

Watsonville High School Foundation

2007 Alumni Hall of Fame

Bill Moncovich was born and raised in Watsonville, attending MacQuiddy Elementary School, E. A. Hall Junior High School, Watsonville High School (Class of 1964), Cabrillo College and California State University, Chico, receiving a BS degree in Business Administration in 1969.

While attending WHS, Bill played baseball and football and was selected a football All-MBL tackle. Bill also played football and baseball while attending Cabrillo College.

While enrolled at Watsonville High School and throughout college he always had summer jobs working in the produce industry, either in the fields, in the coolers or loading facilities. Over the years he loaded lettuce, celery, cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli. This work experience ultimately led to his profession following college.

Bill started working in the produce business two weeks after he graduated from college in 1969, which resulted in starting his own business shortly thereafter in May, 1970. Over the years there have been three different name changes; Monc's Consolidated Produce, Inc., New West Fruit Corp., and California Giant, Inc.

The business started out as buying and selling fruits and vegetables, and then in 1973 he grew his first strawberries. Today, over thirty years later, California Giant, Inc. ships 15 million cartons of strawberries annually throughout the United States and internationally from California & Florida. The company also grows and ships raspberries, blackberries and blueberries sourcing nationally and from around the world.

As the company grew over the years, so did his involvement in many industry affiliations. Bill feels it is important to be involved in organizations that support our businesses, as well as local, state and federal organizations that are committed to improving the health and wellness of Americans. Bill's involvement in both non-profit affiliations and government agencies provides the opportunity to be involved in activities that will benefit the produce industry at large as well as his local community.

Mr. Moncovich is affiliated with the following organizations: California State Board of Food & Agriculture (CDFA), Grower-Shipper Association of Central California, California Strawberry Commission, Spring Lamb BBQ (American Cancer Society), American Cancer Society Relay for Life, Produce for Better Health Foundation, Produce Marketing Association, United Fresh Produce Association, Western Growers Association, and the American Heart Association.

Bill married Karen Chappell (WHS, Class of 1964) in 1967. They have three daughters, all graduates of WHS; Nicole, Class of 1988; Leanne, Class of 1990; and Jennifer, Class of

1992. In his spare time Bill enjoys fishing, hunting, boating, skiing and traveling.

Bill states, "As Chairman of the local Spring Lamb BBQ, I am carrying on a tradition started by my father to benefit the local chapter of the American Cancer Society. The annual event generates tremendous community sponsorship and participation while benefiting a very worthy cause.

I can attribute much of my success in business to my early years at Watsonville High School. I was not the best student on campus, but did my school work, was active in school sports and knew the importance of graduating from high school and going on to college. Like many, I started at Cabrillo and moved to a four-year school to get my degree. I appreciate the education and support of teachers and coaches who pushed me when I needed it and provided the foundation for my higher education and ultimately my career."

Nick Brautovich was born in Watsonville in 1944 an only child, and was raised by his mother and grandmother in Watsonville. He graduated from Notre Dame in 1958 and Watsonville High School in 1962. Nick started working in the lettuce fields at the age of 14 and worked every summer during high school for Bud Antle as a loader in the fields.

During his freshman year, 1959, he didn't participate in any sports, primarily because no one provided any motivation or direction. After a few bad experiences with his aggressive behavior, he decided to try athletics. He had been working in the lettuce fields, loading lettuce for several years during the summer and was very accustomed to hard work and sweat. Although he loved football, he had unusual strength and a propensity for throwing the shot put and discus.

In 1962, he broke the school discus record held by Gary Marinovich on 4 successive occasions. Besides winning the CCAL league title in the discus with a mark of 161 feet, he placed second in the shot put. After WHS graduation, he attended Cabrillo Junior College in 1962 for 1 year and then entered the US Army California National Guard in Watsonville. After the Army experience, he decided to work for a year before he returned to Cabrillo College, where he pursued weight training with much intensity. Working without more education was stressful and he made the decision to pursue his college degree.

At Cabrillo he participated in football and track, winning a league championship and setting a Junior College record.. He received a full scholarship to the University of Alabama and threw both the discus and shot put there for one year before getting homesick and returning to Watsonville. From there he was fortunate to get a full scholarship to San Jose State University and was a member of the NCAA National

Championship team. He graduated from San Jose State in 1968 and had hopes of trying out for the Olympic team but an injury prevented him from doing so.

His love of weight lifting stayed with him and in the early 70's he won the California State Powerlifting Championship and also the Western United States Championship. In 1974, his deadlift of 705 lbs. in the 198 pound weight class was ranked second in the world. He still competes in weight lifting at age 62 and has won the Western United States Police and Fire Olympics 5 straight years. Last year he bench pressed 341 lbs. in the 220 pound weight class. This year he is looking forward to that same meet in Mesa, Arizona. If he wins he would qualify for the World Championships in Australia

His work career has been extremely gratifying since he graduated from college in 1968. After working several years in Silicon Valley with a college degree in Human Resources, he served as a Santa Cruz County Probation Officer from 1974 through 1980. He returned to the computer industry for several more years before returning to his primary career, Corrections. In 1986 he went to work for the State of California as a Parole Agent and now, 21 years later, he is preparing for retirement from a profession that he would pursue again. Currently he is the Unit Supervisor for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Division of Adult Parole Operations. His office and parole agents supervise over 500 parolees residing in Santa Cruz County.

His son Eric, was born in 1968 and lives in Soquel with his wife and his 4 year old grandson. He coached his son in Pop Warner football, played city league flag football with him, and most recently coached the Watsonville Pajaro Valley Bobcats, a Watsonville Pop Warner youth football team with him in 1994. His oldest daughter, Dena, was born in 1972 and is an active aerobics instructor residing in Soquel. His 23 year old stepdaughter, Erika, is a senior at San Jose State University and works part time for Granite Construction in Watsonville. His youngest child, Nikia, age 16, attends Aptos High School and Cabrillo College and hopes to study theater arts at U.C.L.A. He and his wife, Cynthia, have been married since 1988 and are celebrating their 20th anniversary soon.

His dad, 83, resides in Modesto and his mother, 81, in Watsonville. He lost his last grandparent, the dear grandmother that had such a major part in raising him, in 2006, at the age of 99. Nick was greatly influenced by WHS football and track coach Dick Petty, who had just graduated from USC and demanded 110% athletically and academically from his players. He also had the opportunity to play one year of football for Emmett Geiser, his last year of coaching. Nick adds, "A profound appreciation goes out to one of my best friends from high school, Frank "Chico" Castro, also responsible for nominating me for this honor. I feel proud to have grown up in Watsonville and will always be a true Wildcat."

Tim Griffin, a product of the Pajaro Valley and local schools, attended Mintie White, Salsipuedes, Watsonville High School (Class of 1971), and Cabrillo College. He earned his undergraduate degree from the University of the Pacific in 1975 with a B.A. degree in biological sciences. He graduated from Georgetown University in 1979 with the degree of doctor of dental surgery (DDS). Tim returned to Watsonville to begin his career in dentistry. He has been practicing dentistry in Watsonville for 28 years.

Throughout his years in school he was always fully supported by his family. His father Phil, a local school teacher, mother Jeanette, a medical assistant, and sister Kathy all encouraged and helped him continue his career goals. Tim's grandmother, Edna, 100 yrs. old, was one of his biggest cheerleaders. Dr. Bill Franklin, his family dentist as well as his mentor, encouraged him every step of the way. He was Dr. Griffin's role model.

Tim tries to stay as involved as he can in the community. He enjoys coaching youth sports and personally participated in numerous triathlons for fun and fitness. Dr. Griffin is a mentor for the Watsonville High School Health Academy. Along with volunteering for the dental health and education activities, Tim tries to stay active in promoting dental health and vocations. He enjoys visiting schools to participate in dental screenings. This keeps him current on the education taking place locally.

Professionally, he is blessed with having a wonderful and loyal staff. Dr. Griffin is a member of the American Dental Association, California Dental Association, Monterey Bay Dental Society and is also currently seated on their Board of Directors. In 1985 he was fortunate to be named Dentist of the Year by the Society. Currently he is on the Dental Hygiene Advisory Committee for Cabrillo College, a position he has enjoyed for over ten years, helping Cabrillo with the education of dental hygienists.

He has a wonderful family. Tim's wife, Mary, works with him in their dental office. She is a major asset in its success. He is blessed with three children of whom he is very proud: Kellen, 22, will be graduating from college in May. Conor, 20, is a college sophomore and Claire, 19, is a freshman in college. They have all supported him and make sure he doesn't take himself too seriously.

Dr. Griffin tells us, "Life in Watsonville has been very fulfilling. I hope to continue to give back to the community, which has always been caring and wonderful to me. It is an honor to be recognized by Watsonville High School and I am humbled and very thankful for it."

Gustavo Paz, one of six children, was born in 1964 to Roberto and Guadalupe Paz in Watsonville and attended Amesti School and Rolling Hills Middle School. He learned the value of hard work from his parents. When he and his siblings were young, they helped their parents pick strawberries and apples.

In the fall of 1978 he became a freshman at Watsonville High School and decided to go out for the soccer team. On his way out to soccer practice, he got nervous and decided to go home. Before he left the fieldhouse some friends and coach Gary Garcia talked him into going out for wrestling.

As a freshman, he had a record of 10-14. During his sophomore year, he had more success, placing second at the Monterey Bay League and was one match away from qualifying for the sections. As a junior, he was MBL champion and Region IV runner-up. He was one match away from placing at the sections.

During his senior year (1981-1982) he earned a record of 35-2, losing to the same person twice that year, and then defeating him at the state tournament. He was the MBL Champion, CCS Tournament Champion, and the CIF State Champion at 132 pounds. He was also named "Outstanding High School Wrestler" by the wrestling officials.

Gus wrestled at West Valley Community College from 1983-1985 and holds the school record for most tournaments won in a season. During the summer of 1986, he traveled to Japan for 3 weeks and wrestled against Japanese teams. He was undefeated. This was an unforgettable experience for him. He enjoyed meeting and living with the people of Japan and gained some understanding of how it feels to be in a country and not understand the language.

After wrestling at West Valley, Gus wanted to give back to the program that had given him success and confidence. He started helping Gary Garcia, his former high school coach, by working out with the team, showing different wrestling techniques. This eventually evolved into an assistant coach position. He was head coach and co-head coach with Gary for many years. During this time WHS teams had much success with 13 league titles and placing first, second, and fourth at the CCS Tournament and fifth at the CIF State Tournament. They had 10 wrestlers in CCS Championships which many others placed. Two WHS wrestlers were in the CIF finals and placed second, while 4 other wrestlers were CIF state placers. Five wrestlers qualified for the National championship tournament and one, Peter Borba, placed sixth. Gus is very proud to have been given the opportunity to work with student athletes and see their successes in wrestling at WHS and in life.

Gus has always been very artistic as well. He designed wrestling brackets for several tournaments such as the Junior College State Championship, Mid Cal HS Tournament, MBL and SCCAL League Championships, and the Jimmy Hildebrand Memorial Junior High Tournament. In 1984, he painted the Olympic figures in the old Alianza Gym (now Cesar Chavez Junior High). He has painted the Babe Ruth logo on the baseball field for the Western Region Tournament and the "W" and "CATZ" on Geiser Field for football games.

Gus and his wife, Julie, have two young sons, Zachary and Nicholas. He currently works for PVUSD in the Maintenance department as a carpenter. He is looking forward to continuing his work with Watsonville High School wrestlers and seeing his own sons wrestle in black and gold.

Hall of Fame Assembly

Henry J. Mello Center (WHS)

10:45 a.m.

Public is welcome.

Evening for the Black & Gold

Corralitos Community Center

Ham Buffet Dinner

6:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$20.00

