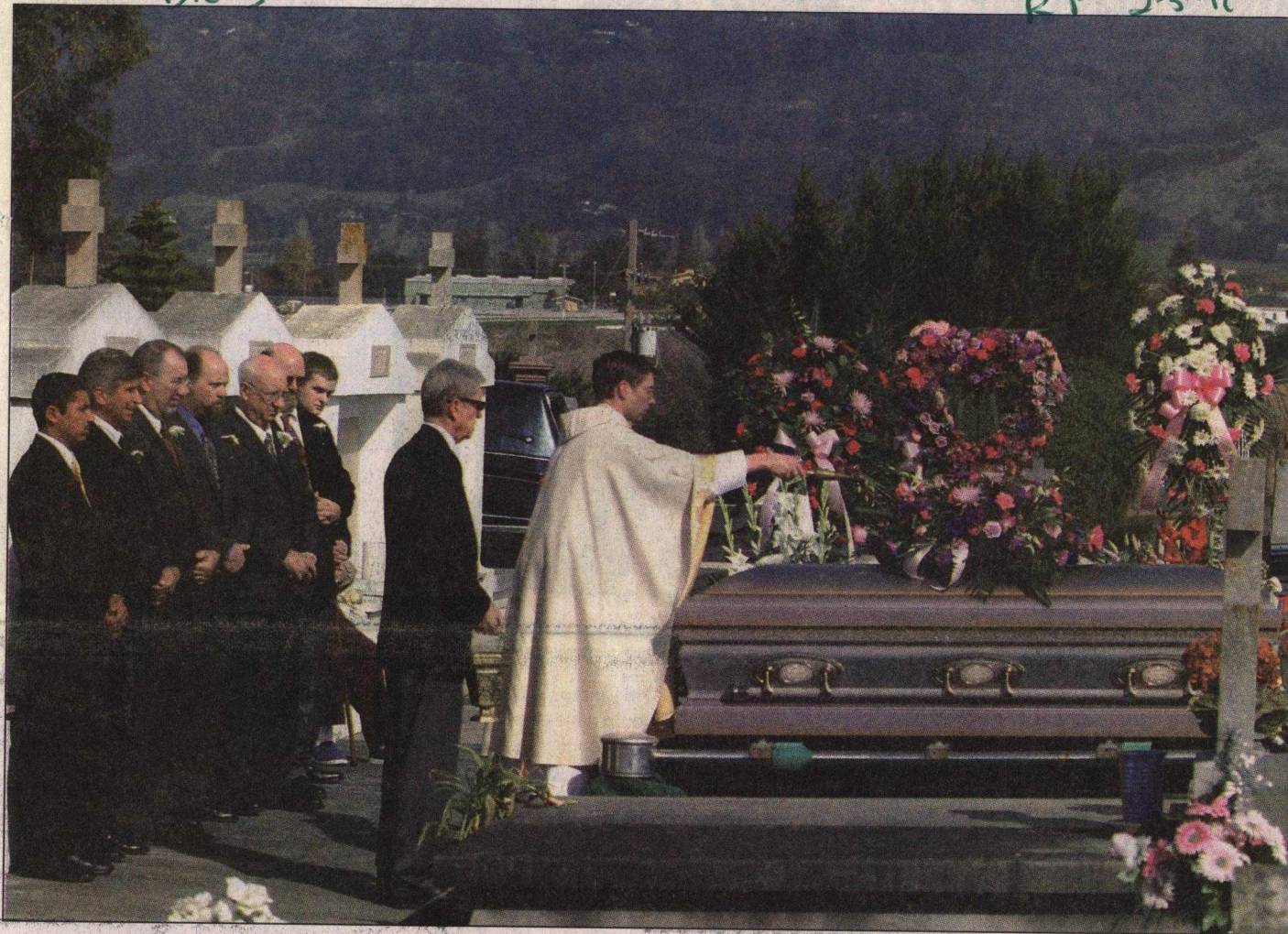


Ann Soldo remembered

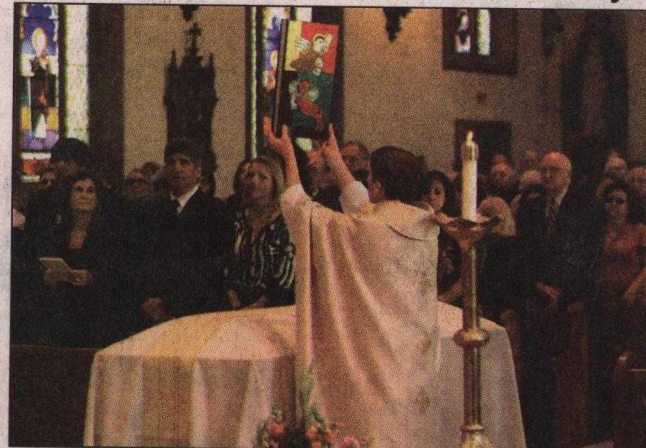
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Community attends memorial for former mayor, longtime educator

ABOVE: Father Marc Dauphine leads a graveside service for the late Ann Soldo, former Watsonville mayor and educator, Friday at Valley Catholic Cemetery. BELOW: A large gathering of family members and friends crowd into St. Patrick's Church Friday for Ann Soldo's memorial Mass.



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

By JON CHOWN

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Nearly every seat in St. Patrick's Church was filled Friday as the Pajaro Valley community said goodbye to Watsonville matriarch Ann Soldo, who died Jan. 24 at age 90.

Soldo became Watsonville's first female mayor in 1983 after being elected to the City Council in 1979. She earned the respect of the community through her work in education, which spanned 40 years. She was a teacher at Hall District, MacQuiddy, H.A. Hyde, Radcliff

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and other schools before she became the first female principal at Aptos Junior High, and also served as principal at Radcliff, Linscott, Mintie White, MacQuiddy and the Tri-County School for the Deaf.

She was also very active in the community, volunteering for a host of activities and leading the push for many improvements in the Pajaro Valley, including the Mello Center at Watsonville High School. She was involved with the Salvation Army, Seniors Council of Santa Cruz County, Soroptimist International of Watsonville, Young Ladies Institute, Watsonville Woman's Club, YWCA, Pajaro Valley Historical Association, the Cabrillo College Foundation and more.

Father Marc Dauphine led the memorial Mass on Friday, noting that the ceremony was being held at the same place Soldo was baptized 90 years earlier.

"She was dedicated and committed to her community," he said, and described her as a gentle lion.

"She was respectful to others, but she had a great strength," he said. "She used her efforts towards the betterment of all of us who lived here."

Retired Watsonville Police Chief Terry Medina told the congregation of the special qualities he saw in Soldo — her



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Joan Matiasovich Rice (left) offers words of praise at Ann Soldo's casket.

sense of responsibility and her sincerity.

"She was committed," Medina said. "What she said she'd do, she did. She was reliable."

And Medina shared a story about Soldo's sincerity and willingness to work with others. In the mid-1880s, Medina said, there was rising crime in Watsonville and Police Chief Ray Belgard made an appeal to the City Council for five more police officers. The council then responded that more taxes

would be needed to pay for the increase and that would require a two-thirds vote of approval.

Medina said Soldo opposed the tax increase, but did not celebrate when the vote fell slightly short of two-thirds; instead, she led the City Council in finding the funds for the five new officers without raising taxes.

"She was able to use persuasion to make it happen," Medina said.

Ida Bobeda, representing the

local chapter of the Young Ladies Institute — one of the many local charities Solano supported — said the Pajaro Valley will miss her energy.

"She was enthusiastic at whatever she chose to do," Bobeda said.

The service lasted about two hours. The procession then moved on to Valley Catholic Cemetery, after which mourners gathered for a reception at the Elks Lodge on Martinelli Street.