

Watsonville High School Foundation

2009 Alumni Hall of Fame

Although her parents lived on Beach Road in Watsonville, Lorraine Everitt Stucki was born in Salinas, California. She and her three sisters and two brothers grew up on a ranch where their father was a ranch foreman for Resetar Brothers in the Pajaro Valley.

As a child she attended Pajaro and Aromas Elementary Schools. In 1949 she graduated from Watsonville High School. Having a dream of teaching primary grades, she worked any job, picking bush berries, cutting apricots and at the lunch counter at Woolworth's Store to save every dime to attend the University of California in Berkeley. Staying focused she was able to do this.

In the early nineteen fifties Lorraine married John Stucki and they moved to Salinas where she worked many years with the Monterey County Farm Bureau. Later, she and her husband moved to Siskiyou County in northern California where she taught Kindergarten, First, and Second grades until the untimely death of her husband. Lorraine returned to Watsonville to be near her sisters and brothers who now have tragically passed away.

Lorraine pursued a career at Couch Distributing when she returned to Watsonville. She found this to be an exciting business, making many lifetime friends in her nearly 21 years there. While employed by George Couch, Lorraine was exposed to the rewards of community work by his example.

At her retirement dinner Lorraine was presented with a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition by Congressman Sam Farr and a Legislative Assembly Resolution by Assemblyman Fred Keeley.

In 1990 she was presented the Anheuser-Busch Golden Eagle Award for her exceptional work and dedication to her community in the 1989 earthquake. Lorraine is the only woman to receive this special recognition.

In 1994 Lorraine was appointed and served four years on the Santa Cruz County Fish & Game Commission. In 1999 she was appointed to the Santa Cruz County Senior Commission and in 2000 she was elected President of the Bay Village Homeowners Association and served in this demanding office for several years. Lorraine was appointed to serve on the Blue Ribbon Committee for Sustainable Resources by the City of Watsonville and is part of the Pajaro River Task Force working to secure a river levee project.

In 2004 Lorraine was the recipient of a Proclamation from the City of Watsonville for Service to the Community, in 2005 she was presented the Paul Harris Fellow Award by the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International and in 2006 she was selected Woman of the Year by the Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture.

Currently, Lorraine serves on the Santa Cruz County Zone 7 Flood Control Board, the Board of Directors of Independence Square – housing for elderly and disabled in Watsonville, and the Watsonville Salvation Army Advisory Board of Directors.

Lorraine states she is dedicated to her community and the needs of all.

Alejo "Alex" Solano shares his thoughts: I was born December 5, 1931, in Mexicali, Mexico. My family came to California shortly thereafter as migrant workers and traveled around California and finally settled in Watsonville in June, 1941. I started school at eight years of age which wasn't too uncommon because many of the children helped the families in agricultural work. I started first grade at Pajaro Elementary. In sixth grade and later the eighth grade, Ann Matiasovich (Soldo) was my teacher. While in the eighth grade, since I had driving experience after driving trucks in the field, Miss Matiasovich asked me to drive Principal Mrs. Delaney's car to the District Office once a month to pick up the teachers' checks. She had a lot of faith in me and that has continued through my whole life. She was a wonderful teacher and encouraged education as a key to our future.

I entered Watsonville High School in my freshman year and continued through my senior year to graduation in 1952. At Watsonville High I had many very good teachers who encouraged us to finish school to get a good education because it would help us through our adult life. I did have FFA (Future Farmers of America) classes where we learned how to raise and care for animals and farming. We had an agriculture field near the high school dedicated to this class. We also had woodworking, metal shop, and auto mechanics which taught us skills that might lead to a career in those fields or help in general with our adult life.

While in my junior year seven students and I wanted to join the service during the Korean War. The Boys' Counselor, Bud Decker, was in the Air Force Reserve at

the time. He advised us to finish our education and graduate since that would give us a better opportunity to serve and advance in the military. It would also help us find better jobs before starting our families. We listened to him and the day after our graduation in 1952 we were on a bus and on our way to military service and boot camp. I served in the U.S. Air Force while still being a citizen of Mexico. President Eisenhower, who had served as a General in the military, declared all military personnel should be American citizens. While in Metz, France, I became a Naturalized Citizen of the United States. I served four years active duty as a Crew Chief on jet aircrafts and then served four years Reserved Duty.

After returning home from the service, I drove tractor for a Watsonville farmer and shortly thereafter was offered a job at a service station. I became manager of the station and in 1958, I met Patricia Gospodnetich who was born and raised in Watsonville. In September, 1959, we were married in Reno, Nevada. This year we will celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary.

In August, 1960, our first child was born and I was offered a job as a commercial refrigeration mechanic. The boss asked if I had any experience in that field and I told him I didn't but I was willing to work hard to learn. I worked in that field for 41 years and retired in 2001. While working there I was elected to serve as a Trustee for the Pajaro Valley School Board. I served for eight years and enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to serve our students and families.

My wife and I began our volunteer service to the schools when our first child, GeriAnne, entered the first year of the Head Start program in 1964 at Hall Elementary School. We continued to be active in the schools as our family increased to five children. Each of our children went through our local school system. Our children were encouraged to be active in school and the community. They have continued service to this day. Today many of my grandchildren attend our local schools. I have 13 grandchildren, some of which have graduated and some will be graduating this year and some in the years to come.

I was honored to have a school named for me; Solano Summit Academy though after three years because of a budget deficit, the school was closed.

My life has been in this Pajaro Valley and I firmly believe that a good education is vital for a better life not only for the students but for their families and community as well. Better jobs will be available to you and more knowledge can only make a better life in this community or wherever you choose to live.

Today, at age 77, I can say my education in our local schools and in the Air Force have taught me skills that have come to help me daily in my work and in my life in general. Education is the key to your future, a better future.

Mr. Solano's service to the community consists of:

- Volunteer Veterans Service Officer for Veteran Affairs
- Community Organizer
- American Legion Member for 53 years
- Life Member of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1716
- Board Member of Pajaro Valley Historical Association
- Volunteer Member at EAA119 at Watsonville Airport
- Member of Slavic-American Cultural Organization (SACO)
- Co-Chairman of 4th of July Parade
- Co-Chairman of Veterans Day March and Program

Richard Stubblefield - I was born on August 21, 1951 in the old Santa Cruz County Hospital on Emeline Street. Even though I was born in Santa Cruz, I always have and always will tell people that I am a native son of Watsonville, California.

I am the youngest of five boys – William Lonero (class of '60), Lawrence Stubblefield Fletes (class of '64), Michael Stubblefield (class of '65) and Ronald Stubblefield (class of '67). A younger sister, Patricia Marie, was called to the Lord as a stillborn infant on New Year's Day of 1959. Ronald and William were called home in May 2006 and January 2007 respectively.

My elementary school years were spent at Salsipuedes Elementary School, from where I graduated in 1965. I then entered WHS in the fall of 1965, graduating as a member of the class of 1969. I attended parts of the next two school years at Cabrillo College in Aptos.

Since March of 1975, I have been employed by three local companies. First, I was employed by Green Giant Company for 16 years until the plant's closure in 1991. From there, I went to work for Red Bryan and Frank Saveria at New West Foods for the next 11 years until the company's sale and eventual closure in 2002. In November of 2002, I was hired by the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, where I am still employed today. For what is almost 34 years, I have been employed in the payroll department of each organization over that time and have also enjoyed the support of all three employers over the years encouraging me to pursue my continued service to the youth of our community.

In 1967, I began what you might call my life's passion of serving the community's youth by getting involved with the Salsipuedes Little League. This service has continued for the last 42 years in various capacities as an umpire, team manager and league administrator for Salsipuedes, Watsonville National and the new Pajaro Valley Little Leagues. In the mid-to-late 1980s, I was recruited by WHS head football coach Ron Myers to serve as the public address announcer for the Wildcatz freshman and junior varsity home football games. I first got to know Ron when his oldest son Rob was a member of my Braves Little League team. In addition to the public address service for Catz football, I have also had the pleasure of sitting next to Ed Kelly as the scoreboard operator for the Catz varsity home football games on Friday nights as well for the last twenty years or so. In the early 90s, Bob Linney, the boys' varsity basketball coach, asked me to become the announcer for the Catz home games. I was recommended to Bob by Marilyn and Jimmy Valentine, former WHS parents and boosters. To this day, I am still in the fortunate position of being able to support all of these activities.

For the last three years I have also had the extremely rewarding honor of being an active participant for the annual radiothon for St. Jude Children's Hospital, which is hosted locally by KTOM 92.7 FM in Salinas. The 2008 radiothon involved 26 hours over a two day period of taking pledges from the many supporters of this worthy cause.

The words of Diana Vargas: The best way to describe the person I am is to tell you about the people who have influenced me the most, my parents, Frank and Dora Ybarra. My parents were born and raised in Arizona. After my father came back from the service, they moved to Watsonville and on March 5, 1956, I was born, the first of three children. Later, we would welcome my brother Felix and sister Christina to our family.

Growing up I observed my parents' hard work and determination to create a better life for their family. They instilled in me the values of family, faith, hard work, and the responsibility and importance of giving back to your community. These values have proved to be invaluable to me and still continue to guide me through my everyday life. My mom, Dora worked in the pajama factory, the Watsonville Cannery, and Ford's Department Store. My father, Frank Ybarra, worked at Meadow Gold Milk during the day and attended Watsonville High School Adult School at night. He went on to work as an insurance salesman before working in real estate. Frank eventually went on to attain his broker's license and become the proud owner of El Camino Realty. He was one of the first Hispanic

realtors in Watsonville to establish his own business. And in 2005 he was honored by the Watsonville Board of Realtors with the first ever "Lifetime Achievement Award," for his dedication and service to the Watsonville community. My father continued working at El Camino until just months before he died in 2006.

Throughout my education, I attended many of the local schools, including Mintie White Elementary School, Freedom Elementary School, Rolling Hills Middle School, and of course, Watsonville High School, graduating in 1974. I have always loved learning and thrived in the classroom. As a child I also participated in organizations such as Brownies, Girl Scouts and 4-H. I was fortunate to have great leaders who really impacted my life as an adult. John Kegebein is a name that always comes to mind as being a highly respected leader in 4-H. I was an active participant of the Japanese Club at Freedom School, the Alley Catz Bowling Club at Watsonville High, I taught catechism classes for Assumption Church, and helped with fundraisers for the Penny Club in Watsonville. It was through the Penny Club, that I met my husband, the love of my life, Javier Vargas.

Javier and I were married in 1976, and are approaching our 33rd Anniversary. Javier has worked for Pajaro Valley School District for nineteen years and is the owner of the well-respected Mariachi California. We have been blessed with two wonderful, loving sons, Andy and Eric, whom we couldn't be more proud of. We also have one charming grandson, Christopher who keeps us young and who we cherish very much. I must say that without the constant love and support of my family, I would not be standing before you today. They are truly the secret to my success.

As for my career, I began by working with my father in his office performing receptionist and secretarial duties. I will always cherish that time. Following graduation from Watsonville High, I joined Wells Fargo Bank as a safe deposit attendant in the Freedom Office. Upon joining the company I began to realize it was a large company that offered a small hometown feeling. The staff and supervisors were friendly and caring. I remember asking how long they had been with the company and when I heard 10, 15, 20 + years, I was amazed and thought I don't think I will be here that long. And yet, here I am today embarking on my 35th year with the company. It has been a wonderful ride. I have been blessed with great coaches and mentors throughout my career, a practice I strive to live by each and every day. In describing my career at Wells Fargo, I often say I have attended the University of Wells Fargo. By this I mean I grew up going through the ranks, holding every

position in the operation area (including teller) to new accounts, Personal Banker, Business Banker to Manager. I have managed several locations in the past 18 years in Santa Cruz and Monterey County including the Freedom, Pajaro Valley and Castroville locations. Most recently in 2008 I managed the Freedom and Pajaro Valley locations. Currently you will find me at the Pajaro Valley location in downtown Watsonville.

Throughout my career I have sat on many different councils. Most recently I have been selected to the Diversity Council for the San Francisco Bay Region. I have also been the recipient of many different awards. A few that stand out in my mind are "The Paul Hazen Award," and being the recipient of two annual trips to Hawaii and one to Orlando, where I was able to meet Senior Management, Dick Kovacevich and John Stumpf and listen to great motivational speakers from all over the world.

Working with Wells Fargo has allowed me to fulfill my life long dreams in so many ways. In ways I never thought possible. I always wanted to be in a career where I helped people. For awhile, I was sure this would translate into a career in the medical field. That is, until chemistry and I didn't really get along. I realized that my talents would better serve people elsewhere. With Wells Fargo, I have truly been able to reach my goals and the vision of the company, which is, "To satisfy all our customers' financial needs and help them become financially successful." The Team Members and I believe in educating the community around managing their money, from checking and savings and everything that goes along with it. Wells Fargo has a wonderful program that assists us called, "Hands on Banking." It is a program that was accredited in Washington and is generic, as far as financial institutions go. We have partnered with non-profit organizations, local schools and the Mexican Consulate in San Jose to make presentations and educate one on one regarding managing your money. I am proud to say I have extended the Wells Fargo vision to my Team Members as well. I love getting to know them, finding out what their goals and dreams are and together set a plan to help get them there. To date, I have promoted many Team Members to Financial Consultants, Merchant Card Representatives, Bankers, Customer Service Managers and Managers. This is my passion, helping people.

A second important goal of mine was to be able to serve the local community. With the help of the Wells Fargo Foundation, I have been able to retain thousands of dollars and distribute those funds to many different local community organizations and charities. However,

it is never enough and there is still so much to do. I am pleased to say, if we haven't been able to give a charitable contribution, I have always been an advocate of giving our time with my team members.

In 2007, I was honored with a "Proclamation from the City." One of the things I remember most was a council member stating I was recognized as a leader in our community. Being recognized then and now with this great honor, I am truly humbled and grateful. I must say I still have so much to do, both personally as well as in my business career. This honor has given me the fuel to continue on. Thank you.

* * * * *

Hall of Fame Assembly

**Henry J. Mello Center (WHS)
May 15, 2009
10:45 a.m.**

Public is welcome.

Evening for the Black & Gold

**Corralitos Community Center
Ham Buffet Dinner
May 15, 2009
6:00 p.m.
Tickets: \$25.00**

