnic School to the California State Polytechnic College. And finally at the end of 1948, Cal Poly was granted full-unrestricted accreditation as a four-year college.
In the years following the hardships of depression and World War II, Americans dreamed of living a slower, more conservative and positive lifestyle. The 1950s gave them just that. The economy was booming, and people were eager to find security in a once war-torn world.

Cal Poly's press was no different. Stories of agriculture and charity work filled the pages of the El Mustang. In 1951, four stories featured the birth of triplet lambs. And at least twice a year readers were treated to pictures of a queen and her court, presiding over Poly Royal and Homecoming.

Back then, "El Mustang was not too controversial," said Robert Flood, who steered the campus press as editor-in-chief in 1956.

It was not uncommon for newspapers to portray the decade as calm, yet by doing this, they were simultaneously neglecting the changing social currents beneath the placid surface. It was the time of the sexual revolution, the birth control pill and getting "wired" for television. Television would soon become a force so powerful that it would change the political and social makeup of the nation.

Although limited, articles concerning social change did appear in the pages of the El Mustang. On May 12, 1950, the headline of an article by Fred Hillman asked the question: "Should sex be taught?" Hillman's answer was yes.

Although these issues were touched on in the press, they were still outnumbered by one local issue that dominated the pages of the El Mustang: the return of women to Cal Poly.

In 1956, women came onto campus after an almost 27-year absence.

Cal Poly prepared for the women's return by adding course work in elementary education and the home economics program. Also, women were moved into the three oldest men's dormitories.

While the return of women had a significant impact on Cal Poly, there were more serious international issues for students. The Korean War forced 600 Cal Poly students to leave campus life behind and go to combat.

As the war went on, Cal Poly increased enrollment to compensate for the students-turned-soldiers. In 1951, Army officers visited campus to define the military programs available to Cal Poly students. Then, in 1952, the Reserve Officers Training Corps came to campus as a temporary duty station led by officers who were professors of military science.

Because of the war overseas, Camp San Luis Obispo was reactivated in 1950. This action displaced hundreds of Cal Poly students who lived there. In response, $1.2 million in funding was obtained so the college could build five new dormitories to accommodate the "homeless" students.

These new students and new dorms weren't the only new additions. Over the next two years, facilities for agricultural engineering, a dairy barn, an aeronautics hanger and a central-processing unit were also added to the campus.

Suddenly, in post-war America, Cal Poly gained attention in national publications, including Reader's Digest, the Christian Science Monitor and agricultural periodicals. Reader's Digest marveled that a Cal Poly student could bring his cow to school.

In the 1950s, Cal Poly's curriculum became the focus of attention as its 12 agriculture-based majors made Cal Poly home to the largest agricultural school in the western United States.

Although agriculture was prominent on campus, technology soon found its niche as well.

At the beginning of the decade, the engineering division had 25 students and 10 instructors.

As the decade rolled to a close, engineering was the college's largest division with 1,880 students (13 female).

In 1951, Cal Poly celebrated its semicentennial. In an article commemorating the event, Julian A. McPhee said, "You are here...as the guests of the men and women who, for a whole half-century, built toward the determination that this state's young people should have an opportunity to learn life by living, gain knowledge through actual experience, and secure a flying start. It is from their hands this week that you take the torch of inspiration."
President Baker, distinguished guests and soon-to-be graduates of the best university in the world:

Has a nice ring to it, huh?
This is an important day for all of you. You carry the hopes and dreams of a generation who worked, encouraged and nurtured you in preparation for this day.

This is the day that was thought of so many years ago by your parents and others who love you very much.
So, please, accept my congratulations for making it to this day.

This is also an important day for me.
Twenty-two years ago, when I graduated from Cal Poly, I was unable to take advantage of the opportunity to sit here—as you are today—and go through a commencement ceremony. The year was 1969, and—as I'm sure you've heard—we lived in a very different time. I had just completed the ROTC program and instead of sitting here in Mustang Stadium to get my diploma, I attended a brief commissioning ceremony. They slapped the bars of a second lieutenant on my Army uniform and told me to go off to war.

I will spare you all the details, but after a Bronze Star, more than 100 combat air assaults under fire, and a "Dear John" letter, everything they say is true. War is hell.

I'd like to tell you a little bit about life beyond Cuesta Grade and what it might take to make it easier for you to get up that hill or glide your way down it.

Life beyond Cuesta Grade is what you've been striving for since you first got here. You went through WOW week, climbed up to the "P" and learned what the hell a "tractor pull" was.

Life beyond Cuesta Grade, I believe, will require you to do the Lord's work. Now, I am not suggesting that we all get religion. If we all get religion, then we are all the better for it. But what I mean about doing the Lord's work is to believe in what you're doing in your chosen field. If your chosen field is architecture, be good at it and get involved in professional groups that promote it as a professional for others who might be interested in it.

For us reporters, those who toil in the Fourth Estate, it means we carry the hopes and dreams of a generation who worked, encouraged and nurtured you in preparation for this day.

On the subject of budget cuts, let me just say this. You've read the stories about the possibility of eliminating journalism here at Cal Poly. It's hard for me to imagine such a thing occurring because this is where I got my grounding in journalism. This is where I was taught. What I learned here helped me win a Pulitzer Prize for my newspaper, the Los Angeles Times.

I hear those of you graduating today cheering for agriculture, for business and other majors. Will you still be cheering in ten years if you have to come back here to give a commencement speech, only to find out they're about to eliminate your major?

It is a mistake to abolish journalism, and I learned that beyond Cuesta Grade.

In addition to covering these issues, many of us find the time to spread the gospel about journalism and that it is a good profession. Now I know what you're thinking. Yeah, right, reporters—right there with used car salesmen and the guy who thought up the idea of the senior project. Journalists many times do come into people's lives at the worst possible time: "Ma'am, I'm sorry your son was killed in Saudi Arabia, but I wonder if there's something you can say that might help other parents who are also hurting." Or, "Sir, I know that your son was killed because he was in the gangs. But I wonder if you have some thoughts about what parents can do to keep their children away from street gangs and away from drugs?" We journalists are asked not only to be neutral observers of everyday life, but we are also asked to be advocates, spokesmen and spokeswomen for issues, thoughts and ideas that need public attention: drugs, AIDS, water conservation, homelessness, the stock market, matters of war and peace. When I go to high schools and colleges to talk about journalism, I tell them simply that it's the best profession in the world.

There is risk involved, but there is also excitement and, more importantly, there is satisfaction in knowing that a story you produced may make a difference in someone's life. If I can win a Pulitzer Prize, I tell them, I sure as hell know that they can, too. I hope that all of you will feel as strongly about what you do once you have that diploma and go over Cuesta Grade, as I do about journalism.

How you approach Cuesta Grade will say much about you. Are you a Cal Poly grad who happened to major in English? Or, are you the prized English prof who happened to go to Cal Poly? How that question is phrased and how it is answered will say much.

While I am on the subject of religion, let me ask each of you to do me a favor: at some point after you leave Cal Poly, please become a rabbi. Now, I am not asking you to convert to Judaism. But what I am asking you to do is to be a mentor. Be a role model, be a guiding light for others. All of us have a teacher, a neighbor, a friend and even Mom or Dad—a special person who took an interest in us, who gave us an encouraging word, who told us what we were doing at the time was important and good, who told us when we were doing something right and when we were doing something wrong. Were we doing the right thing by majoring in political science?

Our lives have been touched by rabbis who have been role models, someone we looked up to.
and who we secretly wanted to be like.

One day, hopefully, you will be asked to be a rabbi, to help someone, to lend a guiding hand to someone unsure of himself or herself. I hope each of you take the time to be a rabbi and help someone along the way, just like when we were all helped by someone else. The world is a better place when all of us care. And I hope all you rab­bis out there will touch someone and care.

Life beyond Cuesta Grade will bring you into contact with many people: architects, farmers, journalists, police officers, liberals, conservatives, Republicans and Democrats. One set of people that you no doubt will come in contact with is the recent immigrants, the people who continue to come to our shores in search of a better life. Now, I am not going to give you some bleeding heart liberal sob story about why these people ought to be here. That's for another commencement speech. But what I will ask of you today is to try and understand them and help them—if you can—become productive members of this society.

This country is a unique place, a land where people came from other lands, cultures, beliefs. For many years, we have been told that America is a melting pot, that when all of these immigrants go through the Americanization process, essentially, we will all be the same. Americans.

Well, to that I say, BS!

The melting pot theory is just that, a theory. In fact, in the last 20 years, America has become a mosaic, a nation made up of very distinct parts but a country, nevertheless. It is a place where tamale at Christmas Eve is just as American as turkey, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving.

California has become the most diverse state in the country; it's a place where you can buy a kosher burrito or order Mexican food next door to a McDonald's in the middle of Koreatown. There has been a school of thought that all of these immigrants somehow weaken the fiber of society by keeping to old ways, by speaking their native tongues, by keeping pretty much to themselves. One of the reasons for this feeling, I think, is that we tend to be distrustful of people in this country who don't speak English. We somehow feel that perhaps these people aren't willing to fully buy into America. But America, as I said earlier, is a unique place. It's the only country in the world that does value the knowledge of languages, including the languages that many of these new immigrants speak. I have a saying that I have shared with many when I act as a rabbi, and I'll share it with you now. If you speak three languages, you are trilingual. If you speak two languages, you are bilingual. If you speak one, you're an American. And, frankly, there's too much Americanism beyond Cuesta Grade. When you get over the hill, be mindful of what these immigrants are going through and what they hope to accomplish here. Be mindful of where your ancestors came from. And be mindful that the destination you're going to is probably the same place these new Americans are headed for, too.

Since I speak Spanish, I am often asked to cover stories involving the Spanish-speaking. When I see immigrants struggling to get ahead, I often wonder what life would have been like if my grandmother had not crossed the border into Texas during the Depression. Many times, when I see an illegal alien, I see an image of myself, a possibility of what might have been. Instead of being a Cal Poly grad and a Pulitzer Prize winner, I might have turned out to be a struggling ranch hand, trying to feed a family back home in Zacatecas.

If you can speak to these new immigrants in Vietnamese, Cambodian, Korean, Spanish, French, Hebrew, Russian, Serbo Croatian, Arabic, there will be a time when they will speak to you in English, as I am doing today to you. And in that process, you will have made this country a better place for all of us.

Let me leave you with this thought: beyond Cuesta Grade, you will go forth with a flashlight with batteries and you will be asked to make a difference. You will be asked to shine your light at many things and on many people, to illuminate, to explain, to educate, to help. Never be without your flashlight. Never let your batteries run down. Because in 20 years, you may be asked to be up here and explain to the next generation of Cal Poly graduates what you did, why you did what you did and why they should do this and not do that, like abolishing journalism. What I have just talked about, I believe, is the responsibility of being a college graduate, of being a participating member of our society; of being an American. It is something I have tried to do since I went over the grade.

And one last thing. Please remember: there are many Bruins, there are many Trojans, there are many Gauchos, Bulldogs, Lions and Tigers and Bears. Oh my! But there is only one Mustang and the Mustang stands alone, above all the rest.

Thank you very much and good luck!

George Ramos was editor-in-chief of Mustang Daily in 1969. This is an excerpt from his commencement address delivered on June 15, 1991.
FORMER Cal Poly football player Carl Bowser had the window seat on the ill-fated Oct. 19, 1960, flight leaving from Ohio. He saw the stars above the fog bank as the plane soared up and then rapidly lost altitude.

"The plane was vibrating really badly," Bowser said. "I knew it was going down and someone told me later they heard me say, 'Cover up, we're going down.'"

It has been more than 40 years since the crash that killed 16 football players, six other passengers and impacted Cal Poly forever. Because the date of the crash falls so close to Homecoming, the usually festive weekend is bittersweet for many Cal Poly alumni and staff.

The Mustangs had flown to Toledo, Ohio, to play Bowling Green in a football game they lost, 50-6.

After the game, the team went to Toledo Express Airfield to fly home. The fog was so thick, some thought they would not fly at all that night. The pilot, Capt. Bob Fleming, decided to fly anyway.

Bowser said the twin-prop plane was too small for the weight of the team and other passengers.

"It was overloaded," he said. "It was bad weather. There were engine problems also. Bad decisions were made that night."

Flight records show the airplane takeoff was premature. As it taxied down the runway, the plane swerved toward the runway lights. To compensate, the pilot lifted off without enough speed. As a result, the left engine quit, the plane flipped over and landed belly-up on the nose. It split into pieces along the runway and burst into flames.

Alumnus Gil Stork was 19 years old at the time and had enjoyed his first year on the team. He said the accident left vivid impressions on his mind.

"When the left engine quit, I remember a sensation of dropping," Stork said. "My seat-mate and I looked at each other and began scooting down in our seats. That was the last thing I remembered until waking up on the runway and hearing voices running towards me. Through the fog, I could see the flickering of fire."

Before flames engulfed the airplane, Bowser and fellow teammate Dick McBride were able to rescue another teammate, Ted Tollner.

"I knew the severity of the accident when we first crashed," Bowser said. "A lot of the guys died that night. A lot of my friends died that night."

To honor those friends, Bowser named his son Larry Joel Bowser after Larry Austin, 23-year-old physical science sophomore, and Joel Copeland, a 23-year-old physical science junior, both from Bakersfield.

Cal Poly created its own tradition of honoring the 1960 football team, said former Cal Poly football coach Larry Welsh.

"The players go to the (memorial) rock and say a prayer before each game, either home or away," Welsh said. "As I walk down there, I repeat the names of each of the players who died."

The rest of that season was canceled after the crash. The survivors returned to Cal Poly in hopes of returning to their lives before the accident.

Bowser said it was something none of the players ever discussed.

Hughes, who was injured in the accident, coached the team from 1950 to 1961.

Stork said the resources back then were inadequate to help the players through the tough and emotional times.

"In those days, you were just supposed to get over it," Stork said. "It wasn't until a year later that I had an emotional let down as a result of it. Suddenly, it just hit me that a lot of my friends died and suddenly I got philosophical. I wondered, how was I so lucky?"

It took the football team a long time to rebound from the tragedy of the plane crash.

But finally it did. Twenty years later, and one month to the day of the accident, the football team won the division championship.

Cal Poly Sports Information Director Jason Sullivan said that despite this achievement, the time around Homecoming is always touched by tragedy for the university.

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Re-Inventing Everything

The '60s

It was one of the most turbulent decades in recent memory. The 1960s presented a world different than the one we know today. The assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, his brother Sen. Robert “Bobby” Kennedy and civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. shook the nation at its core.

It was an era that required people to grow up quickly, and this was reflected in a more mature press, both on and off the Cal Poly campus.

El Mustang covered mostly campus news, but it slowly began reporting on issues from around the nation. It was a news event of both local and national interest that started the trend of serious reporting.

The pivotal event was the plane crash involving members and staff of the Cal Poly football team. On Oct. 29, 1961, 16 football team members and six other passengers were injured or killed in the tragedy that would remain in the minds of students and reporters for years to come.

“The plane crash kind of obliterated a lot of stuff that happened before that,” said Tribune staff writer and former El Mustang editor Carol Roberts. “It affected the whole town.”

According to reports in El Mustang, the campus was set up as a press headquarters for reporters from all over California. This was just the beginning of what would become a news-packed decade.

The 1960s was marked not only by the presidential assassination, but by nationwide civil rights demonstrations. El Mustang covered the assassination of John F. Kennedy, looking to students to localize the story.

On the day of the assassination, a student in El Corral bookstore was quoted in El Mustang as saying, “I’ve forgotten what I came in for now.” The shock was palpable. Some instructors were quoted as saying they had lost the heart to hold class.

Getting student perspectives helped put a face on the enormous tragedy, and it helped to show students how the campus was reacting. In its Nov. 22, 1963, edition, El Mustang reported that “(students) walked along slowly, faces grave, looking up to see if a passerby reflected the news in his face.” The coverage reported the news, with a personal touch to which students could relate.

The Vietnam War, while a large part of life on other major California campuses like Berkeley and Los Angeles, received only superficial attention in El Mustang. Campus attitudes remained calm, with few peace demonstrations. Former El Mustang editor-in-chief and Los Angeles Times metro reporter George Ramos attributes this to the campus climate.

“(Cal Poly) was a nurturing place with a lot of political discussion but very little of (the mentality of) ‘get naked and burn down the administration building,’” Ramos said. “The political awareness didn’t reach the incendiary level that it did at other colleges.”

El Mustang reporters covered in depth a demonstration against the Vietnam War and Dow Chemical’s manufacturing of napalm for it. It was reportedly a peaceful event, without riots or even heated arguments. The newspaper covered the event with two simple stories, and the second was simply an extended version of the first.

While El Mustang reported on most campus events, there was a dedication among the staff to cover the events that might not otherwise get attention.

It was hard to deny the drama or history that unfolded with the civil rights movement in the 1960s. In El Mustang, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. garnered the most attention. King’s death and memorial service received high-front page slots, similar to John F. Kennedy’s assassination. This coverage highlighted the matter of racial discontent on the campus and around the country, but it avoided specifying problems at Cal Poly.

El Mustang reflected the events of its time, and it grew journalistically every year. At a time when the country was reinventing itself, the newspaper was able to do the same by increasing the strength and size of its off-campus reporting. The expanded coverage of events of the 1960s has since made local, national and international news a staple of the Mustang Daily.

On April 14, 1968, El Mustang became Mustang Daily. The name was somewhat misleading; the paper published only three times per week.
The 1970s was marked by Cal Poly's clear attempt to separate itself from other, more radical, colleges and universities. It all began with the arrest of two Iranian students at Poly Royal in 1970. The arrest, based on illegal use of state college facilities, infuriated students at other California colleges, particularly University of California, Berkeley and Santa Barbara. These "other" colleges, as former President Robert E. Kennedy called them, soon formed a union to protest against the students' arrest and Cal Poly's conservative nature.

"You and others in the communities immediately surrounding Cal Poly need to know that radical students at other campuses are threatening to create serious trouble on our campus today," he wrote.

Throughout the early 1970s, thoughts of war could be found across the pages of the Mustang Daily. Several articles in April 1970 cited the draft and deferment options. One article specifically focused on riots in Santa Barbara.

This article was a clear representation of the distinction between Cal Poly and other colleges across the state. Written by Paul Tokunaga, the article recounted the events of the late-April weekend in Isla Vista.

"I was there last weekend," he wrote. "I wanted to see what a real riot was like; this college doesn't offer such a course in its curriculum."

Tokunaga emphasized that while Cal Poly was preparing for the fun and games of Poly Royal, a man died protesting the Vietnam War in Santa Barbara.

While articles regarding the draft and the war did surface in the Mustang Daily, Timothv Barnes, professor of history, recalls merely a "distant preoccupation" with the war.

When Barnes came to Cal Poly in 1969, he was only 27 years old.

"We were separate, and many students expressed it," Barnes said. "War intruded on the campus and occupied student's attention, but it was so distant."

While Cal Poly's socially liberal attitude continued to spar with its political conservatism, coverage of other war-related events was prominent in the Mustang Daily.

A question posed by the Mustang Daily to students in the early 1970s illustrated this social liberalism. When asked about the prevalence of premarital sex on campus, students responded in the press by saying "it was everywhere."

In March 1970, four students were killed and 10 were wounded at Kent State University, when National Guard troops fired into an anti-war demonstration. Cal Poly students were not surprised by the resignation of President Richard Nixon in 1974. On August 9, 1974 the Mustang Daily released a special edition highlighting the unparalleled event.

Later that decade, in summer of 1978, over 400 protesters were arrested for trespassing at Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. A Sept. 28 article in the Mustang Daily reported the details of the one representative "show" trial that was chosen for the arrested protesters.

The end of the decade saw the end of an era at Cal Poly. On February 1, 1979 president Robert E. Kennedy retired after a 39-year career at Cal Poly and 11 years as president.

On March 9, 1971, the Mustang Daily covered the opening of the Julian A. McPhee Union (University Union). The $4.4 million facility took four years to build, and it would house the new El Corral bookstore and many other student facilities. The Union was dedicated to former Cal Poly president Julian A. McPhee.

In 1972, the state legislature changed Cal Poly's name to California Polytechnic State University. Kennedy was quoted by the Mustang Daily saying that the name change will allow the school to "recruit outstanding faculty" and give the school added prestige.

But it was the nation's executive branch of government that would soon struggle with the idea of prestige. Following the press coverage of the Watergate scandal, Cal Poly students were not surprised by the resignation of President Richard Nixon in 1974.

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Cal Poly's new president was named on May 22. Forty-year-old Warren J. Baker was the youngest president in the CSU system. The Mustang Daily reported, "The appointment of Warren Baker as Cal Poly's president was generally well-received Tuesday by campus and student officials."

The article added that Baker said, "I don't plan any major shake-up. But there should be an added dimension - one more oriented toward humanities."

Twenty-two years later, Baker is still president, and the university remains a fairly politically conservative college, and some say, with a fairly conservative press.
THE explosion of the Challenger space shuttle on the morning of Jan. 28, 1986, shocked the entire nation. Cal Poly was no exception. The Mustang Daily devoted its entire first page to the tragedy, with a banner headline that read, "Country mourns Challenger crew." According to one article, President Warren Baker ordered flags on campus to be lowered to half-staff, and students and professors gathered around classroom television sets for updates. The newspaper also dedicated half of its opinion page to honor the seven crew members killed in the catastrophe. Tragedies like the Challenger explosion, the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan and the Las Pilitas fire played a lead role in the Mustang Daily's news coverage throughout the 1980s. However, stories of celebration, education and style also defined the newspaper during the decade.

A town celebration for the university's football team took the lead story in the Jan. 7, 1981, edition of the Mustang Daily. The article "Division II champions honored in Mission Plaza," by sports editor Vern Ahrendes, described the Mustangs' 21-13 victory over Eastern Illinois in the championship game in Albuquerque, N.M.

A different type of celebration also earned a front-page headline in the same edition of the newspaper. Staff writer Tom Conlon reported on the opening of Cal Poly's new library: "The spacious new Robert E. Kennedy Library is finally open for business, but due to a delay in the installation of the shelving only half of the university's 650,000-book collection has been moved in from the Dexter Library."

But while the library encountered shortages of shelves, the mechanical engineering (ME) department faced a shortage of instructors. As noted in a Jan. 8, 1981 front-page article by staff writer Ralph Thomas, 12 ME classes had to be canceled, creating a student overload in many other ME classes. The department chair, Raymond Gordon, cited "the inability to compete with industries and other schools in hiring" as the cause of the shortage. While Cal Poly was offering $21,000 a year for an assistant professor, other schools were offering about $5,000 more, and an ME graduate can start in industry at $23,000, Gordon said.

The Mustang Daily turned to national news for its lead story on April 1, 1981. The newspaper ran two front-page stories and one national brief about the March 30 assassination attempt on President Reagan. The article "Killing attempt shocks students," by editorial assistant Ralph Thomas, indicated that some students expressed feelings of "shock, disbelief, sadness and disgust" upon learning of the attack by John Hinckley, Jr. Others students said the incident would improve Reagan's image as a leader.

As civil engineering senior Bill Frank noted, "It makes [Reagan] look like a hero," he said. "He took it like a cowboy."

For the July 11, 1985, edition of the Summer Mustang, the editorial staff decided to use six of its eight pages for coverage of a local emergency - the Las Pilitas fire. The front-page headline read, "Fire threatens city residents, causes university closure." The fire prompted Gov. George Deukmejian to declare San Luis Obispo County a disaster area, shutting Cal Poly down for two days.

The Las Pilitas fire, however, was not the only threat to lives publicized by the Mustang Daily in the 1980s. In the Oct. 24, 1985, issue of the Mustang Daily, staff writer Renee Shupe wrote, "A local physician has predicted that Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome will soon become the 'worst epidemic modern man has ever known.'"

While the Mustang Daily covered these serious issues, more superficial issues graced its pages as well. The fashion scene on campus was captured in the "Lifestyle" section on Nov. 13, 1985.

A.J. Schueremann, a 1989 Cal Poly English graduate and the Mustang Daily's business manager since 1990, said he remembers the do's and don'ts of fashion in the 1980s.

"There was a lot of big hair," he said. "There were no tattoos or pierced anything, unless you had an old Navy tattoo."

Fashion, however, was of little importance on June 5, 1989. Another tragedy would dominate the front page of newspapers around the country. The banner headline in the Mustang Daily read, "Tianamen Square bloodbath leaves 500 dead."

As the campus learned of the tragedy abroad, it also discovered a celebration at home. The banner headline "!!! National Champs !!!" on page five of the same issue revealed that Cal Poly's baseball team clinched the 1989 NCAA Division II National Championship.

Five months later, the Mustang Daily touched on a different celebration as the world learned of the fall of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, 1989. In the Nov. 14, 1989, Mustang Daily commentary "Broken wall bridges ideologies," staff writer Steve Harmon shared his thoughts on the historic event: "With the introduction of western ideas into East Germany it won't be long before capitalism integrates into the economic system...But I hope East Germans realize that freedom is more than materialism; freedom is more than the tearing down of physical walls. Freedom is a responsibility to one's self and others, a goal we in the 'free' west have yet to fully achieve. Freedom is a tearing down of the walls within."
ARCHITECTURE is widely regarded as one of the most demanding fields of study at California Polytechnic State University. The five-year program is one of the largest in the country, yet applicants have only a one in four chance of being accepted.

But aside from its stellar reputation, a separate School of Architecture did not exist at Cal Poly until 1968. Today it is called the College of Architecture and Environmental Design. It is just one of many curriculum changes over the years.

While the numerous creations, deletions, name changes and reconfigurations of the curriculum can be confusing, the changes ultimately led to what are now considered Cal Poly's six individual colleges: College of Agriculture, College of Liberal Arts, College of Science and Mathematics, College of Business, College of Engineering and College of Architecture and Environmental Design.

That is a long path from Oct. 1, 1901, when Cal Poly opened its doors as a high school. Over the next 47 years, Cal Poly evolved from a high school to junior college to two-year technical and vocational school to a college. Gaining collegiate status in 1947 stabilized Cal Poly's purpose, but the curriculum continued to fluctuate for years.

Today's six individual colleges can trace their roots to the school's two original divisions, agriculture and engineering. As early as 1916, before Cal Poly had even achieved collegiate status, course catalogs show engineering to be one of the first divisions of the school.

Similarly, early course catalogs verify Cal Poly's agriculture-based groundings.

While agriculture and engineering had simultaneously made their marks on Cal Poly in its earliest history, new courses in arts and sciences were emerging as important to the average college student. A separate division, variously titled “Science and Humanities” or “Arts and Sciences,” was created in 1948 to accommodate the demand for these types of classes.

The basic academic structure remained relatively unchanged for a little less than two decades, until a new president saw a need for reorganization. Robert E. Kennedy became president of Cal Poly on May 1, 1967, and during his presidency, Cal Poly saw the largest academic structure and curriculum change in its history.

Although changing the names of the academic divisions to “schools” was not his decision, Kennedy said he played a key role in the realignment of curricula.

Thus in 1967, Cal Poly's curriculum was reorganized into four units: School of Agriculture, School of Engineering, School of Applied Arts and School of Applied Sciences.

Not long after this decision was finalized, the need for another curriculum change gave Cal Poly its fifth school: the School of Architecture.

Only two years later in the fall of 1970, a more massive curriculum reorganization changed the face of Cal Poly's academic structure. Kennedy increased the number of schools by two and changed the names of the schools to be more inclusive of new departments.

Cal Poly was now composed of seven schools with slightly different names: School of Agriculture and Natural Resources, School of Architecture and Environmental Design, School of Business and Social Sciences, School of Communicative Arts and Humanities, School of Engineering and Technology, School of Human Development and Education and School of Science and Mathematics.

The two newly formed schools were the School of Business and Social Sciences and the School of Human Development and Education.

Kennedy retired on Feb. 1, 1979, but change in Cal Poly's academic structure did not end with his departure.

On May 22 of that year, Warren J. Baker was named President. During his ongoing tenure, the individual colleges experienced continued name changes and structure reorganizations.

In 1986, the names of the seven schools were changed to reflect less inclusive descriptions, and some were simply changed back to their original names. For example, the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources was once again named the School of Agriculture.

Baker said changing the schools names was a matter of accreditation issues in some cases and proper descriptions of schools in others. The School of Communicative Arts and Humanities, for example, was changed to the School of Liberal Arts because of a shared understanding of that name at many other schools. Baker added that the main reason for the reorganization itself was to create a commonality within the individual schools.

In 1992, Cal Poly's school structure changed again, but this time the changes were for economic reasons. California's recession of the early '90s severely impacted Cal Poly and its high-cost programs. Baker said many of the early discussions focused on consolidation, budget cuts and the elimination of programs. In response to the economic downturn, the university chose to eliminate the School of Human Development and Education, and phase out the Engineering Technology and Home Economics programs. This left six schools, and one final change to their name.

According to a Mustang Daily article from July 16, 1992, as of July 1, Baker decided that the six "schools" would now be regarded as "colleges."

With this major academic structure change, Cal Poly now comprises six colleges: College of Agriculture, College of Architecture and Environmental Design, College of Business, College of Engineering, College of Liberal Arts and College of Science and Mathematics.
THOUSANDS of lives were lost on Sept. 11, 2001, when terrorist attackers crashed four commercial airliners. As the twin towers crumbled to the ground, so did the overly confident perception of the security of the United States.

The event was the top news story around the world. Nearly every American television station had round-the-clock news updates, and newspapers struggled to put out special editions covering the disaster.

The Mustang Daily responded to the terrorist attacks in a similar fashion. For a newspaper that once focused solely on local news, the current Mustang Daily gave the attacks front-page attention almost every day.

When the Persian Gulf War erupted, the Mustang Daily was quick to report the latest news. Peace marches, demonstrations, personal accounts of early marriages, and families separated by war were covered on almost a daily basis.

Currently, the United States' military action against Afghanistan, through what is now being called "Operation Enduring Freedom," solidifies the state of war between the two countries—the first war for the United States since the battle in the Persian Gulf.

While the international crisis may be the lead story in recent Mustang Daily articles, a more local crisis unfolded throughout the 1990s.

Crime and violence were large areas of focus for the Mustang Daily. As covered in the Feb. 24, 1992, edition of the newspaper, Cal Poly students experienced bomb threats on campus.

Shootings between lovers, friends and teammates, as well as drug use, assault and drunk driving were also highlighted on the pages of the Mustang Daily.

Crimes against women garnered a wealth of attention, as rape, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct became increasingly present in the news. Perhaps the most obvious example of this coverage came with the disappearance of Cal Poly student Rachel Newhouse and Cuesta College student Aundria Crawford. Their disappearance shook the entire community, leading to newspaper headlines such as, "Some students don't walk alone," and "Missing girl's family offers $10K reward."

This was just the beginning. On April 23, 1999, a Mustang Daily headline read, "Prime suspect in custody," publicizing the arrest of Rex Allan Krebs. His trial for the murder of the two missing girls would later receive front-page attention on a regular basis.

The election of 1992 surfaced questions about the political views of the student body. A Sept. 29, 1992, headline read, "Campus poll: Clinton ahead, political science professor and Mayor Dunin discuss results, possible shift to left on 'conservative campus.'" Shifting trends toward a more liberal stance were a stark contrast to the historically conservative nature of the campus.

With the 1996 presidential race, the Mustang Daily continued to report the platforms of the candidates. Opinion articles discussed the overzealous and premature nationwide reporting of the election, arguing against making rash statements about who had won.

In 2000, debates between the candidates were analyzed, and opinion articles gave students an opportunity to rationalize which candidate had done better in the debates. Most of the election coverage focused on the Florida ballot controversy and who had really won the election. The Nov. 8, 2000, headline said it all: "Bush win in question; too close to call."

While these issues involved the entire nation, many local projects and events were underway to improve the campus and educational experience offered by Cal Poly. In November 1990, the Mustang Daily reported the opening of the University Center for Teacher Education on the Cal Poly campus.

Another modernizing factor was the state-of-the-art Recreation Center, built in 1993. The Mustang Daily anxiously awaited its opening in many articles of that year. One headline read, "Rec Center will ease problems." Another article on the subject discussed the flood of students who could not wait to use the new facilities and the slight overcrowding in the new center, a phenomenon students still experience today.

Another new building to surface on campus during the 1990s was the Performing Arts Center (PAC). Its completion was cause for celebration, not only within the boundaries of the Cal Poly campus, but in the surrounding community as well. The Mustang Daily covered its opening, as well as the first performances given there.

Continuing with the coverage of on-campus news, when Cal Poly's intercollegiate athletic program moved from NCAA Division II to Division I, Mustang Daily coverage was not hard to find.

But aside from its athletics or new buildings, Cal Poly's biggest accomplishment has been the development of its academic programs. Since the beginning of the 1990s and through today, Cal Poly has become one of the most selective schools in the nation. The university has received praise in top publications, including its own Mustang Daily.
Linked in time and holding the walls of the newsroom together, more than 100 editors in chief of the Mustang Daily have built up a newspaper that is recognized throughout California. Despite their differences in era, attitude and equipment, these editors are all united under a common goal: to inform the Cal Poly community.

In 1916, Raymond E. Herr became the first editor of what was then called The Polygram Weekly. Herr once wrote in the editorial page of the paper that, “anybody can start something but it takes brains, ambition and support to keep it going and make a success out of it.”

Every editor since Herr has made his or her mark while producing a successful and vital paper. Cut in 1932 due to lack of funding, the paper returned in 1938 and took on the new name of El Mustang.

Years later in 1949, then-editor Phil Keyser praised the position of editor-in-chief in a letter to incoming editor Russ Pyle.

“It is a privilege to be editor of El Mustang. It is an experience you will never forget. In spite of all the headaches, it is still the best job a student can hold in this college.”

Pyle agreed with this statement. With less than average engineering grades, he made the switch to journalism and took the helm. Using the current tools of the trade -- typewriters and offset printing -- Pyle made his mark with controversy and investigative reporting.

It was during Pyle’s reign as editor that the campus paper developed into an administrative watchdog. Pyle was often called in to see President Julian A. McPhee to discuss campus policies and help set the campus agenda.

“The hardest thing was keeping it staffed and walking the line between pro and con administration,” Pyle said. “We had really good journalists.”

“There wasn’t a lot of entertainment in the city back then. It forced us to spend all our free time in the basement (newsroom),” Pyle said. “We only saw the daylight once every three days.”

In an effort to spice up the newsroom, Pyle founded the California Intercollegiate Press Association (CIPA). He hoped that association with other college journalists would help his all-male staff meet coeds. CIPA is still in existence today.

As it turned out, neither the men of El Mustang nor its readers had to wait long for the coeds to return to campus. Cal Poly began re-admitting women to the University in 1956, and one year later, Marge March (DePalma) became the first woman editor of the El Mustang.

Pete King and Fred Vulin became the first co-editor team in 1973. These journalism buddies made this decision because they felt that two heads were better than one.

In 1988, Susan Edmondson was one of the first editors to regularly use computers in the newsroom.

“We had five or six computers with huge monitors,” Edmondson said. “They were always crashing and only had word processing. We still had to do lay-outs on paper.”

Trying to keep the students in mind, Peter Hartlaub (1992) wanted to create a more liberal newspaper. From investigative reports on marijuana use to stolen newspapers to profanity usage, Hartlaub was constantly pushing the line.

These character traits paid off when Hartlaub encouraged the staff to pull an all-nighter to be the first paper in the county to publish updated election results in the 1992 presidential election.

“We taped the paper on the windows at the Tribune so that when they came in that morning they’d know we’d beaten them,” Hartlaub said.

“Then we walked around passing them out.”

The first editor of the new millennium was Adam Jarman. With a newsroom full of Macintosh G-4 computers and digital cameras, Jarman said the décor may look different from the time capsule described by Pyle, but the atmosphere is nostalgic.

“It’s chaotic, busy, loud and obnoxious, but it’s great.”

With this high-tech equipment, Jarman was able to start printing the cover page in color every day.

Jarman said that the hardest thing for him to realize as editor is that people might not like every decision you make, and you’re going to upset people. But if you have good journalistic integrity, you will be respected.