

MARION CALDWELL: 1912-2009

# Kennolyn Camps' 'Aunt Marion' dies at 96

Bio-C

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SANTA CRUZ — Tens of thousands of campers and counselors knew her as Aunt Marion.

Marion H. Caldwell, co-founder of Kennolyn Camps in the Soquel forest, shared a dream with her husband to open a school or camp for both boys and girls in the forties, and with \$10,000 and a great deal of enthusiasm, the Caldwells made it happen in 1946.

Nearly reaching the 64th anniversary of the creation of the camp, Caldwell died at her Soquel home March 21. She was 96.

Born in Winton, Caldwell was raised in the Central Valley on her family's ranch, where she would help cut peaches and haul almonds every summer during her childhood. She often shared fond memories with her children of swimming in the irrigation ditches with her sister and brothers to pass the days of summer.

Later Caldwell was called to a career in education, fol-

lowing in the footsteps of her father. After attending Bakersfield Junior College and graduating from UC Berkeley, she taught drama and public



CALDWELL

speaking to students at Fowler High School. It was in Fowler in 1937 that she met, and eight months later married, another young teach-

er named Max Caldwell.

In 1944, while Max Caldwell was in the Navy during World War II, the couple dreamed up one of the first co-ed summer camps in California. Two years later, upon Max Caldwell's return, the couple saw an advertisement in the San Francisco Chronicle for the 60-acre plot of land above Soquel.

The first summer the couple invited their nieces and nephews to the camp to supplement the small group of paying customers. The young relatives naturally called them "Aunt Marion" and "Uncle Max." The names

## MARION H. CALDWELL

**BORN:** Sept. 1, 1912  
**DIED:** March 21, 2009  
**HOME:** Soquel  
**OCCUPATION:** Retired Kennolyn Camps founder and co-director, drama and public speaking teacher  
**EDUCATION:** Graduate of Bakersfield Junior College, teaching credential from UC Berkeley  
**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** Founder of Kennolyn Camps, founding member of the Western Association of Independent Camps, board member of the Northern California Section of the American Camp Association, honored as a 'Super Pioneer' by her camp director peers, and was recognized by the U.S. Congress, the California Legislature and the governor of California for her achievements. In 2000, the Aptos Chamber of Commerce listed her and her husband Max as 'People of the Century.'  
**SURVIVORS:** Son, Ken Caldwell of Lafayette; daughter, Carolyn Folmar of Watsonville; granddaughters, Pam Nootbaar of Menlo Park, Lindsey Johnson of Capitola, grandson, Stephen Caldwell of Hermosa Beach; and many great-grandchildren.  
**SERVICES:** Public celebration scheduled at Kennolyn for April 25. Contact Kennolyn for information at 479-6714 or camps@kennolyn.com.

stuck and for generations of Kennolyn campers and staff.

Pat Veatch, longtime Kennolyn camper and counselor, remembered their genuine interest in each and every child.

"When campers talk with either Aunt Marion or Uncle Max, they felt at

the center of their world with such a feeling of 'just me,'" she said. "The campers delighted in it."

Described as quite the visionary, she was always looking for new and exciting things to adopt at Kennolyn, according to granddaughter Lindsey Johnson.