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# CHEVY CHASE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

From the beginning, the elementary school was an important institution in the Town of Chevy Chase. For Chevy Chase parents, their children's education has always had a high priority. And the Chevy Chase Elementary School has provided a focus for community interest and activities since it first was formed.

At the turn of the century, the Montgomery County school system consisted of a few small schools. The majority were one- and two-room structures. They adequately served the thinly-populated upper county's small towns and farmlands. The only high school was located in Rockville.

Communities near the District of Columbia, such as Chevy Chase, Bethesda, and Silver Spring, faced a different situation. Their population was increasing, and they were an extension of the city. Residents observed the rapidly improving D.C. school system south of their border. Many of these homeowners were well-educated employees of the federal government. Their occupations, interests, and lifestyles were more urban. For their children, they wanted the best education possible.

It took the residents of Chevy Chase 20 years of plan-

ning and persuasion to establish a neighborhood school in a permanent building in 1917.

## From the Beginning

In those early days, funding schools was a problem. In 1900, the disbursements for schools throughout the county amounted to only \$64,000, and the total did not exceed \$1 million until 1929. Chevy Chase community leaders began in the late 1890s the long tradition of working with county legislators and school officials to increase the school budget. Parents donated an indispensable commodity, their time. They worked with teachers and helped to establish a sustained performance of superior educational achievement and a tradition of outstanding extracurricular programs.

The first school in Chevy Chase opened in 1898. It was a two-room structure on Bradley Lane west of Connecticut Avenue. The Chevy Chase Land Company donated the property and built the building. The county school board paid the \$2,200 construction costs. This school served the community until 1903, when low enrollment forced it to close. The building was sold for



*Residence on Bradley Lane was originally built in 1898 as the first Chevy Chase School.*

PHOTO BY TOWN OF CHEVY CHASE

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\$1,700. It stands today, the attractive frame house at 3905 Bradley Lane.

The declining enrollment was caused by the transfer of many Chevy Chase students to a large new school on Connecticut Avenue just two blocks south of Chevy Chase Circle in the District of Columbia. The public schools in D.C. were among the best in the country, whereas the Montgomery County schools were considered by federal employees to be very marginal, and definitely not geared to families expecting their children to go on to college.

In 1911, the District of Columbia announced a tuition charge for non-resident students. It would cost \$24 a year for first grade, \$29 a year for sixth grade, on up to \$68 for high school. Shortly afterward, primary children outside the city limits were prohibited outright from attending D.C. schools. There suddenly was a need once again for a local neighborhood school in Chevy Chase. At least many people felt there was a need. The *Sentinel* reported on August 16, 1912, that "Mr. Andrew J. Cummings, a prominent resident, has taken the backers of the situation to task, asserting that not more than a dozen children could be found who would attend such a school if erected. Other citizens declare that at least 150 pupils would attend the school."

## The First Home and School Association

There was little organization among local citizens in 1912, and no parent-teacher association. Dr. Ryan Devereux, a county school commissioner, became the leader of the Chevy Chase effort to establish a school. He called a meeting to form a Home and School Association, the first such organization in Montgomery County.

In September, two teachers and a principal were hired. The house at 6812 Delaware Street, one block east of Connecticut Avenue, was rented for classrooms. The school was an instant success, and during the first year an enrollment of 108 pupils was reported, including an eighth grade, "under the supervision of a Wellesley graduate," that included children from Bethesda and Kensington. Trustees were appointed from the community, and the *Sentinel* reported in October: "The entire community, as well as the trustees, is devoting considerable time and taking a great deal of interest in the school proposition, and it is fully expected that before long the Chevy Chase school will be pointed out as the model school of Montgomery County."

Some measures of progress, duly reported in the press

in succeeding weeks, were an honor roll of 25 names, a piano, and new ventilators, "making the building very comfortable."

But the building was too small for the number of students, and was not available for a second year. The community demonstrated their determination to have an adequate neighborhood school. They collected \$5,000 to provide four portable frame classrooms on Rosemary Street—"a macadamized street, with granolithic sidewalks," the trustees proudly announced. There were no more than 15 houses within two blocks of the site at that time.

"Four competent and qualified teachers have been engaged," the trustees noted, and the school was to serve all grades, including the first two years of high school.

By 1915, there were five teachers and two assistants, and S.D. Caldwell's *Directory of Bethesda District, Montgomery County, Maryland* for that year listed them in its section on the five schools in the district: ". . . No. 3—Grammar, located, temporarily, on Rosemary Street, Chevy Chase, west of the Capital Traction Electric Line, Mrs. Florence E. Barksdale, Principal; M. Lillian Morgan, Emma Washington, Mary Tracy, Elsa D. Muench, J.R. Daly, and Edgar Thompson (M.T. Dept.), Effie G. Barnsley (Domestic Science Dept.), Assistants. Total salaries paid, \$2,482.85, and total cost of school \$4,749.02. This school accommodates seven grades, averaging 19 pupils each and three high-school grades with an enrollment of 44. The building was first occupied in September 1914, and cost \$5,000." In the same year, by the way, Bethesda Elementary's total cost was \$2,140.46, and the school "located at Friendship Heights" (Somerset Elementary?) cost \$745.35.

There were still high school students crossing the line to the D.C. schools. The trustees exhorted the citizens to send their children to the new school—particularly high school students—to help convince the legislature of the need for a bond issue to fund a permanent school building on the site. "Every child of this community attending the D.C. schools will serve as an argument against our needs."

A bitter controversy between Chevy Chase and Kensington began. Both towns needed new school buildings. Both towns wanted the area high school grades to be located in their building. Montgomery County faced a difficult choice; the total school budget for 1913 was only \$115,000. This matter delayed the construction of both schools until 1917. Records indicate that a few students in grades eight through ten attended the Chevy Chase School during those years.

## A Permanent Building

The 20-year goal of a permanent school building was realized in 1917. A two-story red brick building was built by contractor Roy W. Poole of Frederick, at a cost of about \$20,000 in county funds. The county reimbursed the Chevy Chase residents for the cost of the portable buildings, and moved them to other sites. The school fronted on Valley Place, which at that time connected Rosemary Street and Meadow Lane. The ground-breaking ceremony for the new “high school” was reported in the *Sentinel* in April. The building was dedicated in November. Actually, Montgomery County listed the Chevy Chase school as a high school for one year only—1917-18.

Enrollment dropped again in the early 1920s. Congress had enacted new legislation allowing children who lived outside the District to go to D.C. schools if their parents owned property in D.C. or worked for the federal government. The Chevy Chase School was a

44th Street in 1928, the seventh grade was relocated there.

Much of the foregoing information was obtained from E. Guy Jewell’s *From One Room to Open Space*, which was published with the assistance of the Montgomery County Board of Education.

A lunch room was established in the basement of the 1917 building. It was not quite a cafeteria, because most of the food was brought from home in lunch boxes or brown paper bags. Milk, juice, and light snacks could be purchased. Fourth grade teacher Elsie Irvine supervised this facility. She saw to it that the supply of food was maintained, and that there were volunteers to act as cashier, rule enforcer, and cleanup crew. She also kept the financial records and made bank deposits.

In 1930, a 12-classroom brick building was constructed at a cost of \$94,000. It fronted on Rosemary Street, and caused the closing of Valley Place as a through street. The southern portion of this structure remains as part of the current east wing. With its new address, the school became affectionately—but never formally—known as “Rosemary School.”

Enrollment continued to increase, and in 1936 Chevy Chase added another brick building—a nine-room addition costing \$103,000, the existing west wing. During this year, the 1917 structure was demolished, according to the *Chevy Chase Elementary School Feasibility Study*, published in January 1973. The two brick buildings were connected by a wooden “Long Hall,” so that it was possible to get from the rear of one building to the rear of the other—but only on the first floor. The “Long Hall” had a row of windows on each side, and no pretense of insulation or

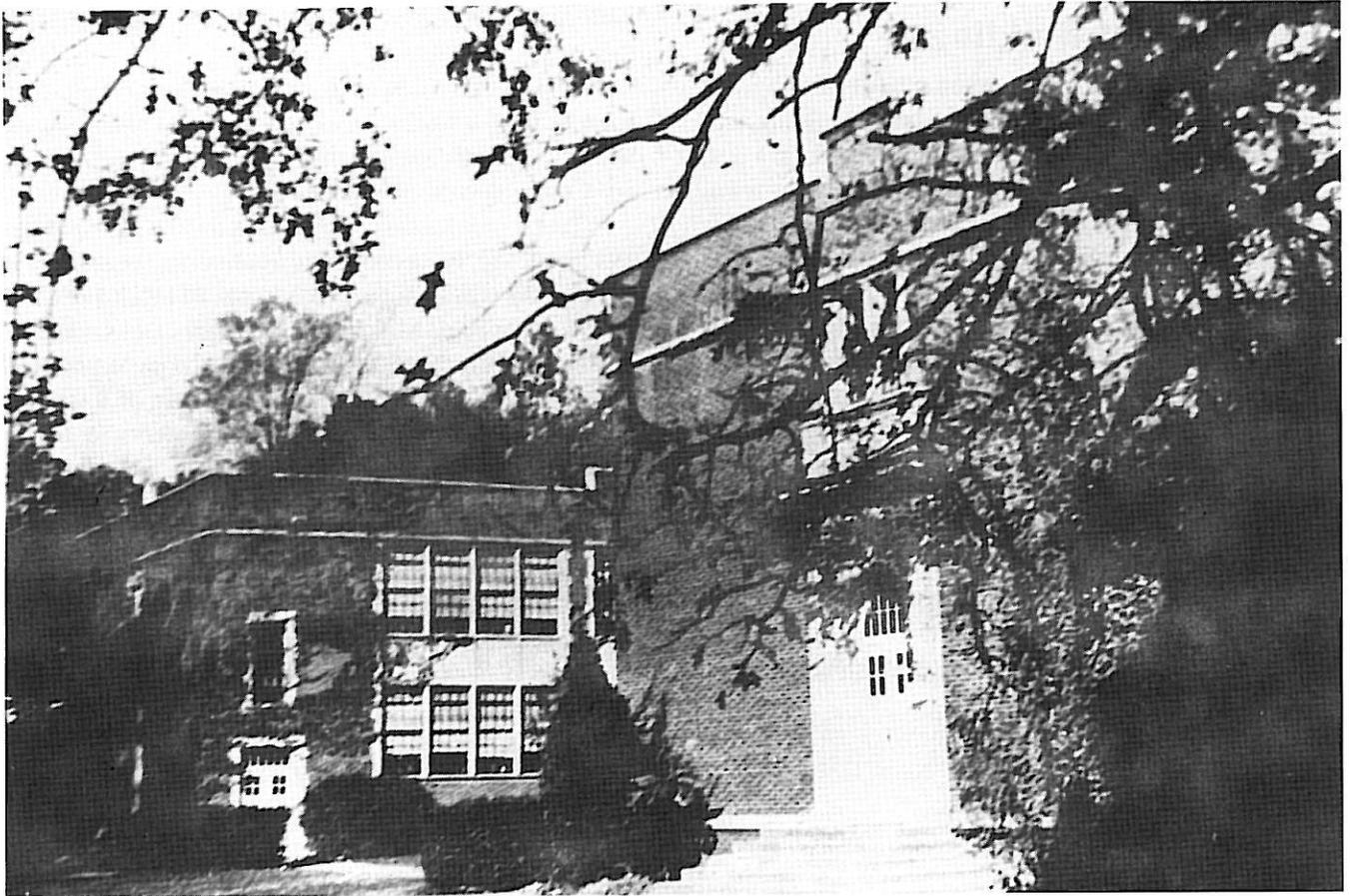
heat. A ten-year-old, running hard, could shake the whole structure and make the windows rattle. “Lost and Found” items were set out in boxes there. Book sales were conducted there. And in the large square enclosed by the school buildings on three sides was lawn for the annual May Day dance and for graduation ceremonies, weather permitting. The grass extended all the way to the Rosemary Street sidewalk.



Elsie Irvine and her third grade class in a 1924 photo taken at the south entrance of the 1917 first permanent building. COURTESY. ELSIE IRVINE

five-teacher school with grades one through seven. In 1926, a kindergarten teacher was assigned. The school had already been the first in the county to hire a school secretary.

In the mid-1920s, enrollment began to increase rapidly, and two portable classrooms were added to the north end of the brick structure. When the new Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School was finally located on



*Chevy Chase School in 1936. The east wing, constructed in 1930, is in the foreground.*  
COURTESY, MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Fun and Games

The school had a softball team that competed with those of other local schools. The playing field was in the southeast corner of the school property, with home plate located approximately where the entrance to the parking lot is now. A 20-foot tree in very short left field did not detract from the quality of play.

Dodgeball was another interscholastic team game. One team was positioned around the circumference of a 25-foot circle and threw a basketball with a vicious side-arm motion at members of the opposing team, who were within the circle. When a player was hit, she or he retired with chagrin. After a timed period, the positions were reversed. The team with the most survivors was declared the winner.

The athletic high point of the school year was the county track meet. It was held in the spring at the Rockville Fair Grounds, now Richard Montgomery High School. Children practiced at Chevy Chase Elementary for several weeks prior to the big day. Events included high jumps, broad jumps, races of various

distances for individuals, and the relay race. At the end of the day, much-coveted ribbons and medals were awarded.

## Another First for the County

It was some years before the entire 1936 building at Chevy Chase Elementary was needed for classrooms. The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cooperative Nursery School was permitted to use a room adjoining the kindergarten on the first floor. There were a health room and a music room, as well.

In the late 1930s the PTA Library got its start in one of the unused classrooms. The library was the biggest and most productive volunteer undertaking in the school's history. Planning began in 1938, and an incredible number of work hours were contributed by parents each year until 1965 when the county took responsibility with a full-time librarian and an increased appropriation for books.

The Chevy Chase PTA Library was the first library in a county elementary school.

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Edith Dinwoodey had volunteered to set up a PTA library when her first child went to kindergarten in 1935. "Wait until you are president, and then you can try it," they told her. And she did. She enlisted hundreds of parents to help, and they gained the enthusiastic support of principal Anna P. Rose and school superintendent Edwin Broome.

The objective was a bright cheerful atmosphere where children would want to go—a service, not just a room. The parents brightened the walls with paint, built bookcases, found furniture in second-hand shops, and made curtains. From the grand opening in the spring of 1939, for 20 years, mothers volunteered to keep the facility open every day during school hours. Families donated books.

All the money for the library came from the PTA. Funds for books and library furnishings were raised in a variety of ways. There were book fairs just before Christmas; one raised \$1,400, but weary mothers had to deliver the promised books on Christmas eve that year. Sixth grade teacher Agnes Kain organized a Creative Club, which met after school to read books and dramatize stories. They built scenery and rehearsed the plays they wrote, and friends and parents filled the long narrow auditorium which occupied the west side of the ground floor in the west wing. Ticket money went to buy more books for the library, and members of the Creative Club were allowed to make suggestions about which books they wanted their money to buy.

The long narrow auditorium consisted of three stepped-down floor levels for chairs, and a stage at the front. In addition to the plays, it was used for school assemblies, for PTA meetings, and even for a time was rented to a church group on Sundays. Citizens meetings for Section Four, now the Town of Chevy Chase, were held there.

A booklet, *The PTA Library Story*, by Marion Holland, parent, author and illustrator of children's books, and long-time neighbor of the school, who was a former library chairman, documents the history of the library, and can be borrowed from the Town History Committee.

## The Cafeteria—A Cooperative

The PTA cafeteria occupied the remaining space in the ground floor of the west wing. Mrs. Russell Sowers, a dietician who had children in the school, ran the cafeteria with a firm hand and a minimum of paid kitchen help. All the less-skilled jobs were handled by mothers. They were told which days to be there, and showed up

dutifully, wearing their aprons, to be put to work making sandwiches, assembling salads, folding paper napkins, and punching lunch tickets. The teachers were able to eat their lunches in peace and quiet on the auditorium stage.

During the war years of the 1940s, Mrs. Sowers supervised a home canning "cooperative," in which mothers who wished to could come to the cafeteria on Saturdays and jointly "put up" bushels of tomatoes or peaches or beans to line the shelves at home for winter use in the days before frozen foods. Children were enlisted for the production line. In the process, Mrs. Sowers taught the fundamentals of nutrition to a whole generation of Chevy Chase mothers and their families.

As before and since, a distinguishing mark of the Chevy Chase Elementary School was the interest and effort put into the school by the students' parents. But in the years during and after World War II, that interest was translated into actual service in the school itself, mainly by the mothers, who were well educated, energetic, and full-time homemakers for the most part. Principal Mildred Smoot and the teachers welcomed their help. The mothers ran a health program, a music program, and the library, worked in the cafeteria, and monitored the playground. Parents could set the rules in these situations, reports Marion Holland. In the cafeteria, students had to eat what they chose from the serving line. In the library, there were fines for overdue books.

The county eventually took over many of the functions that the PTA had initiated.

Toward the end of the 1940s all the space in the building was needed for classrooms. The cooperative nursery school went first, then the science room, the music room, and then the auditorium, which became two classrooms. The library was moved from its second floor space to the basement of the east wing, in a space separated from the boilers by wooden partitions installed by fathers. Some grades were on double shifts. The parents were gratified to find that newly-named principal Francis Powers was a firm supporter of the library, whatever other squeezing arrangements had to be made.

PTA meetings had to be held in adjoining space in the basement, in a dim, dank area, with the tiny ground-level windows splattered from the last rain, a small rickety wooden platform at one end for speakers, and rows of folding wooden chairs set out by the janitor ahead of time. The space was completely filled every time.

In 1958, a new brick addition was built to relieve the crowded conditions. A new front wing housed school

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offices and an “all-purpose” room that served the same functions as the auditorium and was a physical education facility as well. Upstairs there were classrooms and a new school library. In the rear, replacing the old wooden “Long Hall,” were more classrooms. The additions enclosed the grassy yard and the trees as a hollow square inside the new building. In 1968, another building was added at the back to house an expanded library, now called the “Instructional Materials Center.”

In 1969-70, there were 828 students at Chevy Chase Elementary from 487 families. Twenty-eight teachers in kindergarten through grade six were joined by a physical education teacher and a full-time librarian, and by part-time teachers of art, instrumental music, vocal music, reading, and speech. The principal and assistant principal were assisted by three school secretaries. The cafeteria manager and custodian rounded out the paid staff.

## Parents and More Parents

The PTA, with an active board of 35 parents, and a budget of about \$3,000, sponsored before- and after-school art classes, foreign language classes, group piano lessons, and a physical education program. In-school theater and music programs were arranged and paid for by the PTA cultural arts committee. Parents assisted the school librarian by supervising the checkout desk, repairing books, and conducting an annual inventory, and the PTA Fair raised enough money to provide nearly \$1,000 annually for the library. The PTA also raised money by sponsoring movies at the school on weekends. Fifty parents assisted teachers with lunchtime playground duty. Parents helped to plant and maintain the school grounds. A community service committee organized food and clothing collections and housing for foreign visitors. Parents volunteered to tutor non-English-speaking students, or to act as liaison to the community and the school for their families. A new “Interact” committee instituted a cooperative during-school program with a sister school in the District to give children an opportunity to learn about others so as to combat racial isolation. Home room mothers in every classroom organized meetings and enlisted other parents to assist the teachers.

The PTA board met monthly, and five general PTA meetings, a back-to-school night, the annual Halloween parade in which costumed students and teachers marched around the school yard, and the Veterans’ Day open house brought other parents to the school. PTA-spon-

sored discussion groups met in homes to talk about problems of children with learning disabilities, about long-range planning for the school playground, about whether there should be changes in the school’s report cards, or about the special problems of divorced or widowed parents. Block mothers helped to cope with emergencies on the way to and from school. The PTA editor produced a school handbook for parents and staff, along with 16 newsletters per year, delivered to parents by their children. Other parents actively followed county school budget and election processes, and testified on behalf of Chevy Chase parents.

At the end of the 1969-70 school year, Jacob E. Adams was named principal of Chevy Chase Elementary. He was to preside over a series of changes at the school—changes brought on by forces not within the control of the local community or the school staff, but to which they reacted with energy and care. The results were a new “modern”—and controversial—school building and an equally controversial pairing of Chevy Chase Elementary School with a school in Silver Spring, for the sake of racial balance in the school system.

## Major Renovation

Testifying at a January 1971 School Board capital budget hearing, the representative of Chevy Chase Elementary complained that “one of the oldest and most out-of-date schools in the county” was not in the budget for renovation, despite serious needs—for rewiring, partitions, ceilings, and playground repair, among other things. “We are out of patience,” he stated, and when the budget failed to include the necessary funds, the PTA Renovations Committee was formed.

The effort took more than five years. It involved many demonstrations of parental interest at School Board hearings; many meetings with county facilities staff members; an effort to understand and utilize the new system whereby the State of Maryland would pay for—and have the final say about—school construction; and visits to new and renovated schools in and out of the county. It involved PTA meeting discussions of the new “open space” school concept that seemed workable for Chevy Chase Elementary, and work sessions in which parents, teachers, and administrators met with architects and county and state officials.

The renovation project cost more than a million dollars, and took two summers and a school year to complete—in which year the children studied in other nearby schools. During the “year of the diaspora,” each

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grade—students and teachers—was placed in a different school, the administrators kept in touch with all of them, and the PTA held the school community together.

The renovated school building was occupied in the 1975-76 school year. It included a gymnasium, remodeled classroom space, and a much larger library, and it filled in the square grass open space. Neighbors bought the displaced trees and flowering shrubs in a PTA-sponsored fund-raising project.

The new open classroom space was controversial from the start. Teachers soon began marking out the margins of their teaching spaces with moveable chalkboards, ropes, saw horses, and other devices. Parents began to complain about the “echoing opening learning vistas,” as one neighbor described them. Before many years, there were walls where there had been open space.

## An Integration Plan

By the 1970s, Montgomery County school officials prided themselves on their enlightened policies in the area of school desegregation. They had done away with their separate black and white schools well before the civil rights movement in the 1960s. In the down-county area, they were especially proud of the racially-mixed school in the integrated community of Rosemary Hills in Silver Spring.

By the late 1960s, though, the minority enrollment at this school increased from 10 percent to 53 percent in six years, while the countywide average was only 5 percent. In an effort to reverse this trend, the School Board in 1972 proposed a “model school” plan for Rosemary Hills which would involve busing for integration. The Rosemary Hills community opposed the idea and staunchly defended its neighborhood school. The plan was shelved.

By 1974, however, Rosemary Hills Elementary School’s minority enrollment had reached 82 percent, and the PTA and the neighborhood conceded that the school needed a new plan to achieve racial balance.

School officials asked communities in the surrounding school neighborhoods to form “local evaluation committees” to consider what should be done. Their idea was to form a “cluster” of all the surrounding schools and devise a plan whereby students from cluster schools would be bused for kindergarten through second grade to Rosemary Hills, and Rosemary Hills children would be bused to the surrounding schools for third through sixth grades. The local evaluation com-

mittees were not enthusiastic. However, at least one committee—for the Chevy Chase Elementary neighborhood—expressed some willingness to work with school officials to integrate their school.

In the closing days of the negotiations, the “cluster” which had been planned to involve at least five or more of the dozen area schools was reduced to a “pairing” in which the youngest children from Chevy Chase Elementary School and Larchmont Elementary School in Kensington would be bused to Rosemary Hills, and older children from Rosemary Hills would in turn attend the “paired” schools.

The decision not to spread the responsibility for integrating down-county schools to more of the cluster elementary schools in this original plan proved to be a grievous error.

## Going It Alone

In the first year of the new plan—1976—Chevy Chase parents rallied around the new school. More than 95 percent of the eligible Chevy Chase children reported for the K-2 primary school at Rosemary Hills. In the Larchmont community, only about 50 percent of those eligible reported to Rosemary Hills. Within the first few years of the pairing, the enrollment at Larchmont for grades three through six dropped drastically, as parents opted to send their children for all seven years to a neighborhood private school. The School Board had no choice but to close Larchmont. Chevy Chase’s new third-through-sixth-grade school remained relatively stable, although parents there, also, began to seek private school alternatives. With a parallel decline in actual numbers of school-age children, enrollment from our neighborhood to Rosemary Hills for kindergarten through grade two and to Chevy Chase for grades three through six began a steady decline.

Demographically, in the next five years the down-county area changed. The school-age population in the predominantly minority community of Rosemary Hills increased dramatically, partly because of the construction of many large apartment complexes which were included in the Rosemary Hills school district. In Chevy Chase and Kensington, as in the rest of the western down-county areas, the number of majority school age children dramatically declined. Also, the highly-touted private schools gained in popularity. Thus, the racial balance at Rosemary Hills Primary School and also at Chevy Chase Elementary began to shift again. In the early 1980s, the minority percentage at Rosemary Hills

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was rising from 65 percent to 70 percent and at Chevy Chase Elementary from 35 percent to 40 percent.

During these first five years of the "pairing," Chevy Chase parents who chose to send their children to public school were as active in their support at the Rosemary Hills site as they had been at their neighborhood school on Rosemary Street. They successfully led a fund-raising campaign which put thousands of dollars worth of playground equipment at Rosemary Hills, and they contributed heavily to improve the school library. They served as PTA leaders and volunteered regularly in the classrooms. They continuously pressed school officials for extra support for resources, diagnostic teachers, and materials for this special school.

## A Losing Battle

By 1980, however, there was significant personnel turnover. Some of the new teachers were selected from the "teacher surplus" list, instead of being handpicked, and were overwhelmed by the diversity of the school. Some of the promised special support was not forthcoming.

In 1980, PTA officers, including representatives from all three communities—Chevy Chase, Kensington, and Rosemary Hills—testified that there was great concern about the racial imbalance, which was 15 percent above the county average—well over the point at which School Board guidelines required remedial action. There was concern about the teacher turnover, discipline, and academics, and about the need for special resources to serve "special needs" students and non-English speaking students.

Parent volunteers put much effort into recruiting students from Chevy Chase and Kensington back into the public schools, with open houses and special brochures and personal tours. But in spite of the immense effort, the number of parents from those communities who chose public school for their children decreased significantly each year. Many parents simply felt that their children were not getting the quality education they required from the "paired" schools. As parents withdrew their children, there was a clear perception of instability in the schools.

In 1981, the School Board, faced with declining school enrollments throughout the down-county area and pressed for new money for school facilities and programs in the rapidly-growing up-county area, decided to close numerous schools as a cost-saving measure. In the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster, they decided to return all elementary schools to the K-6 structure and to

close Rollingwood Elementary, Lynbrook Elementary, and Rosemary Hills Primary School.

The decision to close Rosemary Hills was appealed to the State Board of Education, and the State Board reversed the decision less than two weeks before the opening of school in the fall of 1981. The County quickly made a new decision. They closed North Chevy Chase, Rollingwood, and Lynbrook, and merged those school communities into K-6 schools at Rosemary Hills and Chevy Chase. Needless to say, the cluster schools were in an uproar and it was clear that this decision, too, would necessitate further scrutiny and would be appealed. So many closures county-wide in one year caused the appearance, if not the reality, of true chaos in the Montgomery County public schools, most especially in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster.

The results in the fall 1981 School Board election were dramatic. Conservative School Board members were defeated and a new liberal majority took office, with one firm commitment—to reconsider the decision involving the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster schools. The Board asked superintendent Edward Andrews to prepare new alternatives.

## Agonizing Choices

In Chevy Chase in 1981, the reinstated K-6 school attracted many more students than expected. Two kindergarten classes had to be added. Chevy Chase parents saw that for whatever reason, the return to the seven-grade structure had become a magnet for attracting Chevy Chase neighborhood parents back from private schools into the public school fold.

By the time Superintendent Andrews announced his recommendations, one of which was to return to the "K-2/3-6 pairing," many Chevy Chase parents wanted more than ever to defend the new K-6 structure for all cluster schools. Throughout the 1981-82 school year, the debate over the alternatives continued. Parents within the school were divided and the parents in all cluster schools were pitted against one another. North Chevy Chase, Rollingwood, and Lynbrook were closed; Rock Creek Forest, Bethesda, Somerset, Westbrook, and Chevy Chase were struggling for survival. Because of the court's order, only Rosemary Hills was certain to remain open.

The fray focused on whether there should be a return to the original "pairing" which was considered by many a "failed experiment" or whether to allow the cluster to have K-6 schools throughout. The new School Board chose to adopt Superintendent Andrews' recommenda-

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tion that reinstated the original pairing but with some significant changes. They called for the *reopening* of North Chevy Chase to serve grades three through six only and assigned North Chevy Chase's younger children to Rosemary Hills. Since Rollingwood and Lynbrook Elementary Schools had also been closed, their K-2 children were assigned to Rosemary Hills, also.

This time the Chevy Chase parents, joined by the Rollingwood parents, appealed the decision. Needless to say, it was a complex mess. The local press chose to sensationalize the struggle, and the School Board took the politically popular stance of chastising Chevy Chase parents as well.

Chevy Chase parents, who had sent their children to Rosemary Hills, who had worked for the success of the school, who had supported the integration effort, and who had served in the PTA and as volunteers in the school, were caught in the middle—between their desire to cooperate with integration and their concern for their children's education. It was important to them that their public school attract more children back into the system. The return to the K-6 structure appeared to be achieving that goal. Other area parents defended the return to the pairing, and there was a great struggle within the school community. However, both sides strongly supported an integrated school—a fact that seemed to be overlooked by the media and ignored by the politicians.

## Appeal

Parents of entering kindergarteners were particularly strong in opposing a return to the pairing. Literally hundreds of Chevy Chase and Rollingwood parents appealed the School Board's decision on the basis that the alternative chosen would overcrowd Rosemary Hills and underutilize the other schools involved, especially the Chevy Chase facility which had the largest capacity and was the newest in the cluster. In order for the "pairing" to work, the School Board had added children from three more school neighborhoods—Rollingwood, Lynbrook, and North Chevy Chase.

The appellants felt that either the Rosemary Hills facility would be overcrowded if those neighborhoods participated, or these three neighborhoods would suffer the same loss to private schools that Larchmont and Chevy Chase had encountered. They proposed a new plan that Rosemary Hills be made an "early childhood

learning center" with Headstart, kindergarten, and first grade, and that Chevy Chase Elementary and North Chevy Chase Elementary house grades two through six. The merits of this proposal were never given serious consideration by school officials, and the appeal was denied.

The Town of Chevy Chase participated as an appellant in this suit as it had earlier in the appeal of the closure of Leland Junior High School. The town participated in the hearings before the School Board, and supported the position of the Chevy Chase Elementary School PTA—always strongly supporting the continuation of integration. However, when the plan was finally implemented, they embraced the new Rosemary Hills Primary School and promoted it as the "neighborhood" school.

## Success

In the first year of the reinstated "pairing," Rosemary Hills was given tremendous support by the School Board and the school officials. An outstanding new principal and "only the best" handpicked teachers were selected. An assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, counselor, nurse, and many diagnostic teachers were assigned to the school. The facility was repainted and provided with many "extras." And, in fact, Chevy Chase parents who had appealed the decision were right—there was immediate overcrowding! Many came from out of the district for the all-day kindergarten and the magnet program. Temporary classrooms were brought in and the School Board immediately approved a \$3.5 million renovation project.

Within all the neighborhoods involved, there were still a lot of hurt feelings and many who were skeptical of a school system which had changed school assignments so radically in just ten years. To their credit, school officials sought meetings with parents to ascertain what the problems were in the first pairing, and they attempted to remedy these problems, real and perceived. Although few students from the Town, Chevy Chase Village, or Rollingwood attended Rosemary Hills that first year, there has been a steady increase each year since. As the perception of stability in the cluster increased, more families began returning to the public school system.

*William Duvall, Marion Holland,  
Jean Dinwoodey Linehan, Jane Lawton*