

Readin' 'n' writin' 'n' rememberin'

By MARYBETH VARCADOS
Sentinel Living section editor

THE 1928 GRADUATING class from Boulder Creek High School numbered one — Shirley Cress. Think of it — class reunions with just one guest. This year would be her 60th reunion.

In fact, any reunions from those days would be small, since the entire school population was just 25. Gleason delights in talking about those days of small classes, and Friday evening she was sought out by eager listeners at the Octagon Museum.

The occasion was the opening reception for a new exhibition called "School Days, Schooldays, Good Old-Fashioned Schooldays." It will be open through May 6 at the Octagon, 118 Cooper St. Hours are noon to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

It'll bring back memories to all kids, like Shirley, who remember the old days, and should please anyone interested in the schooling process, then and now.

"Some of our classes were almost one-on-one," Gleason said, adding she really had no favorite study. "It was the only education I had," added the Valley resident who has "lived in only two houses in my life — the one I was born in, and the one I went to when I got married."

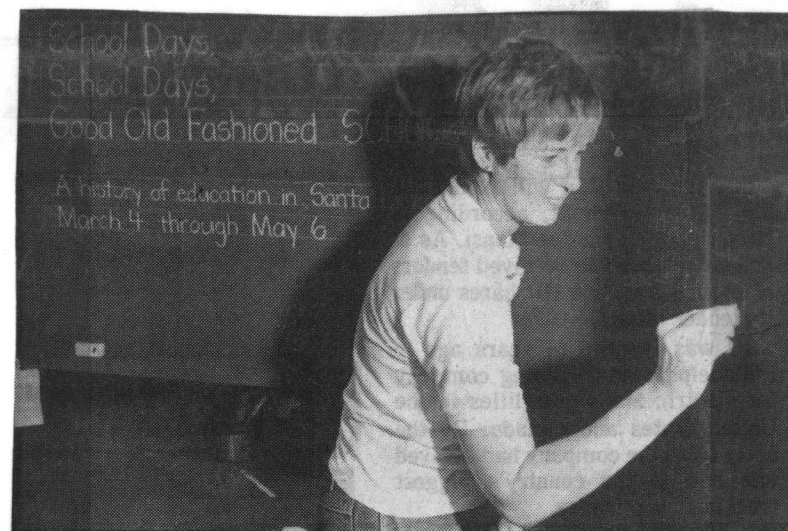
Her mother, Mildred Moody, had gone to Washingtonian School in Boulder Creek around 1885. In those logging days, bars

flourished more than schools because most of the Valley population was single men, the woodchoppers, said Gleason, who attended the reception with her daughter, Mary Jo May — another graduate of Valley schools — and Mary Jo's husband, retired Superior Court Judge Don May.

The exhibit includes a scene

from a schoolroom of yesteryear, complete with bits of wisdom on the chalkboard. "A good child is a quiet child," is one message. Another — "A good child has a curious mind." These are "signed" by the teacher, a Mary Amney Case. Case was a real teacher, considered the first in Santa Cruz. She came from one of the few families that settled here by 1847 and held school in her home near Neary Lagoon in 1848 and '49.

A display on Santa Cruz High School intrigued Truella Lund Friday. "There's Dr. Harry Piper," she said. He delivered me." In fact, added Lund, "I was born in the room I live in today." Her companion, Dorothy Forgery, commented, "That's permanency."



Sharon Maxwell works on a 'b' at exhibit title board.

Recent photos by
Bill Lovejoy



Ben Lomond School's population had this group photograph taken May 7, 1897.

The exhibit, done in cooperation with the county Office of Education and individual school districts, touches on diverse segments of local education, even the migrant education graduation of 1982, the "colored school" in Watsonville from the 1850s and the teleprinter classes at Western Union.

Visitors wise to the comparable worth issue of today tsk-tsked when they read this bit from the 1870s — male teachers were paid \$90 a month, female teachers, \$58 a month. Usually, teachers of that era were high school graduates, or passed a special test to qualify.

The first public school in Santa Cruz was built in 1857, according to the exhibit organizers. It was a one-room schoolhouse built on Mission Hill. In 1863, Watsonville voters decided on a tax to build the town's first school building and the following year, the Primary School was built.

By the turn of the century, the Santa Cruz area had 67 schools, most of them rural, one-room schoolhouses.



Ready for school, Ashley Gordon visits the Octagon Museum's education exhibit.