

The Novato Historian

The Quarterly Publication of the Novato Historical Guild and the Novato History Museum

FEATURE SECTION

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September 2003

Preserving Novato's History

Vol. 27, No. 3

The History of the Novato 4-H Club

by May Ungemach

I Pledge
My **HEAD** to clearer thinking,
My **HEART** to greater loyalty,
My **Hands** to larger service, and
My **Health** to better living,
for my club, my community,
and my country.



important in rural
areas and small
towns.

Many
individuals and
groups have taken an interest in
helping the 4-H Club succeed.

In 1927, when Miss Gertrude Lane founded the Novato 4-H Club, the above pledge became a way of life for many of Novato's young people.



Since then, several generations have become better citizens through the teachings of the leaders of this

outstanding organization. Ask any successful man or woman about growing up in Novato, and chances are you'll find he or she is a former 4-H Club member and perhaps also a 4-H Club leader.

The 4-H Club gave youngsters between the ages of 10 and 21 an opportunity to acquire skills in raising livestock, agriculture, home economics and citizenship, as well as providing much needed social activities. This was extremely

The first two years, the club met in the Novato Grammar School auditorium. A clothing group was formed so the Club members needed a place of their own to keep sewing machines as well as other equipment they acquired. Getting permission to use space over a grocery store, a problem of poor lighting was solved when the lumber yard donated a window and a member's father installed it. A fresh coat of green and white paint and the new Club room was ready for occupancy.

Members met in this Club room for two years until offered a better place in the rear of the telephone building. In a little over a year, membership grew and it was necessary to find larger quarters.

Someone suggested an old car or even an old shack would do as long as it was their own. At last, Mr. Boissevain, County Farm Advisor, wrote to Mr. Maggard, President of NWPRR, to ask for the donation of an old railroad car.

The 4-H Club's wish was granted and the 17 ton passenger coach was moved from the Tiburon yards to Novato, then with the help of the Chamber of Commerce, by truck from the station to its final destination behind the Community House. Oh happy day!! Volunteers painted the new Clubhouse a dark ivy green. The wicker seats along one side were replaced with sewing machines and a cutting table. On the other side, every other seat was removed. The interior was painted a soft buckskin shade on the floor and ironwork of the seats. Al Cain donated labor and materials for all electrical wiring. The members were thrilled when they moved into their new Clubhouse in February 1933.



Once a year, Achievement Day is held when the Department of Agriculture awards medals, prizes, and trips to 4-H youngsters with outstanding accomplishments.

In June 1932, the event was held at the Novato Grammar School where a lunch prepared by Novato 4-H leaders was served under the

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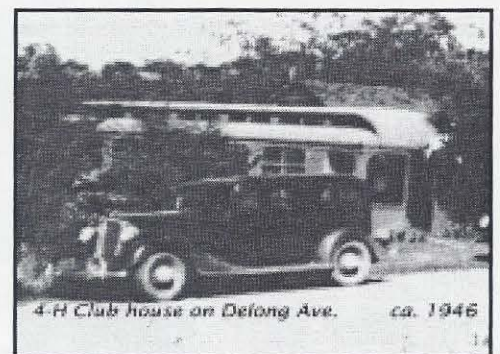
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Novato 4-H

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trees. After lunch, A. W. Bunt of the Novato Dairy Farm, served each child milk. Novato Businessmen's Club donated ice cream through Otto Oldham of the Novato Pharmacy. Ena Bunt played a piano solo. Marian Bellman, Jane Butler, Jane Simmons and Janet Bernard tap danced. Modesto and Victor Homeres played a duet on guitar and harmonica and Senior 4-H members modeled dresses they had made.

An annual convention is held at UC Davis to provide 4-H members with additional knowledge, recreation and entertainment.

One week each summer, Marin County 4-H members and their leaders go to their camp at Las Posadas on Howell Mountain in Napa County. Part of the expense has been offset with money raised from various benefits.

One fundraising affair to assist Novato 4-H youngsters was "Night Court" held at the Community House in May 1934. The idea for



the skit came from Mrs. C. E. Carlile, a 4-H Club leader. The newspapers gave it excellent reviews.

Judge Hermann Rudolff presided as Judge, a role for which he was well prepared. Bob Trumbull, Jr., Pete Regalia, Pauline Rudolff,

Walter Simonds and Betty Wise were defendants from Novato. J. A. Stutt, in the role of Court Clerk, kept the audience of 300 people in stitches doing a "take off on everybody's name." Miss Margaret Keena, Court Reporter, was a hit chewing gum and sending notes to the clerk until caught by the Judge.

When the "trials" were over, there was dancing to music by Robert Lewis and refreshments prepared by the 4-H leaders.

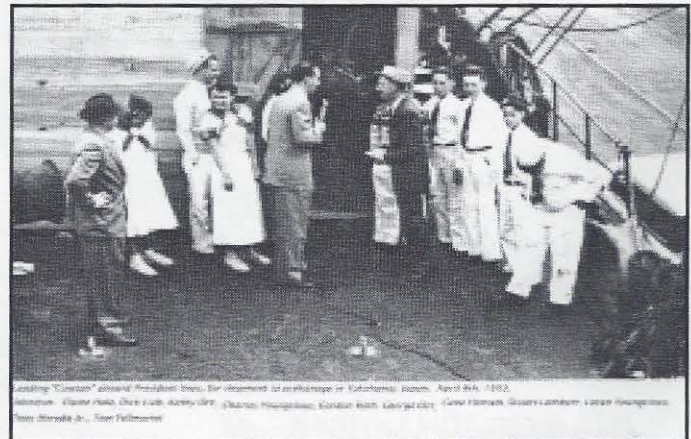
In February 1935, the Club formed its own drum corps. A year later, they were leading parades and were said to have attained a "state of perfection."

In August 1950, Novato 4-H Club responded to the new CARE Farm Implements program by presenting the Consul General of India with a hand plow for his country.

The Club celebrated its 25th year in March 1952. Over 250 people

attended and a plaque was presented to Miss Gertrude Lane.

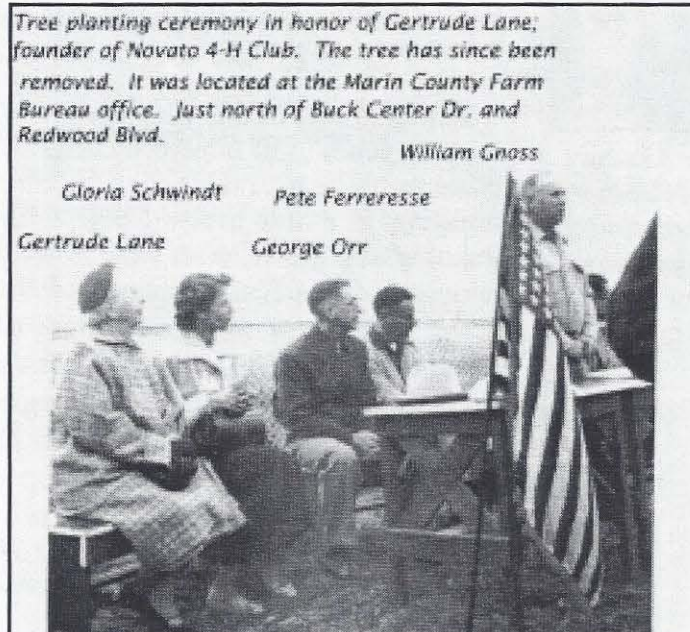
A 900 pound Guernsey cow was shipped to an orphanage in Japan in April 1953 as a gift from the Marin County 4-H Clubs. The Japanese children named her "Cow-San" and her calf delivered two months later was called



Loading "Cowsan" aboard President Lines, for shipment to orphanage in Yokohama, Japan, April 1953
 LtoR: Unknown, Elaine Hale, Dick Lieb, Kathy Orr, Charles Youngclaus, Gordon Roth, George Orr, Gene Hansen, Stuart Lambert, Loren Youngclaus., Tony Moreda Jr., Tom Ielmorini.

"Mary-San." For the ocean voyage, Cow-San had a special stateroom on top-side deck of the ship S.S. President Pierce. Upon arrival in Japan, there was a very touching welcome ceremony. The Japanese children were concerned

that "the cow not being able to understand must feel lonely for the familiar American phrases." They vowed to treat her with great kindness and "to make arrangement for the cow to have many small cows to ease her loneliness." It was a most satisfying venture on both sides of the ocean.



Tree planting ceremony in honor of Gertrude Lane; founder of Novato 4-H Club. The tree has since been removed. It was located at the Marin County Farm Bureau office. Just north of Buck Center Dr. and Redwood Blvd.

William Gross
 Gloria Schwindt Pete Ferreresse
 Gertrude Lane George Orr

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In the early 1950s, membership in the Novato 4-H Club grew rapidly necessitating formation of several new groups. ♦



Sandra Pranzini
Karen Olson
Jan Pranzini



Karl Olson with his Holstein calf. 1949

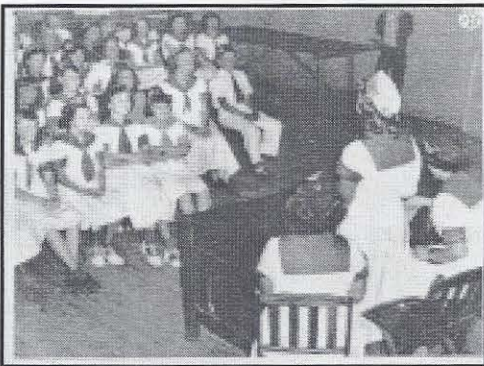


Unknown, Judy Johnson, Erline Porter, Sandra Glass, Unknown.



Directors of the Marin County Farm Bureau.

William Wright, Captain Charles Clarkson, Gertrude Lane, Virginia Orr

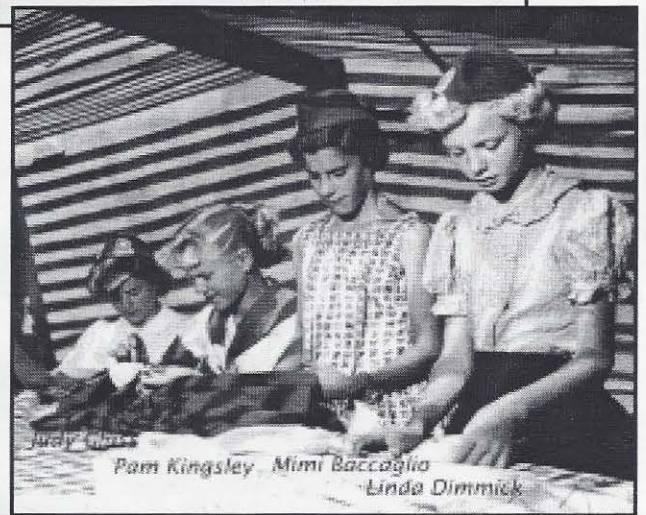


Virginia Orr, President, Novato 4-H Club



Alta Johnson

Alta Johnson, Novato Valley 4-H Club leader.



Judy Glass
Pam Kingsley, Mimi Baccaglio, Linda Dimmick



Marin County 4-H All-Star Member
Devoty Steele, Novato, Ca



Clifford Orr, Marin County All-Star. 1944

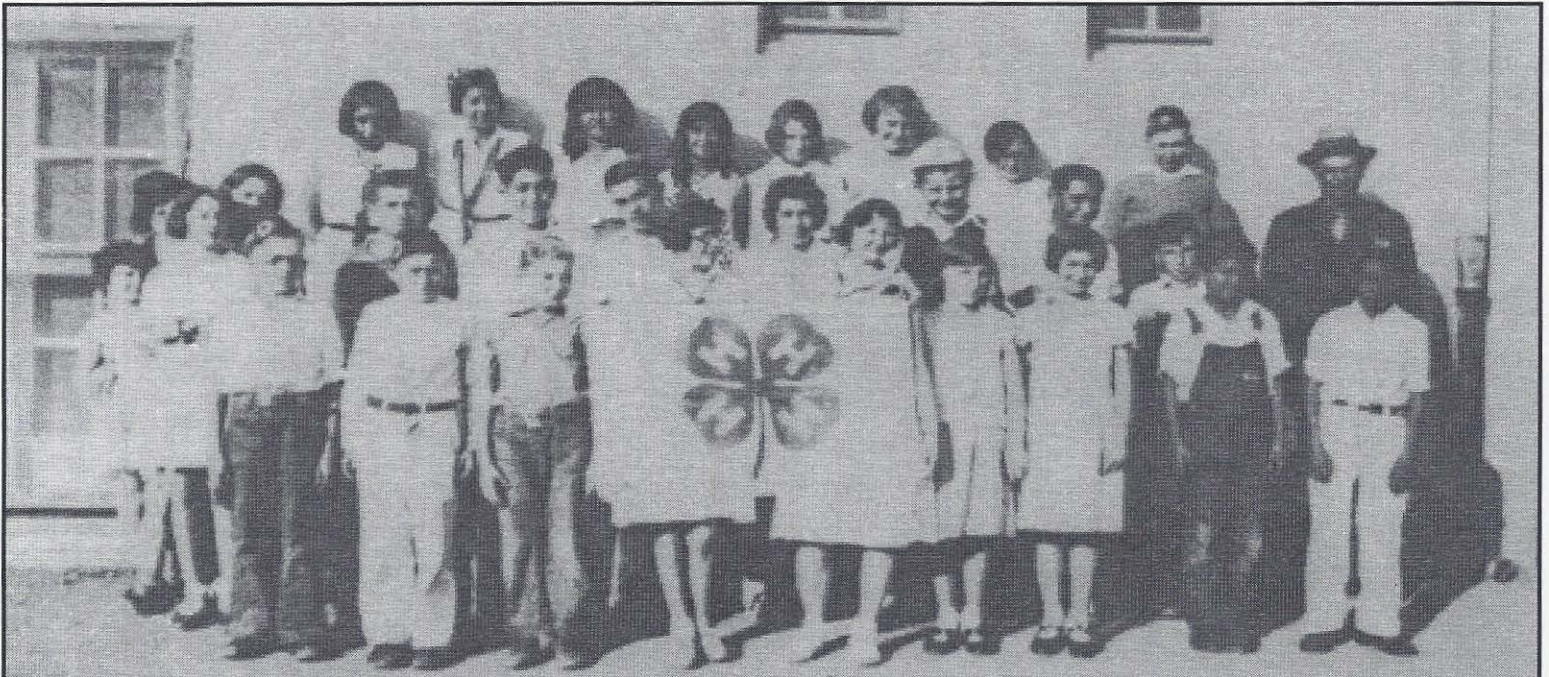


Ellen and George McClelland.

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Novato 4-H Club. 1932

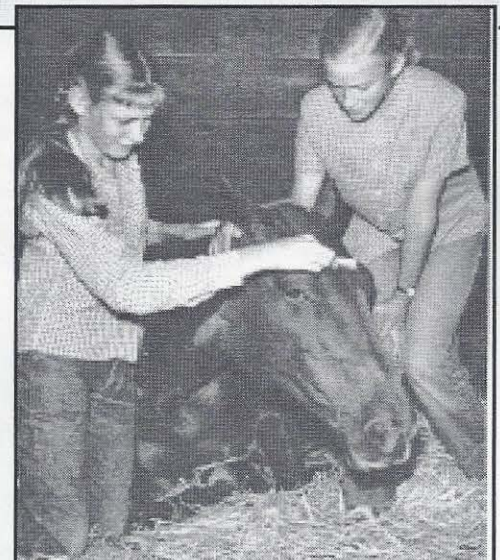
Back Row: Josephine ---, Marian Bellman, Alice Costa, Rose Costa, Mildred Probasco, Ena Bunt, Bernice Busher Robert Thompson.

Middle Row: Unknown, Peggy Smith, Allie Simontacchi Frank Valim?, Walter Bunt, Minnie Valim, Ivan Johnson, Modesto Homires, Robert Busher, John R. Thompson.

Front Row: Ruth Chabin, Teresa Lorasso, Robert Wells; Bormolini, Charles Bunt, Janet Bernard, Hazel Johnson Dorthy Young, Jane Simmons, Clarence Bellman, Victor Homeres.



Valerie Schwindt Erline Porter Sandra Glass Rebecca McClelland Elaine Hale



Jone Young Bondoc and Lisa Malone groom Chuparosa at the Sonoma-Marin Fair, Petaluma, 1957

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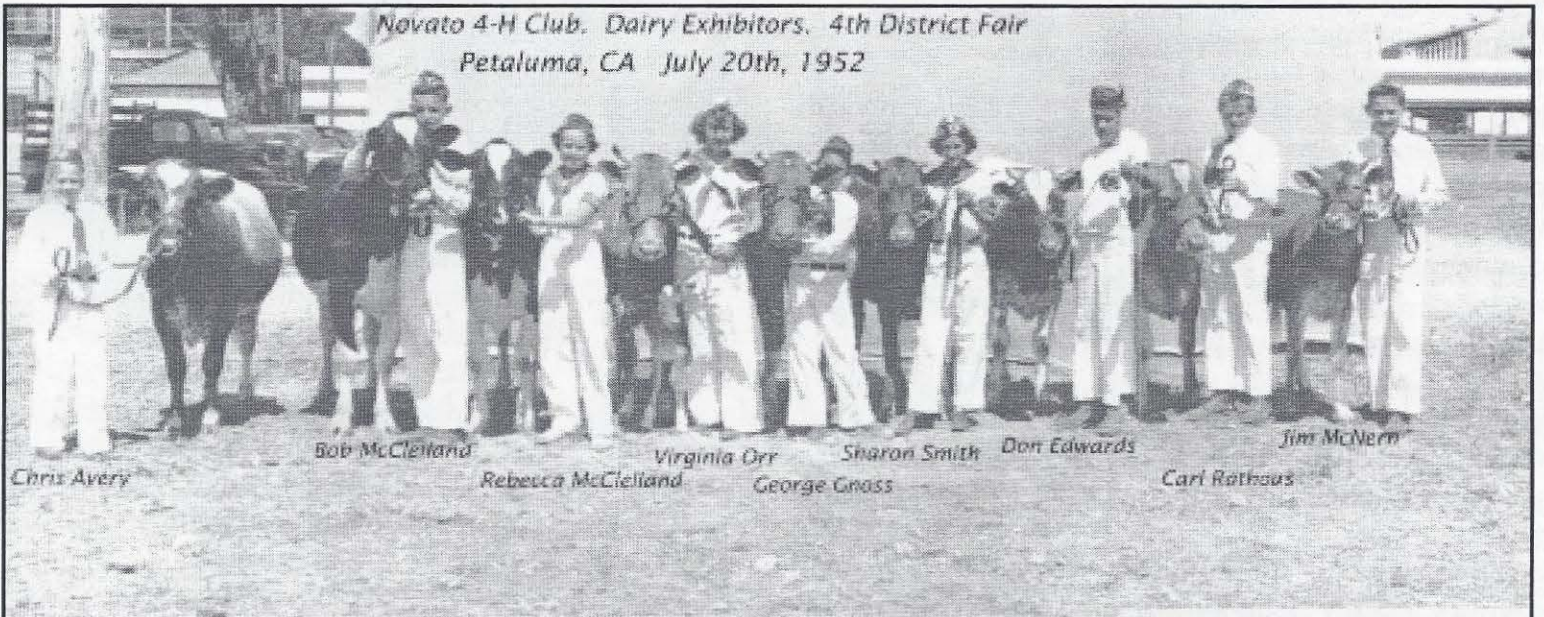
Novato 4-H

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Los Posadas 4-H Club Camp. 1932

Front Row, second from left is Gertrude Lane, Novato 4-H Club founder. Also pictured: J.R. Thompson, Bernice Busher, Jane Simmons, Chas. Bunt, Walter Bunt, Ena Bormolini, Walt. Busher, Ettore Promolini



*Novato 4-H Club. Dairy Exhibitors. 4th District Fair
Petaluma, CA July 20th, 1952*

*Chris Avery Bob McClelland Virginia Orr Sharon Smith Don Edwards Jim McNern
Rebecca McClelland George Gnoss Carl Rathaus*

4-H Club Remembrances

•ANNA PALADINI MORRISON

I remember attending monthly 4-H meetings in the Grant Avenue School auditorium, and going to Mrs. Carlile's house for sewing classes. I remember when Mrs. Carlile, Mrs. Bernard and Miss Lane were our leaders. The senior 4-H Club members were Ivan and Hazel Johnson, Jane Butler, Nell Lane, Marian Bellman and Ena and Walter Bunt. I remember sewing in the "club car" after it arrived. I also remember attending the state 4-H convention at Davis and traveling there by train.

•VIRGINIA ORR REED

4-H was one of the best things that happened in my life. When my family moved to Novato in 1938, my brother, Cliff, already owned a heifer. Miss Gertrude Lane was a neighbor who encouraged Cliff to join 4-H. Our formative years became shaped by 4-H. Memories are too numerous to mention. We all went to Novato Grammar School, so we were like one big family. As we got older we helped the younger, newer members with their projects. Our monthly meetings were in the "club car" behind the community house. I remember attending conferences at UC Davis where I met members from all over California; one of whom is still a very close friend. And of course I remember all the fairs where I exhibited my cattle and sewing projects. There again, meeting members from other counties, mainly Sonoma.

Summer Camp at Los Posados was great fun.

Our project leaders were Gertrude Lane, Pearl Lieb, Hazel Thompson, Tike Lieb, Barbara and Warren Kingsley, Alta Johnson and of course "Mr. 4-H," my dad, George Orr.

Thanks to all who helped form my life. If I could do it again, I would grow up in Novato and join 4-H.

•LOUISE GNOSS NEUSTADT

Camp was the reward for completion of projects and commitments. It was an experience never to be forgotten: sleeping and showering outdoors, swimming, crafts, mail call, flag raising and lowering, taps, campfires, Indian Tribes, scribes with the latest gossip and skits. Last but not least - the girls in bathing suits taking showers because the boys stoking the fire for hot water were "peeking" through the floor slats.

•YVETTE BORLOZ JACKSON

I remember the "Club Car", located between the Community House and the back of the Presbyterian Church (now the City Hall). This was where we had sewing lessons. My leader, Jo Deny, was also my aunt, so it was extra special. We sewed our projects on push peddle sewing machines; this included our collars and cuffs and sundry other wonderful things. The "car" was used for many things during my early years in 4-H.

•JOAN MARZELL QUINN

I could not wait to become a 4-H member. At the age of nine I joined as a junior member. I was ready to dive into every activity the club had to offer. Two annual events stand out in my memory. Earwig Abatement Saturday happened in the spring of each year; when my dad Sam, a Novato firefighter, and other fellow firemen would use a big cement mixer to make up the poison beet pulp bait at the firehouse. Local 4-H members and leaders would bag and distribute the bait to every resident in Novato to combat the plethora of earwigs.

The Novato 4-H parade was always the highlight of the year. We built floats in Babe and Reno Pronzini's barn, off Indian Valley Rd. (now the location of Pleasant Care Nursing Home) or at the Lieb Family barn off of Hill Road. Local grocery stores could always count on major sales of colored toilet paper and kleenex, and Pini Hardware would have a run on wheat wall paper paste and chicken wire; the main ingredients of any 4-H float. One year in particular, I remember Bill Wright, Jim McNern, Bette Benaski, Mimi Baccaglio, and I constructed a life-size Angus Steer. We brought the papier-mâché steer to my house on Indian Valley Rd. and placed it on the back porch. We completed painting the steer with black enamel paint in the wee hours of the morning. My dad came home

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that morning from his shift at the fire house to face this realistic full-size steer on the back porch. Needless to say... he nearly had a heart attack.

- JONE YOUNG BONDOC AND
- CATHRIN YOUNG VAN DEN TOORN

The 4-H experience for us, the Young sisters, was certainly one of the fondest memories of our youth, where we established many of our most important life-long friendships and at the same time learned many of life's greatest lessons. It was here we were mentored by our outstanding leaders and role models. Mrs. Pearl Lieb and Miss Theda Bugeia who devoted countless hours teaching us sewing in the old 4-H Club car next to the Community House. George Orr, our dairy leader, taught us responsibility for our animals and never accepted less than one hundred percent. Jim McNern, our Junior Leader, guiding light and role model, put in long hours helping us with record books, demonstrations, grub removal, and halter breaking young heifers behind motor vehicles; a very helpful skill providing excellent exposure for our cows which had to be led yearly to town for the annual 4-H parade.

Our 4-H Club meeting was the Saturday night highlight, where we would play broom ball and square dance. The high points of the year were the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Fairs and 4-H Camp, where we learned two invaluable lessons on table manners and

personal hygiene. "Keep your elbows off the table or around the water tank you must go." It was here also that we developed a preference for cold showers so we wouldn't have to inconvenience the "Fire-handlers" who would occasionally sneak a peek through a knothole in the shower wall. The fairs also offered us the opportunity to exhibit our animals and earn a little extra cash. We made pocket money for the carnival on the back stretch of the race track by selling milk au naturel, and scraped in a few coins in the calf scramble, greased pig, pie-eating, and milking contests.

But most memorable are the invaluable friendships that still exist today: Baccaglios, Keenas, McNerns, Mike Silva, Schwindts, Olsons, Nunes, Parrs, Ferrareses, George Gness, Pronzinis, Marzells, Azevedos, The George Orr Family, Mr. Don Brittsan, Mary Karinen and countless others.

- BILL GLASS

My most fervent memory of Novato 4-H club is of an event that occurred while attending camp at Las Posadas on the eastern side of Howell Mountain, Napa County. My mother had been a 4-H club leader; she taught cooking and sewing. I believe the year was 1954 and although I was too young to join, I accompanied my mother and two older sisters to camp that summer.

The camp was laid out with the kitchen, dining hall and outside dining area in the middle, boys' camp to the south of the kitchen and girls' camp to the north. The swimming pool was about five or six hundred yards to the east, with three campfire circles in between.

I was seven years old at the time. After breakfast, around nine in the morning, I decided to take a walk to the swimming pool. There were two paths that led to the pool — the main trail and a less traveled side path, which led from campfire circle two to campfire circle three. I took the path less traveled. I suppose it was because it was so far from camp that circle three was seldom used. Certainly the most picturesque of the three, it was an amphitheater with stadium seating on the side of a hill, overlooking the creek. A quaint wooden bridge over the creek led up the hill to the swimming pool.

As I stood silently at the top of the amphitheater, listening to the sounds of the water gurgling in the creek below, I was vaguely aware of the noise of the kids back at camp. Suddenly a mountain lion appeared about seventy-five yards away. It casually ran down the bank and climbed out on the limb of a bay tree, which hung suspended over the creek. Obviously, based on its behavior, it had not seen me. I ran all the way back to camp and began shouting the alarm. One of the camp counselors grabbed me

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Remembrances

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and took me to see the Camp Director, who did his best to convince me that I hadn't seen the cougar. Then he asked me to describe the big cat. His next question caught me off guard. "Do you want everyone to go home?" Of course I didn't. "Unless you keep this quiet, everyone is going to have to leave!" Many days passed in silent agony before I repeated the story.

•DON BRITTSAN

In the fall of '59, I accepted the position of 4-H advisor, replacing Bill Schneeflock who moved on to become 4-H specialist in Berkeley. I grew up in Stockton and was looking forward to a cooler climate. My first day of work was the 15th of September, and we were in the process of moving the office from the basement of the San Rafael Post Office to a new location on A Street. About 10:00 A.M. it started to rain and in one hour it seemed as if it had rained a whole year's worth of Stockton rainfall! The locals explained this was not normal and I stayed.

When I came to Marin, I became convinced Novato was the "4-H'iest" town in California. Most of the kids belonged, and it seemed to me that most of the adults were involved in one way or another. There were lots of ten and twenty acre "farms" where youngsters could raise livestock and poultry, so 4-H club work was a natural! A lot of award

winning 4-H'ers called Novato their home.

When I took the job of 4-H advisor I had several trepidations, not the least of which was the co-ed 4-H camp. At that time 4-H was open to young people between the ages of ten and twenty-one. I wasn't much older than that myself, and the thought of one hundred or so young people at camp in the woods gave me pause for thought. Boys' camp and girls' camp were separated by the dining area. I felt sure there would be some "comingling" going on after dark. The first night I turned off the lights and waited for the fun to begin. I heard lots of tromping around and at the proper moment I turned on the flashlight. No, not campers, but four very startled deer; the campers were asleep!

•MARY KARINEN

Having grown up as a member in 4-H in Stanislaus County, I always hoped my kids could have the same experience. When my oldest son turned ten, he joined the Novato Aggies 4-H Club. He was enrolled at Our Lady of Loretto School, and most of the kids there were in the Aggies. Josephine Baccaglio was the Community Club Leader. We decided that was the club for us and I never regretted it. The Baccaglios even let him raise a calf he got from his uncle on their property on Novato Boulevard. He showed the calf at the fair.

I taught sewing for many years. My first student member was Naudia Wise. I also became Co-

Community Leader, and continued that for almost thirty years. All four of my children were in the Aggies. The Aggies grew to over one hundred and fifteen members, so we split the club and formed the Novato Stars with Lois Dimmick and Jane Eide leading the newly formed club. I continued to lead the Aggies with various Co-Community Club leaders. We had a very large horse project with Jone Bondoc leading them for many years. We put on great horse shows which financed most of our club activities. We always sent a large group to Los Posados 4-H camp; we gave camperships to many members and paid for all the adult chaperones at camp.

My second son took entomology and had the good fortune to have Beverly Ehreth as leader. Bill Melson was leader of the whole town in the rabbit project. Many members from Novato had calves and sheep. The Wordens raised most of the swine. Ralph Worden still raises pigs and sells them to Sonoma 4-H'ers and Future Farmers of America members. Leavitt Baker not only led Forestry in Novato, but always went to 4-H camp and taught environmental conservation long before it became fashionable.

Our beloved Jo Baccaglio was the camp nurse for many years; she was affectionately known as "Nursie." Noel Roach and a group of Novato businessmen got together each year and purchased animals the Novato kids were selling at the Sonoma County Fair Livestock Auction. I will never forget Sam Marzell holding the kids spellbound as he told stories of the "old" days in 4-H. ♦