



✓ Register Pajaronian 5-15-92 p.1



Kurt Ellison

Jon Gurnee's 1906 White steam car carries 1909 WHS grad Marie Knudsen (back seat, left), parade grand marshal and 1920 grad Doris Johnson Martin (back seat, right) in Saturday's parade. Gurnee and his wife, Lorene (waving in front), are 1954 WHS graduates.

Hundreds celebrate Centennial

Old memories of Watsonville High School relived

By CHELA ZABIN
STAFF WRITER

Hundreds of people turned out during the weekend for Watsonville High School's Centennial celebration, which kicked off with a dance Friday night and included a parade down Main Street, a ground-breaking ceremony and a day-long celebration at the high school's football field.

The small parade began at 11

a.m. and featured antique and classic cars carrying members of high school classes from the '20s through the '70s, the E.A. Hall Middle School Marching Band and local politicians. The Watsonville High School Foundation led the parade, and two current students followed behind carrying a sign that said, "Walls May Fall, Pride Still Stands," in reference to the building the school lost to the

earthquake.

After the parade, dozens of people walked over to the high school field, where a long line was forming for hot dogs, strawberries and cream and other food. Classes sat together by year on the bleachers, talking and eating. Musicians and dancers performed on a stage at the end of the field, watched mostly by parents with small children.

There were tours of the high

school for those who hadn't graced its hallways for sometime, a photo display and sales of high school memorabilia.

At about 2 p.m., a woman selling the school's special Centennial yearbook estimated that only 250 copies out of 1,800 were left. Organizers had sold 1,800 badges, including sales at Friday's dance, at the gate and in pre-paid registration packets.

See WHS / back of section ►

Charles Hushbeck, introduced to a reporter by his wife, Mae, as "the last Hushbeck in the school district" (after 55 years of Hushbeck children), had come to the celebration from Salinas, where he and Mae now live.

Hushbeck's great-grandfather was a wheelwright in the days when Watsonville had 26 build-ings, he said. The family also owned a 72-acre orchard way out in the country on East Lake Avenue. Hushbeck, who graduated in 1945, is now a diesel mechanic and said he moved to Salinas for a job.

Mae Hushbeck, who was in the class of '48, said she had little hope then that Charles would ever notice her — "he was an almighty senior," she a lowly underclassman. But a few years later, after the war, that age difference didn't seem so great.

Mae said she was working in an ice cream parlor when Charles, fresh from the service, walked in and ordered a strawberry milkshake. Mae made it extra strawberry-flavored by using strawberry, instead of vanilla, ice cream, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The Hushbecks hadn't seen too many of their classmates, except, according to Charles, "a lot of my old girlfriends."

Ethel Hambey Mahan, of the class of '36, a Sunnyvale resident, and Paul Hammitt, class of '38, a Sacramento resident, also hadn't seen many fellow classmen. They both agreed that things had changed at the old high school.

"I don't think there are any buildings left that were here when I was here," Mahan said.

They talked a little about their years in high school.

"The tragedy was our Japanese friends," Mahan said, referring to the internment of residents of Japanese ancestry during World War II. Mahan said her class president was a Japanese-American who later joined the highly-decorated 442nd Regimental Combat Team from his camp.

Mahan, who went on to study physical education at San Jose State University, said she might have been among the teachers celebrating long careers at Watsonville High in a special event Sunday. After graduation, she signed on for a position at the school, but was advised by a faculty member to go elsewhere if she could because, as she put it, "it's always better to grow."

As it turned out, she began her career at Fortuna High School, and never did come to teach at Watsonville.

June Shirachi Fujii and Roberta Lewis Nipper, both from the class of '54, were sitting on the lawn with Fujii's mother, catching up and keeping one eye on the entertainment.

The two, who have been friends since their elementary school days at Pajaro School, both live in San Jose now, but had lost track of each other until a few years ago when they found out that Nipper's husband worked with a friend of Fujii's.

Both had fond memories of their Pajaro School days — "It was like a family," Nipper said, and especially their eighth-grade English teacher, Ann Soldo, who later became Watsonville's first woman mayor.

Nipper said that feeling of family was lost a bit when the children went to Watsonville High. Because of academic tracking, she said, she suddenly never saw her Mexican-American friends anymore. That was a loss, she said.

"There was a lot of things to learn from them."