



**HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA**  
**INTERSCHOLASTIC FEDERATION**  
**SOUTHERN SECTION**  
**(CIFSS)**



39<sup>th</sup> historical “tidbit.”

**AVALON HIGH SCHOOL**

**CATALINA ISLAND**



Catalina High School opened in 1923 in the city of Avalon and is currently the furthest south school of any in the CIFSS. The school is part of the Long Beach Unified School District. The Lancers participate in the Western Athletic Conference in most numerous sports...a unique factor are they do not participate in swimming or tennis. They got their football program going with 6 man football and a cash contribution from the Wrigley family in the 1970's. The coed school of 240 students is located at 200 Falls Canyon Road in Avalon. They used to be referred to as the “Flying Prepsters” because they flew from the island to their games. Today, they take the boat like all the visiting teams. They even tried to change the name from the Lancers to the Islanders. It is expensive to run their athletic program when you have to travel to the mainland and pay the expenses travel expenses of officials at home games. They play their basketball games at the Wrigley Field House and their baseball games are well attended with rabid local rooters. Many opponents say the biggest advantage the Lancers have is the fact that some of the visitors get sea sick and don't get their land legs back in time for the game.



# CIF-SS BULLETIN



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AVALON JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH

## CIF-SS FOCUSES ON . . . "THOSE FAR AWAY PLACES"

*Editor's Note: Every now and again the CIF-SS Bulletin will feature a story on some of the Southern Section's own "far-away places". These are the outlying areas many of us in metropolitan cities never see except for a rare visit for a playoff contest or just driving through. We hope to personalize the uniqueness of these Southern Section member schools located from the desert and yes, even across the sea!*

Avalon Junior-Senior High School is part of the Long Beach Unified School District and was established in 1923. There are approximately 200 students enrolled in grades 7-12.

The school is located on Santa Catalina Island in the city of Avalon. Students from K-12 and the evening school program come from all parts of the island.

The island is located approximately 26 miles south of Long Beach in the Pacific Ocean. It is about 26 miles in length and 8 miles wide at the widest point.

The school serves permanent residents of the island - predominately owners and operators of small businesses which cater to vacationers from the mainland, plus some fishermen and workers at the rock quarry or cattle ranch on the island. Other sources of income are the City of Avalon, the Santa Catalina Island Company, Public Utilities and our Public School.

Bill Whitaker, principal at Avalon High comments on athletics at Avalon:

"We participate in CIF competition in basketball and baseball for our boys and the girls play softball and basketball. Our athletic travel expense runs close to \$10,000 per year because of having to fly or boat to mainland games; we then incur expenses for our overnight stay. It is also difficult scheduling teams to come to the island because of their expenses. We play our basketball games in Wrigley Field House which is a beautiful gymnasium donated by Philip K. Wrigley some 20 years ago."

Officials particularly love their Avalon assignment, many of whom plan family trips for the entire weekend when officiating a contest on the island. A typical officiating trip involves a doubleheader, one game Friday night and another on Saturday afternoon. The high school at Avalon pays for transportation over and back either by plane or boat as well as one night lodging.

CIF-Southern Section officials Penny Dodd and Dean Crowley have their own stories to relate about hospitality on the island. Dodd tells of her plane ride home on the regular island to mainland hop when she discovered that the Avalon School

counselor was also the pilot for the trip. Upon recognizing each other, Dodd received a couple of aeronautical lessons and helped fly the plane home!

After completing his assignment, Crowley was invited by the school's athletic director on a tour of the island's rugged interior.

Both officials are unanimous in applauding the generous hospitality of the townspeople. Says Crowley: "When you walk around town everyone knows you were the ref at last night's high school game and win or lose the islanders are always gracious good sports".

## Team With a Home Sea Advantage

SCOTT OSTLER

*Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Jan 25, 1978; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 198 pg. D1*

# Team With a Home Sea Advantage

## Avalon Opponents Sometimes Come Into Games Seasick

BY SCOTT OSTLER

Times Staff Writer

Catalina Island is fish flying, buffalo roaming and gulls gliding in the clear water and air just 22 miles from the nearest freeway traffic jam.

It's pleasant Spanish-style architecture and 360 degrees of scenery suitable for framing, especially in the low-key offseason, before the annual tourist migration.

It's also a headache if you happen to be coach of a high school basketball team getting ready for a two-game weekend at Avalon, pop. 1,800.

"You don't necessarily always enjoy making the trip," said Rick Norris, Maranatha High (Arcadia) coach. "You kind of dread it. They have an uncanny home advantage there. You usually feel good about getting a draw when you go over there. They just really psych up. And sometimes there's a really hostile feeling. Basketball hasn't been much of a problem the last couple of years, but baseball is. There's always a lot of heckling."

Maranatha principal Bill McKinley has been making the trip to the resort island for 15 seasons. "There's a sort of holiday atmosphere," he said.

"The kids have a lot of things on their minds besides basketball. Of course, it's the other way around when they (Avalon players) have to travel."

As Norris herded two teams (varsity and JV) and about 100 other students and rooters aboard a boat in Long Beach, he said he hoped the large group would help offset Avalon's home-court edge. Then he thought of another aspect of that island advantage.

"Some guys don't get their land legs back in time for the Friday night game," he said. "Inevitably, some people get seasick."

Seasick on a 1¾-hour cruise across the Catalina Channel on a pleasant, sunny afternoon? Yes, it is possible.

It's just one of the quirks of geography and travel that makes Avalon High athletics unique. The school, part of the Long Beach Unified School District, has 130 students and fields teams in basketball and baseball. No girls teams and—oddly, for an island famous for its challenging channel swim—no swim team.

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# The Home Sea Advantage Helps

Continued from First Page

Despite its home advantage, which in baseball includes a cliff-top perch for hecklers, Avalon High has never been an athletic power. The Lancers have never gone beyond the second round of the CIF small-schools playoffs in basketball. They have fared better in baseball, but have never won a CIF title.

When Avalon travels to the mainland, it's a treat for the players, if not for the coaches.

"Travel was a big reason a lot of the guys went out for sports," said Gil Voci, former Avalon basketball superstar. Back in 1969 Voci, a 5-9 guard, set a CIF record by averaging 32.5 points (eight others have since broken the record). "It was like playing in the NBA for us. We flew over to the mainland for games, spent the weekend, stayed in the nicest hotels. You would really look forward to the weekends."

Bill Johnson, a more recent Avalon alum, now works as a pro baseball scout. "We traveled better when I was playing here than most double-A (baseball) clubs do," he said.

"I've known some kids who, if they didn't play sports, never left this island until they were 16. In baseball we would have Friday and Saturday nights off and you were just like any kid on the mainland for one weekend. What is an everyday occurrence for kids on the mainland is a treat for kids over here, and vice versa. You would learn things like how to catch a bus, things that mainland kids took for granted. Ninth graders on their first trip would be amazed. For many of them it was the first time to see things like a train."

The best trip, most players agree, is the annual visit to a mountain school like Mammoth. And for several years Avalon hosted a tournament at Long Beach Millikan.

"We left Thursday and had a Friday school requirement," said Johnson, "so we got to go to classes at Millikan. It was an exciting experience to meet the kids and go to classes at a big school."

Until five or six years ago Avalon teams traveled by seaplane, but tightening budgets forced a switch to boats. This season the team might make a trip or two via Air Fast Freight, a cargo plane that can seat 10 passengers, thus requiring two trips to shuttle all the players. Some parents, however, are reluctant to send their young ballplayers back into the air. Islanders tell stories of local air mishaps, major and minor, commercial and private. The seaplane airline resumed service last November after being grounded for 4½ months by the FAA, but the team can't afford to fly by seaplane, anyway. Last summer an Air Fast Freight plane crashed on a cargo flight, killing pilot and copilot, when carbon monoxide fumes leaked into the cabin and put the two asleep, according to FAA investigators.

For league home games, Avalon must import officials and pay their transportation and lodging. The Academy League makes Avalon pay each visiting school \$100 to help with travel expenses, but Avalon gets no money from the league schools it visits.

As one Avalon alum explained, "The league told us, 'You need us, we don't need you.'"

The community frequently chips in to keep the high school athletic programs in business.

"People who live here year-round are not rich," said Avalon basketball coach Gary Brown. "They are just hard-working people and extremely generous. We get a lot of help with money for athletics, especially from the three service clubs. For one thing, they have an annual Mexican dinner and raise about \$1,000 for us."

When William Wrigley Sr., the chewing gum tycoon, and his wife were alive and watching the island from their hillside villa, they were enthusiastic sports boosters. Wrigley—whose family long owned the island—donated the school gym (Wrigley Fieldhouse), so games wouldn't have to be played on the tennis courts. He donated a baseball stadium to the town, and brought his Chicago Cubs over for spring training from 1925 to '47. Avalon prep teams wore castoff Cubs' uniforms for years.

Nine years ago Bill Johnson and a friend went to the Wrigley mansion seeking financial support to help start an interscholastic six-man football team. Mrs. Wrigley invited the boys in for tea and cookies, showed them family photo albums and placed \$5,000 in an account. The school district, however, turned down Avalon's request to field a football team.

Whether it was sea legs, tourist fatigue or the fact that Avalon has its best basketball team in several years,

Maranatha lost two close games to the Lancers (now 9-3, 6-0 in league) last Friday night and Saturday afternoon. Maranatha came to the island ranked in the top 10 in small schools.

The Lancers, whose seniors were playing their last game ever on the island, treated the wins like a world championship. After Saturday's one-point victory they cut down the nets, tossed coach Brown in the showers and made plans for a second-straight night of partying. The games drew about 300 locals.

It was an emotional double win for Brown, a Millikan High grad who came to Avalon to coach 13 years ago, went back to the mainland for seven years, then returned three years ago, for good.

"When I played at Millikan in '57, we came over here for a game," Brown said. "That's when I first decided I liked it here."

His enthusiasm has helped revive the basketball program, with a big assist from the local youth league.

The youth program was started long ago by Frank (Hickey) Rolick, a member of the original Boston Celtics. But Rolick was ill for several years and the program languished until three years ago. When the youth program made a comeback, so did the high school program.

Likewise in baseball; the high school's consistent success is attributed to the youth program, started 17 years ago by Lola Saldana, the local barber, and others. Lola's barber shop is the local sports shrine, complete with historic photos, and charts listing batting averages of every player in the youth baseball league and the town softball leagues.

The Avalon-Marathana rivalry is particularly intense when Maranatha plays baseball at Avalon. The field is tucked into a canyon. Rising up beyond the right field fence (238 feet) is a bluff topped by a dirt road where some Avalon fans traditionally park their trucks, drink beer, soak in the sun and toss down an occasional bottle, rock, or insult. Last year a bottle hit Maranatha's right fielder.

"Yea, they get a little rowdy up there," said one local fan with a smile. "We know it upsets 'em (the opponents), so the madder they get the more we get on 'em. Maranatha has been our main rival because they're so good."

Fortunately for all visiting teams, construction is under way atop the bluff. The Avalon Bluff Brigade is being condominiumed out of existence.

The morning after Avalon's Friday night win, a group of Maranatha cheerleaders strolled along Crescent Avenue. An Avalon native greeted them with a friendly "Hey, good luck tonight," and received in return a classic noses-up snub.

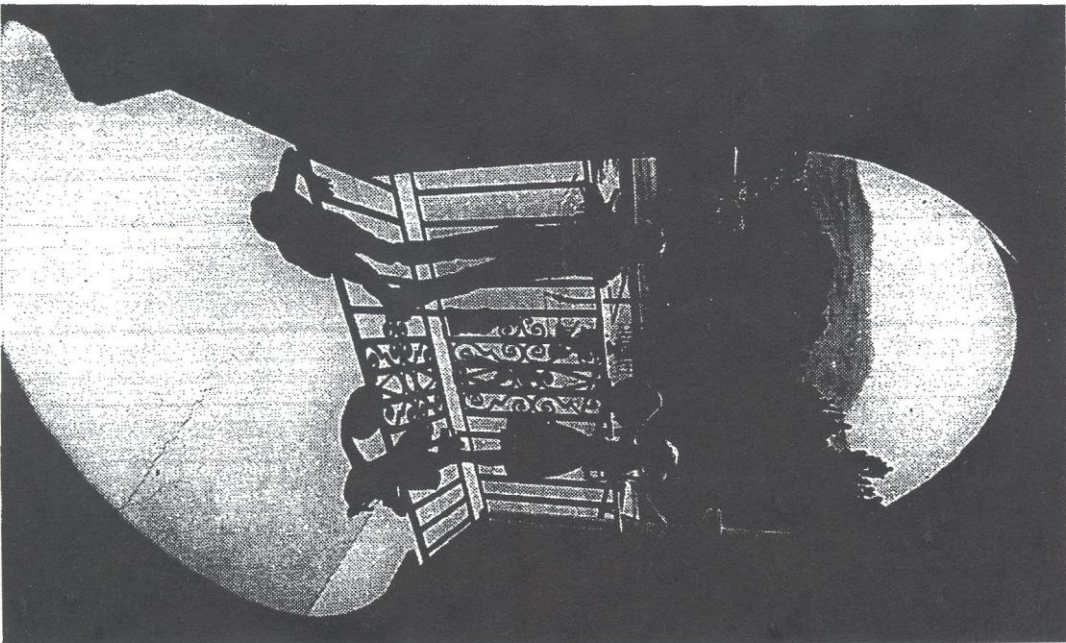
"When teams come over to visit," explained one local, "they go their way and we go ours. I guess they think we're kind of rowdy or spoiled or something."

Or maybe just a little different. Avalon is only 15 minutes away from Los Angeles (by air), but it remains very much a small town.

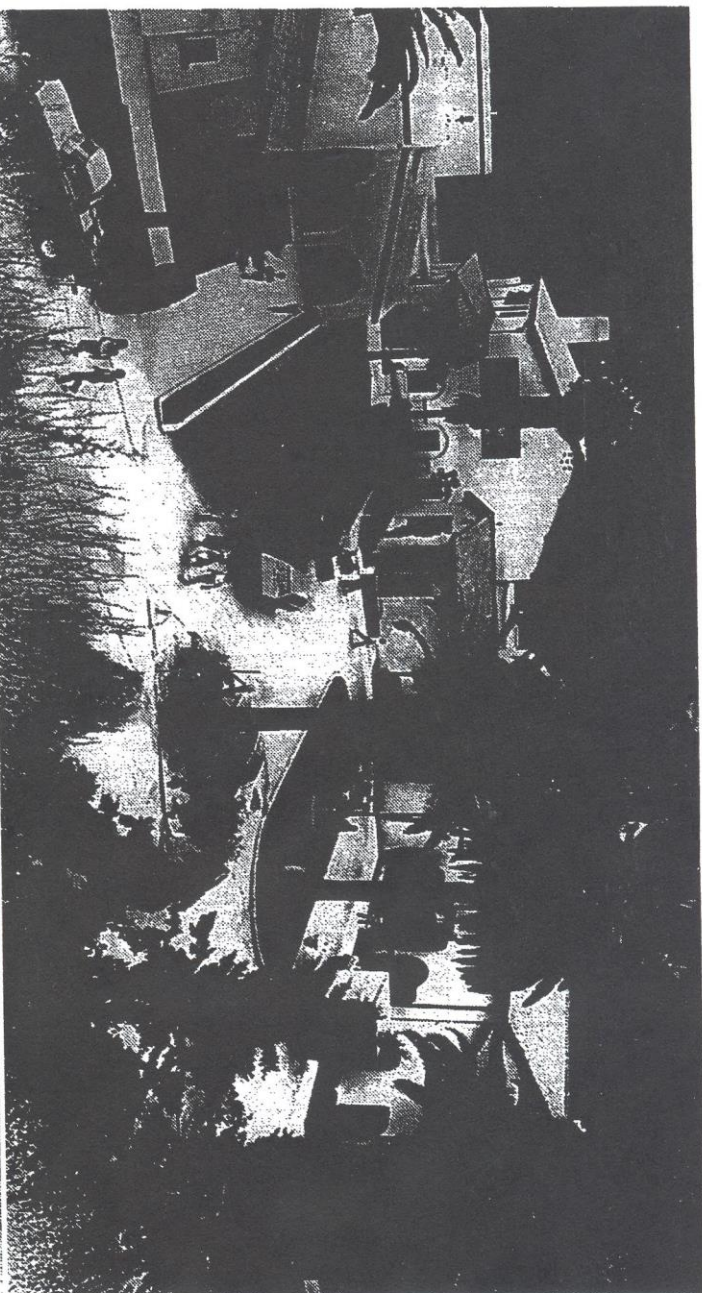
"That's the only bank in town," said an islander to a visitor while walking along Crescent Ave., "but nobody keeps their money there, because pretty soon everyone in town knows how much you have."

Islanders tell you that athletes and others who go away to college often return to Avalon within a couple years. For them the mainland is a nice place to visit, but . . .

**Avalon School: An Island Unto Itself**  
**MARY BARBER**  
*Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File)*; Sep 18, 1980; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1985)  
 pg. LBI



**ARCH AND SHADOW** — Lenny Lopez, left, and Terri McAdams both /, and their shadows, too, are in the frame of an arch during recess. Times photos by Thomas Kelsey



**IDYLIC SETTING** : Five-acre Avalon School campus is far from "maddening crowd" for island's kindergarten through 12th-grade students.

# Avalon School: An Island Unto Itself

By **MARY BARBER**  
 Times Staff Writer

**AVALON** — Distinctive and hardy strains of flora and fauna have developed through the ages on Santa Catalina Island, and the same can be said of its children.

Most of the 361 who began a new school year on Tuesday are related to others through a network of marriages among old-time families. Two-thirds of the 25 seniors in

Avalon Junior-Senior High School started kindergarten together 12 years ago.

Like a giant family, the kids have formed a protective alliance in which they support, encourage, cover for, snitch on, intrigue with and battle each other.

Having worked every summer in the tourist business, the kids tend to be self-disciplined and financially secure; they act like they own the

And woe to any teacher who suggests that Avalon may not be paradise.

This is the composite student portrait drawn by teachers who lounged and laughed on opening day, in striking contrast to schools and teachers all over the Southland.

Avalon is Long Beach Unified School District's only school that includes every grade from kindergarten through 12th. It is the only one that has to be reached by boat

or plane from the mainland, the only one exempt from the intricate workings of buses and integration, and one of the few that has almost no discipline or attendance problems.

It is the school where deer and children mingle with disregard for each other, where a maverick burro from a herd in the hills visits often, and where wild pigs keep wrecking the lawn.

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## AND SIX-MAN FOOTBALL'S NEXT EARL GUSTKEY

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Jan 8, 1970; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1985)  
pg. OC\_B11

## AND SIX-MAN FOOTBALL'S NEXT

# Everything's Up to Date at Avalon High

BY EARL GUSTKEY

Times Staff Writer

These are times of change at Avalon High School, a school with an athletic program as unique as any in the United States.

First, football is attempting to rear its high-priced head on Santa Catalina Island.

Second, after 45 years, the school may be in the market for a new nickname.

Despite an obvious logistics problem, Avalon High, with only 140 students, competes in three CIF sports — basketball, track and field, and baseball.

Next, hopefully, is six-man tackle football.

Avalon has never played football but there is an effort now to establish a program for the 1970-71 school year," says Dick Greene, the school's 54-year-old athletic director.

"It will require a community effort for us to be able to play football next year," he says.

"We figure we need about \$3,000 to buy all the gear and start a program.

We're in the Academy League and we're the only league member who doesn't play football."

Concurrent with football plans is a move to change the school's nickname from Lancers to, more appropriately, the Islanders.

Even without football, Avalon's athletic program is one of the most expensive in the CIF. Every year means flights on Catalina or Channel Air Lines and the school makes about a dozen trips to the mainland during basketball season alone.

"Every once in a while we'll go by boat when we can't get a flight but mostly it's by air. Sometimes we need three planes for one basketball trip—we take the junior varsity team, too, plus the cheerleaders and other students who can go.

"And once we reach the mainland, we have to rent a bus.

"Our athletic budget for basketball is \$6,000."

The search for such funds is a continuing struggle at Avalon.

"There're always students involved in money-

raising projects for us," Greene explains.

"The letterman's club has regular car washes and the girls conduct bake sales. One member of the community here, Joe Hernandez, raised \$500 by himself. He sponsored a basketball game between the Island Company and the Edison Company and sold tickets door-to-door all over Avalon.

"The Lions and Rotary people are helping us raise money for football."

Finding airplanes for the 15-minute run across the Catalina Channel isn't the extent of Greene's scheduling problems.

**Game With Newport**

"I write about 200 letters a year trying to get schools to play us over here. Some want to make the trip but they have administrative difficulties which prohibit them from coming. If they stay overnight here and don't want to stay at a hotel, we have to put them up in the gym."

It's the same situation with the baseball program. Greene — who coaches both basketball and baseball—has booked

"Most of our students' families depend on the tourist trade. They own stores and businesses which cater to the summer, weekend and holiday tourists. Some, though, work for the Island Company, the Edison Electric Company and two rock quarry companies."

Greene feels that Avalon (pop. 1,650)—a member of the Long Beach Unified School District — would support Academy League

a game in Orange County. His team plays at Newport Harbor Friday, March 20.

Because of the limited number of boys in school, most of the baseball team's members double up with track. The Catalina school participated in only two meets last year, however — the Laguna Beach Relays and the Academy League meet.

Avalon High's 140 high school students attend the same school as the city's kindergarten through eighth grade age students. The enrollment figures have remained constant for decades.

"We went up to about 160 three years ago but it dropped down," Greene says.

football, of which Heritage High of Anaheim is a participant.

"We get terrific community support at our basketball games, which is another reason we can afford air transportation. Our gym seats about 700 and we fill it most of the time.

The students pay 50 cents and the adults \$1. We had about a thousand for our big game with Miraleste last year."