

# ✓ Chaminade Whitney: *Conference Center* a dream coming true

2-3-85  
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SANTA CRUZ — High above Santa Cruz and the shining Monterey Bay, the Chaminade Whitney conference center is emerging.

Located on a bluff at the top of a private, tree-shaded driveway off Paul Sweet Road, Chaminade Whitney has sailed smoothly through the planning and building process in Santa Cruz, a testament to the skill of the people behind the project.

It's now more than halfway to completion, with an estimated opening date of "mid- to late-April," said general partner Larry Swanson.

Swanson and the other two general partners — Carl Taylor and Frank Hildreth — believe Chaminade Whitney will be competitive with Monterey Peninsula conference centers.

"It's like an Asilomar, but the difference is we're quite a bit smaller," said Swanson, adding he thinks the size will

allow Chaminade Whitney to provide "the highest level of service."

Also, Santa Cruz is undeniably warmer than the Monterey Peninsula and closer to the San Francisco Bay Area.

The three envision Chaminade Whitney as a retreat for professionals who want to continue their schooling, a kind of corporate education center.

"Our business is to cater to meeting groups exclusively," said Swanson.

Sophisticated audio-visual equipment, projectors, fully sound-proofed rooms and a library will be in the main conference hall. In all, there are 10 meeting rooms of different sizes in the main hall, which was formerly the Chaminade Catholic Boys High School.

The school was built in 1930 by the Marianist Brothers, a teaching order founded by Father William Chaminade after the French Revolution. From its opening until the mid '40s it operated as a school, then switched to a novitiate.

Please see Page A4



Pete Amos/Sentinel

Front of original Chaminade building

# Chaminade as a retreat

Continued from Page A1

The partners bought it from the brothers in 1978 and won the right to keep the name, "Chaminade," because the conference center will carry on the educational tradition as before, said Swanson.

The Whitney came from Whitney Centers Inc., a Florida-based company that will be the management and marketing consultant to the Chaminade general partners, he said.

Swanson said the ownership and operating firm is a limited partnership of about 30 investors, with himself, Taylor and Hildreth forming the general partnership.

The partners said Chaminade Whitney will cater to professionals in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Silicon Valley — accountants, high-tech executives, lawyers and doctors.

Studies have shown that such educational retreats for executives are becoming increasingly popular, said Taylor.

When completed, Chaminade Whitney will have a capacity of 240 guests in 156 guest rooms located throughout 11 new guest villas. They're designed in the same Spanish-style architecture as the old Chaminade school building, replete with red-tile roofs, by Neal Lindstrom of Palo Alto and Whitney Design Group of Hollywood, Fla.

The general contractor for the massive project is Murchison Construction Co. of Sacramento, said Swanson. Most of the subcontractors are local firms, he added.

The guest houses are divided into 16 and 12 rooms, each room having two digital phones for the executive with his or her own computer to link up with the home base. The interior doors and frames are solid birch.

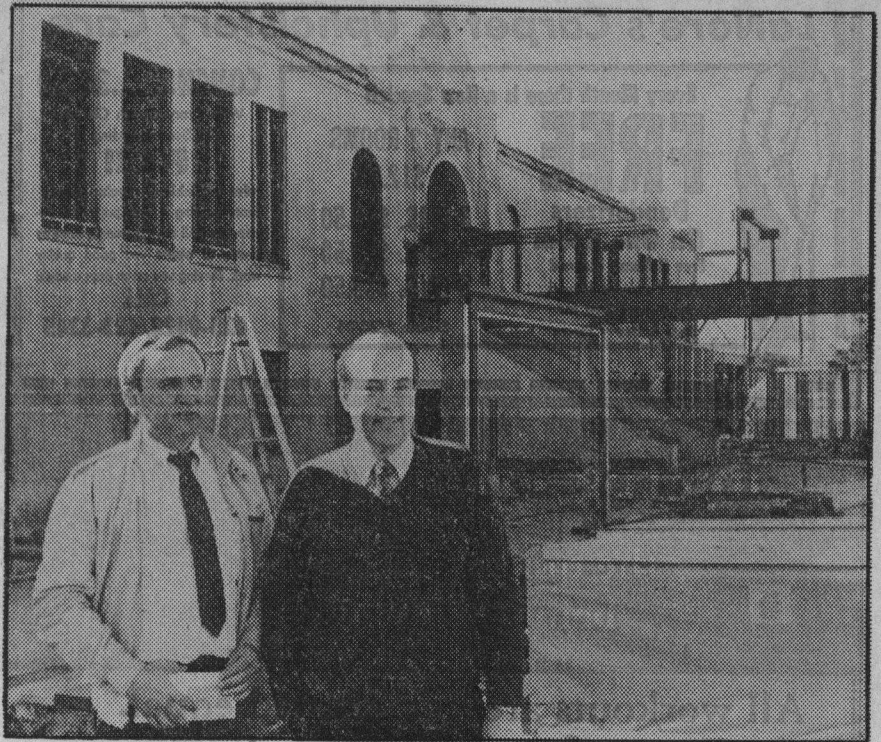
Some of the rooms are designed as suites, with lounge areas for small groups to get together and brain-storm. Each of the guest houses has a patio for group gatherings.

The main meeting rooms are housed in the Chaminade school, with a library, dining room and second-floor lounge providing a sweeping view of Monterey Bay. Swanson said the library will double as a gourmet dining room for small gatherings.

A greenhouse on the first floor also overlooks the bay.

The exterior will include a portico, two glassed-in walkways and a Spanish-style walkway.

The conference center will stress outdoor activities with four tennis courts, a swimming pool, two health spas, a sports



Pete Amos/Sentinel

Carl Taylor, left, and Larry Swanson at Chaminade.

field, and hiking and jogging trails on the 80 acres.

"We've attempted to have little areas of benches, tables and spas for people to enjoy the outside," said Swanson. "We think people learn as much outside the classroom as inside."

Automobiles will be left at a parking lot on the outskirts of the conference center to lend an air of remoteness.

Even the little details are thought out at Chaminade Whitney. Swanson said all the plumbing is cast-iron and the second floors are constructed of light-weight concrete, all to reduce sound.

The heating and electricity will run on a co-generation system that's very energy efficient.

"We really tried to think through the mistakes others have made and avoid the pitfalls," said Taylor.

Another careful eye will be trained on the food. Taylor ran a food service at UC-Davis, and believes that good food can make or break a retreat.

Most meals will be California cuisine. But, Taylor said, he will vary the regular dinners with theme meals, barbecues, picnic lunches and the gourmet dinners in the library.

Taylor and Swanson met each other at

UC Davis, where Taylor ran the food service and Swanson was a client of his. They met Hildreth through the Stanford Alumni Association at Fallen Leaf Lake.

"It's our first joint venture," said Swanson of Chaminade Whitney. "But we've been involved in university and education services for a long time."

"We had this idea in mind," said Taylor. "We'd all been involved in different aspects of this field and we were looking for a temperate climate to locate in."

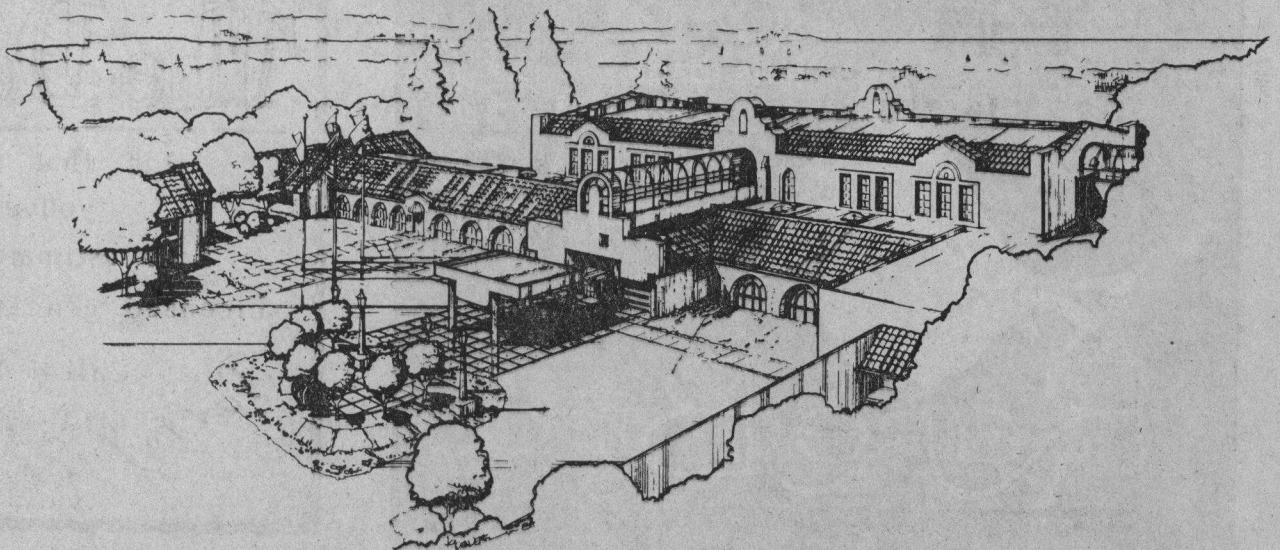
Once they saw Chaminade, they thought it was perfect for their purposes.

They made a bid which was accepted by the brothers. All told, the buildings and land will come to over \$16 million, said Swanson.

Both Swanson and Taylor said the government was very supportive of the project. It passed the Board of Supervisors unanimously.

In return, Chaminade Whitney will generate a substantial amount of revenue in transient occupancy taxes and will provide jobs for about 100 people, said Swanson.

"A lot of students will work here," said Taylor, adding, "We all have a university background and like working with students."



An architectural drawing of the Chaminade Whitney conference center.