

# OUR FAIR LADY

## 'Farm girl' has left her mark

By GREG BEEBE  
Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Margaret Gnehm, the grande dame of the annual Santa Cruz County Fair, offers this refresher course for all you city slickers:

- Milk comes from a cow.
- Lettuce grows in a field before

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it shows up in the salad bar.

• The petting zoo is not the only place to find farm animals.

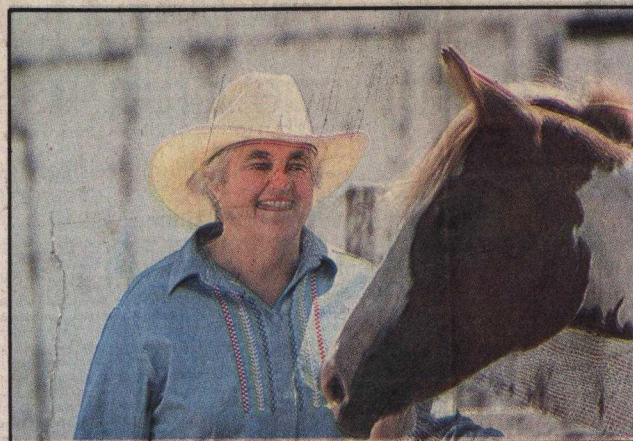
"Especially the young folks, they think milk comes from a box in the grocery store," said Gnehm, who first participated in the county fair as a teen-ager in 1949, exhibiting a calf named Luke.

Gnehm (pronounced guh-NEM) has been a fair fixture ever since.

"Margaret is a super lady who has participated and who has volunteered endless hours out here," said John Kegebein, the fair manager. "She's an all-around fair person."

Margaret, who declines to give her age but will say she "qualifies as a senior citizen," is also the consummate farm girl. "I don't know what I'd do if I had to live in town, I really don't," she said. She keeps

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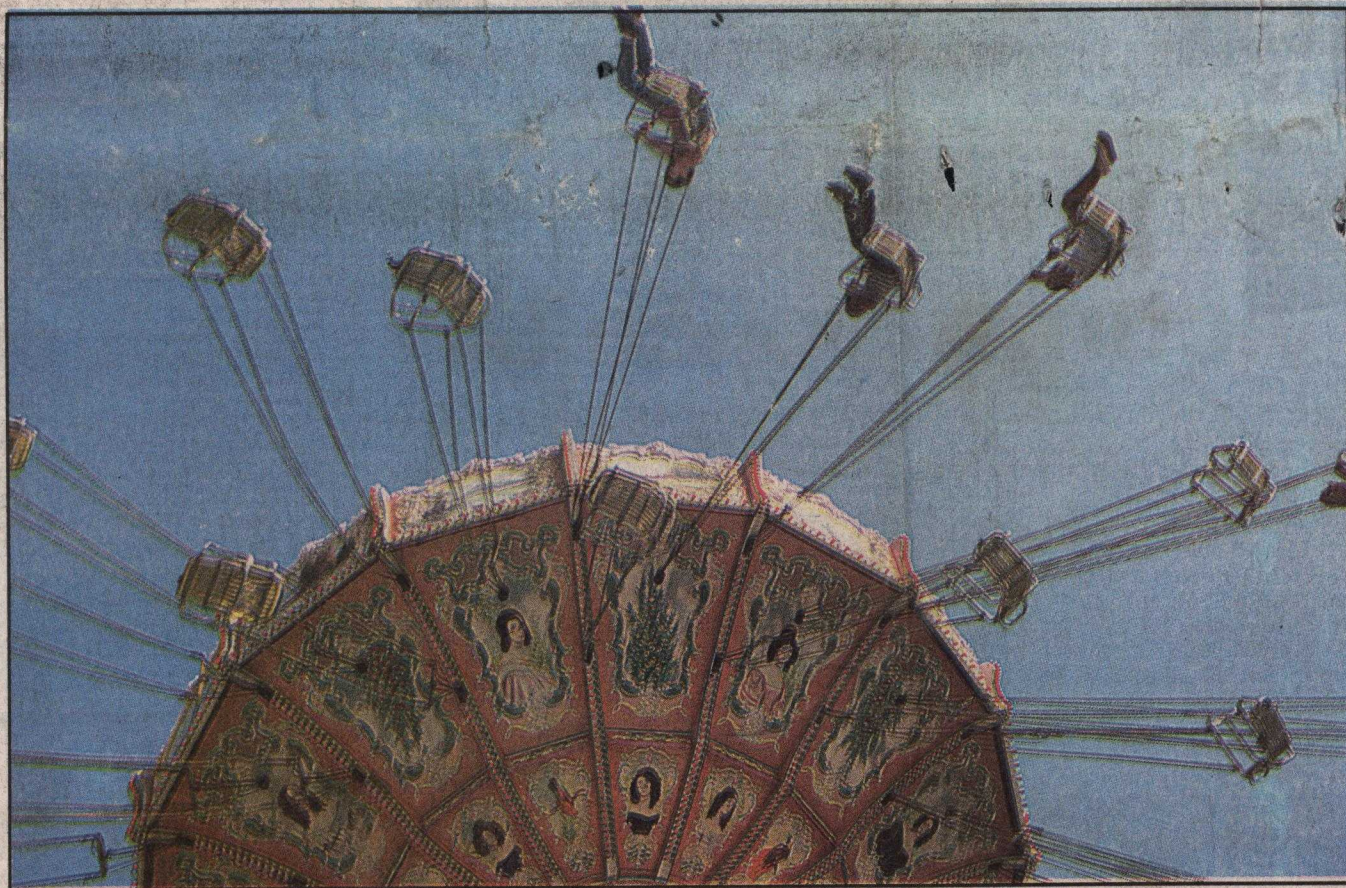


*Fairs*

*9/13/92*

Margaret Gnehm, left, has been watching the carnival rides go 'round at the county fair since 1949.

Dan Coyro/  
Sentinel photos



## Strict alcohol, security policies in effect

By GREG BEEBE  
Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Booze and moos don't mix. Neither do guns and goats. That's why, for the second straight year, the Santa Cruz County Fair will have strict alcohol and security policies in place when the six-day event begins Tuesday.

"We're trying to make the Santa Cruz County Fair a safe place to be,"

said fair manager John Kegebein. "This is a family fair and we want to keep it a family fair."

In years past, the event assumed a somewhat tougher persona after dark, scaring away many families, said Kegebein. The venerable fair's country atmosphere was marked by sporadic fights and stabbings in the late '80s.

Arrests at the fairgrounds dropped dramatically in 1991, the first year of revised alcohol policies and new proce-

dures for screening fair-goers for weapons as they enter the grounds.

More than 25 people were arrested in 1990; four were arrested in 1991, and "two of them were people who showed up drunk," said Kegebein. More than 52,400 people attended the fair last year.

"We've had a lot of comments since the fair last year," he said. "It was safe

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## Santa Cruz County Fair

Larry Meyers brings in munchies for animal guests at the county fair, which opens Tuesday in Watsonville.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel



## Fair lady

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trips to the big city — nearby Watsonville — as brief as possible.

"Hey, one afternoon is too much," she said.

Gnehm is active in, among other things, the Green Valley 4-H Club; the Cattleman's Association; two Grange clubs; the fair's horse show committee; and the Monterey Bay Dog Training Club. She raises horses on Kelly Thompson Ranch near Watsonville, where she and her husband Paul are caretakers.

This week, she put the finishing touches on 25 calico stick horses to be used by children ages 2 to 4 in races this weekend.

"She is one of the kindest, most wonderful people in the whole world," said her friend, Sherry

Barnard, secretary of the fair's horse show committee. "She's like everybody's grandmother. My children are 10 and 5 years old and they just adore her."

The fair is a family affair for Gnehm, a native of the Pajaro Valley. Her 92-year-old mother Margaret Hayes coined this year's fair theme, "Treasure Chest of the County's Best." Hayes started the event's poetry division and also penned the fair's first theme, "Apple Annual."

Gnehm has exhibited "something or other" at every fair for 43 years: "calves, horses, pigs, chickens, flowers, canning, sewing, whatever. ... Our family has always participated — my brother, my sisters, even my grandmother

put a fruitcake in one time."

This year, Gnehm is entering jam, jellies and pickles in the fair's canning competition. She doesn't just enter; she wins. She took the outstanding exhibitor and coveted all-around "sweepstakes" award in the canning division in 1991.

The county fair's board of directors last week presented Gnehm and Kevin Larkin, chairman of the fair's auction committee, with the Western Fairs Association Blue Ribbon Award for outstanding volunteer service.

"That was really a big surprise," said Gnehm. "I always thought some big shot got it."

Her favorite thing about the fair is "getting together with people over the years, the friendship. And

I like to see the town people and the country people get together. I like to see the expressions on the little kids' faces when they see different things. They really enjoy it."

So-called progress, though, is taking its toll on the fair. Gnehm said the number of entries is down, especially in the livestock and animal divisions.

## What's new this year

WATSONVILLE — New features at this year's county fair:

- Tell the difference between a sow and a cow;
- Open your arms to the disabled community;
- View photographic visions of Santa Cruz County;
- Understand the contributions of livestock beyond the dinner table;
- See collections assembled by area hobbyists;
- Go on-line with a computer, or travel in a storybook world;
- Hear the county's best local musicians; and
- Win a ribbon in a sack race.

Fair officials are especially excited about "Pen Pals," a series of free tours of fair animal exhibits. Gray-vested docents from Cal Poly's Swanton Ranch facility will tell young fair-goers why sheep wear muzzles, the difference between a calf and a steer, and why LaMancha goats don't have ears. "Pen Pals" tours will be offered at 4, 6, and 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and at 4 and 6 p.m. Sunday.

The fair embraces the disabled community Wednesday with its first-ever "Disability Awareness Day." Special-education classes from area schools will be there, and people with disabilities will be admitted for half-price. Area businesses and groups who work with the disabled will set up a special exposition area near the fairgrounds' J.J. Crosetti Building.

The top 20 color and black-and-white photographs from the Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council's "Your Vision of Santa Cruz County" contest will be on display in the Floriculture Build-

ing.

Meanwhile, the "Fifth Quarter" exhibit at the Harvest Building will pay tribute to the contributions of livestock above and beyond the dinner table. Four quarters of livestock are used for food. But the "Fifth Quarter," animal by-products, are used to produce leather, soap, heart valves, insulin and more.

Everybody collects something, and many of them will be displayed in the Art Building. This year's event showcases collections assembled by child and adult hobbyists, as well as memorabilia from yesteryear.

At Kid's Korner, boys and girls will be encouraged to plug into computer art, make a colorful mask or hear a captivating tale told by master storytellers. Kid's Korner is open Wednesday through Sunday in the education area at J.J. Crosetti Hall.

The cream of the county's music scene — four bands selected from a field of 32 — will appear on the fair's Amphitheater Stage beginning at 12:30 p.m. Saturday. Winners of the competition, the Back Alley Band, will be joined by Bernetta Hutchinson & Jazzmyn; the Bop Cats; and the Shine.

Children age 12 and under are invited to participate in the Junior Fair Board's "fun games" beginning at 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday at Paddy Smith Park. All entrants will receive ribbons for competing in wheel-barrel, two-legged and sack races and egg toss.

One new event that won't happen as scheduled is the chili cook-off. A lack of entrants led fair officials to cancel the competition. The decision was made after today's special fair section was printed.



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## Strict

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after 10 p.m. and people had their families out here. ...

"We're trying to take control of the fair and not have to depend on local agencies to do it for us," Kegebein said.

The Sheriff's Office likes the new policies, said spokesman Sgt. Craig Little. ...

"If we curtail the alcohol and make sure that the people who are under 21 do not drink, then we have less problems," said Little.

"Last year it resulted in less problems and hopefully this year it will be a good year for everybody. ... It should be good for the families," Little said.

Bartenders at the fair's two beer and wine gardens will be trained in responsible serving practices, said Kegebein. All patrons will be asked for identification, he said, and fitted with a wristband indicating that the drinker is older than 21. Alcohol sales will be limited to two per customer at a time, although Kegebein said he has the option to limit drink purchases to one per customer as he sees fit.

As nightfall approaches, fair security officers will check patrons for weapons as they enter the fair. The searches will continue until the fair closes its gates for the night, said Kegebein.

Security officers in towers also will keep an eye on crowds at the fair's many musical events and in the expansive parking lot.

## The details

**What:** 51st annual Santa Cruz County Fair

**When:** Tuesday through Sunday, Sept. 15-20

**Where:** County Fairgrounds, 2601 East Lake Ave., Watsonville.

**Hours:** Tuesday, noon-11 p.m.; Wednesday, noon-11 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m.-midnight; Saturday, 10 a.m.-midnight; Sunday, 10 a.m.-9 p.m.

**Admission:** Adults \$6; children under 4, free; children 5-11, \$3.50; senior citizens 62 and over, \$3 (\$1 on Tuesday); active military in uniform, veterans with I.D. or medals, free.

### Special admissions:

Children with KCBA Kid's Club card, free Tuesday through Friday; Two-for-One Day, Thursday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Disability Awareness Day, half-price admission Wednesday; Kid's Day, children under 12 free Wednesday.

**Parking:** Regular \$2; Four or more in vehicle, free; bus loads of 20 or more, free with \$1 off admission; free parking lot shuttle to fair's front gates.

**Bus service:** Free shuttle from Metro's Watsonville Center, departs continuously beginning at 10:30 a.m. daily; last return trip from fairgrounds, 10 p.m.

**Information:** 724-5671.