

BILOXI SCHOOLS

1950-1959

The Biloxi Schools In The 1950s

Biloxi – Population, 1950 Census – 37,425

Mayor, 1950 – G.B. Cousins

City Council – J.A. "Tony" Creel, Gordon A. Dacey

Superintendent, Biloxi Public Schools – A.E. Scruggs, 1946-1957
L.J. Buford, Acting Supt., 1957-1958
Gycelle Tynes, 1958-1960

Biloxi School Board –

- 1950 - Glenn Swetman, Lewis Hood, Jr., Judge Leslie Grant, Frotscher Steckler, Dr. D.L. Hollis
- 1951 – Glenn Swetman, Lewis Hood., Jr., Judge Leslie Grant, Frotscher Steckler, Dr. D.L. Hollis
- 1952 – Glenn Swetman, Dr. D.L. Hollis, Judge Leslie Grant, Jacinto Baltar, Mrs. Henrietta Laughran
- 1953 – Dr. D.L. Hollis, Jacinto Baltar, Mrs. Henrietta Laughran, Jacob D. Guice, Judge Leslie Grant
- 1954 – Dr. D.L. Hollis, Mrs. Henrietta Laughran, Jacinto Baltar, Jacob Guice, Marshall Fayard
- 1955 – Jacob Guice, Marshall Fayard, Mrs. Henrietta Laughran, Jacinto Baltar, Dr. J.A. Graves
- 1956 – Jacob Guice, H.M. Toche, Glenn Swetman, Dr. J.A. Graves, Mrs. Henrietta Laughran
- 1957 – Jacob Guice, H.M. Toche, Glenn Swetman, J.A. Graves, Beverly Briscoe
- 1958 – Jacob Guice, H.M. Toche, Glenn Swetman, Dr. J.A. Graves, Beverly Briscoe
- 1958 – Jacob Guice, H.M. Toche, Glenn Swetman, Dr. J.A. Graves, Beverly Briscoe
- 1959 – Dr. J.A. Graves, C.T. Switzer, Glenn L. Swetman, Beverly Briscoe, Peter Kuljis
- 1957 – Jacob Guice, H.M. Toche, Glenn Swetman, J.A. Graves, Beverly Briscoe
- 1958 – Jacob Guice, H.M. Toche, Glenn Swetman, Dr. J.A. Graves, Beverly Briscoe
- 1959 – Dr. J.A. Graves, C.T. Switzer, Glenn L. Swetman, Beverly Briscoe, Peter Kuljis

Student Enrollment in 1950-1951, reported in first week – 3,001

Total Budget, Biloxi Public Schools, for 1950-1951 – \$342,660.00

V. THE BILOXI SCHOOLS – 1950 - 1959

Based on the 1950 census, Biloxi's assessed value by the county was \$13,990,583, with a median family income of \$1,272. The percentage of the population with an income less than \$2,000 was 67.9, with only 4.9 percent of the population with a family income of more than \$5,000. Median years of school completed was 10.2; only 16 percent of persons 25 and over had completed over 12 years of school (Associated Consultants, p. 5).

With a student enrollment of 3,001, the budget for operation of the schools in 1950-1951 was \$342,660.

At the beginning of this period, the School Board was headed by Mr. Glenn L. Swetman, with Mr. Lewis W. Hood, Jr., Mr. Frotscher Steckler, Judge Leslie B. Grant, and Dr. D.L. Hollis as Board members. The administration, led by Superintendent A.E. Scruggs, was expanded to include the new position of assistant superintendent. Dr. Wayne Sandefur, high school principal, was appointed to this position, while at the same time continuing his duties as principal. Mrs. Mary L. Michel was then appointed assistant principal of the high school; Mrs. Catherine Clower was appointed acting principal of the junior high school.

It seemed a good beginning to the 1950s that in December the Board received a favorable report from the Mississippi Committee of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, in which Biloxi High School was cleared of all deficiencies and all elementary schools were graded "Class A." The Committee had conducted its evaluation of the Biloxi schools on February 5-9 and had included members from the State Department of Education, colleges and universities, and other school systems. With Mr. S.A. Brasfield of the State Department of Education as official consultant for the SDE and Dr. Forrest Murphy, School of Education of the University of Mississippi as coordinator, committees on curriculum, philosophy, pupil activities, guidance, library science, school staff and instruction, and school plant and administration made on-site examinations of programs and assessments of instructional practices and personnel.

Although there were some specific recommendations for change—including expanding vocational curriculum and remedying deficiencies in buildings, the report generally gave the Biloxi schools very high marks. One facet of the report dealt with the schools' first attempts to put into place a guidance program, with mixed results and with obvious need for employment of professional personnel. In addition, the employment of a trained business manager was recommended. The committee was critical of one practice of the schools which continued for many years with little change—the home rooms which were supposed to serve as the center for the activity program and which included designated days for guidance, planning, and home room programs. Although it was set up and organized for an effective program, the committee reported that it was not functioning in light of the school philosophy. The visiting educators made strong recommendations about adding a vocational track for students and making more effective efforts to meet the needs of what they

recognized as a uniquely diverse community. Among the most highly praised facets of school operations were the public relations program to keep residents well informed about school needs and activities and the well-trained administrative and teaching staff and the high level of morale exhibited.

Faced with continuing overcrowding of classrooms during this period, the administration and School Board made plans to build new schools. After state and federal aid was sought for a new West End School, the state approved \$16,000 toward construction; it was believed by the Board that \$250,000 would be available from the federal government for building purposes, though the Board understood that funds would be distributed on a priority basis. Superintendent Scruggs was authorized to go to Washington to seek federal funds for the building program.

Trying to make arrangements to reduce overcrowding in some of the schools, the administration scheduled 93 students to be moved from Lopez to Howard II. The Lopez enrollment would then be 315, with a possible later increase of 30 to 40 children; Howard II would have an enrollment of about 500.

Tentative plans were discussed on June 22, 1950, for the construction of West End Elementary School and a new football stadium. The school was expected to cost about \$190,000. The next



month the Board called for a \$435,000 bond issue to fund the new school and the stadium, with \$100,000 to be set aside for other improvements. As in the past, the Biloxi PTAs moved to support the bond issue, together with all principals and other staff members. With the bond issue approved by the voters later that year, the Board moved ahead to secure the property for the new school. In November the Board discussed the possibility of securing federal aid for school construction. An application had been made to the federal office involved, and it was believed that the Biloxi schools would be entitled to \$250,000 for building purposes. Receipt of such funds would be based on a governmental priority rating. It was disappointing to learn later in 1951 that the schools' priority rating of 2.8 was not high enough to permit federal funds for building programs for the city (Board Minutes, February 23, 1951, 798). Moving ahead

on its own, the Board advertised for bids for West End School construction on April 17, 1951.

The Board persisted in its aggressive efforts to improve the Biloxi schools during this period. In 1952 West End Elementary School (now Lopez Elementary School) was opened and an addition to Gorenflo Elementary School was constructed.

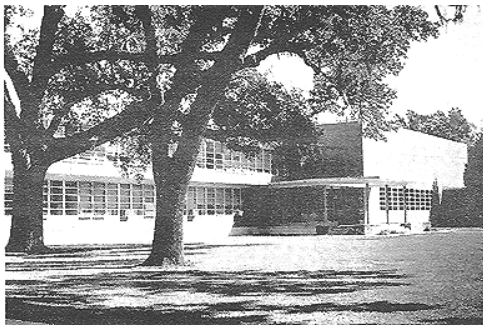
The Board and the administration lost no time in making additional plans for school construction, including a new junior high school in the western section of the city and a new Elementary Colored

School adjacent to the Nichols School. Following a trip to Washington to secure federal assistance in the building program, Superintendent Scruggs advised the Board that as soon as funds were made available by the United States Congress, \$659,460 would be reserved for the Biloxi work. He had also been advised by federal officials that "if the Board would give the Colored Elementary School Number One priority and the Junior High School Number Two Priority, the City would get both projects, a total of which is \$773,060.00" (Board Minutes, May 8, 1952, 878).

On a motion by Dr. Hollis, seconded by Judge Grant, the Board authorized a change in the application to reflect the federal preference.

Discussing the site for a junior high school, the Board, together with Mayor Hart Chinn and Commissioner J.A. Creel, decided that the north portion of the Methodist Camp Ground from the black-topped road to the railroad would be the only suitable property for the school. A bond issue would be proposed of sufficient amount to (1) purchase that portion of the Methodist Camp Ground; (2) secure the Parker land on Main Street touching the Howard I property; (3) purchase the Butler Huff property at the foot of Bellman Street or adjacent to the high school running from Washington Street to the Railroad; (4) build a bulkhead and to fill in behind it on the property north of the present Nichols School; and (5) develop the Camp Ground for school use.

The attempt to secure the Methodist Camp Ground property would run into difficulties from the beginning. When the Board met with representatives of the Methodist Camp Ground Board on May 19, 1952, it was obvious that the Methodist group would have problems with the offer to buy the property. Meeting with Mr. Swetman, Mr. Grant, Dr. Hollis, Mr. Scruggs, and Dr. Sandefur were Bishop Marvin A. Franklin of the Methodist Church; Mr. Ben Stevens, president of the Trustee Board; Reverend T.A. Carruth of Biloxi and Reverend Clyde Gunn, both members of the Methodist Board; Reverend Oliver H. Scott, Methodist District Superintendent; Reverend E.E. McKeithen, Director and Superintendent; and Judge Lawrence Corban, Trustee.



The School Board offered \$75,000 for the parcel of land owned by the Methodist Conference—or a lease for twenty-five years and a flat sum of \$15,000. A resolution requesting city officials to call a bond issue election for \$290,000 "for the purpose of erecting, repairing, equipping, remodeling and enlarging school buildings and related facilities in said district and purchasing land therefor" was passed by the Board (Board Minutes, May 19, 1952, 880-A). *(Built directly*

east of Biloxi High on Father Ryan Avenue, Biloxi's new junior high school was named for the longtime and well-loved Biloxi educator Mrs. Mary L. Michel. Additions were completed in 1961 and 1967.)

In June the Board requested the city to exercise the right of eminent domain to secure the Seashore Methodist Assembly (Camp Grounds) property. Forestalling further legal action, the Methodist

Board reached a compromise agreement with the School Board, the eminent domain suit was dismissed, and title of the property was transferred to the School District for \$85,000 (Board Minutes, September 23, 1952, 913). It would not be until March 31, 1955, that the Mary L. Michel Junior High School would be completed at a cost of \$529,000.

On June 16, 1952, the annual budget was set at \$543,820.00 (Board Minutes 886). By this time, the Board members included Mr. Swetman, president; Dr. Hollis, vice president; Judge Grant, secretary; and Mr. Jacinto Baltar and Mrs. Henrietta A. Laughran, members.

An incident in August 1952 was illustrative not only of the racial divide that was prevalent in Mississippi daily life of the time but also of the legal wall that had been constructed over the years. In August of that year a letter was received from State Superintendent of Education Mr. Jack Tubb about the admission of a Japanese boy into the high school. "It was pointed out that even though it was illegal, some schools admit the yellow race. He felt it would be acceptable as long as there was not a protest from Biloxi citizens" (Board Minutes, August 25, 1952, 904).

The superintendent and the architects were invited by the Housing and Home Finance office to come to Atlanta to discuss proper procedures in preparing plans and specifications for the new school buildings. On April 20 it was reported that plans for the new school adjacent to Nichols had been approved. Plans were being made to prepare the site for construction of the new junior high school north of the Seashore Assembly property. Specifications for an addition to Lopez Elementary School were approved, as were plans for a swimming pool to be constructed at the Nichols School site. Perhaps prophetic of later problems that would surface in Board action, in a number of matters brought before the Board for approval during this period, Mrs. Laughran cast the only negative vote.

Dr. Wayne Sandefur resigned as assistant superintendent on June 8, 1953, noting that he was leaving to accept a position that would hold even better opportunities for him and his family.

A letter written on October 20, 1952, was received from the Woman's Club suggesting that the new junior high school be named for Miss Edna Holley, Miss Helena Brander, or Mrs. Mary L. Michel. The Board said that it would consider the names (Board Minutes, 916). In February of the following year, on a motion by Mr. Baltar, adopted unanimously, the new junior high school was officially named the Mary L. Michel Junior High School.

In an application for federal aid for school maintenance, Biloxi reported on November 17, 1952, that there were 466 children in the Biloxi schools whose parents worked and lived at Keesler, and 808 children whose parents were employed at Keesler but did not live in base housing. Total enrollment for the schools was 3,478.

On May 27, 1953, J.O. Collins was approved as architect for new colored elementary school, with a construction bid of \$115,850. At this time Judge Leslie Grant was Board president; Dr. Hollis, vice president; Mrs. Laughran, secretary; Jacob Guice and Jacinto Baltar, members.

In 1953 Mayor Laz Quave and Biloxi Commissioners Tony Creel and Carl Short, accompanied by a large delegation of Biloxians, including George Sumrall, Vester Wentzell, Matt Lyons, Elbert Manuel, Marcel Bellande, T.A. Patterson, John Treuting, Tony Pitalo, and Dick Lightsey of the *Herald* staff met with the Board to discuss the need for a new stadium for Biloxi. They proposed that it be built on the present site of the football field used by Biloxi High School. Dr. Hollis pointed out that the Biloxi High School Athletic Association had an investment of approximately \$40,000 in the present field, including lights, bleachers, dressing rooms, ticket offices, etc. Judge Grant proposed that the Board go into executive session to discuss the matter. The response of the School Board was inconclusive at best. *(Pictured here is Dr. Hollis.)*



(Fernwood Junior High School – Pictured in 1969, the westernmost of the Biloxi schools, was until 1957 a separate school district. The school was constructed in 1928, with extensive additions made in 1948 and 1956. For many years the Fernwood school served students in grades one through eight, with high school students transported to the Biloxi schools. After incorporation into the Biloxi system, the school at first kept on enrolling students in grades 1 - 8, later being reconstituted as a junior high school for students in grades 7-9, a middle school in the late 1970s for grades 6-8, and a reversion to junior high school status, grades 7-9, in the 1990s.)



In 1953 occurred one of the watershed events in the history of the Biloxi Public Schools as the legislature met in extraordinary session and acted to abolish every school district in the state, at the same time mandating that the district

remain as constituted until June 30, 1957, "unless it is reorganized or reconstituted before that date by the County School Board and such organization is approved by the State Educational Finance Commission as required in Sec. 3" (Associated Consultants 7). The legislature required a full survey of existing facilities, proposals for consolidation, programs for expansion and improvement, and an application to the State Educational Finance Commission with proposals for reconstitution of the district. The Commission approved plans it considered "best promote the educational welfare

of [Harrison] County, the physical, mental, moral, social, and educational welfare of the children involved, the efficiency of the operation of the school system of [Harrison] County, and the economic and social welfare of the various schools involved." The order approving the reorganization of the Biloxi Municipal Separate School District was given on March 7, 1957, by the State Educational Finance Commission of Mississippi, after a previous request to retain districts in the county as constituted in 1953 was denied by the Commission.

The order was to take effect as of April 1, 1957. Its most important long-term effect, not made official until 1957, was to enlarge the Biloxi Municipal Separate School District to include the Fernwood Rural School area. The proposal for reconstitution of the district was made only after an extensive survey and evaluation of the schools undertaken by Associated Consultants in Education, employed by the Biloxi School Board.

On March 13, 1954, the *Herald* reported on the new E.A. Perkins Primary School, which was an addition to the Nichols school plant:

E.A. Perkins Primary School, recently completed and built to accommodate 180 Negro children, opened with an initial enrollment of 240 pupils in the first and second grades. The \$125,000 building, a federally financed project, was constructed by the Collins Building Service.

The new primary school, which is adjacent to M.F. Nichols School, contains six modern classrooms, one all-purpose room, teachers' lounge, restrooms and storage closets for janitorial supplies. (*Daily Herald*, March 13, 1954)

The 1950s were years of almost uninterrupted construction in the Biloxi schools. Mary L. Michel School was built in 1954 in what was then the westernmost part of the city. In March 1954 the new elementary school was completed and accepted. On April 19, 1954, the Lopez addition was completed and accepted. On April 25, 1955, plans were discussed to add eight classrooms at West End school, with John Collins to design the West End enlargement, and four classrooms at Dukate. Fernwood School was still a separate district in 1954, with O.L. Ladnier superintendent, though it would not be long (1957) before the Fernwood School would finally and officially become part of the Biloxi district. In 1954, Fernwood received federal funds to build six new classrooms and enlarge the school cafeteria. On July 18, 1955, a motion was made to build an eight-classroom school on St. Mary Blvd.; the motion failed. The Board then voted to go ahead with plans to enlarge West End—and to notify the city of a need for a \$198,000 bond issue.

On August 15, 1955, the Board again discussed the need for a new school in the Dukate area, and voted to call for a \$268,000 bond issue needed to finance construction. A motion was made by Jacinto Baltar and seconded by Marshall Fayard to build a school on St. Mary Blvd. (which would later be the Jefferson Davis Elementary School); this time the motion carried. In the September 23, 1955, recess meeting the Board discussed the fact that twenty new classrooms were needed. The

question was whether or not to build a new Dukate school and tear down the old. Board members recognized that the most important problem with new construction and bond issues was getting the facts out to the public, and members urged the *Herald* and local radio stations to pass as much information along to the public as possible about the school building program. On October 17, 1955, the Board passed a resolution calling for a bond issue of \$536,000, a figure which ultimately became \$678,000 when the matter was submitted to Biloxi voters on December 16, 1955.

It was obvious that the Board was deeply divided when on November 21, 1955, Mr. Swetman moved that Mr. Scruggs be reelected as superintendent. There was no second and the motion failed. Mr. Swetman stated that he sincerely believed the election of the superintendent was the most important action of the Board and that the Board should let people know whom it would have to administer the school program. It was his opinion that failure to do so would or could have an adverse effect on the coming bond election.

In an attempt to inform the public and help to ensure passage of the bond issue, Board members Jacob Guice, Marshall Fayard, Henrietta Laughran, Glenn L. Swetman, and Dr. J.A. Graves had worked very hard to make the case that the schools needed expansion. It was reported that elementary enrollment in grades one through six was 2,461 in 55 permanent classrooms and 20 temporary rooms; that next year the enrollment was expected to reach 2,625; and that total public school attendance was approximately 4,500 students.

When the final vote was counted on Friday, December 17, Biloxi voters had cast 764 votes in favor and 675 against. Because the state then required a 60 percent majority in favor, the bond issue failed.

In a forecast of what was to come in matters concerning the Board of Trustees, Mr. Swetman was reported as saying that the vote was a protest by taxpayers who believed that the classrooms could have been built for less money. "This expansion program was under way before I became a member of the Board several months ago. On several occasions Mr. Guice and I endeavored to amend the program but were outvoted by the other three members" ("Biloxi Voters Fail To Pass School Bond Issue," *Herald*, December 17, 1955, 1). He also said that the failure to reelect the superintendent at the proper time was another reason people had lost confidence in the Board. "The taxpayers have a right to know who will spend such a large amount of money. No business or institution can properly function when uncertainty exists in the administration," he concluded.

Early in 1956, the School Board was mired in conflict that soon became public and that would result in lengthy confrontations between opposing sets of Board members, in part owing to the appointment of two new Board members that year and the confusion after one Board member resigned.

On one hand were members Jacob Guice, Glenn Swetman (who had earlier succeeded Dr. D.L. Hollis), and H.M. Toche (appointed to succeed Marshall Fayard, who resigned and whose resignation was initially rejected by the City Council).

On the other side were Henrietta Laughran, Dr. J.A. Graves (who had been appointed to succeed Jacinto Baltar), and Marshall Fayard.

Meeting on December 19, 1955, following defeat of the bond issue and recriminations from both sides, the Board heard a motion by Dr. Graves, seconded by Mrs. Laughran, that the Board of Trustees declare the position of Superintendent of Schools vacant at the expiration of Mr. Scruggs's contract on June 30, 1956, and that applications for the position be received from anyone except the incumbent. Voting for the motion were Dr. Graves and Mrs. Laughran; voting against, Mr. Swetman and Mr. Guice. After a discussion, Mr. Fayard requested that his vote be recorded in favor of the motion (Board Minutes).

Board president Jacob Guice commended Mr. Scruggs for his outstanding work and pointed to the growth of the school system under Scruggs's tenure as superintendent. He described the motion to accept applications from anyone except the present superintendent as "slander on a man's excellent conduct" and an attempt to deny full consideration to every applicant for the position.

Mr. Swetman expressed agreement with Guice's statement, adding that the Board was biased and prejudiced, adopting the arrogant attitude that it had adopted prior to the failure of the bond issue. Mrs. Laughran's answer was that she did not believe Mr. Swetman qualified nor authorized to speak for a majority of the citizens of Biloxi, adding that he and Mr. Guice refused to take defeat gracefully and defending the position she and fellow Board members Graves and Fayard held.

Dr. Graves, who made the motion for vacating the superintendent's position, listed the reasons for his motion and vote: poor management of finances, shown by the recent audit; failure to cooperate with the Board and to carry out Board's requests; not consulting the Board on matters of policy before acting; and not developing an adequate curriculum for college-bound students.

The following day the *Herald* reported on the meeting of December 19, noting that the Board had moved into a closed session, later voting 3-2 to vacate the present superintendent's position and defer election of a superintendent until January 9.

Mrs. Laughran, Dr. Graves, and Mr. Fayard met on January 9, 1956, elected Mrs. Laughran president, and voted to employ Mr. R.O. Stringer to succeed Mr. Scruggs as superintendent. It was this meeting that was in question at the regular monthly meeting of January 16.

On January 16, 1956, the School Board met in regular session in the Board room at the high school. Board Minutes note that President Jacob Guice announced that the City Council had accepted the resignation of Mr. Fayard and had appointed Mr. Toche to the Board. He recognized Mr. Toche as a

legal member of the Board. Secretary Laughran refused to record the ruling, and Dr. Graves objected to the new member's voting. At this point, Mr. Toche arrived and reported his appointment to the School Board. A letter signed by commissioners Carl Short and J.A. Creel noted Toche's appointment and the acceptance of Mr. Fayard's resignation as of January 10.

Mr. Fayard stated that since his resignation had been previously rejected by the Council, he considered himself presently to be a member of the Board. For the next few meetings of the School Board there was widely publicized confusion in the community as to Board make-up. The president ruled that he would not recognize Mr. Fayard as a legal member of the Board, but he would have the right to record his views as he would have voted if he had been a legal member (Board Minutes, January 16, 1956, 1246).

Following that ruling, Mr. Swetman read a motion in which he referred to charges made against the superintendent by Dr. Graves, giving Jim Lund, *Daily Herald* reporter, a copy of the prepared motion.

I desire to make a motion that the minutes reflect that the charges as made by Dr. Graves against Superintendent Scruggs in the *Daily Herald* article of December 20th are his own personal, biased and prejudiced views and are not charges of this board. These charges appeared in the *Daily Herald* along with and as a part of their report of the School Board meeting of December 10th, and as they and the prepared statement of Mrs. Laughran were not separated or set off from the report (evidently an oversight by the paper) the public were given the impression that the charges were of the Board. This is not true as Dr. Graves has never made these charges at any Board meeting as reflected by the minutes which are kept by the Secretary Mrs. Laughran (Minutes, January 16, 1956, 1247, 1248). (Pictured above – Mr. Swetman)



The controversy over who was and who was not a member of the School Board occupied a great deal of the Board's time at this and subsequent meetings. Mrs. Laughran [pictured here] made a motion that the minutes of what held on January 9th" be approved; Toche abstained. Dr. Graves's office immediately was not acted to table the motion, Mrs. Laughran vote being recorded as nay. Dr. refused to recognize a legal



she termed "a legally recessed meeting, the motion did not carry in a tie vote. Mr. motion that the Board elect officers to take on when Guice, Toche, and Swetman voted and Dr. Graves voting no and Mr. Fayard's Graves said that since the presiding officer majority vote on the motion, the three-member group composed of Graves, Laughran, and Fayard constituted a quorum and that Mr. Fayard, vice president, should preside over the remainder of the meeting. Mrs. Laughran "then

proceeded with recording such conversation as she, Dr. Graves and Mr. Fayard were having in an attempt to proceed with some type of unauthorized meeting" (Board Minutes).

Mr. Guice ruled that Mrs. Laughran had abandoned her position as secretary and requested that Mr. Swetman assume this position immediately. "Mr. Guice then stated that it was necessary at this time to proceed to remedy the situation that was created at the last Board meeting and that Mr. R.O. Stringer should be notified that the minutes have not been approved and he therefore made a motion that Mr. Stringer be so notified that he had not been elected as Superintendent of the Biloxi Schools, seconded by Toche" (Board Minutes, January 16, 1956, 1248). Dr. Graves and Mrs. Laughran declined to vote, but the motion carried with the votes of Swetman, Guice, and Toche. Mr. Guice (*Pictured at left*) then asked about the



location of a petition that had been presented at the January 9 meeting. Mrs. Laughran stated that there had been no petition; however, the existence of the petition had been reported in the press and by other persons who had attended the meeting. Mr. Swetman asked that he be authorized to investigate the matter of the petition, which had called for Mr. Scruggs's resignation, as to its location and the names of signers and under what authority a Keesler Field employee had acted in regard to the petition. The agenda for this meeting called for the election of principals, but that was deferred until the next meeting.

The continuing controversy was highlighted in the meeting of February 6, 1956, by a statement from Mrs. Laughran, Dr. Graves, and Mr. Fayard:

We do not recognize Mr. Toche as a member of this Board and Mr. Fayard still maintains his position as a legal member of the Board. Mr. Toche has never, in fact, been appointed to the School Board as will appear by reference to an inspection of the minutes of the City Council of Biloxi. Mr. Fayard has never relinquished his position. His resignation was rejected unanimously by the City Council, as previously stated, and there has been no order declaring his office vacant. While we feel that any three members, exclusive of Mr. Toche, would have the right to elect a superintendent at a legal meeting—nevertheless we feel that it would in all probability be best for the school system and all concerned that there be some orderly and legal determination of the status of the Board as to membership before the election of a superintendent. In this way we believe that qualified applicants would be more willing to apply for the position. (*Mr. Toche pictured above.*)



We feel that no action should be taken until it has been determined legally who is the lawful member of the Board—in such a manner as will be to the best interests of the schools.

We are voting without prejudice and without waiving the right to insist on the illegality of this whole meeting—but, in order that our votes may be recorded, in the event it could be held, under any circumstances, that this is a legal meeting. (Board Minutes, February 6, 1956, 1258)

With the Board still divided, Mr. Scruggs was reelected for one year to his position as superintendent in the meeting on February 6, despite the protests of Mrs. Laughran and Dr. Graves. Mr. Fayard, who did not stop attending the meetings, abstained on the motion to reelect the superintendent. Mr. Swetman made another request to see the petition which had been filed by Royal Hodges and the application for the position as superintendent that had been made by Mr. Stringer.

According to the Board minutes, "these apparently had been turned over to the secretary at that time, Mrs. Laughran, and have not been filed with the superintendent." Dr. Graves asked where the minutes book was. Mr. Guice replied that it was in the hands of the legal secretary, Mr. Swetman. "Mr. Guice therefore requested that if the minute book was handy that it be presented at the meeting, whereupon the minute book was produced and was scrutinized by Dr. Graves. Dr. Graves made a motion that the meeting adjourn and which was seconded by Mrs. Laughran and carried" (Board Minutes, 1260).

As the meeting was ending, Mrs. Dennis Harris, a member of the delegation of parents and interested Biloxians present, expressed her regret that the meeting had been adjourned before an appeal by patrons of the schools could be presented, asking whether the differences between Board members could be settled, because the problems were affecting the schools.

Mr. Guice said that he was sorry the meeting had been adjourned before the delegation had been heard and stated that the Board would be glad to hear their appeal. "However, Dr. Graves, Mr. Fayard and Mrs. Laughran left the meeting abruptly, Mrs. Laughran stating that they did not have time to listen to any such appeal. After the three withdrew, Mrs. Harris resumed her appeal which was listened to by Mr. Guice, Mr. Swetman and Mr. Toche. Mr. Guice stated that he believed the reason some solution could not be worked out was because it had just walked out the door" (Board Minutes, 1260).

Addressing the delegation present, Mr. Guice noted that the Board would always be glad to hear from citizens and that he knew of the conditions Mrs. Harris had referred to, pertaining to anonymous calls. All the Board members had received such calls, he said, some of them threatening or obscene, but primarily only aggravating and annoying.

In March, with School Board membership apparently settled, Mr. Scruggs was given a three-year contract, which the Board concluded would give evidence of tranquility and continuity in the district's administrative personnel. In a final word, Mrs. Laughran persisted in her protest (in the April 16, 1956, meeting) that the city had only recently accepted Mr. Fayard's resignation and that

any and all business conducted by the Board with Mr. Toche acting as a member before that time should be declared illegal. Eventually the Board reached a point where controversy no longer ruled, and the Board Minutes do not reflect continuing open criticism and counter-criticism.

The Board continued to make efforts to improve both the instructional program and working conditions for teachers. In an effort to ensure stability in the school staff, the Board voted to continue to give teachers a three-year contract if they had given three years of what was termed "satisfactory service." This limited tenure practice remained in place for several years but was eventually abandoned. Minimum requirements for supervisory positions in the Biloxi schools were established and the salary range for the following year was reviewed.

The salary scale for teachers was changed by the state to include a minimum program scale, with a teacher holding "A" certification and no experience beginning at a salary of \$2250, a teacher holding "AA" certification and no experience, \$2475, with increments up to nine years and a top salary of \$3155. A survey showed that the Biloxi School District paid salaries second only to Jackson in the 1955-1956 school year, with teachers holding a bachelor's degree and a Class A certificate receiving pay in a range from \$2400 to \$3200. (Male instructors continued to receive an additional \$200 per year in their contracts.) Improvements in the sick leave plan for teachers and administrators were also adopted, with accumulation of leave being permitted for the first time. The requirement that teachers holding A or AA certificates be required to acquire eight quarter hours of college credit every four years was kept by the district.

A review of Board action and administrative concerns during the remainder of the 1950s shows a great deal of activity in relation to building programs for an ever-increasing student population. Because of increasing enrollment, in November 1955 the Board called for the city to set an election for a bond issue in the amount of \$673,000 to build an addition to the West End Elementary School, a new school on the St. Mary Boulevard property, despite some opposition because of its nearness to Keesler (later named the Jefferson Davis Elementary School), and a new building on the Dukate School site. West End School was crowded, it was reported in September 1956, and one classroom was in the hall and one in the auditorium.

Registration for Howard No. 1 was so low that it was closed, with Howard No. 1 students being assigned to Dukate and Lopez. An addition to West End was built in 1958. Looking toward future expansion, the Board pursued purchase of property for an elementary school in the western part of the city, with Mr. William Rich offering a tract of land in the Beauvoir Truck Farm subdivision for \$10,000. With a cost of \$58,000 to improve the Beauvoir property for school use, including drainage, filling and access road building, the Board voted to contract John Collins to build the new school. Cost of the Beauvoir school was expected to be about \$437,370.

In January of 1957, the Biloxi School Board was informed that its petition to reorganize, consolidate, and reconstitute the school district, as mandated by the state, had been disapproved. The Board, under the leadership of Superintendent Scruggs, was forced to amend the petition under

Chapter 12, Laws of the Extraordinary Session of 1953 of the Mississippi Legislature. Under the new petition, the district would become the Biloxi Municipal Separate School District and would include the territory that had formerly constituted the Fernwood Rural Separate School District, together with Deer Island, with lines coterminous with the corporate lines of the city of Biloxi.

Noting that children who had resided on Deer Island had always attended Biloxi schools and that the high school students in the Fernwood School District had always attended Biloxi High School, together with some elementary children from the district, the Board also went on record to show that Biloxi had always had a large number of children from the territory that was formerly the D'Iberville Consolidated School District and that only in recent years had these children been assessed tuition.

Recognizing, however, that the case for taking D'Iberville into the Biloxi district was not strong, the Board amended its petition of reorganization to state that the D'Iberville territory was included in the petition only if agreeable to parties concerned and that Dr. H.M. Ivy, Director of Associated Consultants in Education, suggested D'Iberville should be included.

The superintendent was directed to write the D'Iberville superintendent, Mr. D.W. Salter:

Dear Mr. Salter:

We are enclosing a copy of our most recent revised suggested petition for reconstituting our school lines. As you are aware from reading the paper and possibly by word of mouth, the Biloxi Board of Trustees, acting upon its willingness to cooperate and the feeling that it would let your people know that we are friends and neighbors with a genuine desire to improve our school district and yours along with it, and also following a suggestion given by Dr. H.M. Ivy, it therefore included your school district in its petition to become a part of the new Biloxi School District.

You will note also in the petition that the Biloxi Board only requests your territory to be added if you and your people are agreeable. We have had numbers of your children in our school and we have always found them and their parents to be cooperative and fine.

It has been more than a pleasure for me to associate with you in the past and I sincerely hope that our future associations will always be pleasant. Your broad and practical attitude toward this problem is most revealing.

I wish you would give to your Board the messages contained in this letter and add that the Biloxi Board would be most pleased to meet with it to discuss our common problems and would like to do so, if it is the desire of your Board, at a very early date. (Board Minutes, March 18, 1957)

It was no surprise to the superintendent and the Board, one suspects, to receive a quick reply from the D'Iberville Board of Trustees, though the tone of the letter, addressed to the Biloxi Board of Trustees, might have evoked some surprise:

We, the undersigned, are so glad to know that the great and honorable School Board of the City of Biloxi, Mississippi (as we learned through the medium of the newspaper) would be willing to accept the D'Iberville Consolidated School District into the Biloxi District. We also know that there are a few children of the D'Iberville District that go to the school in Biloxi; but we wonder why the great and honorable School Board did not mention in the newspaper the children of the Biloxi School District that come all the way over to D'Iberville Consolidated High School.

If your honorable Board is so anxious to annex the D'Iberville District, why not make arrangements with our board to meet with us at our office? Or did it even occur to you that the D'Iberville School District might not want to be annexed by your school board?

Inasmuch as the State Finance Commission did not disapprove our school district as it is, and inasmuch as we have no intention of crawling to the honorable Biloxi School Board and begging to be annexed into Biloxi, we hope this will clarify our point of view to you on the annexing situation.

The letter was signed by D'Iberville School Trustees R.A. Quave, Darius Hengen, W.E. Elkins, and H.H. Grantham. The Biloxi minutes reflect no particular response to the communication; however, one hopes that members enjoyed a good laugh. No doubt there are many people in Biloxi and perhaps in D'Iberville today who believe that the territory should have been part of Biloxi and that the school district's enlargement to include that area would have been a wise and proper course.

Fernwood School District was officially made part of the Biloxi Municipal Separate School District with the Board's adoption of a resolution on September 30, 1957, which noted that the Fernwood district had been abolished as a result of the Laws of the Extraordinary Session of the Legislature of 1953. The resolution was ratified by the city on October 5, 1957.

In October 1957 the untimely death of Superintendent Arthur E. Scruggs resulted in the Board's selection of Biloxi High School principal Lawrence J. Buford as acting superintendent.

In a resolution adopted by the Board on October 21, 1957, Mr. Scruggs was remembered for his long and unselfish labors to upgrade the Biloxi schools and to establish better relations with all schools, "with no thought to his own ease and comfort and with no consideration to his own health and welfare." He had served the Biloxi schools for more than twenty years and had been superintendent for the past eleven years.

For the first time, a Board member was elected to represent Fernwood. Mr. Buford had reported that students from the Fernwood area represented 17.7 percent of the student population. The Board set an election to be held at the Fernwood School on March 1, 1957. At that time, Mr. C. T. Switzer was elected as a member of the Biloxi Board of Trustees.

The Board wasted no time in setting about the task of choosing a new superintendent, making it clear that the selection would be made from a list of top candidates that excluded any present or previous employee of the Biloxi schools.

It was unfortunate that Mr. Buford's assumption of the office would be followed almost immediately by a conflict over which he had no control, involving the Biloxi High School and Gulfport High School football teams in the traditional end-of-the-season Thanksgiving game. The rivalry between the teams—and, in fact, the cities--was long and often contentious and unpleasant. At the football game on November, it was reported in the *Herald* by sports editor Dick Lightsey:

Biloxi won the 43rd renewal of the Biloxi-Gulfport football rivalry 19-10 Thursday afternoon at Joseph W. Milner Stadium in Gulfport before a near capacity crowd of an estimated 6,800 fans.

But the Indians of Coach W.D. Wiles had to stage a determined second half rally to pull the victory out of the fire after the Commodores had taken an earlier 10-point lead. ("Indians Rally," *Herald*, November 29, 1957)

It was the final regular game in the season for both teams (Biloxi would go on to play in the Shrimp Bowl that year), and the longtime battles for the past 42 years between the teams had resulted in a record of 20 wins for Gulfport, 19 for Biloxi, and 4 ties. The Biloxi Indians included A.J. Holloway, fullback, and Glen Williams, halfback, and reserve fullback George Sekul, together with BHS students whose names became almost legendary in the school's football history: Joe Balius, John Wetzel, Scott Jones, Butch Nadalich, Billy Sanford, Harold Erickson, Frank Ryals, Kenny Langlinais, Richard Olier, Melvin Raley, Warren Rosonet, Gerald Richards, Paul Kettering, J.N. Ford, and Billy Johnston.

It would be almost impossible to create a more exciting game for both players and fans, with controversial penalties on the Biloxi team that resulted in a Gulfport field goal added to its first quarter touchdown. Time was running out in the first half when Biloxi scored on a pass from Balius to Williams in the last fourteen seconds, making the score 10-7 in Gulfport's favor as the half ended. With Williams, Holloway, Johnston, and Misko moving the ball and Holloway scoring twice in the second half, the Biloxi team mounted a defense that held Gulfport to minus-fourteen in the second half, at one point holding the Gulfport team scoreless at the one-yard line.

Victory for the Biloxi Indians was well-earned and well-deserved, but it would be marred by fights between team members and fans at the end of the game.

That fracas and the history of bitter rivalry caused the Mississippi High School Activities Association to suspend the series. It would not be renewed until 1968, when Biloxi again defeated the Gulfport team in an undefeated state championship season.

The Board voted on February 17, 1958, to elect Mr. Gycelle Tynes of the West Tallahatchie School District as Biloxi's new superintendent, with a three-year contract at a beginning salary of \$12,000. One of his first administrative acts was to recommend the appointment of Lawrence Buford as assistant superintendent of secondary education and R.D. Brown as assistant superintendent of elementary education.

The February 17 meeting was the last meeting for Jacob Guice. The PTA wrote Mr. Guice a letter expressing the feelings of community residents, thanking him for all that he had done for the schools, his "devotion and tireless energy for the advancement and betterment of the educational opportunities of our children, and the promotion of harmonious public relations with school patrons and the community at large" (Minutes).

With Dr. Graves as the new Board president in 1958 and a Board composed of Glenn Swetman, secretary, Beverly Briscoe, H.M. Toche, and C.T. Switzer, Sr., negotiations began in the matter of securing land for the proposed new high school.

As early as 1952, the Board had begun considering the building of a new high school, at first planning to apply for \$500,000 to \$600,000 from federal sources, but it was not until this point that decisive action was taken. The Board authorized Dr. Graves and acting superintendent Buford to present a proposition to the Board of Trustees of the Seashore Methodist Assembly for purchase of property west of Michel Junior High School. The offer would include a purchase price of \$7,500 per acre. In a resolution, the points were made that the land in question was the most suitable location for a central site for all Biloxi high school students and that no other land suitable for this purpose was available.

At the same time, Mr. Buford and business manager John McDermott were authorized to locate suitable quarters for new school administrative offices.

While the proposed high school construction occupied most of the Board's attention during this period, other projects were demanding Board action. Building underway or in critical planning stages included the A.E. Perkins school addition, advertised for bids in September 1958; the new elementary school to be constructed in the Beauvoir Truck Farm Subdivision (later named Beauvoir Elementary School on recommendation by Superintendent Tynes); extensive repairs to Howard II Elementary School, Dukate and Gorenflo; extensive remodeling and renovation and additions to the Fernwood school; and joint efforts with city officials in managing the new stadium on Lee Street.

Projected building plans in the most ambitious and far-reaching building program since the early 1920s included conversion of Nichols into an elementary school and construction of a new junior-senior high school; conversion of Fernwood to a school for grades 1-9; renovating the senior high school plant to serve Central Junior High School; construction of eight classrooms at Gorenflo to replace temporary barracks; adding four classrooms at Dukate and enlarging the cafeteria; constructing eight classrooms as a second story at West End Elementary; utilizing only the fourteen

permanent classrooms at Howard II; utilizing only the sixteen permanent classrooms at Lopez; constructing twenty-two classrooms at Beauvoir; and constructing sixteen classrooms at the St. Mary Blvd. site.

Failing to reach an agreement with the Seashore Methodist Assembly for purchase of the property, the Board acted to institute eminent domain proceedings. It is instructive to reproduce the entire letter to the *Herald* editor that the Board prepared on August 25, 1958, in regard to the history of negotiations and planning for the new high school:

There appears to be some confusion in the community concerning the litigation between the Seashore Methodist Assembly and the Biloxi Municipal Separate School District.

Statements have alleged that land has been 'taken' from the Assembly, and that the Assembly has 'granted' land to the city of Biloxi for public purposes. Actually the only land ever received from the assembly for use by the public schools of Biloxi was conveyed in a deed in 1952 for a cash consideration of \$85,000.

Since \$85,000 appears excessive for the purchase of 10 acres of swampy, undeveloped land, it should be noted that the school district in 1952 was in danger of losing a Federal grant of \$659,000 for the construction of Mary L. Michel Junior High School unless it could produce an immediate certificate of ownership to a suitable building site. School officials in 1952 felt under duress to pay the \$85,000 in order to hold the large Federal grant.

Besides the initial cost, about \$50,000 more was spent developing the M.L. Michel site.

What of the present eminent domain court case?

The Biloxi Municipal Separate School District now has fully twice the land area that the district had in 1952. The Biloxi District and the Fernwood Rural Separate School District were combined by law in 1957.

Total pupil enrollment in Biloxi public schools has increased from 3,862 in 1951-52 year to 7,250 for the 1957-58 session. There has been no construction of permanent-type classrooms since the completion of Michel Junior High in 1954.

School sites meeting state requirements are nearly impossible to locate within the city limits of Biloxi. The Board of Trustees has an elementary school site in the Beauvoir Truck Farm Subdivision and plans to award the contract for a 22-classroom school there on Oct. 7. The School Board also has an elementary school site on St. Mary Boulevard, and is purchasing the city barn property for another site.

The Biloxi High School, built in 1912, has given splendid service for almost half a century. But it was not designed for the quality and the quantity of educational services it is now called on to render. State education authorities and consultants join with local officials in the conviction that the district must have, immediately, a modern, comprehensive high school, centrally located on an adequate site. It must

meet the needs—general, vocational, college preparatory, and special—of 1100 students.

A site survey made by professional consultants in the last three years at the direction of the School Board has this to say about a new high school:

(These) conditions indicate that the present Michel location should be considered for the new high school location. The entire present Michel plant can be utilized but would need to be more than doubled in capacity. At least ten acres should be added to the site. The additional area lies immediately west of the present site, though there may be some difficulties in obtaining it.'

Last May the Biloxi School Board offered \$7,500 per acre to purchase about 12 acres of the Seashore Methodist Assembly property. The offer was rejected and no counter offer received. Then the Board instructed its attorneys to file eminent domain proceedings for 8-1/2 acres of Assembly property lying north of Father Ryan Avenue and just west of the Michel school site. This action is now in court.

All resolutions of the School Board and the resolution of the State Educational Finance Commission approving this site point out that it is to be for the construction of a senior high school.

Since Central Junior High School will continue to grow in enrollment, and a junior high school doesn't demand the number of types of equipment and special construction which a modern senior high school must have, a number of the present senior high classrooms can be converted to use for Central Junior High.

It should be pointed out that while some state and federal aid is available for school construction, the local school district must always provide the site.

Local school officials are charged by state laws 'to promote the physical, mental, moral, social, and educational welfare of the children involved, the efficiency of the operation of the schools, and the economic and social welfare of the various school areas.'

It was with a feeling of legal responsibility and moral obligation that the School Board initiated legal action to compel the sale to the school district of 8-1/2 acres of heavily wooded, undeveloped property, which has lain dormant for generations.

With all deference to the owners of the land, school officials must place the welfare of the boys and girls of the school district paramount. (Board Minutes, August 25, 1958, 1753, 1754)

The Board requested the city to call a special election for the purpose of submitting to voters a bond issue proposal for \$2,000,000 primarily for building the high school on Father Ryan Avenue (though the proposition as phrased referred to erecting, repairing, equipping, remodeling, and enlarging school buildings and related facilities).

On December 15, 1958, Mayor Laz Quave and City Commissioners Dominic Fallo and Pete Elder received a report from the Election Commission that a total of 3,735 votes had been cast in the bond

issue election. The bond issue was overwhelmingly approved by three-fifths of the voters—2,940 votes in favor, 795 against. Plans could then go forward with the building of the high school.

And on February 16, 1959, Board president Graves reported that the Methodist Seashore Assembly suit had been settled, the ground had been paid for, and attorneys' fees had been paid (Minutes 1871). School officials then set out to visit new schools, with school administrators and architects. Architects for the high school would be Henry Fountain, Jr., and Landry and Matthes.

In May 1958 the State Department of Education published a compilation called "Special Salary Tabulations" which included data for all Mississippi school districts regarding salaries for both white and Negro teachers, showing numbers of teachers and support personnel employed in each district; salaries paid to certain school officials; and average salaries for elementary and secondary teachers.

The Biloxi Municipal Separate School District for the 1957-1958 school year had 171 classroom teachers, with an average daily student attendance of 3,560. White teachers' salaries averaged \$3,090 for elementary personnel, \$3,410 for high school teachers, and a district average of \$3,212. The district ranked twelfth among the approximately 80 school districts.

Given the history of salaries in the earlier years of the Biloxi schools, it is surprising to find that by 1958 the average salaries as reported for Negro teachers was \$3,261 for elementary teachers, \$3,368 for high school teachers, and an average of \$3,302 for the district. The average salary, then, was higher than the average salary for Biloxi's white teachers, and the district ranked first in the state in this category. It was a matter in which Biloxi school officials could take some pride despite the problems that remained ever present in a segregated school system and, in effect, a segregated society.

The importance of federal aid to the total operation of the Biloxi schools was highlighted in 1959 with an announcement that under Public Law 874, \$248,652 in federal assistance had been approved for the Biloxi district. Under the law, federal aid was based on the number of school children living on federal reservations (on which no local taxes were collected) and the number of school children living off federal reservations but whose parents worked on federal property. The district was constant in its efforts to secure federal funding for school construction, including a shop building at the high school and a twenty-classroom elementary school

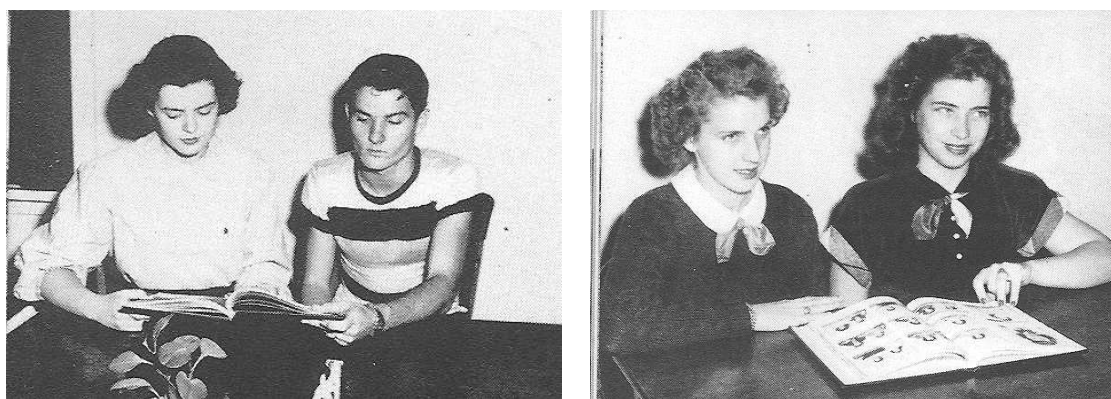
In 1959 there were 2,918 such children in the Biloxi schools, superintendent Gycelle Tynes said ("Approve Federal Aid," *Herald*, March 3, 1959). Installations covered by the law at that time were Keesler Field, Ingalls Shipbuilding, Biloxi and Gulfport VA Centers, and the Navy Construction Battalion in Gulfport. Financial aid under the program would continue to be an integral part of the Biloxi School District's operating budget, and it would also become a matter of great concern as the government in later years reduced its proportionate aid.

The building of a new school in the western section of the city, Beauvoir Elementary School, was almost complete at the beginning of the 1959 school year, though there were some problems connected with the opening. Bid date for the addition to West End was set for October 19.

Registration for the opening day of the Biloxi schools in 1959 showed a total of 6,345 students, with attendance at the new Beauvoir Elementary School, 807; Dukate, 3787; Fernwood Elementary, 556; Gorenflo, 620; Howard II, 471; Lopez, 447; West End, 393; Perkins Elementary, 570; Fernwood Junior High, 143; Central Junior High, 454; Michel Junior High, 484; Nichols High School, 251; and Biloxi High School, 915. As a result of the opening of Beauvoir Elementary and Fernwood Junior High at the beginning of the year, several of the other schools showed a decrease in enrollment as students were assigned to the new schools.

It was also a momentous event in the history of the schools when the new Yankee Stadium was completed in 1959; the stadium would hold 5,000 seats on the home side, 3,500 on the visitors' side. Dr. D.L. Hollis, longtime Board member, team physician, and a dedicated supporter of athletics over the years, called both the football team and the stadium the finest in the state.

At the March 16, 1959, Board meeting Dr. Graves, president, reported that in the last year several construction projects had been undertaken, chief among them the new Beauvoir Elementary School, with 22 classrooms and the Perkins Elementary School. In addition, the city had passed a \$2-million bond issue to fund the building of a new high school. Graves noted that considerable credit should be given to the new superintendent, Mr. Tynes, and the new administrative structure that was expected to help raise the standards of the entire school system.



Members of the Indian Echo staff, 1950 – Gerald Guidroz, Advisor

It was with a greatly enlarged school district and several new building plans underway, budgeted operating costs of \$1,311,839.76 for the school year 1958-1959, and approximately 5,800 students that the Biloxi Public Schools ended the first half of the century, having weathered times of Depression and war, of searching evaluation and inquiry, and of growing pains that afflicted every

middle-aged school system. Those years of painful growth would lead the schools into the Decade of Change, the 1960s.



*Biloxi High School
Quill and Scroll – 1951*



The old victory bell, cast in 1899, had first been placed in the Old City Hall, and every night the desk sergeant rang it at 9 o'clock curfew. In 1916, four years after Biloxi High School opened, the bell was presented to the school by the City Commission. It was mounted on the roof of the school on East Howard Avenue and had once been rung to begin the school day—and then, over the years, to signal BHS team victories (the football team was called the Yellowjackets at first). For forty-six years the bell hung in back of the old high school.

When football games were played behind the school, spirited students would ring it after every Indian touchdown. Older Biloxians used to listen for the bell, and its silence after a football game was as eloquent as its ringing. It was moved to the new high school and hung in the courtyard, where BHS students continued the tradition. *(From the Herald and the Hi-Tide)*



The annual Spelling Bee, sponsored by the National Honor Society, Biloxi High, In the late 1950s



BHS Journalism Class - 1959



Biloxi High School National Honor Society – 1959



Biloxi High School graduates have often returned to Biloxi as teachers. These three 1956 graduates of BHS were teachers at the high school in the early 1960s. Madeline Demopulos, Kay Ayers, and Mary Kay Hammond were members of the outstanding class of 1956. Betty Jean Covich, who has taught in the Biloxi schools for 41 years, was also a member of that class (see "Biographies" Section—Mrs. Betty Jean Covich Hughes).