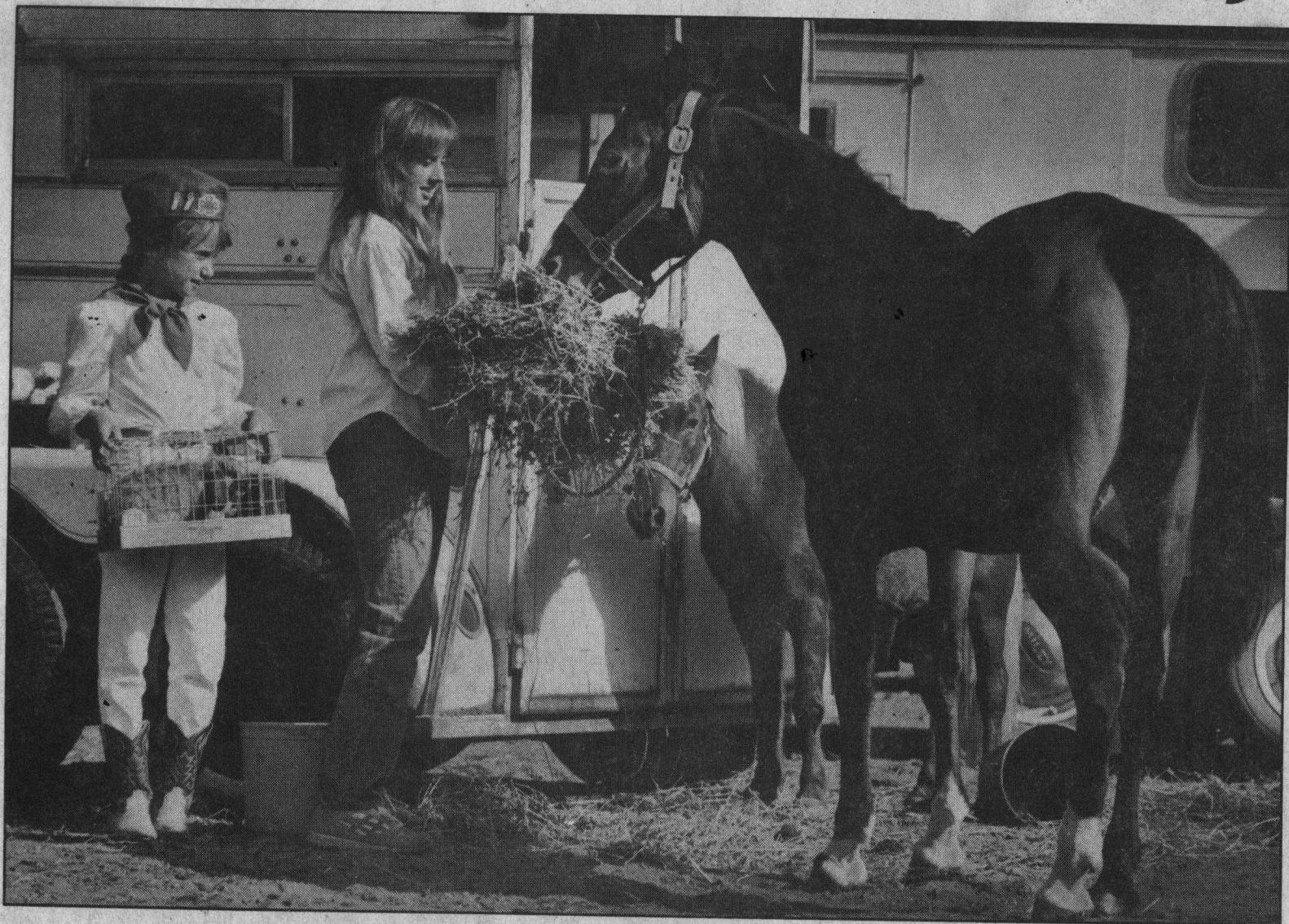


# Fair celebrates an anniversary



Kurt Ellison

Janet Snyder and daughter Shastin, of Boulder Creek, feed their horse Sweetie after competition in the 4-H Novice Showmanship category this morning.

## It's the 50th year at East Lake fairgrounds

By LARAMIE TREVINO  
STAFF WRITER

As World War II raged in other parts of the world — and with Pearl Harbor just two months away — residents of the Pajaro Valley inaugurated the new Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds out on East Lake Avenue in October 1941.

Since then, major events have come and gone but the Santa Cruz County Fair and Horse Show has remained a fall tradition. With patriotic displays and sentimental gusto, Golden Anniversary ceremonies began this morning.

During the four-day fair that began Oct. 15, 1941, nearly 13,000 people walked through the gates and fair participants took home about \$13,000 in prize money.

When this year's event con-

cludes its six-day run Sunday, officials hope that last year's attendance of 59,000 will be surpassed and the \$50,000 mark in premiums awarded will be topped.

Before 1941, fairs were held at various locales in town. Places such as the Civic Auditorium and Folger's Skating Rink opened their doors to the county's crop offerings and equestrian thrills.

Half a century ago, the former Peter Peterson tract was action central on a less-grand scale.

"It was very slow paced," Diane Cooley, who celebrated her 12th birthday on opening day. Then Diane Porter, Cooley came in from Las Lomas at what the community viewed as a major social event, to show her Palomino horse on halter and in the musical chairs event.

Unlike today when activities take place in tandem, fair goes back then all gathered together to watch shows. During those early years, the horse arena was the main attraction, Cooley said.

Thus the entire crowd heard the name of her mother, Bernice Porter and her friend, Libby Bosworth, announced over the loudspeaker during the mule-pulling contest. It seems Cooley's father, Tom, named the mules after the ladies without their knowledge.

"They were kind of flustered and embarrassed," Cooley recalls.

Cooley, now a civic leader, will be out there throughout the fair run, overseeing exhibits for the groups she supports and represents. And her son, Steve, will again participate in live-

stock auction duties.

During the fair week of 1941, before stables and other livestock accommodations were available, participants arranged to board their animals nearby. Also that year, a noon bicycle race to the grounds figured prominently on the entertainment roster.

Over in the Atlantic, southwest of Ireland, a United States destroyer was hit by a German torpedo, headlines declared. Here at home, fair "theme girls" posing amid valley produce shared newsprint space with world developments.

Margaret Hayes, 91, recalls riding out to the fair in the family Studebaker, accompanied by her husband and five children.

The dairy Holsteins exhibited

See FAIR page 9 ▶



► From Page 1

by the Calcagno family of Castroville ranked as an outstanding fair feature in her book as did many of the animal displays.

"We were interested in the animal competition since we had livestock," she said.

One of Hayes' counterparts, Stella McGowan, 87, also was a loyal fairgoer in the early days, especially when her children, active in Future Farmers of America and 4-H, were growing up.

"We practically lived at the fair," she said.

Many changes have occurred on the local and world scene since the fair relocated to its permanent site, with fair officials adjusting the activity slate to reflect the times.

Hispanic entertainment, in recent years relegated to the final fair day, will be held daily this year, said Phil Haskin, whose American Syndicated Artists signed on some of the fair acts.

In recognition of the magnitude of the Hispanic population, 60 percent in the Watsonville area alone, Haskin said Latin performers are "spread out over the whole fair."

Others wishing to celebrate their roots, particularly the ethnic pioneers who settled the Pajaro Valley, will be recognized this year at the International Pavilion, a new fair department. And there's one timeless act, the Bob Baker Marionettes, that hasn't gone out of style.

The Los Angeles-based puppet attraction has been absent from the Santa Cruz County Fair schedule for at least a decade after 27 years as a fair staple.

Their omission weighed mightily in the hearts of baby boomers, a generation bearing witness to the plights of the Lonely Little Petunia in the Onion Patch and other charac-

ters.

Mention the marionettes and a co-worker is likely to oblige with a few sing-song bars of dialogue, and call to mind the anticipation with which the performers were awaited.

Even Haskin, now 40, remembers queuing up an hour and a half before show time.

"When we were kids it was a big thing," he said. "They were a mainstay of the fair."

This time around, Henrietta the Chicken and Don Tortilla

and Chili the Pig are among the cast of the traveling theater.

For puppet crews who strolled the midway and other repeat entertainers of years past, the rolling grounds on the city's east end is the only local fair site they've known.

Throughout the week, motorists will crowd the roadways leading to the 2601 East Lake Ave. destination, fanning out to parking lots on the 105-acre site.

(For complete schedule of fair events this evening and tomorrow, see page 11.)