



DENTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

CAMPUS FORTY

Paige Phillips Boroughs, *Principal*

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To: The Denton Independent Board of Trustees

The task of naming the Juvenile Detention Center Campus has been a complicated one. We have considered at least fifteen "different inspiring names". Unfortunately they have usually been used by a placement, crisis center or a rehabilitation center somewhere in the State of Texas. The idea of naming the DISD program at Juvenile Detention Center after Joe Dale Sparks seemed appropriate to both the County and the Faculty. I have included statements from members of the Committee and also former teachers.

Thank you for your consideration in the matter of the name change. The PEIMs code for the Campus has been used since the existence of the program. The confidentiality of students is assured by law while they are enrolled in Juvenile Detention. JJAEP and DCJDC are consistently confused by almost everyone. The distinction of an appropriate name will solve many problems and allow our transcripts to continue to protect the placement status of students while enrolled at Campus Forty.

Respectfully,

Paige Boroughs, Principal, Campus Forty

**It is proposed that the
Denton County Juvenile Detention Center, Campus Forty Program
210 South Woodrow Lane
Denton, TX 76205
be named for:
Mr. Joe Dale Sparks**

I. Biographical and Historical Data: (see pages following)

Professional Experience
Joe Dale Sparks
1967-2000

Education: Bachelor of Science Degree, McMurry College, Abilene Texas,
August, 1967.

Masters of Education, University of North Texas, Denton Texas,
August, 1974.

Career Experience: 1996-2000 Fifth through Twelfth grade teacher, Juvenile Detention Center,
Denton, Texas.
1991-1996 Sixth grade teacher, Denton ISD, Denton Texas.
1988-1991 Third/Sixth grade Dallas ISD, Dallas Texas.
Part time Dallas Juvenile Detention, Dallas, Texas.

1986-1988 Fourth/Sixth grade Alternative School, Odessa, Texas
Part time Adult Parole Counselor, Odessa, Texas
1985-1986 Sixth Grade, Gallup ISD, Navajo, New Mexico
1983-1985 Adult Education, Texas Department of Corrections
Windham ISD, Windham Texas
1981-1983 Sixth Grade, Big Spring ISD, Big Spring, Texas
1980-1981 Fifth Grade, Terrell ISD, Terrell, Texas
1976-1980 Sixth/Eighth Grade, Texas Youth Commission, Gainesville,
Texas
1972-1976 Elementary Grades, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Arizona and
Alaska
1967-1972 Fifth Grade, Abilene ISD, Abilene, Texas

Synopsis of Educational Experience:

Mr. Sparks felt teaching allowed him the freedom to experience many different aspects of culture and society. Not only in traditional school settings but in rich cultural immersions. Experiences such as his sojourn on the Navajo Reservation and his stay with the traditional Eskimo villagers gave variety and scope to his teaching abilities.

In addition to these cultural forays, Joe Dale incorporated a great deal of experience with another unique population of learners. This being students in correctional populations. Teaching stints in both adult and adolescent correctional facilities imbued him with an intense desire to contribute to the efforts to educate and inspire, at risk, juvenile detention students. Before his untimely death in late 2000 he was thoroughly involved in every aspect of that goal being a devoted member of the faculty, at The Denton County Juvenile Detention Center.

Joe Dale Sparks
Personal Information

Mr. Sparks was born on April 9, 1941 at home in Ballenger, Texas. He grew up there and was well known by everyone in this small town. Joe Dale was a friendly inquisitive child. The term "It takes a village" was very apropos for him. The entire community knew his parents, who were ministers of the local church. Everyone considered it their duty to keep close tabs on the pastor's child.

Joe Dale's parents began their nomadic church missions, when he was in the fifth grade. He attended Texas schools in Odessa, Brownfield, Coleman, Sweetwater, and finally finished High School in Abilene. In childhood, he learned to blend into any environment; in fact he loved traveling and meeting new people. People did not remain strangers very long after meeting Joe Dale.

Mr. Sparks graduated from High School in 1961. He married his first wife shortly after and began earning a living. He soon saw the advantage of furthering his education. He enrolled at McMurray College in 1963 and worked full time to support his wife and two children. He graduated in 1967 and began his career doing what he loved, teaching. Later while working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, he earned a Master's Degree from The University of North Texas, by attending classes during the summer sessions.

Mr. Sparks was a very gifted man, blessed with diverse artistic talents. One talent was accidentally discovered when he was still in middle school, this was his ability to play by ear. He simply sat down and began plunking on the church's piano, when the church pianist did not show up for practice. On that day, his dad gave him permission to stay behind, at the church, while the rest of the family went on visitations. After three hours, they walked back into the church, where he was playing a perfect rendition of *Precious Memories*. The next morning he became the church pianist playing a large variety of hymns perfectly. Dale taught himself to play many other instruments: trombone, accordion, guitar, banjo, harmonica, and drums. He frequently used this talent in his teaching, much to his student's delight.

Joe Dale was also a talented artist and artistsan. He minored in Art and studied under many talented teachers. He worked in a variety of mediums: oils, acrylics, watercolors, and charcoal. He especially loved working with wood, carving realistic figures both human and wildlife. He also used his own decorative wood burning techniques on wood and other natural canvases. He handcrafted knives and decorated them with scrimshaw. Joe Dale also loved creating cartoons, and hilarious caricatures of friends, students, and most especially of him. Mr. Sparks did not profit much from his prolific creations preferring to give most of them away. He believed he would be remembered as long as someone somewhere had a piece of his artwork.

In summation, perhaps Joe Dale's greatest contribution to the Juvenile Detention Center was his ability to bring people together as a group. He was always ready with a positive word and a hilarious story. During his time at JDC, he made lots of friends, organized many staff get-togethers, and mediated a few disputes. He was a very unique character that most people loved and respected. He hardly ever missed a day of work simply because he loved his job and enjoyed those around him: teachers, staff, and especially his students. He believed each day was a grand opportunity to make a difference.

II. I believe the facility should be named for Joe Dale Sparks:
(see pages following)

Rationale Supporting the Nomination

Bobbie Hanford, Deputy Director for Institutional Services, Denton County Juvenile Detention Center . . .

The Denton County Juvenile Center was blessed with the presence of Joe Dale Sparks for the final few years of the long and distinguished career of this wonderful educator. He came to us with experience in educational settings in secure correctional facilities including the Texas Youth Commission and the Texas prison system. He also taught on a reservation for Native Americans in New Mexico and in several public schools including Rivera Elementary. This wealth of experience was evident in every class Joe Dale taught. Even the students who were the hardest to reach quickly warmed to one or more of the many tactics he used to make learning fun and interesting. His lessons were richly embellished with personal experiences that made the subject matter seem "real" to the students. He was a wonderful artist and a humorous caricature of a reluctant student often opened the door to new learning experiences for the youth. Joe Dale had a sense of humor that reached all his students, his fellow teachers and all the staff of the facility. His funny, often corny, jokes brought smiles to many faces on a daily basis.

The tragic, untimely death of this wonderful man took him from us and I think that designating the Juvenile Detention Center education program as the Joe Dale Sparks school would be an honor befitting him. Such a great man and the contributions he made to the lives and academic achievement of our residents should be remembered and this designation would be fitting and proper.

Bill Brown, Juvenile Detention Officer, Denton County Juvenile Detention Center . . .

Experience with Joe Sparks

It was enjoyable to see Mr. Sparks share his variety of life experiences with the juveniles in the classroom. I remember Mr. Sparks teaching the juveniles how to write a paper. Mr. Sparks quoted Will Rogers . . . "Tell what your going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you told them". So simple and to the point.

Trish Lana, Science Teacher, Campus 40 . . .

In 1998 I began a long-term substitute position at Campus 40. Joe Dale Sparks was my mentor when I began subbing in the POST program. His class of 6-10 boys was always busy and on task. The boys were involved in their studies and their behavior was usually not a problem. When the behavior disruptions occurred Joe Dale would very calmly give the young man his options and often this calmed the juvenile down enough to continue in class. He de-escalated the potential problems before the juvenile disrupted the entire class. When ther was a disruption he handled it in a matter of fact way without getting upset or flustered. The boys had respect for Joe Dale and valued his teaching style and gentle manner. Hopefully this stayed with some of the boys and kept them from returning to their former lifestyle.

Gary Fiori, Special Education Teacher at Calhoun Middle School . . .

Joe Dale Sparks was the most empathetic, caring and creative teacher I have had the honor of working with. His experience educating Indian and Eskimo children in harsh surroundings and situations gave him a unique and remarkable insight into motivating and teaching students at Campus 40 which is also a hard educational environment for students. Using his creative talents combined with his open and positive personality he was able to motivate his students to achieve things I never would have thought were possible. Beyond his legacy to the students whose lives he changed was his legacy to me personally. Many teachers touch the lives of their students but few truly touch the lives of other teachers that they work with. I, as a teacher, learned a great deal from Joe Dale Sparks and owe him an enduring debt of gratitude for I am truly a better teacher for having worked with him. I feel it would be fitting and a long overdue testimonial to his contribution to this school district to name Campus 40 after him.

Steve Erdman, Social Studies Teacher, Campus 40 . . .

The purpose of this short document is to present the rationale in naming the Denton I.S.D. Campus 40 Program in the loving and respected memory of Mr. Joe Dale Sparks. Mr. Sparks was already a teacher at this facility when I arrived. He gave me a tour and explained the hows and whys of what the facility required and what the school was expected to accomplish and truly, became my mentor. Mr. Sparks was a very knowledgeable, caring teacher and confidant to facility personnel, fellow teachers and to the students. His example was such that I feel it is fitting to have our program named after him based upon the hard work Mr. Sparks participated in and the dramatic influence he bestowed upon everyone whose lives he touched. He was a man who really did make a difference.

Raquel Orozco, Standards Compliance Officer, Denton County Juvenile Detention Center . . .

I'm very excited that our campus has the opportunity to be named after Joe Dale Sparks. Teaching in this environment has a unique set of challenges. Mr. Sparks always met those challenges, understanding the importance of his role, but also the roles of our staff. He taught with passion, conviction and we can't forget humor. He related well to his students. Mr. Sparks saw potential in every student. I looked forward to seeing him every day. He always had a story, joke or some project he completed to share with us. Mr. Sparks was always able to relate what he was teaching to the students' everyday experiences.

Maria De La Garza, Campus Manager, Communities in Schools of North Texas, Denton High School . . .

Joe Dale Sparks was the person who introduced me to Campus 40 the first time I walked into the facility as a substitute teacher. What I remember most about his presence there was how he really wanted the students to succeed. He was not only interested in their academic education, he was also interested in their moral education. He wanted them to leave there with a sense of pride and the ability to choose to do right rather than wrong. Mr. Sparks educated these students by giving them respect. He knew that before anything else, he would have to show them that he respected them as people. In an age where teachers demand respect before they will give it, Mr. Sparks knew that would not work with this particular population of students. He was admired as an educator and loved as a colleague.

Sandy Hemmingson, Educational Diagnostician, Campus Forty . . .

I will never forget Joe Dale's kind and gentle spirit. His dedication to go that extra mile to help his students will be something I will always remember about him. Paige would say that he would do additional research if needed in order to help his students learn and retain the information in his classroom. I think it only fitting that Campus 40 should be renamed in honor of him!

Jenneal Vincent, Registrar & Secretary for Campus Forty . . .

I only knew Joe Dale Sparks for a short time, but he certainly left an impression on me and his students. He always treated the students with respect and showed them how to respect themselves. Mr. Sparks had a talent for making the impossible possible and loving the unloveable. Mr. Sparks was a great man, wonderful teacher and a loving man. I am the registrar and enroll and withdraw students. It was so amazing that Mr. Sparks' students (we were not departmentalized then) seldom reoffended and returned to Juvenile. He always told them he did not want them there again. In fact, he often helped them know where they might belong and assured them they had the ability to be there.

Mark King, High School Math Teacher, Campus Forty . . .

Mr. Joe Dale Sparks and I started teaching at the P.O.S.T. program at Campus 40 in 1998. Mr. Sparks soon became my mentor and one of my very best friends. We did not have much in the way of teaching materials back then, but Joe Dale could take the simplest of tools (old fashioned wooden tops he made by hand) and teach the students basic Geometry or Physics. I believe renaming this campus Mr. Joe Dale Sparks will honor this individual as a mentor to his fellow teachers, the many students his teaching skill touched over the years and the dedication he had toward education.

Mary "Patti" Robinson, Related Vocational Instruction Coordinator, Central Education Center, Coweta County Schools, Newnan Georgia-Denton County Juvenile Detention Center, 1999-2004

While our time with Joe Dale Sparks was brief, the memories we share will linger the rest of my life. Every-day he brought enthusiasm for life to work which inevitably rubbed off on us (his co-workers) and his students. He delighted in starting a day with a funny story, a DELICIOUS Grandy's biscuit and gravy, a practical joke on one of the staff . . . you know . . . SOMETHING really good and FUN!!! His joy for life was contagious and we will miss him ALWAYS. Thank you for honoring an educator who believed in the value of students, learning and LIFE.

Paige Boroughs, Principal of Campus Forty, Denton ISD...

Isn't it strange the way people wander into our lives and leave a mark so indelible that the only way to describe it is- 'Amazing.' Joe Dale Sparks was one of those people. I became the administrator of Juvenile Detention because I asked Tony Swafford if I could spend some time there and help solve a few issues. That position evolved into a principal-ship-a job that means the world to me. When I began my assignment at Campus Forty there were three teachers and five full time long-term substitutes. I was often asked about those who wanted to substitute there. My response was always, "They asked to be assigned there and many are willing to work there assuming all the duties of a teacher-with no benefits." The teachers love their assignment and say they have the best job in the world. Many of those fine substitutes completed degrees or began an alternative education program. Because I could not offer a full time position, they migrated to other campuses. Tony Swafford told me once that I ran a teacher training program for others.

Joe Dale Sparks was one of the original three teachers at Campus Forty. He and Darline McDonald were pioneers in the POST Program and the Detention Program. Mr. Sparks often was the person who met substitutes at the first of three locked doors and showed them the Facility. He knew every single person in the Facility they knew him.

In the early days of Campus Forty each teacher was responsible for teaching all subjects to a single class. This was a real challenge as students ranged from ten to seventeen and grades four through twelve. Math was the biggest challenge for teachers. Mr. Sparks always studied the lesson one day ahead so that he had a better chance of "knowing the answers" and "understanding the questions". When that failed, Mr. Sparks would say, "I just don't know the answer to that-but I will find out for you." Now to a group of Juveniles for a male to admit that he just did not know was something of a revelation. Mr. Sparks was a man that the Juveniles admired. I think that one of the best lessons that Joe Dale taught was that it could be manly not to know something and say so. The very best lesson he taught these young men was that he kept his promise to them. If he could not learn the concept and teach it, he always brought in Mario-de-la Garza. Mario was a math wizard and also young. What a wonderful life lesson. Not only to defer-but to someone younger.

Mr. Sparks spent hours on the phone with other school districts helping young male students transition back to their home campus and help them have every opportunity for success. When he was so critically ill in the hospital the teachers and I had to give him updates on students that he would have been following if he was back at Forty.

I could expect a daily call from Mr. Sparks expressing his opinion that he had the best job in the world and how appreciative he was to be able to work with such deserving young people. His wonderful sense of humor helped us all stumble through rough times and difficult students. One time I heard him make the comment that even to look at one student made him angry because he had so many tattoos. (Student was covered head to toe with them) One of the other teachers look in such surprise at him and said, "Why Joe

Dale that is one of God's children -tattooed or not". Tears flooded his face and he said, I am so ashamed. I just meant that I wish I could have been there to give him direction not to do that! He often repeated that experience and said what a lesson that had been for him in humility. His gentleness was unsurpassed as was his compassion for the Juvenile student. He honored them by expecting the most they could produce and helping them with self-realizations that all youth should be taught.

Mr. Sparks is just one of the remarkable teachers that have had the opportunity to provide students self worth and help with them with the opportunity to be successful at Juvenile Detention.. He is, however, the only one that passed from this world. Those remaining to continue his work would be most honored if consideration could be given to naming our program after such a pioneer. We respectfully petition to rename Campus Forty the Joe Dale Sparks Campus.

III. Name(s) of Person(s) supporting the nomination:

Paige Boroughs, Principal of Campus Forty, Special Education Services

Bobbie Hanford, Deputy Director for Institutional Services, Denton County Juvenile Detention Center

Bill Brown, Juvenile Detention Officer, Denton County Juvenile Detention Center

Trish Lana, Science Teacher, Campus 40

Gary Fiori, Special Education Teacher at Calhoun Middle School

Steve Erdman, Social Studies Teacher, Campus 40

Raquel Orozco, Standards Compliance Officer, Denton County Juvenile Detention Center

Maria De La Garza, Campus Manager, Communities in Schools of North Texas, Denton High School

Sandy Hemmingson, Educational Diagnostician, Campus 40

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Denton County Juvenile Detention Center, 1999-2004**