

Watsonville High School Foundation

2006 Alumni Hall of Fame

Elizabeth (Rector) Raffaelli came to Watsonville High School in 1972. While her first two years were difficult, academics improved with involvement in WHS's Model United Nations. Under the guidance of a wonderful mentor and advisor, Ron Jones, she caught the spark of learning and a genuine love of debate. Elizabeth attributes her ambition to attend college and law school to Mr. Jones and the experience of Model U. N. Her grades improved dramatically with straight A's and she started to get more involved in school activities. Elizabeth was the first female Explorer Scout, obtaining her private pilot's license during her sophomore year, thus flying a plane before she obtained her driver's license. Her history teacher, Bill Peck, was her favorite in that he made the subject come alive and instilled a love of learning that remains to this day.

After graduating from WHS in 1976, Liz attended Brigham Young University and majored in political science. She then married and returned to California where she worked and attended junior college. After returning to BYU, she volunteered for a suicide prevention program and a troubled teen program. Her son, Joshua was born and a year later son Gabriel was born. The following year they returned to California to be close to family. Elizabeth volunteered at the Victim Witness Assistance Center at the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office and started to think of being a prosecutor. Ms. Raffaelli enrolled at UCSC and graduated in 1986 in Social Psychology with Highest Honors and Phi Beta Kappa.

She was accepted at Stanford Law School in 1989 and that summer worked as a law clerk for the California State Attorney General's Office in their Health, Education, and Welfare section. After she separated from her husband, Elizabeth became a single mom, which made her final two years at Stanford challenging and difficult, but also very rewarding.

In the fall semester of her third year, she did an "externship" at the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office and became a voice for victims of domestic violence. In 1989, she graduated with a law degree, passed the state bar exam (on the first try!), and was hired by the San Mateo County District Attorney. One of her proudest moments was helping to design the protocol for the county's first domestic violence unit as well as a report format and follow-up procedures for police investigations. In 1996, Elizabeth received an award from the office of California Senator Spear for her

work in domestic violence and a certificate of recognition from the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention. Elizabeth states, "The best part of the work isn't the gratification you get with a favorable verdict, it's bigger than that. It's having the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives. Helping to see that justice is done for victims of crimes and their families is a profoundly satisfying experience. It has been a great honor to serve as a Deputy District Attorney."

Ms. Raffaelli has taught classes at the police academy on the investigation of domestic violence and sexual assault, and has also been a guest lecturer at several local colleges, high schools, and community organizations. She was recently hired to teach a seminar on Victimology/Crises Intervention at a local college and is certified by the California Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training as an instructor, teaching classes on crimes against children, sexual assault, domestic violence and crimes against the justice system.

Twelve years ago, Liz married Kevin Raffaelli, a highly respected police captain for the San Mateo Police Department. Kevin brought into her life two step-sons, Casey and Anthony. Son Joshua graduated from Harvard, works with a venture capital firm, and has recently entered Stanford Business School. Gabriel graduated last year with a major in psychology and a minor in theater arts. He has been cast in a number of stage productions in the Bay area. Anthony received his certification as a diesel mechanic and is in his apprenticeship. Casey is a freshman at Sacramento State where he rows crew and studies criminal justice, hoping to follow in his father's footsteps.

Born at Watsonville Hospital in 1948, **Carolyn (Heebner) Swift** first lived in her late great-great grandmother's house on Bockius Street.

The home was situated about halfway between the high school and the Pajaro River levee, in a blue-collar community of Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Latinos, and Anglos. The mix of cultures allowed her to observe the lifestyles of young classmates whose customs differed from her own.

Moving with her family to La Selva in 1956, she rode an ancient bus to Aptos School and was fascinated

by the ghost town aura of Aptos Village. The hills nearby were edged with concrete foundations, rusted railroad track, dilapidated fruit stands, abandoned motor courts, and corroding farm equipment.

Entering Watsonville High School in 1962, Carolyn was delighted when her first classes were in the old building (corner of Marchant and E. Beach) that had, for the previous three years, housed Cabrillo College. She knew by then that the history of the place she lived in was inviting and mysterious. But with no ready opportunity to pursue it, Carolyn spent time instead on the basics of English and art. As it turned out, these skills have come in handy. Nonetheless, seeking the office of class historian in high school was her only outward, and unconscious, move toward a future career. Carolyn graduated from WHS in 1966.

As a history major at Cabrillo College, Carolyn did well enough that a professor suggested her name for a job opening at the Watsonville Register-Pajaronian. Although she had yet to learn typing, she was hired. She picked up the necessary skills for writing and layout with the help of Marybeth Varcados, who edited Carolyn's first byline story in 1969. She stayed with the paper twelve years, assigned to a weekly publication called the Green Sheet, covering Aptos, Soquel, Capitola, and Live Oak.

Always interested in Cabrillo's history classes, Carolyn enrolled in Sandy Lydon's "Santa Cruz County History" in 1975. The course provided the broad and pertinent overview she needed to start her own historical investigations. Later, Carolyn co-authored with Lydon the book, *Soquel Landing to Capitola By-the-Sea*.

During the Seventies, Carolyn also became involved with the resurgence of the women's rights movement, serving as co-coordinator for the Santa Cruz County Chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1973-74. The organization's accomplishment that year was a statewide "counter-celebration" to the Miss California Pageant, held during its 50th anniversary ceremonies in Santa Cruz. Carolyn remained loyal to causes involving women, and later worked with Judith Steen on the introduction to *Georgiana, Feminist Reformer of the West, the Journal of Georgiana Bruce Kirby*, published in 1987.

Over the years, she's written articles on Santa Cruz County history for numerous publications, including a column for the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*. Carolyn continued collecting photographs, researching, and writing about Capitola history, and in 1993 became director of the Capitola Museum. Working at related interests, she served twice on the Santa Cruz County

Historical Resources Commission. In 2003, Carolyn wrote the City of Capitola Historic Context Statement, which assists the evaluation of historic properties. As a member of the Santa Cruz County Museum of Art and History's landmark committee, it has become her favorite project to help expand the number of historic buildings in Watsonville that are honored as distinctive structures.

Believing it's never too late to accomplish a goal, and really desiring a college degree, Carolyn went back to school, graduating in 2002 from UC Santa Cruz with honors in Community Studies. Previous to this—and 23 years after their 1978 divorce—Carolyn remarried Steve Swift. Today they live off White Road, near Watsonville. She looks forward to volunteering one day to assist Jane Borg at the Pajaro Valley Historical Association. Carolyn states, "Watsonville is my hometown. I feel a strong allegiance to it. No matter how far back in its history or near to the future one goes, the story is complex, diverse, and deserving to be told."

A native of Santa Cruz County, **Charles Thompson** was born in 1962 at the original Dominican Hospital in Santa Cruz. Early on in his life, he and his mother, Phyllis Thompson, moved to Watsonville. Charles attended H.A. Hyde and T.S. MacQuiddy Elementary Schools, E.A. Hall Junior High School (it was not a middle school at that time), then continued on to Watsonville High School to begin his freshman year in 1976, graduating in 1980.

Charles tells us, "I can't say I was involved with too many clubs or sports while I attended WHS, but I did concentrate on my studies and maintained reasonable grades throughout my four years, emphasizing mathematics and science coursework, while also taking my share of English and foreign language classes." Prior to his senior year at WHS, he spent a summer in Central America and returned to school in September thinking he might want to travel after graduation rather than continue on to college. However, he was accepted as an electrical engineer into the College of Engineering at the University of California, Santa Barbara, so he decided to forego any travel plans and go to school instead.

During his time at UCSB, he began to seriously ponder what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. Ultimately he decided electrical engineering was not his niche, so he moved from engineering to computer

science. While he felt that computer was more to his tastes, he still was not completely satisfied with the curriculum. He moved on to yet another major – geography, with an emphasis on cartography and remote sensing. While he wasn't exactly sure what he would do with a geography degree upon graduation, he felt he was at least studying a subject in which he had a great deal of interest.

In 1985, after graduation, fate intervened. Unbeknownst to Charles, his former geography professor was contacted by someone at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena regarding a position requiring skills in, believe it or not, cartography and remote sensing. Within two weeks Charles' career began at JPL. His stay at JPL was a short one. On January 28, 1986, the space shuttle Challenger exploded. This tragedy affected his tenure at the lab. JPL was forced to perform a "personnel reduction exercise" and Charles was one of the first to go. For the next five years he worked for an environmental engineering firm. In June, 1990, fate again intervened. JPL called to offer Charles an extremely interesting position. 2006 marks his 16th year with the lab.

Charles is a software developer at JPL. Most of his work involves the development of applications and tools which are utilized by scientists for analyzing and visualizing types of data acquired by satellites and other probes, such as the rovers which are currently on the surface of Mars. His work is varied and rarely is he on a project for more than 2-3 years. Charles feels very fortunate to have this career and looks forward to the challenges ahead.

Charles never expected to be in the position he is today and in retrospect, upon graduating from high school, he had no idea about what career he wanted to pursue. It took him almost his entire college experience to really figure out what interested him enough to consider it as a career. Because of that, the one suggestion he has for any student who graduates from WHS without a clear idea of their career path is not to fret. Sometimes it takes awhile to really figure out how to spend a good portion of the rest of your life.

Phyllis Bailey Thurstone, M.D. is a fifth generation Californian on each parent's side. Her mother was Leona Trafton of Watsonville. Her father, Clarence "Hap" Bailey, worked as a printer at the Watsonville Register Pajaronian.

Phyllis attended local schools Mintie White, E.A. Hall, and Watsonville High School, graduating in 1951. Her two older sisters were also graduates of WHS: Dorothy Needham in 1938 and Alma Westberg in 1944. Both sisters are now deceased.

As the recipient of a local scholarship given by an anonymous donor Phyllis attended the University of California at Berkeley for three years. Then, as an honor student, she entered Northwestern University School of Medicine.

After medical school she interned on the Stanford service at San Francisco General Hospital and then completed a residency in internal medicine at the newly constructed Palo Alto Stanford Medical Center.

It was at the Palo Alto Stanford Medical Center Dr. Thurstone met her husband, Conrad Thurstone, M.D., now deceased. Phyllis has three children.

For over 28 years her practice was as a staff physician in internal medicine at San Mateo County General Hospital. She also had a Clinical Faculty appointment at Stanford Medical School and Center instructing medical students and residents in internal medicine.

In 1990, Dr. Thurstone began a second career taking a residency in psychiatry to further her longtime interest in the human mind and behavior. She worked again for the County of San Mateo, the Veteran's Administration Hospitals, and more recently for the Social Security Administration.

She is a Diplomate in both The American Board of Internal Medicine and The American Board of Neurology and Psychiatry as well as a Fellow in the American College of Physicians.

Two of Phyllis' children are also involved in healthcare – a daughter is a nurse at Stanford Medical Center and a son is an adolescent psychiatrist and researcher in adolescent substance abuse in Denver. Another son is a business man in Louisville, Kentucky.

Dr. Thurstone's family has been quite athletic with the discipline and sportsmanship of athletics being a source of pleasure and development. Two sons have been world class tennis players competing in international professional tours. Phyllis was elected to the Block W Society while at WHS.

Phyllis believes she has been blessed with good health, much energy and curiosity about life and learning. She continues to be active in several areas: working part-time, studying psychoanalysis and its application to human growth and development, the arts, film, society, and politics.