

Laney Is Living Legacy Of Oakland Journalist

BY BOB FADER

Why Laney? Have you ever wondered why this college is named Laney? Speculation on the school's namesake covers wide range. Most of the people asked thought it was named after a carpenter or a building trade leader. Others said the college was named after a former Oakland mayor, a real estate agent, a financial contributor and Jack "Laney" London the author.

Joseph Clarence Laney was born in Salt Lake City in 1880. He was the son of Mormon parents who could trace their family back to the settling of the territory. Laney's grandfather ran the Pony Express station in Fish Springs Utah, and his parents were farmers.

Joe Laney left Utah to attend Arizona State Normal College and graduated in June of 1900. Interested in newspaper work he landed a job with the Phoenix Republic. While working in Phoenix Laney met Grace Saylor, a member of the famous family who owned the Saylor Candy Company. They were married in 1904, that same year the Laney's moved to California and settled in Oakland.

Laney's first job in the Bay Area was with the old Alameda Argus. He stayed with the Argus for a year and then transferred to the Oakland Herald. His work well respected and in 1907 he was offered a job on the staff of the Francisco Chronicle as an East Bay correspondent. Then a short time later the Oakland Enquirer gave him a job as city editor.

As city editor he really got to know Oakland and especially the

legal profession in Alameda County. Laney's two brothers were lawyers in Phoenix and he always had an interest in the profession. Seeing a need for a legal publication, Laney and Perry W. MacDonald founded the Inter-City Express in 1909. Laney and MacDonald had met while both were reporters for the Oakland Herald.

During the first year of publication Laney kept his job with the Enquirer and shared his income with MacDonald, because it took about a year for the paper to start making a profit. The two men would gather all the information on court decisions, building permits, legal notices and anything of interest lawyers and contractors. Each night they took their copy to a Berkeley printer and the paper was ready for circulation at six the next morning.

For the first two months they delivered the paper free to all the Oakland law firms, banks, lumber companies and building contractors who depended on permits. On the third month they stopped deliveries, that first day their office was swamped with calls. Laney explained that the paper was no longer free and subscriptions were now \$1 per month. Orders poured in, the Inter-City Express was now in business.

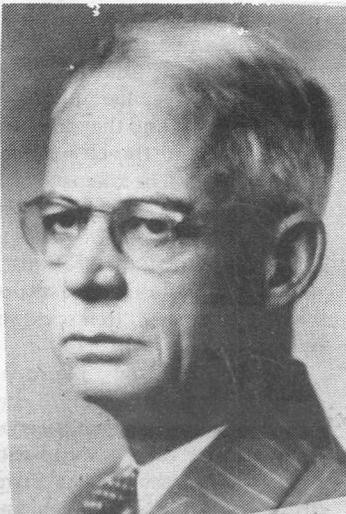
That same year, Laney became the proud father of twin boys, Howard and Clarence. Over the years that followed his two sons would help with production of the Express and eventually take over his half interest.

Laney was always active in public affairs. He was a 25 year member of the Kiwanis Club,

member of the Athenian Nile Club, belonged to the Oakland Masonic Lodge, president of the Oakland Visiting Nurses Assoc., president of the California Graphic Arts Ass., director of the East Bay Safety Council, division colonel for the Community Chest, and in 1933-4 he served as foreman for the Alameda County Grand Jury.

Laney was always interested in education, and he voiced his opinion on issues important to the Oakland schools. In 1938 the Board of Education unanimously named Joseph Laney to fill the unexpired seat of school director Charles Snook, who resigned to run for Congress. "I consider it a great honor", Laney said "To be appointed to fill the unexpired term of Mr. Snook and to be given an opportunity to serve with a board that has won national recognition for its efficient and progressive administration of the city's schools."

Perry MacDonald's younger brother still publishes the Inter-City Express. He remembers Joe



Laney and his brother Perry when they started publishing. He was the newspaper boy back in 1909 and today he and his son own the paper.

MacDonald remembers how Laney took to his new job on the Board of Education. "Work on his desk would pile up while he spent all his time studying the problems of the schools and just doing his homework".

Laney was concerned with the emphasis on Liberal Arts at the expense of students with a aptitude for the trades. He felt that these students were just marking time until graduation and then they would be ill equipped to earn a living.

The idea of a free vocational trade school was novel and it faced resistance from the powerful labor unions. The unions had no intention of giving away any jurisdiction to a school system. Laney got union and management together, a difficult task. He showed the unions how they could benefit from the training the apprentices would get at school. Union men could teach courses and benefit from continuing their studies in the current state of the art. Laney was successful through his efforts Oakland's Central Trade school opened.

In 1943 after his appointed time expired Laney declared himself a candidate for the Board of Education. "The operation of our schools", Laney said "is one of Oakland's biggest and most important enterprise. I shall continue to strive for the best possible education for the pupils and patrons of the Oakland schools. The harmonious non political, economical and efficient manage-

ment of the schools shall be my administrative policy". He was elected in 1943 and again in 1947.

After his election in 1947 Laney was selected by unanimous approval to become president of the Board of Education. He had been chairman of the finance committee for the past two years and this was a big vote of confidence by his peers.

Laney's two sons still live in the Bay Area. Last week Howard visited the new Laney College for the first time. He helped fill in some details about his father's life and provided the college with two old snapshots. He remembers his father as quiet and unassuming, a man who worked hard helping the community. He was non political and considered himself an independant.

When he wasn't working Laney liked to go camping and fishing. He had a special interest in photography and spent time making home movies. Howard said that his father thought his greatest achievement was the success of Central Trade School.

On August 16, 1948, just one year after his election as board president and the same day that Babe Ruth died, Joseph Clarence Laney passed away. On September 27th, C. Stanley Wood, the new president of the Oakland Board of Education, announced that Central Trade School would be re-named Laney Trade Tech. "Members of the Board of Education took this action." Wood said "to perpetuate Laney's name in honor of his innumerable contributions to the community".