



The day I met the Queen B-To-Be

By **BUCK DOPP**

The photograph above was snapped in 1998. The guy craning his neck on the left, is me. At the time, I didn't think there was anything special about the people in the picture. It turns out I was very wrong.

We had just participated in a program called "i attend" at an all-school assembly in the gym of an urban New Jersey high school. The program was designed to encourage students to stay in school.

I worked for Comcast, the cable TV provider in the area, and we were always looking for opportunities to support the local community. I was asked to say a few words to the students at East Orange High.

I remember saying something like, "Comcast only hires high school graduates. If you stay in school and get your degree, you could be working with us someday."

While the students applauded politely, they weren't exactly electrified by my remarks, especially since they came from a guy in a suit who appeared to be as old as their principal. They were more in awe of the DJ who stood next to me in the picture. They were also excited to listen to a group of male rappers and a female R&B group called Destiny's Child.

When LaTavia Roberson, LeToya Luckett, Kelly Rowland and Beyoncé Knowles started singing, the students leaped to their feet and erupted in pandemonium so intense, the stage started vibrating.

I'd never heard of Destiny's Child. However, when the girls shook my hand they impressed me with their kindness and courtesy. I later told my wife Stephanie that they seemed like "good Christian girls" because they kept saying "God bless you."

Destiny's Child went on to sell over 60 million records worldwide before splitting up to pursue separate careers. The girl in the center of the picture with the yellow top is Beyoncé Knowles. She became the first African-American female artist to be awarded "Songwriter of the Year" by ASCAP. In 2009, Billboard named her the "Top Female Artist and Top Radio Songs Artist of the Decade."

Now known only by her first name, Beyoncé, she sang at two Super Bowls, won 22 Grammys, and sold over 17.2 million albums in the U.S., and 100 million worldwide.

Little did I know on that balmy May morning nearly 20 years ago — a day that started like any other day — that the quiet 17-year-old girl in the yellow top would someday become a megastar known the world over as the Queen B.

Buck Dopp is a Lake Havasu City resident.

Readers with a story to tell are invited to submit their writings to Today's News-Herald's "Your words" feature. Email submissions to pashley@havasunews.com.