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**WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL:
ITS HISTORY AND THE PATH TOWARD INTEGRATION**

**BY:
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Tulsa Washington's school song exemplifies its philosophy and may be predictive of Washington's eventual position in Tulsa's integration processes.

Dear Booker T. Washington High School
The pride of the Great South-West
You're a symbol of light for many a youth
By pointing the way to life's best.
You stand as a beacon in Tulsa...

Indeed, Tulsa Washington is a beacon in Tulsa. The great South-West is finding pride in her and the eyes of a nation are upon her. Proof of these statements can be found in the recent invitations of Dr. Bruce Howell, superintendent of Tulsa Independent School District #1, Washington's principal, H. J. Green and teacher, Robert Jackson to the National Board of Education meeting in Miami, Florida to explain Washington's plan of integration; Principal Green's and Assistant Principal Robert Mayes' invitation to St. Louis for the same purpose.

Washington has not just come to life. Her sons and daughters span these United States and their contributions are both numerous and noteworthy.

What makes a school? It is not buildings, classrooms, athletic fields, concert halls and fine equipment. Rather, there is a philosophy and spirit that gives to a school its significance and Washington's first principal drilled a principle into each of

his students and they believed it. "You are as good as 90% of the people and better than the other 10%."

Sixty-two years of growth under six principals of Washington High School and a people proud of the past, living the present and preparing for the future with what appears to be a successful integration program. Washington has been blessed with good leadership from its inception through the present.

The school began as a high school without a building of its own. It was born out of the desire of eight children who had completed the elementary grades in the two-room frame building of Dunbar and were in need of High school work. The year was 1912, and E. W. Woods was offered the job of principal. Because of other commitments as a teacher in Creek County, he couldn't make it to Tulsa until 1913; before the end of the year, a four room frame structure was built for the high school. It was built on a site at Elgin and Easton streets. Mr. Woods moved fourteen students and two teachers, Mrs. Lula Sims and Mrs. Myrtle McKeever, to the building which was given the name of Booker T. Washington High School.

The year, 1916 found Washington with all of 50 students and six teachers. The first graduates were Bertha Hale and Geley Pecala Wilson. In 1918, a two story spacious brick building of fifteen rooms with an equal number of teachers was Washington High School. There was an enriched course of study and a bid for recognition among the accredited high schools of the country. Courses in science, public speaking, debating, oratory and music were introduced. Seven seniors benefitted from these innovations.

Five seniors were on roll in 1919 and eight in 1920. The manual arts building was erected in 1925. Twenty-one teachers staffed the building directing the growth of 470 students, twenty-one of which were seniors. The curriculum was updated and a library was added. At this point, North Central granted the sought after accreditation. Washington has held continuous membership in this organization for forty-nine years.

Whereas there was no band, there was no football team, etc., in 1913. The band and major sports were very much in evidence by 1922. Basketball had come in 1921. Nineteen hundred and twenty-two brought the band, football and the fans. This was the year that a football queen was crowned for the first time in the history of the school's existence.

The building, during this time, had grown to thirty classrooms and a commercial room had been added with thirty typewriters within it. There was a science laboratory with \$10,000 worth of equipment for student use. A laundry and a library with 6,000 volumes were a part of the facilities. Seven late model machines, thirteen sewing tables and a manual arts department equipped to teach electric wiring and woodwork plus a cafeteria with seating capacity for 250 people were some of the acquisitions for that year. Publication of the school's first newspaper occurred in this same year.

Growth in material things had not lessened the desire to have the best or be the best during the days of the depression, from 1930 until post WWII, there was a pressing need for a new school. This need did not dampen the spirit of continual

improvement and the interest in extra-curricular activity to make the well-rounded student. Hi-Y and Y teens were the first extra-curricular organizations making their appearance in 1935. Girls basketball, thought to be an innovation now, was a part of the activity program in earlier years. A new department was initiated in 1941 headed by an alumnus. Ben McKinney headed the tailoring department.

Through the years, Washington students excelled in sports and debate and ranked high in the scholastic meets held at Langston University yearly. Most every student helped collect scrap iron, plant victory gardens and sang with enthusiasm "We Are Americans Too!", during the war years. The students lent themselves to constant campaigns in the 40's to hasten the day of a new school of which they had dreamed. They addressed themselves to several editorials using the "The Washington News-Flash," as their voice. One editorial in particular by Clifton West in November, 1945, lamented the difficulties of basement classrooms while the elementary classes were out to lunch. He spoke of the library in the basement containing valuable volumes in surroundings that were dark dingy and dilapidated. He compared the existing libraries in other Tulsa school plants as dreams, and indicated that the dream of Washington students was a New Washington High School.

Washington boasted ninety-one graduating seniors in 1946 and continued its growth over the next few years. The six period class schedule was adopted in the fall of 1947. Formally, there had been five classes of seventy-five minutes. Five class periods and one study period was now the rule. The 1948 class