Longview Independent School District fully integrated more than 15 years after the Supreme Court’s ruling that declared segregation within schools unconstitutional. Almost 40 years later, the district is in the midst of formulating a new strategy for assigning students to schools.

Inside this section are stories from some of the people—teachers and students—who lived through the district’s full 1971 integration.

BY ERIN WATERS
Contributing writer

EARLY THIS SUMMER, Longview ISD officials began a process to change the district’s attendance policies in conjunction with the anticipated completion of a districtwide building and renovation project. But a proposal to return to “neighborhood schools” has sparked concerns among some community members who believe it will re-segregate the district.

The attendance zone proposal expands upon the $266.9 million bond project to demolish, replace or renovate 14 outdated school buildings starting at the elementary level, a four-year project approved in May 2008. LISD attendance data shows a tangled web of 28 zones that scatter children around the district through an equally complex busing system—all products of a 1969 court order to desegregate Longview with a racial balance of 70-30, white to black, on all campuses.

The district aims to eliminate long bus rides to and from school for many students, officials say, and redraw the attendance zones geographically around the new elementary schools—cutting the number of zones from 28 to six. Neighborhood schools would reduce the need for busing but result in less ethnically diverse student populations in most schools, particularly those at the southern and northern ends of town.

 Passage of the proposal requires ending the federal desegregation court order that has the zones locked in place. Administrators say the white-black ratio is impossible to meet today because of changes in the city’s housing patterns and the ethnic make-up of the district.

LISD Superintendent James Wilcox, two-and-a-half years with the district, envision brand new, state-of-the-art schools close to home, increased parental involvement and academic success for students.

He anticipates a bright future for LISD as “the best school district in the state of Texas,” believing the best facilities will begin to produce the best students. In 2008, LISD had one school ranked exemplary by the state.

A history of racial divide in Longview could overshadow Wilcox’ optimistic vision. Some community members fear the end of the desegregation mandate will be a 40-year step backwards to a re-segregated district with unequal opportunities.

Wilcox assigned a rezoning committee to tackle the proposed attendance zones, which

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Black and white becomes green

The image at left showing black and white students was on the front of the 1971 Lobo Yearbook, the first year of official integration at Longview High School.

“There is no black, there is no white,” Former Lobo football coach Clint Humphries told his team after integration. “There is only green and white.”

LIFE NEAR THE BUS STOP AND IN THE CLASSROOM

Disturbances outside Longview High School and in its hallways and classrooms were common during the early years of forced integration. Hear from former students and teachers about those years.

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UNITY NOT EASY TO FIND ON FOOTBALL FIELD

Coach Cliff Stewart had his problems at Black Mary C. Womack High School since he arrived at the school in 1951. But as forced integration arrived, Stewart, his staff and Womack players faced off challenges as the newest Lobos.

PAGE 4G
"The time I was unhappy, but there's an old song, You will understand it better; by and by; We all find out that we were the same."

**WILLIAM**

*Former Mayor* of Longview: Dr. E. Willis High School's principal, talking about integrating the Longview High School, which was a predominantly black school in the 1940s and 1950s.

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**Zones**

Spring of 1971 tested many black students

By Jon Prior

*Les Hassell/News-Journal Photo*

FOR THE first time in nearly 10 years, Longview High School students rode school buses with their white counterparts and brought a new era to the school's campus.

The school board, in response to a court order, ended the all-black schools proposal and the plan was overturned.

That required an immediate reorganization of the Longview Independent School District (LISD), according to the findings of the Supreme Court.

After the Supreme Court's decision, the school board voted to submit a neighborhood school plan to the长校 district. This plan was accepted by the Justice Department.

The board reviewed the at-large schools proposal and decided to make all schools free of choice with title III funding.

The school board had established a rating plan for determining if a student's housing is adequate. This rating plan was adopted for the district.

With the school board's approval, the chief executive officer of the Longview Independent School District was appointed to do the job.

The school board's decision was a result of a long battle between the school district and the Justice Department.

The long battle between the school district and the Justice Department was resolved with the appointment of a new superintendent for the district.

The new superintendent was appointed by the school board, and his duties included overseeing the school district.

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Tension lift to fuse to bombings

A group wanting to delay integration in the city attack buses, putting Longview in the national spotlight

BY DIANNA WRAY
Contributing writer

N.J.L. July 1957, shadowy figures approached Longview’s Big Loop and red lighted St. Chowling across the ear of the lot, a bolt of light emerged, a crescent shaped hole 13 inches by 77 inches — just big enough for a man to wrangle through it — as the metal fence was knocked down. The car had been full-time flag waver, barbecuist and fireman, but Longview was beginning to quiet down. Racism reasons that had been almost palpable in the previous months and years as levels of school ordained desegregation. The residents, those few that knew there was a problem, started to become notorious. The shadows moved across the darkened parking lot, picking up the old blanket covering the asphalt pavement under and over the sun. The fireworks tinkled with quiet tales of the past with matches and tengticked bang under the fences. W.A.R.M. Seventh powers of dynamite described the sound of the explosion, and a bright flash lit in the sky, as crams of fireworks had gone off at any time. That was the moment the screaming started in the sky with sparkling colors. The tension was lifted from people in Longview’s city bus station. Longview police officer Buck Rosborough was in his patrol car at a stop sign (850 feet away when it happened) “It was a percussion like finding a needle in a haystack” he told me back in the seat of my car, parking car a few feet from the lot. Rushborough had rushed for his car, but the parking lot of the athletic field lot was filled with school buses blacked, twinned masses of metal that sat in the long, long space.

Detective Clifford Phelps was also on duty and he noted “There was loud noise, seen on the scene.” Witnesses described a “distant explosion, took all the air out of the room” the bus, cramps, heat, confusions, and shock. He began to collect evidence. He began to consider all the incidents that happened the past several months. The true picture of the destructive event is that the sun came up revealing 13 of the 36 buses in the parking lot with gapping wounds, twisted metal, burned frames, their undercarriage.

Elliot, the bomb’s chief — who had been found with eye wash unimpaired by the blast — was picked up right after midnight. What they did to him the entire night was a mystery. They sold the bunch of school buses, and it was all about integration. It was some way people did their work, after being shot and then going to school with their kids. They believe to do it. They weren’t the Rikks. They sold them the buses.

Beginning Integration

The Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that schools were class-criminals. Fifteen thousand students were involved in the fight. The 36 school buses were sold to fall into disuse. The city refused. But the 36 school buses were still losing. The integration was failing. The 36 school buses were being burned. The community reaction was not in favor of the group of bus owners. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized. The group of bus owners formed and organized.
As integration spread from the hallways of Longview High School to the football field, players and parents struggled to come together for a common cause.

BY KELLY GORDON

In the fall of 1969, Mary C. Womack High School baseball coach Clifford Stewart had just completed a 1-4 season. Womack had experienced success in Longview, winning five district championships since he arrived in 1961, but the team suffered in the late 1960s. Despite that, Stewart had hope. A group of freshmen stood out to him that spring training, the Longview High School baseball team meeting at Womack’s practice, taking note of the fastest players and the ones with the most skills. Despite that, Stewart had hope. A group of freshmen displayed promising skills. Born in 1954, they already claimed the shores of Mary C. Womack High School and integrated its Longview High School baseball team.

A new school with a good team, but not yet prepared for the scene that they would encounter. Mary C. Womack High School in Longview is a segregated high school, but he was not as prepared as he should have been. His players were black. They didn’t want us there, and we didn’t want to be there. That’s when integrating was a must.

It was a big deal because representing the black neighborhood, Stewart said. “He told them at a meeting that we were going to have a baseball team. How can you rise to that?”

“The only way you can rise to that is if you walk the hallways in uniforms,” Stewart said. “You’ve got to have a team. The fans are going to be coming in. They want to see us play, but we don’t have anyone to do it.”

So Stewart and his players walked in the building, each wearing uniforms. The fans were impressed.

Humphries believed the guys who played for Womack and their school would not want to come together for a common cause. The club had made multiple attempts to add a black player to the team. As a senior, urged by his parents, Calvin Portley arrived at Longview High School.

“Hey man, y’all going to walk on this team?” Stewart asked.

“Yeah, we’re going to walk on,” Portley responded.

“OK, you’re on the team then,” Stewart said. “I’m going to help you walk on this team.”

Calvin Portley arrived at Longview High School in 1972. Most of the parents didn’t want their kids out of the system. Some of the parents did take their kids out of the school system. Stewart and his coaching staff didn’t want to lose their kids.

“We had three plays and we lost them all. Stewart said.”

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Mingling white and black students was "smooth" in C.C. Turner's honors math classes, but not in other parts of LHS

C. C. Turner
Longview High School math teacher

In this class, integration was solved.

Two teachers found each other in Longview's forgotten story.

By Don Pizer
Contributing writer

Two friends found each other in Longview's forgotten story.

Boyon Jones, a student at Longview Colored High School, saw black student Christian teaching algebra at 11 a.m. in 1960, reading a book. Jones looked his way, knocked on the door and said, "You're eating with us today.

When he began teaching at Blanchaud Johnson, he told two things. You can't give a student an "F" and you can't use the teacher's lunch. One day, two teachers approached his mobile-unit classroom outside the school and knocked on the door, and said, "Judge, we don't have a teacher." Don't say anything, you're the best thing we've ever done.

"You're eating with us today," she said, remembering his classroom outside the school, "It was going to be OK," Pool said. "I didn't make your skin white. I didn't make mine black. Forget that. Shangalee says, shaking his head and pointing to his own skin, "I'll tell you, we don't have black tables. We're all white, and that's the law."

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“No matter how hard I try, I’m looking for what I am first, then who I am. They say education is the way to move forward. The tragedy for that is if you buy into the idea that you go to school and be a good black, you’re still just black.”

Troy Simmons

LONGVIEW ISD school board president

North of US 80 — also known as Marshall Avenue — stands restaurant such as the Olive Garden, which were often the sites of protests. These days, the school district’s athletic programs still thrive. That's another part of the problem, he said.

“Longview residents should think about ‘Who benefits and who’s hurt’ by this poem and by this kind of thinking,” he said. “That’s the problem, the question.”

How many people live in the southern part of the state and have been educated in the programs that are part of the Longview ISD’s rezoning efforts?

Culver worked in Longview until 2002, when he retired. He has been a consultant to districts across the country, as well as to schools in the Longview ISD rezoning efforts.

“Longview is going to have to bring programs such as the Community Action Program to help encourage parents to schools and also create programs such as the busing program to help encourage parents to schools,” he said.

Culver says all students are receiving the best education possible. He made decisions that he thought were best for the children, but when he was tasked with implementing them, board members threw him “under the bus” for it.

“Quite frankly, it was quite simple,” Culver said.

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