



Smedberg Park History

The life of T.R. Smedberg and his influence on Elk Grove and the whole Sacramento region is substantial. At 87 years old, Smedberg has many accomplishments to his credit, including 40 years in the field of education, helping start local public television, and the community involvement in Boy Scouts, the American Red Cross, and his church.

T.R. (which stands for Teddy Roosevelt), wanted to become a doctor while at U.C. Berkeley, but the \$500.00 medical school tuition steered him away from medicine and into another love, working with children and the field of education.

While serving as a playground director in Berkeley, he received a call from the principal at Jackson High School in Jackson, California, asking him to teach. Jackson high was a small school and teachers were required to be adaptable to all kinds of needs. T.R. taught science, trigonometry, biology, chemistry, and algebra. The principal thought he looked athletic and made him coach of the basketball team. After one year of teaching, he was selected to become principal as well as teacher. At the time, T.R. was the youngest principal in the state. He held the position for seven years, but a teacher's strike caused him to look elsewhere for employment. At the time, Elk Grove High School was looking for a principal.

T.R. spent 14 years as principal in Elk Grove. Some of his accomplishments include getting a new home economics and science building constructed. In 1949, the Superintendent of Sacramento County Schools called T.R. to work as the Director of Education and Research. Although he never heard of this position, it became apparent the job was right up his alley – another jack-of-all-trades position. But fate had another plan for him. After just six months, the Superintendent died of a stroke.

Smedberg was young and didn't have all the administrative units required for the position of Superintendent. In spite of this, the selection panel felt he was the best person and chose him to fill the position. T.R. served 20 years as the Superintendent and in that time accomplished many things. He introduced mobile hearing and vision testing for all elementary students. He purchased the largest computer in northern California to handle attendance and payroll, saving hundreds of hours of work. He hires specialists in math, science, and psychology to provide needed experts for the individual school districts. T.R. was instrumental in gathering district superintendents to form and fund the Valley Instructional Television Association, which later became KVIE. He also signed 3400 diplomas each year – by hand. His staff formed the first vocational training program, teaching students useable skills for future employment.

One of T.R.'s greatest contributions to children and education was the acquisition of Sly Park, the mountain camp for students, located above Placerville. T.R. was so impressed by a mountain camp experience he had at age 15, he vowed to make this experience available to other children. As County Superintendent, he worked hard to raise funds to acquire a camp. \$150,000 was raised, but no site up to T.R.'s standards was found. Then in 1968 the Federal government decided to sell its Job Corps site location at Sly Park. This was a dream come true for T.R. Now thousands of school children receive an out-of-doors experience.

For 39 years, T.R. has been an active member of Elk Grove. He served 12 years as American Red Cross chairman, 12 years as Boy Scout camping chairman, 17 years as the Security Pacific Bank Secretary and Treasurer, and 17 years as the director for the Christmas Pageant at United Methodist Church. In 1956 he was selected as Elk Grove Citizen of the Year. He enjoys gardening, playing pinochle, and spending time with his grandchildren. T.R. and Irene have two sons and five grandchildren.

The information within this document was created at the time of park dedication and may not be current.