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Romeoville School Namesakes: A. Vito Martinez

West View Junior High opened in 1966 and in 1991, was renamed A. Vito Martinez Middle School. But who was Vito Martinez?

Arnold Vito Martinez moved to Hampton Park with his family in 1960, served in the Korean War, and was an engineer for 35 years with ComEd. During his time with ComEd, he helped to put up the antennas on the John Hancock building in downtown Chicago.

He served for 20 years on the Valley View School District School Board, all but two of them as president. He was also the board's first president. He guided the district through rapid growth, the 45-15 year-round school plan*, uniting the teachers' union, the coordination of the district's curriculum, and the closing of two elementary schools. He had a vibrant sense of humor as well. During a particularly testy school board meeting, an audience member called him a name, "Ayatollah Martinez,". In response, Martinez photocopied a dart board with his photo in the middle and sold them for \$1 each, with proceeds used to help send the district's cheerleaders to a competition in Florida.



In 1991, the district decided to rename West View after him. During the ceremony, he received a memento with the number 23,045 on it. According to the calculations of the board treasurer Paul Swinford, that was the number of handshakes Martinez had given out over the course of 76 high school and middle school graduations. "My heart is in kids," he once said in an interview. He died in 1992 at the age of 62.

**The 45-15 year around school plan was implemented when the number of students outpaced the available school facilities. In it, students were divided into four groups. Each group of students would stay home for 15 consecutive school days and then go to school for 45 consecutive school days while a different group stayed home.*

This is the third in a series of six articles that explore the people the Romeoville Valley View Schools are named after.