

UCSC at the crossroads

How the dinner uproar unfolded

SANTA CRUZ — In the wake of recriminations over the "Asian Food Affair," biology professor Ralph Hinegardner interviewed the participants.

A member of the Crown College faculty, Hinegardner interviewed people in both Crown and Merrill colleges. This timeline primarily is cultivated from Hinegardner's subsequent report.

● **Spring 1988:** Filipino students ask the Merrill College student affairs officer to schedule a Filipino meal for one of the college nights the following school year. He agrees.

● **Late summer 1988:** A list of possible college night dates and themes from Merrill College are reviewed by Crown's student affairs officer and residential life coordinator. Crown and Merrill share the same kitchen, to they have to agree on theme nights.

They see one suggestion for "Asian" theme food on Dec. 7. A Japanese-American on the Crown staff suggests Pearl Harbor Day might not be the best time to celebrate "Asian" culture. She thinks it best to pick another date.

● **Fall 1988:** Merrill's student affairs officer remembers planning for a Filipino theme dinner on Dec. 7, assuming Crown is doing the same. Crown's student affairs officer remembers the theme to still be an open-ended "Asian" one, and that he has told Merrill that Crown did not want to do that on Dec. 7.

● **Oct. 24, 1988:** Crown's student affairs officer now knows Merrill's entertainment will be a Filipino dance troupe on Dec. 7. He says the meal still appeared unspecified to him.

In the past, he says, college night entertainment sometimes hasn't corresponded to the dinner be-

cause of price and availability of groups.

● **Nov. 18, 1988:** The Merrill administrative officer talks with the Food Service manager about the Filipino menu, and asks the manager to try to persuade Crown to change its plans not to have a theme dinner.

Crown staff says that message never reached them.

● **Nov. 28, 1988:** Both staffs now realize Merrill is planning for Filipino food and Crown has not scheduled an Asian food menu for Dec. 7. They meet with a Food Service representative to work out different menus.

● **Late November 1988:** Merrill's administrative officer asks her provost to talk with Crown's provost about going along with the Filipino theme.

The request is not acted upon.

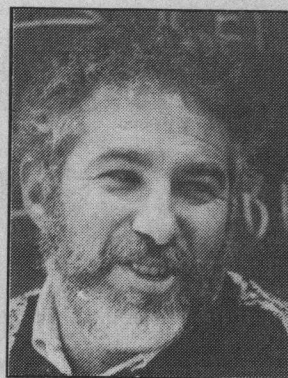
● **Dec. 7, 1988:** Merrill College's Filipino theme college night and Crown's non-theme college night are conducted.

Some students at Merrill are upset when they hear Crown has "canceled" Filipino night because they wanted to "punish" Asians for Pearl Harbor.

Late that night, the Crown provost is awakened with a phone call from the student newspaper, City on a Hill Press, about the issue.

● **Dec. 8, 1988:** The newspaper reports the Crown provost said it would be unpatriotic to have Asian food on Pearl Harbor Day.

The provost later says the quote was taken out of context. She had based her comments on a brief conversation during college night with a member of her staff. She assumes from the conversation that Merrill was "celebrating" Pearl Harbor Day by serving "Asian" food.



"(Crown thinks) the way to deal with racism is to treat everybody the same."

— Michael Rotkin,
Merrill College faculty



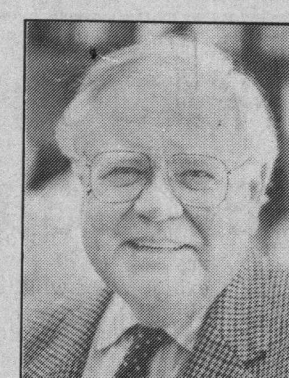
"It's very hard for me to see the white Crown faculty as the victims in this case."

— Roz Spafford,
Kresge College faculty



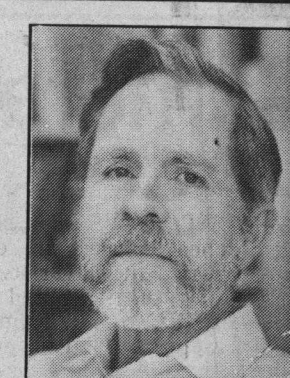
"You can't de-race this society."

— 'Gini'
Matute-Bianchi,
Merrill College faculty



"The tradition of a lack of civility on this campus (didn't help)."

— Chancellor
Robert Stevens



"The ideal to them would be every race mixing together."

— Ralph Hinegardner,
Crown College faculty

● **Dec. 9, 1988:** The Crown provost is asked to meet with the chancellor. The Merrill provost is also there, and they talk about the incident and subsequent press report.

The chancellor asks the Crown provost to write a letter of apology for what now is perceived by many to be a racist decision on the part of the Crown staff. She complies.

A group of Asian-American students begins publicizing a campus-wide student meeting on Jan. 6 to discuss the issue.

● **Dec. 12, 1988:** Hate phone calls to the Crown staff continue. The Crown provost asks for another meeting with the chancellor.

A mediator is appointed to work with Merrill and Crown staffs. The debate rages.

● **Dec. 13, 1988:** A group of Asian-American students attends

office hours at the chancellor's. He suggests they meet with the Crown provost to air their grievances.

● **Dec. 14, 1988:** The Crown provost meets with the students, but they go away convinced the decision not to celebrate Filipino or "Asian" food on Dec. 7 was based on racism.

At noon, the provost meets with Crown faculty members to show them a letter from the campus budget director calling the Crown provost and chief administrative officer "perfect examples of what enlightened people of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds define as 'racist' and 'bigoted.' ..."

A group of Crown faculty meets with the chancellor about the letter, asking him to disassociate himself from it. They leave the meeting unhappy with the chancellor's lack of response.

● **Dec. 16, 1988:** At the request

of the chancellor, the budget director writes another letter, saying he should have stated the actions were racist, not the people. He also acknowledged the letter was his own opinion and should not have been written on university letterhead.

● **Dec. 19, 1988:** After perceiving what she sees as a lack of support from the chancellor, the Crown provost resigns.

● **Dec. 21, 1988:** The chancellor writes a letter asking for the finger-pointing to stop, and for everyone to learn from the mistakes and move on.

Crown faculty members are unhappy with the letter, saying the chancellor did not support them strongly enough.

● **Early January, 1989:** The Crown College chief administrative officer outlines ideas for changes at the college to help meet de-

mands of the Asian and Pacific Island Student Association in the wake of the dinner debate.

Response from some on the Crown faculty is negative, and many of the ideas are not carried out.

The administrative officer takes medical leave, and has not returned.

● **Jan. 25, 1989:** A report on the events is presented to the chancellor by the vice chancellor for student affairs, who had been asked to investigate the Asian Food Affair.

It angers the Crown staff, which finds it one-sided.

● **October 1989:** The Crown chief administrative officer sues the chancellor, budget director and the University of California regents over the letter that used the words "racist" and "bigoted" to describe him and the former provost.