

# Fifty years: For Dominican Hospital and for Sister Georganne



1946: Dominican sisters Anne Herringer, left, and Georganne Duggan, right, work in the nursery at Sisters Hospital.

Dominican Hospital archive





Sister Georganne Duggan will retire this month after 50 years with Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel



**W**HEN SISTER Georganne Duggan, O.P., arrived in Santa Cruz in 1941 and first set eyes on the building she would help turn into a new hospital, she was shocked.

"It was like a little cottage by the sea," she said about the old Hanly Hospital on West Cliff Drive, which had been closed for a year. A Chicago native who studied nursing in Minnesota, Sister Georganne was used to larger facilities.

Little did she know that the tiny general care hospital would grow into the present-day Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital with more than 300 medical staff representing a variety of specialties. And 50 years later, as Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital prepares for its golden anniversary this weekend, Sister Georganne is the last of its founders to tell its history.

Looking back on the past as she prepares to retire at the end of this month, Sister Georganne remembers 1941 as an important year. She had just completed her novitiate training at the Dominican Motherhouse in Adrian, Mich., when the Bishop of the Monterey/Fresno Diocese invited her and five other sisters to come out west and provide much-needed health care.

The Dominican Sisters began in 1206 when St. Dominic, founder of the Order of Preachers set up the first convent of women religious at Prouille, France. The O.P. after their names signifies affiliation with Dominican Order of Preachers.

So she moved to Santa Cruz and spent her first year as a Dominican sister helping to renovate and establish the new Sisters Hospital, which opened on Sept. 14, 1941. The sisters and about 20 to 30 physicians — mostly general practitioners — worked and lived together like family, she said. Sister Georganne lived on the premises and, as the only registered nurse at first, worked round the clock as needed.

Although the facility was equipped to handle only general emergencies — they referred others to Stanford — Sister Georganne said all of their 28 beds were usually occupied. In addition to the community, she said they also treated men from Fort Ord during World War II.

Sister Georganne said she recalls one adventure while working in the nursery at the Sisters Hospital. The staff stumbled upon an illegal adoption ring, she said, when they noticed that one particular Boulder Creek woman frequently picked up other women's babies after delivery at the hospital. They eventually

"My father thought it was a whim and I'd get over it. That's a pretty long whim, isn't it?"

— Sister Georganne,  
on her 50 years as a nun

found out that she provided room and board to pregnant women who wanted to give up their babies — many of them were servicemen's wives — and then arranged for illegal adoptions.

The hospital, she said, decided to institute a new rule to divorce itself from any involvement: The baby could leave only with its own mother. Shortly thereafter, the Boulder Creek woman stole some money from a local doctor and disappeared from town.

In 1949, the sisters took over the operation of Santa Cruz Hospital on Soquel Avenue, across the river from downtown. For a while they ran both the original Sisters Hospital and the larger, 49-bed facility.

Although Sister Georganne moved to Las Vegas, Nev., in 1965 to become an administrator at the St. Rose de Lima Dominican Hospital, the hospital in Santa Cruz continued to expand by moving to its present site on Soquel Avenue in 1967.

When she returned to the Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital in 1978, she found both doctors and nurses becoming more specialized and trained in operating high-tech equipment. Sister Georganne's new position became Manager of Sterile Processing.

As a young woman, Sister Georganne said, she naturally chose to study nursing because she always enjoyed taking care of people. However, being somewhat mischievous as a girl, she said no one expected her to become a nun.

## Dominican throws itself a party

**D**OMINICAN HOSPITAL'S 50th birthday extravaganza Saturday will take place at two sites, the hospital on Soquel Drive and the Rehabilitation Services at Frederick Street, with lots of entertainment, exhibits, talks, popcorn, soft drinks, catered food and fun.

There will be free treats, games, tours and health information at both sites. Local authors of health-related publications will meet the public. The D'Reid competition dancers will perform.

At the Soquel Drive site, there will be clowns, mime Craig Landry, a juggler, a creature of the deep called Ogo Pogo Jr. and "Allen," a welcomer that goes "beep beep." The CALSTAR helicopter will be on display.

The entertainment schedule is: 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., Sidesaddle, women's bluegrass group; 12:15 and 2:15 p.m., the California Raisins; 2:30 and 3:45 p.m., Santa Cruz Mariachi Trio; 3:30 p.m., Birthday Cake Cutting (See story on Page 2).

A 10-minute video will be accompany the new

historical exhibition in the main hospital. In the video, Sisters Brigid McDonald, Anne Herringer and Georganne Duggan reminisce about early days at Sisters Hospital, and Julie Hyer, president and CEO of Dominican discusses challenges and changes at Dominican and in the health care field.

At the Frederick Street site, Mr. Bill Board will announce the day's activities, which include: 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., the Cool Jerks; 11:45 a.m. and 1:45 p.m., Mary Lee Sunseri singing with children; 12:15 and 2:15 p.m., "Play It Again, Santa Cruz," an original musical parody revue.

Classic cars and an ambulance will be on display; "Tame the Iron Horse" program on motorcycle safety will be represented; and Popeye will be on hand, courtesy of the Seaside Company.

Continuous shuttle service will be available, with handicap access. Free designated parking will be available at both sites.

It's all free. The public is encouraged to help Dominican celebrate this special anniversary.