

Pat Martinelli looks back on 14 enlightening years

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As a fourth-grader at Mintie White school, Pat Martinelli attended a tree-planting ceremony in honor of a former Pajaro Valley school district administrator.

"I thought, 'My, that's an old person,'" Martinelli, 56, recalled recently of the only time she saw T.S. MacQuiddy, for whom an elementary school was later named.

So when her fellow trustees of the Pajaro Valley school district told her during her last regular meeting Nov. 18 that an apple tree would be planted in her honor at Salsipuedes school, "it brought back a lot of *deja vu* for me."

"I'm practically a senior citizen now," she said, as she looked back on her 14 years on the school board. She decided that was long enough and will be succeeded as the representative of the Corralitos/Salsipuedes area on the board by Vic Marani. Marani will be sworn in Monday night.

She said her 14 years on the board made a big difference in her life.

"I changed from an innocent, young matron to a wise grandmother," she said.

In that time, Martinelli, who had lived a relatively sheltered life, learned to face the political heat — out in the open.

"I'm tougher now," she said in her soft, slow voice. "I have a shell around me that I never had before."

Martinelli, who considered herself shy, said it had always been difficult for her to deal with emotional issues in public, "because I become emotional myself."

But from the moment she began her first campaign, from which she was to emerge as winner from among four candidates in the March 1974 special election, Martinelli had her hands full.

"That was the hardest thing I ever had to do — campaign," she said.

In office, she found tough situations never ending.

Closed executive sessions are one example.

Usually held prior to regular meetings of the board, these sessions deal with personnel and legal matters.

And while those sessions allow trustees to be candid, they can be draining.

"It's hard to switch gears," Martinelli said, adding that staying alert throughout the long public meetings that follow were another challenge.

Confrontations that arise were "difficult" and Martinelli said she had learned not to take them personally.

"I had to learn to put them in perspective," she said, adding that she has broken into tears at meetings and at home.

"Sometimes I didn't even want to go to meetings because it was so difficult," she said.

She regrets she didn't take a stronger leadership role on the board in recent years to help bring about an end to long-winded meetings.

Martinelli considers former trustee Bruce Richardson her role model during the eight years they served together.

Besides admiring his skill



Diane Vanni

Pat Martinelli helped shape school policy.

at presiding over meetings and keeping them relatively brief, she said he had the ability to focus on central themes.

Listening and mediation skills were assets she acquired while on the board, Martinelli said.

"If you listen to people — even if you disagree with them — they can accept your opinion," she said.

Patience, tolerance, prepa-

longer be in a policy-making position to help.

But then there is the up side to being a trustee, she said.

In spite of the district's problems, Martinelli said she never considered it a thankless job.

Along with Manuel Osorio, Martinelli voted against giving board members a \$400 monthly salary.

"It's an honor being in the position I'm in," she said. "I

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ration and caring are among the attributes Martinelli said she hoped she would leave as a legacy to the board.

In her own case, Martinelli has found she has changed her stand on issues by listening to others.

Once opposed to allowing high school students in the district to smoke in designated areas on campus, she changed her mind after realizing students stand a better chance of learning if they didn't have to sneak off school grounds to smoke.

Among other issues, Martinelli has also weathered desegregation, parental consent for confidential medical services, the closing of schools and bilingual education.

A supporter of bilingual education, she said she was convinced it provides a way for a child to succeed.

While acknowledging that the work of trustees "is never finished," Martinelli said the overcrowding in the schools and the needs of special-education students were big problems the district must solve, although she would no

never had any intention of being remunerated."

The mother of three children, all of whom attended district schools, Martinelli said it was a real treat to be able to give diplomas to her children and, in one case, sign one for one of them in her role as a trustee.

She also enjoyed visiting schools.

"It kind of put all the budget sessions and negotiations into perspective," she said.

Martinelli said when she began her last term four years ago, she knew it would be her last.

"It's time for me to move on to other things," she said.

She wants to learn to play the piano, she said, and she would like to join the Cabrillo Chorus.

Martinelli will wait one year before she takes on any volunteer commitments.

"I want a time of no pressure for awhile," she said, adding that she "will always be involved in public service — that is very important to me."