

Mill Valley Oral History Program
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BRUCE GRANT

**An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Tom Isley with Stella Perone in 2011**

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TITLE: Oral History of Bruce Grant
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Proud Tamalpais High School teacher and track coach Bruce Grant was born in Hollywood, California in 1928. Three years later, Bruce's family moved to Glendale, Los Angeles County, where he attended local schools and participated in track and field. Bruce first gained familiarity with Northern California while pursuing studies and athletics at the University of California, Berkeley and eventually chose to call the area home, in part due to the abundance of fresh air — a boon for his running. Both before and during his long teaching career, Bruce spent time sailing the South Seas with Matson Lines, a tourist and navigation company. He began his teaching at Sonoma High School, and in 1963, moved to Tamalpais High School as a history teacher and track and field coach. In the interview, Bruce describes major social changes that occurred during the 1960s, '70s and '80s and how these changes manifested at the high school level and deeply impacted the community and culture at Tam High. He touches on a range of historical events, including the rise of hippie subculture, racial issues, the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement. Bruce also delves into his long-time role as a track and field coach. He recounts the changes he made to the athletics program and his drive to improve, and further recalls with detail and clarity the many accomplishments of Tam High track students.

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Editor's note: This transcript differs in ways from the audio recording. It was reviewed by Bruce Grant, who made corrections, clarifications and additions.

Tom Isley: I just want to make sure we are recording.

Bruce Grant: Oh, it's on? Okay. When I arrived at Tam,¹ they were the Tam Indians. They used the Cleveland Indian logo which is really, well, it insults Indians — a big, grinning Indian with a missing tooth. That is what they used and they used it for quite a while. When the political correctness movement grew, people objected to that Indian, so the principal at the time, Frank Gold, said, "Bruce, you draw. Draw something that is more noble. We have got to get rid of that cartoon." So I drew this. [Indicates drawing.] But it doesn't look like the Indian on an Indian nickel. I think it is too much central casting Indian, but at least they changed that. Then a group of teachers got together with the librarian and they convinced the school board to get rid of the Indian all together and they had a vote on what they would have instead. Of course they chose the Red Tailed Hawks. I was actually against the change because on my track team there were the Colliers and their grandfather was the head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, John Collier. He said, "Indians aren't insulted by having Indians as mascots, any more than Scots are insulted by having Highlanders as mascots." But the group came over to my house and celebrated their victory in getting rid of the Indian and I just had to keep my mouth shut.

Tom Isley: Diplomacy. Well, I must say that your drawing that you've done is a very noble drawing. You changed it from, like you said, a caricature, into a noble brave. It is a profile, you can't see it on tape.

Bruce Grant: It was funny, I won't go off on this now, I'll talk about it later, but the great hair issue for athletes surfaced, and the baseball coach, who was very much for short hair, objected to my drawing. I was for the long hair. He says, "I am not going to use that Indian look, it has the long hair." I said, "Did you ever see an Indian with short hair?" So anyway, that's the story.

You are doing the whole Mill Valley thing, you aren't just doing Tam, right?

Tom Isley: Right. Our goal is to interview and discuss history, which I'm kind of interested in. I understand you were from Los Angeles, from Glendale, and you ran track at Glendale High.

Bruce Grant: No, Hoover High. Not Glendale, they were our archrivals. I lived in Glendale, but went to Hoover. I was actually born in Hollywood, in October 1928, and we moved to Glendale in 1931.

Tom Isley: Ah, okay.

¹ Tamalpais High School

Bruce Grant: Herbert Hoover High School, yes.

Tom Isley: What were your events?

Bruce Grant: Low hurdles, mainly. I was little. In those days, we had varsities, Bs, and Cs. We only had a three-year high school, ninth grade was still in junior high. So I was a C for my first two years and a B my senior year. But we had practice meets at the beginning of the year, so the coach let me run the varsity low hurdles and I beat everybody so he made me stay varsity. But anyway, I was two years in the Cs. We won the league my first year. My second year, we won the Southern California Championships.

Tom Isley: That's extraordinary, fantastic.

Bruce Grant: I was the captain of the team.

Tom Isley: That's great. Then what happened after high school?

Bruce Grant: I went to junior college, Glendale JC, right after the war.² It was just flooded with veterans, all these people that were just back in the fall. But I hurt myself and couldn't run. I ran the next year. I was injury plagued. Went off to Cal,³ finally made the track team, but didn't do much.

Tom Isley: Yes, competing at a collegiate level is very difficult, a full-time endeavor, almost.

Bruce Grant: It is a whole other story with me at Cal, I won't go into that. My brother was very good in track. He was an all-American long jumper.

Tom Isley: So attending Berkeley, is that how you got settled into Northern California, then?

Bruce Grant: Yes. I came back up here. After college, I went back to Southern California and the smog had gotten so bad. I remember I went out with my brother and a friend of ours and we ran around, I worked in Burbank and we ran around the John Burroughs track. I coughed for the next day and so did my friend. My brother didn't because he didn't run around the track. But it was just terrible. So I said, I'm just not staying down here, I'm going back to Northern California and I want to eventually get to Marin because I know that the wind blows west to east and they won't have much smog — which we don't — and it all blows down to San Jose. So I came back up here.

I was a purser officer for Matson Lines, sailing to the South Seas. Then I had decided to go into teaching. I taught my first two years at Sonoma, what they now call Sonoma Valley — they just called it Sonoma High School in those days. And then after

² World War II

³ University of California at Berkeley

two years, I got the job at Tam. I spent the rest of my time teaching at Tam, starting in the fall of 1963, and then I retired in 1988.

Stella Perone: What did you teach?

Bruce Grant: I taught history — social studies, but mostly history — U.S. history mainly, but also world history. During the times of turmoil, I taught P.E., which wasn't P.E. I'm an avid fisherman and I taught kids fly-casting and took my flying things to school and showed the kids how to tie flies. That time qualified as P.E. And then I taught California history and a little bit of government.

Tom Isley: Was it interesting from your vantage as a social studies and history teacher starting in the early '60s to see a lot of changes?

Bruce Grant: Oh, that's what I'm going to stress.

Tom Isley: Berkeley being ground zero for that, you must have really been aware of what was going on.

Bruce Grant: Well, [that was] the main thing I was going to cover. The other person you should talk to, definitely, is Norm Rogers, who happens to be my best friend. He is one of the people that got the change from Indians to Hawks. He, Pete Belden, and — who else was in that group? — Pat Gaynor, those are the three. They are still alive, all still kicking. It is kind of sad over the years to see people pass by, pass away, that you knew. Anyway, well, I was going to go over the changes that started taking place.

Tom Isley: Absolutely. Changes that started at Tam?

Bruce Grant: At Tam, oh yes. Well, the '60s were, as you know, famous or infamous now for the changes. So I started at Tam in the fall of 1963. Of course that's when the civil rights push was starting to get momentum. At that time, Tamalpais High School was 9 to 10 percent of what we called "Marin City kids." We never called them "negroes," we never called them "blacks," they were the Marin City kids. When you said "Marin City," that meant that they were colored. But the very beginning — when I first got there — Marin City wasn't all black. When I first got here, the housing was the old Marinship housing. You know where Marin City came from — they put all these army-style barracks, which they made into apartments to house the workers at Marinship where they made cargo ships for World War II. So it just stayed on. When I first got there, it was very mixed, but then that changed. They, the government, built the new buildings and burned down the old ones. They would burn one down and use it for the fire department practice to put it out. I remember driving by there and seeing it burning. There was definitely racial tension at Tam. So they had to watch. Up the street from Tam was a place called C's, which is now Kentucky Fried Chicken. They had some skirmishes up there. Out the back gate at the parking lot across the street from Tam was a restaurant, if you wanted to call it that, where kids could dance. The kids used to go over there at noon all the time. It was just right there, right across Homestead.

Stella Perone: What was the name of that, do you remember the name of that?

Bruce Grant: No, I don't. That's what those other fellows —

Stella Perone: You said it was a restaurant. What did they serve? What kind of food?

Bruce Grant: I never went there. I think just hamburgers and things like that. It wasn't really a restaurant, it was just kind of a takeout place. I suppose it would be kind of like a Dairy Bell or something, but it wasn't a franchise, anything like that, just a private thing, I don't remember the name of it.

Tom Isley: The kids could go over there and not be so much under the watchful eye of the teachers?

Bruce Grant: Yes, we had open campus. They still do, unlike at Sonoma High where you couldn't leave campus during the day.

Tom Isley: So when you were in the early '60s, were you involved in coaching at that time?

Bruce Grant: Yes, I came to Tam as the new head track coach.

Tom Isley: For the boys team.

Bruce Grant: There were not any girls teams back then.

Tom Isley: That makes sense.

Bruce Grant: That's another story. But I thought I would keep the coaching separate from what went on at first. Anyways, you know enough from the '60s. My very first semester, I had a study hall. They used to have study halls and I had a study hall. I had a horrible schedule — they did that to new teachers. I had four classes, four different preparations. They devised a system which they thought was great at first. They had x classes and y classes and regular classes. The x classes were all the really good students. They put them all together in a class. The y students were all the underachievers and they were largely Marin City kids. Believe me, it wasn't because those kids were dumb, it was just because of the way society was. These kids just didn't try. There were some very bright kids in there but they were all in there. I remember the first thing I did was issue history books to them and then the head of the social studies department says, "You did what, you issued them books? They'll throw them in the closest ditch!" I mean, that was the attitude.

I came from a white town. There wasn't a black person in Glendale. But I didn't go into all my history. Before I was a teacher, I was a merchant seaman, I was an officer on a cruise ship and we went to the South Pacific. So I had worked with a lot of different

people, different races. Of course I am the standard liberal. So I was outraged at the attitude.

Back to those classes. If you had an x class, the kids were spectacular. The regular classes were just as boring as boring could be, the bright students had all been pulled out and you just had the rest of the kids. They were nice kids but they lacked spark.

Stella Perone: As a new teacher, did they give you all y classes?

Bruce Grant: No, they gave me an x class of freshman for world history, they gave me two regular classes, and they gave me a y class. They gave me the worst room in the school, which was between the drama department and the office. You might as well have been in Grand Central Station. They later got rid of the room and turned it into an office.

Stella Perone: Did you have any success stories from your class, any kids that you promoted out of your class?

Bruce Grant: No. I had some great black kids in my history classes later, in U.S. history. I had the grandson of Adam Clayton Powell, the black congressman from New York. He became the finest student I ever taught. He earned a scholarship to M.I.T.⁴

Stella Perone: When?

Bruce Grant: I don't remember, it was just so long ago now. I don't remember how many years we had that x and y system. But they touted it as the great advance when they did have it. Believe me, it wasn't. So anyway, I was down in that room for two years and then I got a room upstairs.

Tom Isley: That must have been a big relief to you.

Bruce Grant: Oh yes, I had a beautiful room, small room but the windows looked out onto the orange court, so it was nice. It was a little bit of a corner room there, room 14, but it was very pretty. I remember I had a league coaches meeting in there and the coaches came in and they said, "Oh my, what a beautiful spot, look at this, you look out on the orange trees." Of course, Tam's campus, if you go way back — this is before my day, before Redwood and Drake — Tam's campus was on the Grey Line garden tour. There is a little history for you. The campus was so gorgeous. It was written up as one of the 10 most beautiful high school campuses in the United States. Well, look at it now since it has been rebuilt, it — absolutely gorgeous, fantastic.

Tom Isley: I was there with two daughters throughout the construction, both daughters.

Bruce Grant: You didn't go to Tam.

Tom Isley: No, but my daughters did.

⁴ Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Bruce Grant: Oh, I see.

Tom Isley: But when you say “the orange court,” that really does strike a note because it is a magical spot, it’s like something out of Europe, it’s this orange little grove, orange trees set in a courtyard.

Bruce Grant: Well, there are four orange trees and then a fountain in the middle.

Tom Isley: Yes, it’s like something out of Valencia.

Bruce Grant: I’m trying to put this all together now. The changes. Tam was a typical school back then: teachers were expected to wear coat and ties, white shirts and all. I remember once, Chuck Crawford, a Tam graduate and a long time counselor, mentioned this. I had forgotten about it. “Bruce,” he says, “one time you came in and you looked really good, you had on a sport coat but you were wearing a turtleneck in the winter.” And he said that I really look[ed] sharp. I got admonished by the principal for not having on a tie. And so that’s the way it was. But oh the changes that were to come about. Not only did Mill Valley start mountain biking and the Banana Republics and that kind of a thing, a lot of students from Tam were the early hippies in the Haight Ashbury. I did my shopping for track at a place that was about five doors off Haight and Ashbury, a sporting goods store. And I would go over there and I would be walking along and kids would say, “Hey, teach, you got any spare change?” They’d be Tam students. So the first big change that came in was the hippie movement. And that was such a massive change. And so as that got going, and then with the blending right into the whole anti-Vietnam War protesting movement, big changes evolved.

But first with the hippie thing. I remember one of our social studies teachers showed up at school in bib overalls, no shirt, no shoes, his hair in a huge blonde afro, coming to school like that. Some of the female teachers [came to school] with mini mini-skirts on, holy smokes. The kids, they just dressed anyway they please. The Beatles, of course, were going big time and the long hair style became popular. And then the administration changed the curriculum to fit the changes, and that is when I taught fly tying. A teacher didn’t know who was going to show up for class. I would take roll, but I don’t know what the school did about reporting attendance to the state. I would have 25 kids in a class and six or seven kids would show up. Two doors up from Tam, the school district rented a house. I think they called it Peace House or Freedom House or something like that.

Oh! By the way, there were a couple of nasty incidents during these years. The conference room next to the principal’s office was fire bombed one night. Luckily it didn’t burn down Wood Hall. Also someone planted a pipe bomb in a small cistern in one of the bathrooms. If anyone had been in there when it went off, he might have been killed. But back to the house.

Stella Perone: Just going up Miller.

Bruce Grant: Yes, the same side of the street. But it was a crash pad. And if the kids just couldn't deal with school that day, they would go up there and crash.

Tom Isley: I think that house is still there. There are plans to take it down. They are going to remodel.

Bruce Grant: Had you ever heard of that?

Tom Isley: Yes, it's a red house. An abandoned house that kids hang out at, even decades later — it was still an abandoned house that people would go to.

Bruce Grant: Yes, that was our crash pad.

Tom Isley: Did you ever go there?

Bruce Grant: No. I didn't make the huge changes, and I certainly never came to school in bib overalls. In that respect, I am probably a bit of a social conservative but a political and economic liberal. Maybe that is a little of my Glendale background. Glendale became so incredibly right-wing that George Lincoln Rockwell, the American Nazi, finally settled there and said it was the most patriotic town in America. I had one of my friends that I knew from high school run for the City Council on the John Birch ticket. We quit wearing ties and started wearing sweaters, vests, and things like that, which was what most of the teachers did, but some of the teachers went to extremes. We taught all different types of classes. We had a teacher with an African background that taught Swahili. We had a day-long program dedicated entirely to race relations. We spent a day dealing with the racial tensions and what caused them. It made the national news, all the papers, even the *New York Times*.

Stella Perone: What made the papers?

Bruce Grant: The fact that a school dedicated a whole day to the race issue.

Stella Perone: Was that it?

Bruce Grant: Yes. My brother was in the diplomatic corps and he was stationed in Washington for a while with the commerce department and they had a lot of African American women working there. And when they heard that I was from Tamalpais High School, the office filled up, everybody wanted to know, "You teach at that school?" Besides the papers, the day-long conference was on national television. The whole country knew.

Stella Perone: I don't understand why it was on national TV, just all these changes you are talking about?

Bruce Grant: It was so outright, the kids all getting together and expressing themselves, their feelings. Of course as a coach, I had a lot of the African American kids

on the track team, so I knew their feelings. It was a sensitivity day, so outright, a school facing up to its problems. It just made big news, which might not seem so big now, but it was then.

Tom Isley: It is a nice thing when a school's students get together for a positive solution. I have heard that that was very notable. So we were talking about the changes.

Bruce Grant: That got going, and then the whole Vietnam War protest got going too. We had a huge protest and the teachers, most of them, marched uptown in Mill Valley in the pouring rain. It just poured rain. I had painted a big "No War" sign, and we carried it. I probably have some of the pictures someplace.

Stella Perone: That would be great.

Bruce Grant: Okay, I'll look again. But we all walked up Miller Avenue. As I said, I have pictures of us all going up there, my friend Norm with a big cigar, all of us dripping wet in our raincoats, all but one: a U.S. history teacher by the name of Bob Sherman. Bob Sherman had been to Vietnam. He worked during the summers as an ordinary seaman at times, and he would go to sea in the summertime and be scraping paint. He went to Vietnam one summer and came back and spoke to the whole student body, in Mead Theater, about his experiences. Is Mead still there?

Tom Isley: Yes it is.

Bruce Grant: They tore down the building, though. There used to be a big stage with curtains and all.

Tom Isley: The amphitheater.

Bruce Grant: Yes, the amphitheater, they tore that down. They didn't put another one up, did they?

Tom Isley: I don't believe so.

Bruce Grant: But anyway, Bob spoke to the whole student body. But back to the march. Bob Sherman marched up Miller, no raincoat, no umbrella. [He] just got drenched. He said, "The soldiers in Vietnam are out in the rain getting drenched and I'm going to go out in the rain and get drenched just like they do." We marched right up into Mill Valley. One bank employee told me later that she cried when she saw us marching by.

Stella Perone: Most of the student body, like hundreds of people?

Bruce Grant: Oh, all the students came out and went with us too, sure.

Tom Isley: That seems very memorable.

Bruce Grant: Yes, very memorable. So that went on. And then of course later we pulled out and the war was over. And the draft ended so things returned, pretty much, to normal. The students graduated and things changed back at Tam quite rapidly. But then there was another big change. It was as if the kids vanished. When I got to Tam, it had around 1,750 students and Drake had around 1,750 students also, and Redwood had almost 2,600 students. Another story, of course, but, why was Redwood so large? Because the people who ran the district had plans to pull Redwood out of the Tamalpais School District and form their own school district. They wanted Redwood to be the “Lowell of the North,” as they called it, and they tried to pull out. When they built Redwood, the school board gerrymandered the attendance areas and put all the wealthy areas together. But it didn’t work. After meetings in all three schools, the parents, through the school board, put a stop to it. Then the schools got very small as attendance shrunk. Tam went down to 800 students, Drake got into the 700s, and Redwood went way down. It shrunk even more, relatively, than the other schools. I don’t know if it got under 1000 or not but it went way down. We had meetings which talked about putting all the kids in the district at Redwood, or closing Redwood and just having Tam and Drake, because of the distance between the schools. The district had meetings, talking over all of this. Nothing changed, obviously. The schools have never gotten back up to the size that they once were.

Stella Perone: What is Tam today?

Tom Isley: I don’t know what Tam is today. I know that the schools are packed now, although it fluctuates.

Bruce Grant: They have been getting bigger, but Tam doesn’t have 1,800 students, and neither does Drake.

Tom Isley: 1,400 when my daughters attended, or something like that, 1,200 or 1,400.

Bruce Grant: I was going to say more like 1,200, I think. I don’t know how many at Redwood. It is the biggest school around but it has never gotten back to what it was in those days. Of course, Marin County in those early days wasn’t nearly as expensive in the early ’60s as it is now. But the things just came back pretty much to normal in the ’70s. The teachers never went back to having to wear ties, some did, but not many. Teachers wear more casual clothes now. I finally retired in 1988 because that’s when I turned 60. I probably wouldn’t have retired quite then but the schools were trying to cut down on faculty because the attendance was less. The district wanted to weed out some of the teachers. I felt so good when the superintendent came to me. He had no idea that I was near 60. He said, “We desperately need to cut down,” but he said [that] I didn’t need to retire — “we are not pressuring you.” But I went ahead and retired.

Tom Isley: I think Tam has been fortunate to have someone who — you gave them not only your expertise and teaching talents, but your coaching talents.

Bruce Grant: Well as I said, we had those big changes, the hippie era, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights work in there. I started to mention at the very beginning, sorry for jumping around, but my very first year, I had that study hall, 90 kids in it. It was very strict, it was a study hall, you didn't say "boo." If you caused a problem, you were in detention after school, which was also held in that room. In November of that first year I was sitting there and a girl — who had gone to the office with a pass to see her counselor — came back and whispered in my ear. She said, "The president has been shot."

Tom Isley: Wow.

Bruce Grant: But as you see by the books on the table, I read history. She whispered it, and of course that was the great shocker. That was third period, and they went to fourth period and learned that Kennedy had died. They let school out because the students, and the faculty, were in shock. That is how I started my first semester at Tam High. Anything specific that you wanted to know?

Stella Perone: How about your coaching? Did you coach all your years?

Bruce Grant: I just wanted to keep that separate. When I first got to Tam, like the other coaches, I allowed my coaching to slip into the classroom, because a lot of the track kids were in my classes and I would talk about it. But in those days, all the coaches were teachers. The fact that you were willing to coach helped you get the job. That is probably how I got the job at Tam, because they needed a track coach. One of our other social studies teachers was the football coach, another social studies teacher was the basketball coach, and one of them worked also as the wrestling coach. So see, virtually all of your coaches now are from outside, they are not teachers. I think coaching has suffered because of this. I think I've kind of forgotten what I was going to say. Oh, I realized that this wasn't right. I heard the kids would be critical of the fact that all the teacher ever talked about in his class is his athletic team. So I just did a complete reversal. Students came into class the first day and [I] wrote "TRACK" on the blackboard, and I said, "See that five-letter word? We don't mention it in this class." I totally stopped any mention of track in my classes. You could not bring that up. Any kid that wanted to ask about it could talk to me after class. We were very successful in track, but no way did I ever talk about it in class again during those later years.

Stella Perone: Did you do cross country also?

Bruce Grant: I did it a little bit. Actually when I came to Tam, the athletic director made me cross country coach too. And I said, "I don't want to be cross country coach." They had a fellow named Krieg Vezie, who was the coach. He didn't start cross country at Tam. Benefield started cross country at Tam, but there was no league at the time. Then Vezie came in and took it over and helped make it into a league sport. But of course there were no girls. But there were some girls who ran unofficially, first at Redwood and then later, at Tam.

So I came as the track coach. And here was a big change that was to take place. I had taken the job, sight unseen. I was coming down to wealthy Marin, right? Great

facilities, right? Wrong! Tam had the most primitive athletic facilities I had ever seen in my life. You know where the baseball field is now? Well, there were two of them then, one over by Miller and the other one over by Homestead. Not a blade of grass in the whole area. The track wasn't where the track is now. The track was around the corner at the end of the baseball fields. They used to run the 220 on the straight away, and they'd have to stop the baseball games so that they could run the 220 down the straight away. Of course I changed this immediately and said, "Forget that, we will run the 220 on the curve."

But the track was incredibly primitive. It had virtually no curb, you weren't sure exactly where it was. They had some four-by-four posts planted along the sides, quite dangerous. The whole area was much lower than it is now. It was pathetic. They had filled the area originally by sucking up bay bottom mud and filled an area that had been a marsh. What happened when it rained, you couldn't walk out there, all the goo would stick to your shoes. You'd miss days and days of practice because the field was so muddy. There were only two tennis courts. They came out from the gym and then the field dropped five feet. Now it is all leveled out.

Well, how much I affected the change, I don't know. Naturally I would like to think quite a bit. George Gustafson, the Athletic Director — the gym is named after him — had been a coach there forever. He had me come and speak to the boosters. We had a high-powered group of boosters. One was an attorney general. I am pretty outspoken and I said to them, "First, the district built Drake and they have a beautiful athletic field, and then they built Redwood and they have a beautiful athletic field, and we have this." I told them [that], frankly, if I had seen this field before I took the job, I would have never come here. I came down from Sonoma and our facilities there were infinitely better in a relatively poor school district. George said afterwards that I was pretty outspoken in there. I said, "George, I just told them the truth." I said, "This is a disgrace."

I went to sea that summer and when I came back, I was asked where was I going to hold practice the next year. I said, "I guess out in the field." They said, "No, you are not. During the summer the school board adopted a master plan and they are going to rebuild the whole field. They will be bringing in fill from the proposed Marincello project out on the headlands."

Tom Isley: Out in Tennessee Valley.

Bruce Grant: At the end of Tennessee Valley. They did all that excavation work and we got all that granite. Great stuff. It took them nine months, these trucks coming in constantly and dumping. They had to fill that whole marsh area.

Stella Perone: What year was this, do you remember?

Bruce Grant: Sure, '65. My first track season was '64. Then '65 at first we tried to work out at Edna Maguire as it had that little track, but it was too small, and we went over and shared the track at Redwood High, which did not make Redwood coaches very happy. The coach and I were at swords point at first, but now we are really good friends. He is long retired and I still go up and stay with him and play golf. We have become old friends. He later became the coach at the College of Marin.

Stella Perone: What was his name?

Bruce Grant: Tony Bailey. His wife was a star golfer. She was women's champ of San Francisco. Anyway, they built the whole new track at Tam and I had a lot of the say in the designing of it. They built this beautiful track. I remember one of the college coaches came and said, this is the best dirt track in Northern California. So we had that nice track. I am kind of a fanatic in some ways. I really knocked myself out keeping the track up. This was a lot of work. It actually drove me out of coaching finally. It was just so much work to keep the track in condition, the maintenance. On the old field they told me one time, when it really rained hard and the tides came in and the field would flood, the kids said, oh yeah, we have had outboard motor races around the goalposts. They could bring their boats down and race around it was so flooded.

Tom Isley: I can't imagine how much —

Bruce Grant: Later I went back for a while and was on the planning committee when they were planning for yet another new track and field. I got together with a fellow who is the head track coach now at Tam and we basically designed that new field. I think I still have the design, since I did the artwork. I drew it all up and they followed it. The guys who were doing the work would get tired of all the bureaucracy and delays and my phone would ring and they'd say, "Hey, Grant, how about this, how about that." So we got that beautiful track down there.

Tom Isley: Yes, that seems like it is going to last a long time.

Bruce Grant: Oh, yes. It is really nice. I got involved with Redwood and Drake too. Now, the changes in track. When we started, it was all boys. Although actually right early on, I had an afterschool track unit for the girls because I was very sensitive to that issue, that we had women in the Olympic games but didn't have track for them at the high school level. All the girls had, I think, was field hockey and some six-girl basketball teams — they didn't have much. We had varsity, Bs, and Cs for the boys. You became a B or a C by height, age, and weight. It was an exponent system. We had that, I'm trying to think, we used that system until the later '60s, when the coaches — led by the El Cerrito coach, Hale Roach, an excellent coach — said, "Let's get rid of the C teams and go to freshmen teams." Roach said, "We'll have some great big kid come in and he's a varsity by exponents, but he's a ninth grader and he wants to do the shot. There's nothing for him to do because he's not developed. So let's just have freshmen teams." So we had freshmen. That happened. Then in 1967, a woman coach at Tam — who is still a friend of mine, Janice Villasenor — started girls track. It was run separately from boys track as they had their own meets. They had different events, but they had track. So that happened and then she finally handed it over to the cross country coach, Vezie. I think he coached girls track as late as 1973. I had pushed for girls track to be integrated with boys track as early as 1970. I pushed for trying to get the girls into the league.

The league coaches said, "We'll have four teams." I said, "No, we don't need three boys teams. We can have two, and we'll have a girls team." I remember the Terra

Linda coach — I am coaching at Terra Linda right now. By the way, I remember the coach said, “Well, how are you going to get the girls to the meets?” I said, “Well, on the bus.” He said, “You’re not putting any broads on my bus.” Guess who was the first coach to have a girl win state? Him.

But anyway, I pushed for the girls. Then along came Title Nine, a national law which demanded that the girls be equal in sports, along with other things. Starting in the season of 1974, the girls track was integrated with the boys track, and I returned to coaching as an assistant after a two-year absence. The new head coach was Clyde Krusinski. The B team became frosh/soph B. If you were a freshman you could be on it, or a sophomore you could still be a B. Which means you could be a senior and be a B if you were smaller or younger. And then a varsity team. Track became hugely popular. There was no girls soccer at the time, so we’d have as many as 55 girls on the track team. Tam still does.

Tom Isley: Were these changes with the two boys track teams, one girls track team, and then divided into things, was that at Tam and Drake?

Bruce Grant: Oh yes, it was for the whole league and beyond. Yes, the whole league had girls track right from the beginning. We were very successful. We went six years undefeated. We had one tie with Berkeley High, which had 3,500 students. We beat them twice in the girls, not the boys. We beat them twice and tied once. We went for all those years without a loss. Our girls won the first ever North Coast finals, now called the Meet of Champions. We beat out Berkeley. Some of the other schools were slower to get going than we were. I remember we went up to the Santa Rosa relays, the first year they had girls events, and we just crushed everybody.

Stella Perone: What year was that again?

Bruce Grant: ’74. We had a girl, Kate Kayes. We took third in the state mile that year. They had a girls state meet, but they only took the winner of each section. They had no trials, just finals. But Kate had won the northern section so she went. She graduated and the next year her younger sister, Maggie, took third in the state meet. We had a huge contingent of kids that made the state meet that year, 1975. The next year she got very sick and then her backup won state, Linda Broderick. Grab that picture, the one on the right in the front, that one. That is of Linda and Maggie. Linda is coaching at Branson. She is coaching a super young girl who is the daughter of a girl who ran for me at Tam. The Branson girl in the fall won state in cross country in the small schools division, and in track she got fourth in the state 3,200, which is about two miles. Her mother wasn’t as good as her daughter, but she went to Cal and she married a fellow who had been a Canadian Olympian, Brian Maxwell. After they graduated, they developed the Power Bar and became very, very wealthy. Unfortunately, tragically some years ago, he walked out of the Ross post office and dropped dead. Jennie was pregnant and had five kids. But [she had] a lot of money. They sold Power Bar to Nestle. One daughter, Julia, she’s a junior now, has become very good. She has already set the county record for the 3200, or the two mile. Linda still holds the all-time record for the mile in Marin, set way back in 1976, but Julia is now close. Linda is the last athlete from our county to win state. We have had

only had six winners, boys and girls, since 1933. So that is that. But coming to track, you know we are very successful.

Tom Isley: That must have been rewarding for you.

Bruce Grant: Oh yes, that's why I'm still coaching. It gives me something to do besides play golf and keeps me in a little bit of shape. You wouldn't know it too much, but I do get out there and run some. I just coach three days a week, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

Tom Isley: I just want to interject one thing because it is an interesting aspect of your career. Not only the social change and things when you were teaching and the students around you, and you are coaching, running particularly has become a commonplace thing. In the '60s, who would have heard of, oh yes, I'm going to go run. But nowadays, millions and millions of people run.

Bruce Grant: Jogging came in. It started in New Zealand.

Tom Isley: In the '70s.

Bruce Grant: In the '60s. I got involved in senior track at the very beginning, when it first started, 1968. I am trying to think — they wrote it up in *Track and Field* and made fun of it. But let me tell you, it changed quickly. I wasn't 40 that first year — you had to be actually 40 to compete. I turned 40 that year, 1968, but I didn't turn 40 until October and the meet was in July, so I couldn't run it the first year. But I got in shape and ran the next year. I should have known better as I over-trained, ran way too much, and the old injury bugaboo settled in. One year, when there was little competition — let me tell you, this sounds great but it wasn't — I managed to win the national championships in the triple jump. I have this AAU champion patch and an Olympic-sized medal, but it didn't amount to a hill of beans. In those early days, there just wasn't much competition. Now the marks are spectacular and they have all these different age groups. Because I got hurt, I couldn't continue. This old coach needed a coach.

Tom Isley: Do you get to go now? You mentioned you are helping with Terra Linda. Do you end up going to some of the meets then when they compete?

Bruce Grant: Oh, sure. I'm the hurdle coach and the jump coach. Of course I go to the meets. In fact I'll announce them and score them. I've done that a lot in the past. I stay very involved now.

Over the years in the past, I quit coaching. I retired from teaching in 1988 and of course I quit coaching and I didn't coach for a couple of years. As you see, I do rock work.

Tom Isley: Oh, you did this?

Bruce Grant: Wait till you see my backyard.

Tom Isley: Oh, this is beautiful.

Bruce Grant: I went and collected the rocks up in Sonoma, brought them back first in my old Plymouth Duster and then in my van. You might have noticed that there was a rock wall in the front of the house. There's a lot more in the back. I terraced the whole yard just to make it simple to maintain. Anyway, I stayed away from Tam for two years, but the new coach just didn't work out. The athletic director, who was a woman friend of mine, Beth Juri, came and said, "Bruce, you have to come back and get this thing put back together." So I went back, let's see — he was there in '89 and '90 — so I went back in '91. The program was in shambles. But we managed to tie for the league championship with the girls that first year, with only 11 girls. I didn't plan to stay, so I handed the team over to one of my former girl track captains named Jenny Seyranian. She took over. She helped me in '91 and took over in '92. After the season she came to me and said, "Coach, I'm just not ready for this." So I went back in '93 and '94. Jenny was my assistant and we worked together and then she got a lot better at coaching. Our girls team went undefeated for two years.

Tom Isley: What do you attribute that success to — do you think it was preparation, do you think you got an exceptional crop of athletes?

Bruce Grant: We had both. I am highly organized and organization is important, and preparation. When the kids came out to the track, they knew exactly what they were going to be doing. I posted a workout for them every day and they knew exactly what they were going to be doing, which is important. I have a friend of mine that is helping at another school which I won't mention right now and he says it's so disorganized. Secondly, you have to learn all the events. When I started at Tam, I had one assistant. We'd have 60, 70 boys out there and one assistant who, to be honest, wasn't trained much, if at all. Early on, well, we didn't have the discus in Southern California, so I didn't even know the discus. When I got to Tam, they didn't even have a discus ring. They threw off a warped wooden platform, which is illegal. I didn't know the pole vault. I didn't have anybody to help much and to be honest, those kids didn't get much help. They had to work on their own a lot because I had all the other things to do. But we were very successful in the distance events. I bought a large clock with a hand that went around once every minute. One could see it from across the track. They use these in swimming. A man made them for swim teams. I could plug it in and the kids could time themselves. I would put up an assignment for the distance runners, but they always knew what they were going to do and they could time themselves on the clock.

Then I had my assistants doing the starting practice with a starter's gun, and I was just running around trying to coach everything else. But I did know the events, except for the discus and shot, which I learned later. In 1986 I had a boy take second in state in the discus. I went to clinics. I was taught the triple jump and the long jump by the greatest long jump and triple jump coach in the world, Tommy Tellis, who coached Carl Lewis and had some rather great people. You had to do that, go learn all the different events and be interested in the different events. One of the schools had an excellent coach for distance, but he doesn't do anything else. And his track teams are nothing because he

doesn't coach anything but distance. So I did learn all the different events, and eventually I got more coaches. So we have up at Terra Linda a head coach who does the sprints and pole vault. We have a weight coach, and this year we have a woman who is the high jump specialist. We have a distance coach, and me, I coach the hurdles and the horizontal jumps. So we have it covered. We don't have a lot of talent because of the nature of the student body in that part of San Rafael.

Now going way back again, I was pretty much an eager beaver at first. I coached through '71, then left for what turned out to be two years. We had won the varsity championship in '66 and again in 1971. I had a picture of that and all the kids that were on that varsity team that won the league in '66, and there was one Caucasian kid. Every single other kid on the team was a black kid, a Marin City kid. And our Bs also won the league championship. About three of those Bs had run varsity during the year but we dropped them back for the league meet because we had a super B sprinter and I thought we might win North Coast. We didn't. He still holds the school records at Tam.

Tom Isley: In the 100 meters?

Bruce Grant: And 200 meters.

Stella Perone: What was his name?

Bruce Grant: Alan Lee. Caucasian. Other people say, "Is he black?" I say, "No." They say, "Chinese?" "No, no, you know, Robert E. Lee." I'll go on. That one picture up there on the far side of the TV — that woman, as a girl, came into Tam mid-season, having transferred from Florida. By the end of the season, she was on our girls relay that got seventh in the state finals and they still have the school record. She holds the school record in the high jump still.

Stella Perone: What's her name?

Bruce Grant: A good friend of mine still, Casey Overfield. She was later valedictorian. She married the valedictorian from Redwood.

Tom Isley: Nice match, perfect match.

Bruce Grant: He is a star road runner. Their daughter is a very good distance runner at Brown University. But anyway, that's not here nor there. I'm just trying to think about other things. I'm sure there are things that Norm would say that I have forgotten. He became the head librarian. He was much more in the hub of the school than I was. So he can fill you in with lots of goodies.

Tom Isley: You mentioned that you play golf. Did you ever play golf at that Mill Valley Course?

Bruce Grant: I did. When I first got to Tam, I was still playing a little golf. In fact, I remember the teachers played against the golf team, match play, on that Mill Valley

Course, the only time I ever played it. Needless to say, I didn't like the course. But then I quit golf. I didn't play golf for almost 30 years — I quit entirely. I got so busy working on this house, I replaced everything, replaced all the windows, did all the rock work, put in all the sliders. [Gestures to his work.] That deck wasn't out there when I got the house. So I didn't play golf and didn't start playing golf again until I was turning 70. I'm now 84, but still ticking.