

# Tomorrow is Ken Marshall's day

By MARYBETH VARCADOS

**A** QUIET MAN who is described as the "warp and woof" sort in a community has been chosen as Man of the Year in Aromas and will be honored Sunday at 2 p.m. in ceremonies in front of the old Aromas fire station, a traditional part of the annual Aromas Days.

The name Marshall is part of the fabric of the foothills hamlet; 17 years ago, when the celebration of Aromas Day was revived, the honoree was Dolan Marshall, owner of the local grocery store. Tomorrow, the honors will be bestowed on his younger brother, Ken Marshall. The brothers are among the five children of the late Homer and Myrtle Marshall; all were born in the family home in Aromas.

Ken Marshall's business was auto repairs; his contributions to the community have not always been visible to everyone, friends say. "Quietly and unobtrusively, he has written notes, stood bail, given credit references, helped newcomers put down roots and vouched for them," says Mary Jane Morton, an Aromas Day organizer. "It is a way to say thank you to him."

Also during the 2 p.m. ceremonies, two scholarships for \$300 will be awarded, and a surprise presentation will be made.

Marshall, who has been in the

hospital, has just come home to Robbins Way, the street named for his grandparents and developed by his family. Five generations of the Ken Marshall family live on Robbins Way, in homes that Ken and his wife, Darlene, have built, lived in, and moved on from. Among his family are his son, Neil Marshall, and daughters, Bonnie Mahler and Karen Denny. The Marshalls have several grandchildren still living at home, and have three great-grandchildren. Next year, the elder Marshalls will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, and Marshall hopes to attend a 50th year reunion of his class from San Benito County High School in Hollister.

But it's at Watsonville High School that Marshall's name stands out in sports. He attended WHS for three and a half years and played on both light- and heavyweight teams coached by Emmett Geiser.

Those were memorable years, Marshall says sentimentally. That was when he met his wife, the former Darlene Butler.

**M** ARSHALL HAS many home-grown memories, in fact. He recalls, he says, when Aromas Days were held in the 1920s and the Pajaro River was dammed to form a little lake near Aromas. Kids would play Tom Sawyer, and

pirates.

He was a member of the town's first 4-H Club, founded in 1924 under Jim Rowe. He was in the first Aromas Boys Club founded in 1927, and the first Aromas Boy Scout troop, started in 1926 under school principal Walter Reed.

"When I went to high school, I put away childish things," he says. Then, he focused on sports.

His father ran Watsonville's first enclosed auto repair shop, the Inside Garage, in 1917, and later started a garage and little grocery store in Aromas. That's where Ken learned the trade. In 1941, he opened his own shop, Ken Marshall's Automotive, at the junction of Lincoln Street and Freedom Boulevard, where the Puritan Station is located now. In 1960, he moved his business to Aromas, next door to the old fire station. In 1972, he retired.

Although his brother was the first fire chief, Marshall never became a formal volunteer fireman, but always joined the fire-fighting crews, being so close to the action.

**S** IMPLE, HUMAN events are important to Marshall. He recalls, for instance, a time when the football team stood behind him. He had failed English 2, and Coach Geiser suggested that he ask the teacher, Mae Lord, for a second chance, or else he'd be off the football team.

"When I went down to her room, the entire team was in there, making the request for me," he recalls. The request was granted, he passed the exam, and the team was saved. "I couldn't believe anyone would go to bat for me like that," he still says.

Two other events in his life stand out as "things going right," he says. One was when his grandmother Emma Robbins died and her 11 acres of land went on the auction block. Marshall's bid was just enough so that the property, now Robbins Way, stayed in the family. Another happy time was when he decided to buy the garage in Aromas, at the end of the Depression.

Always a hard worker, putting in long hours, he nevertheless kept a finger on the pulse of the community. Outstanding among his contributions was digging of a well to help provide clean water for the town. That well later was sold to the community.

This oldtimer remembers points of growth in Aromas — the building of the first grocery store, in 1900, by the Kortwright family; the paving of Blohm Avenue for the first time — in 1920; then, the paving of Carpenteria Road in 1927.

Marshall describes his lifestyle as "dedicated to trying to stay out of trouble, and yet to make progress for a better life for himself and his family."

BIOGRAPHY  
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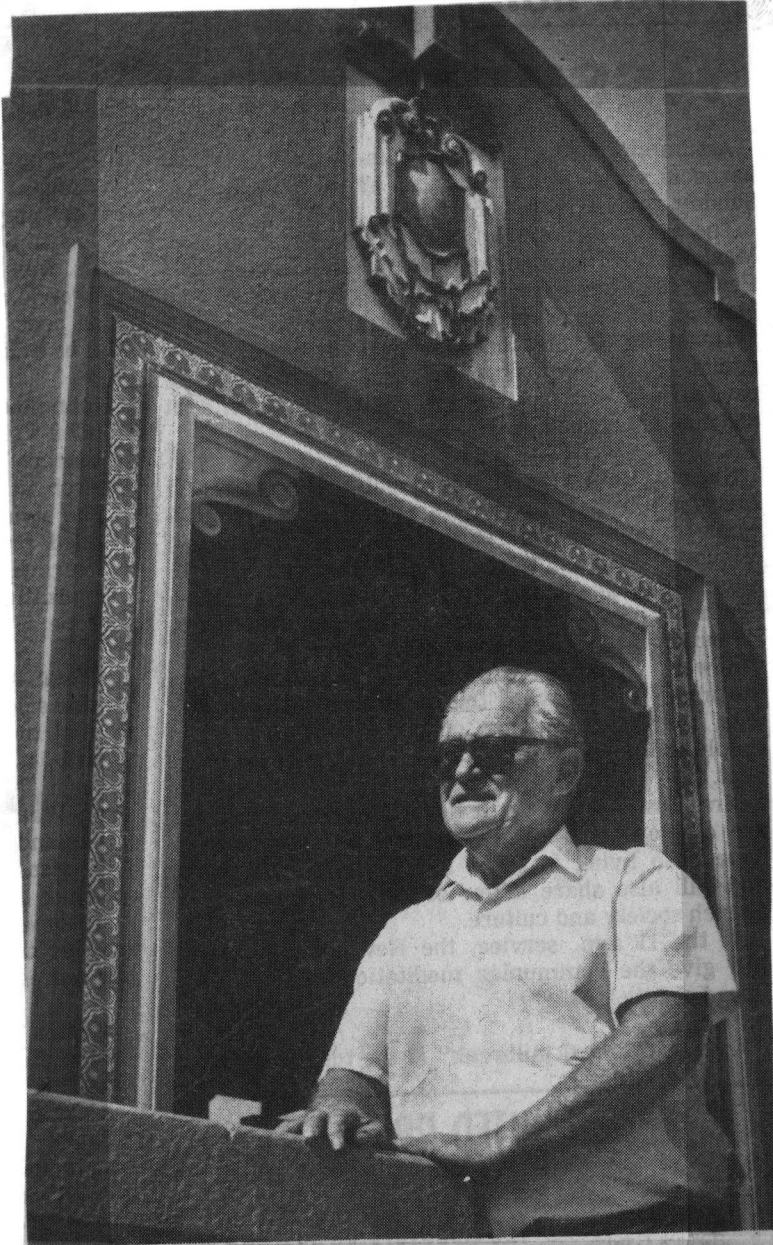


Photo by Kurt Ellison

Ken Marshall attended Aromas School