DOONEY JONES

Dooney Jones has traveled throughout the United States singing with the Dick Bright Orchestra party band, but he much prefers staying close to home and coaching track and field at Castro Valley High.

Jones has tutored four state champions and in 2014 led the Castro Valley boys’ team to first place in the North Coast Section Meet of Champions and a runner-up finish in the state championships behind powerhouse Mater Dei (Santa Ana), the Trojans’ highest finish ever.

Jones was named East Bay Coach of the Year by the Bay Area Newspaper Group in 2014 and was second in the voting for State Coach of the Year.

An excellent sprinter and long jumper at Mt. Eden High in Hayward, Jones began his coaching career at his alma mater, first as the sprint and jumps coach, then as head coach. It was as a coach at Mt. Eden that Jones learned the fine points of the triple jump, an event that he never competed in as an athlete. But he had an athlete, Derrick Mitchell, who showed great promise in that event so Dooney learned to coach it. Mitchell triple jumped over 50 feet, setting the school record.

Jones left Mt. Eden to coach at James Logan in Union City and there developed his first state champion, Nkosinza Balumba, who triple jumped 52’8” – a Logan record – and later became an All-American at the University of Arkansas. After college, Balumba reunited with Jones and barely missed out qualifying for the 2012 Olympics.

Meanwhile, Jones, already a Castro Valley resident, had taken over the track and field program at CVHS, which turned out to be very fortunate for a talented jumper by the name of Nate Moore. Under Jones’s tutelage, Moore won state championships in both the long jump and triple jump in consecutive years (2013 and 2014), earning an athletic scholarship to the University of Oregon.

Officially, Jones coached Sasha Wallace at CVHS when she won state championships in both the triple jump and 100-meter hurdles in 2013, but he refuses to take credit for that, pointing out that Wallace was already a well accomplished jumper and hurdler when she transferred to Castro Valley from Holy Names.

One champion Dooney definitely can take credit for is Kennedy Jones, his daughter, who won the 2015 state championship in the triple jump after finishing sixth the year before. Her personal best of 42’5” broke Wallace’s school record.

“Definitely one of my best coaching moments,” said the proud father.

Dooney and his wife, Susan, have three daughters.