

MARYBETH VARCADOS: 1940-2009

## Former Sentinel managing editor dies

By GENEVIEVE BOOKWALTER  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

### Marybeth Varcados

**BORN:** Feb. 20, 1940.

**DIED:** Jan. 23, 2009.

**HOME:** Capitola.

**OCCUPATION:** Former managing editor, Santa Cruz Sentinel.

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor's degree in journalism, UC Berkeley.

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** Served on the board of Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, Capitola's art and planning commissions, member of St. Joseph's Catholic Community in Capitola.

**SURVIVORS:** Husband of 46 years, Peter Varcados; daughters Diana Varcados of Sacramento and Sophia Varcados of DeKalb, Ill.; brother Jack Hockel of Walnut Creek and Mike Hockel of Bozeman, Mont.; sisters Suzanne Hockel of San Francisco and Maggie Alvidrez of Watsonville; and one grandchild.

**SERVICES:** Jan. 30 at St. Joseph's Catholic Community in Capitola. A time has not been set. Arrangements by Benito and Azzaro Pacific Garden Chapel in Santa Cruz.



SANTA CRUZ — Marybeth Varcados, a former Sentinel editor known for sharp storytelling, community involvement and dedication to journalism and the journalists who worked for her, died on Friday of leukemia. She was 68.

"She was very, very interested in people and encouraged them to tell her their story," said Carolyn Swift of Watsonville, a friend of Varcados for 40 years. "If you were homeless or whatever the situation was, things that were not politically correct, she would go there because that was news."

"She's one of the best features writers I've ever known," said Mike Wallace, who worked with Varcados at Watsonville's Register-Pajaronian. "She had a real ability to help people relax and really get at what their story was, really get them to open up and trust her."

Born in Wisconsin, Varcados moved

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## Marybeth Varcados: 1940-2009

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Before she died, Marybeth Varcados, a longtime Sentinel employee, wrote her own obituary, hoping to have one last byline in the Sentinel.

### By MARYBETH VARCADOS

I was born at home during a fierce snowstorm on Feb. 20, 1940, in Milwaukee.

As the doctor arrived, my grandmother Grace Cronin Cress popped some rolls into the oven. After I was born, the doctor and everybody sat around eating fresh hot cinnamon buns. My parents moved us to Watsonville in 1947. I attended Moreland Notre Dame Academy, keeping busy with piano lessons and Girl Scouts. I graduated from Watsonville High School in 1958 and was editor of the high school newspaper, the High Times, for two years.

Our staff was introduced to a new printing method called Offset. After graduation I was hired as Society and Clubs

editor at the Register-Pajaronian, which was printed using hot lead lithographs. I learned many journalism skills from the managing editor, Ward Bushee.

In 1959, I attended the University of Nevada, Reno studying under A.L. Higginbotham and was editor of the school newspaper, the Sagebrush. In 1960, I entered University of California, Berkeley and finished my degree in journalism. Peter Varcados and I were married in May 1963 and soon had two daughters, Diana and Sophia Varcados. When Sophia was in the fourth grade, I returned to the Register-Pajaronian to manage the newly named Family section. A great revolution came to our newsroom soon after — the introduction of computers, which would change our journalistic lives forever. My section was the first one printed under the new system.

After 10 years, I accepted a job at the Santa Cruz Sentinel as editor of the "Tree and Sea" section, which later became the

"Style" section.

Probably the most life-changing experience during that time was the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989. The ravage, the destruction, the great rumbling were printed indelibly in our memories. In the early '90s, after a brief time as managing editor of the Sentinel, I retired but continued in the print media, writing for and editing various newsletters for local businesses. In more recent years, I enjoyed the publication of "The Jewel Box" and "A Killer Festival," two mystery novels written by "The Jewels," who included myself and four dear friends.

Journalism is my passion, but my true love is my family. My husband of 46 years, my daughter Diana and her partner Karen McBride, Sophia Varcados and daughter Zoe Markle and Christopher Markle, Sophia's husband who died in July 2008. My siblings are Dr. Jack and Judie Hockel who have six children, Dr. Suzanne Hockel, Mike Hockel of Boze-

man, Mont. and his daughters Stephanie Borash and Suzie Hockel and Maggie Alvidrez and her sons Daniel and Patrick Alvidrez of Watsonville.

I firmly believe in participating in the community around us. I participated on the board of the Cabrillo Music Festival, the Art and Planning Commissions of the city of Capitola. Of all the ministries I have done with St. Joseph's Catholic community, my favorite has been accompanying the "Sistine Choir" on piano as they sing at communion services for local rethomes.

Mine has been a full and exciting life, which continued as I started the journey with chronic lymphatic leukemia in 1999 under the care of oncologist Dr. Michael Alexander and the wonderful oncology staff. I have never said I fought cancer, rather that I accompanied it on my life's journey.

My favorite charities are WomenCare and the Ministry to the Elderly at St. Joseph's Catholic church.

## Varcados

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to Watsonville with her family when she was 7. She left for college at University of Nevada, Reno and UC Berkeley but returned to work at the Register-Pajaronian in 1968, according to Sentinel files. She worked as a reporter, general news editor and features editor before joining the Sentinel in 1983, also as features editor. She was named

managing editor of the Sentinel in 1991 and retired a few years later.

Sentinel Editor Don Miller worked for Varcados as a reporter and later as the Sentinel's local news editor. Friday, Miller called her a talented, forward-looking and enthusiastic leader.

"She made sure her staff not only felt they were making a difference, but were offering all they could give to a community she loved," said Miller, who met his wife at one of Varcados' Hal-

loween parties.

Along with writing about Santa Cruz County, Varcados was known for her involvement in it. Online columnist Bruce Bratton recalled working with her in the early days of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, and posing nude with her and others for the cover of "Cannibal Soup Cookbook." Proceeds from the book raised money for the festival, and Bratton said the best recipe was Varcados' Greek tomato soup.

Bratton also marveled at Var-

cados' ability in recent years to bring together four close friends to write two mystery novels set in Capitola.

"How could you possibly agree on whether it was a dark and stormy night and all that?" said Bratton, who hosted the women on his KZSC radio show last month. "But they did it and Marybeth was the key to all that."

After retiring from the Sentinel, Varcados, a longtime Capitola resident, was named to the Capitola planning and art com-

missions and handled communications for the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency. She was active in her church, St. Joseph's Catholic Community in Capitola.

In her obituary, which Varcados wrote from her hospital bed before she died, "Mine has been a full and exciting life..." she said. "I have never said I fought cancer, rather that I accompanied it on my life's journey."

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