



School district Supt. Eric Birch

Supt. Birch

District administrator voices deep concern for the individual

Mr. Eric Birch
Superintendent of Schools
Fontana Unified School District

It is its people that impact a community. Good leaders emerge from within to lead the others of us out of confusion and make decisions that improve the lives of us all. We are blessed to have such a leader in our school district, Mr. Eric Birch. He is of the people and from the people and leads quietly and well.

His family migrated from Yugoslavia via Canada and came to live in California in 1942. For the past 27 years, Mr. Birch has worked and raised his family in this city. He loves the city and is proud of it.

He has watched Fontana grow from a rural area of wide open fields to the urban center we live in today. He has worked in or been a leader of this school district from its rural beginnings to the first class school district we work in today.

He was Fontana's first high school science teacher; biology was his special field of interest and instruction. He recalls in 1953 that there

Mr. Eric Birch, Continued

was no Fontana Unified School District. We were then still part of the Chaffey Union School District.

He tells a story that might be called, "Schoolrooms on Wheels". High school students from Fontana had but three buildings in which to attend their classes. Since the community was growing and expanding this was not enough room. Everyone, students and staff as well, had to "brown bag" it for lunch for there was no cafeteria. It was necessary to do something drastic to provide more classroom space. Therefore, each morning thirty school buses were rolled onto campus. These were the schoolrooms for students and their teachers. When we complain about conditions today, it serves us well to remember the way it was.

Mr. Birch continued to become a department chairman at Fontana High School (1952-56) to the positions of high school counselor (1956-60), assistant principal (1962-65), Fontana High School Principal (1965-67), and Fontana Adult School Principal (1971-72). Mr. Birch also instituted the continuation school now established on Locust Avenue under the name of Birch High in honor of his work and dedication. Because of their admiration for Mr. Birch, the students themselves petitioned the School Board to have the school named in his honor. His work and caring have touched many lives.

Mr. Birch became School Superintendent in 1972. He has served since that time until now. It is in this position that his concept of leadership works to influence those around him, staff and students as well. He keeps in touch and frequently visits the schools to talk with and listen to students, teachers and others. He shares with us the decisions being made that effect us all.

This quote of Loa-tzu describes well his concept of leadership:

A leader is best
When people barely know that he exists,
Not so good when they acclaim him,
Worst when they despise him.
"Fail to honor people
They fail to honor you";

But of a good leader, who talks little
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,
They will say, "We did this ourselves."

Mr. Birch is an active and caring member of our community. He has served as a Y.M.C.A. Board member and president. He has been a board member of such organizations as: Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Fontana United Fund, Gridiron Club, as well as the Family Service Agency and the Crime Commission.

Mr. Eric Birch, Continued

Perhaps because of the experiences he brought to his job as a beginning teacher, he has given the breadth of understanding and depth of compassion to develop into one of this communities finest leaders. One of which we all can be proud. In his early years, Mr. Birch has been an Army medic, a lab technician, truck driver, steelworker, quality control technician, as well as working for some time in agriculture.

A great deal more should be said about our superintendent. That is for historians to continue.