

# Community celebrates reopening of Felton Hall

By MAY WONG  
Sentinel staff writer

*Felton - 1990*

FELTON — This town celebrated the dawning of a new era Friday.

In addition to the swearing in of San Lorenzo Valley's new county supervisor, the mountain community heralded the long-awaited re-opening of the Felton Community Hall.

The original hall was destroyed by fire in August 1990. The new one is nearly complete. A 65-person meeting room was opened for service Friday, and the remainder — a 285-seat auditorium — will open by next spring, according to members of the Felton Community Club, the non-profit group rebuilding the hall.

The club still needed \$110,000 to finish the hall's auditorium, but Friday, the Ley family, a pioneer Felton family, donated \$100,000 to help complete the project.

"A community needs a place to come together for plays, events, and emergencies," said Doug Ley, whose grandfather, George Ley, was one of the founding fathers of the original Felton Community Hall built in 1925.

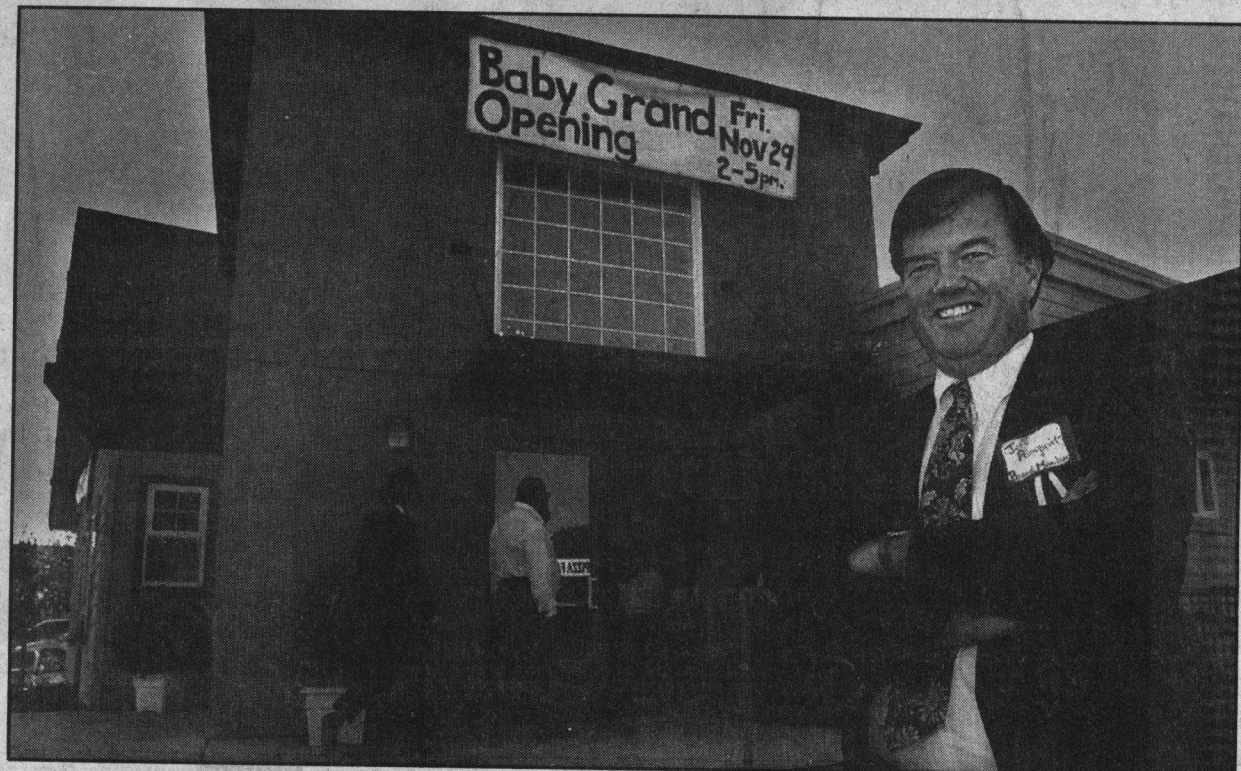
Doug Ley recalled his and his late father's childhood days of dances and drama productions at the old community hall.

"My family is very fortunate to be part of this rebirth," Ley said. "We hope young people today will have comparable memories here."

The hall, a single-story, 5,600-square-foot building, was rebuilt on the original site at the corner of Highway 9 and Kirby Street.

Local residents expect the new hall to carry out the same tradition of being the town's centerpiece.

"This is really a big day," said Jim Bricken, presi-



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Part of the festivities marking the partial opening of the rebuilt Felton Hall Friday was the swearing-in of Jeff Almquist to the county Board of Supervisors.

dent of the Felton Community Club. "It's not that we could see the light at the end of the tunnel. It is the end of the tunnel."

All that is missing to complete the \$650,000 project is \$40,000 to finish the kitchen and about \$20,000 for furnishings, said Gene Martin, chairman of the community club's building committee.

"But it looks we may be getting that soon," Martin said, pointing to the line of local residents at the celebration who were writing out checks.

Friday's shower of donations was music to the ears of the community club members who had spent years scraping numerous fund-raising barrels and battling insurance companies.

As late as three weeks ago, doubt lingered about whether or not enough funds could be raised to complete the hall, said Bricken. "It's heart-warming to see

now that it's going to happen," he said.

Scotts Valley attorney Jeff Almquist, who was sworn in as a supervisor by Superior Court Judge Bill Kelsay on the unfinished stage of the hall's auditorium, joined in the project's fund-raising effort last year.

Almquist, who will officially take office in January, aided his predecessor, Supervisor Fred Keeley, who secured for the project \$100,000 in county funds. Keeley, who was elected to the state Assembly on Election Day, orchestrated a 30-year, \$100,000, pre-paid lease of the hall, allowing the county use of the hall as a disaster relief center.

"Fred's going to be an extremely hard act to follow," Almquist said to an audience of about 100 people at the Felton ceremony. "I just hope I could do as great a job as you did, Fred."