

# TEARS, CHEERS AS SCHOOL DIES

*Loma Prieta School 5Jmn*  
*End of quake's namesake rouses memories*

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"It's hard to watch this. My heart feels like it's in my throat. But change had to come."

BY CONNIE SKIPITARES  
Mercury News Staff Writer

It was the symbol of a community disaster that many wanted to forget. Yet when the small clutch of people gathered Friday in the Santa Cruz Mountains to watch quake-torn Loma Prieta School come down after nearly a decade in ruins, the memories came flooding back.

Dennis Heimer, who had attended the little rural school in the late 1950s and early '60s, choked back tears as a bulldozer chomped through the fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms where he remembered being scolded for talking too much

and "pestering the girls."

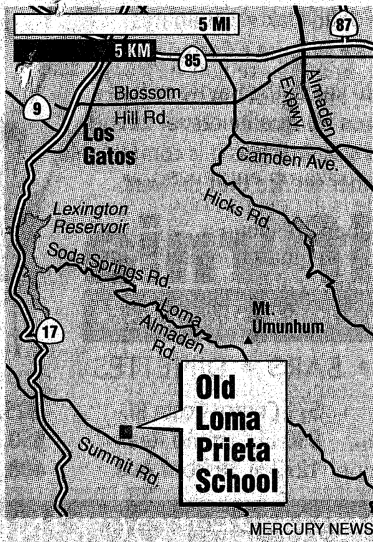
"I spent a lot of time over there in that hallway as punishment for acting out in class," the 51-year-old Heimer said as he motioned toward the wing of rooms that bore a gaping hole.

Heimer, who still lives in the mountains, retrieved a few of the pillars that supported the wing's overhang. He plans to use them in a future construction project at his home.

"One of them should have my initials still carved on it. It'd be great to find that one," Heimer said.

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— Donna Borchardt White,  
former Loma Prieta student



2B

## School demolition kindles memories

### ■ DEMOLISHED

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It took crews about an hour to raze the shell of the former school on Summit Road, which had remained largely untouched after the October 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake pummeled the building and knocked it off its foundation. The campus was built in phases between 1952 and 1960.

Following the temblor, state and school officials determined that the Loma Prieta School's administrative and kindergarten wings were salvageable and could be used by students. A preschool now makes its home in one and an independent study center occupies the other.

Just a few months before the Oct. 17 quake, the school district was told by the state to start looking for another site because of trace faults underlying the property. An application to the state to remodel the school in 1988 had triggered geological studies that revealed the faults crisscrossing the land.

School officials ended up receiving \$7 million in state funds to build a new 400-student Loma Prieta School, which opened about five years ago across the street and next to the C.T. English Middle School. The elementary school students attended classes in portables before the new school was finished.

The community plans to build a soccer and baseball field on the old school site, and a group of mountain residents hopes to construct a large gazebo nearby for outdoor events.

Most who showed up for the demolition said they were sad to see the old school go, but that it was an eyesore that needed to come down after nearly a decade standing in ruin and decay.

"It's hard to watch this. My heart feels like it's in my throat," said former student Donna Borchardt White, 40. "But change had to come. We need to move on. We're going to be getting a wonderful ballfield, and many of the parents are looking forward to that so they won't have to drive down the hill for soccer and baseball anymore."

As crews tore into the school, children from the middle and elementary schools across the street sent up a cheer.

The mountain community, long known for pulling together in disasters, did just that after the quake shattered their tranquil existence on that hot, muggy day in October.

Many residents who were struggling to put their own homes and lives back together still found time to attend dozens of community meetings to help plan and rebuild the new Loma Prieta School — their community's heart and soul.

Joyce Haworth, a longtime teacher at the school, remembered all too well the frightening day when the magnitude 7.1 quake hit late in the afternoon. She had just finished a parent conference and was writing the next day's lessons on the blackboard. She was the only person on the school grounds when the tremor shook the building so hard that "file drawers shot out like cannons and desks danced across the floor like popcorn popping."

Cracks opened in the floor, and the walls buckled. Haworth panicked when the only door out was jammed, but she scrambled out a window.

"It's something you never forget," she said. "To this day, I don't like being in a windowless room or in a room with only one door."