

Betty Lewis named Historian of the Year

Resident has researched Watsonville
for more than four decades

By TODD GUILD

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Betty Lewis, who has studied and written about the history of Watsonville since she moved with her husband into their East Beach Street home in 1965, was given the Historian of the Year Award this week by the History Forum of the Museum of Art and History in Santa Cruz.

Lewis is ill and was unable to be interviewed, but her husband, Monte, said he was happy for her.

"It's very timely because she's under hospice care, and it's just a matter of time," Monte Lewis said. "She can't enjoy it, but those around her are very proud."

Betty Lewis has written a column called "That Was Watsonville" for the Register-Pajaronian for more than three decades. She has also penned nine books, including "Watsonville, Memories that Linger" and "Highlights in the History of Watsonville," and has written more than 100 radio history programs for the KOMY radio station.



Lewis

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Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Watsonville historian and author Betty Lewis is shown in 2002 when she rode in the Fourth of July Parade in Watsonville as the grand marshal.

LEWIS

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In addition, she wrote a Walking and Driving Tour of Watsonville.

Monte said his wife began researching the history of the city when she learned her house was built by famed architect William Weeks.

"That's where it started," he said. "Little by little, she became more involved. She does it for the love of research. She found a niche she really enjoys."

Since then, she's researched and written on hundreds of topics ranging from architecture to

prohibition.

The History Forum award is not her first. She has a pile of commendations for her research and writing that date back to 1977.

Betty Lewis is past president of both the Pajaro Valley Historical Association and the Pajaro Valley Questers. She was named Woman of the Year in 1987, and in 1996 she received the Rotary's Paul Harris Award for outstanding community service.

To help with her research, he was given 10 grants from San Jose State University.

In 2005, Watsonville named her the first official city historian, and in 1977 she was the first

woman to be named grand marshal in the Fourth of July parade.

Betty and Monte Lewis met as students on the bus ride to Salinas junior college, now called Hartnell. The two were married in 1946.

"And one thing led to another," he said. "She's been a real close companion for 60 some odd years."

Formed in 1997, the History Forum is a group with a mission to foster an interest in the preservation and appreciation of Santa Cruz history.

Lewis will be honored at the annual History Forum awards dinner on Nov. 4.

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For information on Betty Lewis, visit www.pajarovalleyhistory.org.