



# RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

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*Healdsburg's third city hall opened in 1997.*

## Healdsburg 1980 - 2000

### "What a Long, Strange Trip It's Been"

*by Daniel Murley*

#### Also in this Issue:

#### And the Band Played On

*by Lew Sbrana and Charlotte Anderson*

#### Theater Buildings and Community Theater

*by Don Osborn*

#### Theater Performances

*by Charlotte Anderson*

#### Competitive Swimming in Healdsburg

*by Charlotte Anderson*



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*The Official Publication of the Healdsburg  
Museum and Historical Society*

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## IN THIS ISSUE

Winter 2003 and we cover the last 20 years of the 20th Century completing our project started last Spring and we welcome three new contributors - Daniel Murley, the Museum's new curator; Lew Sbrana, retired educator who helped to start the Community Band and Don Osborn, also a retired educator and long active in community theater.

Dan took on the task of bringing us an overview of the years 1980 - 2000 and he has done an admirable job of catching the essence of those years.

Lew who is still active with the community band and is well known for his John Phillips Sousa concerts, teams up with our regular contributor Charlotte Anderson to

tell us about how the music in the park was revived and the important role it plays in the community.

Don gives us a detailed history of venues for the community theater in Healdsburg as well as an update on what is happening in local circles.

And finally Charlotte in her articles about Competitive Swimming has done a great job of research on this subject.

We look forward to 2004 and hope we can bring you, in our next four issues, interesting and provocative articles.

Arnold Santucci  
Editor

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## HISTORIC



## OVERVIEW

# HEALDSBURG 1980-2000:

## "WHAT A LONG, STRANGE TRIP IT'S BEEN"

by Daniel Murley

Looking back at the period from 1980 to 2000, one is struck by the immensity of growth and the enormity of change to the once quaint hamlet of Harmon Heald's design. Once known for the location where Highway 101 meets the Russian River, the town now became a metaphor for that contradictory contrast of the coming together of hard black asphalt and gently running river water. Healdsburg awoke to the changes wrought by the implementation of the Warm Springs Dam, and the shifting spotlight of the grape industry, from the Napa Valley to Dry Creek and Alexander Valley. The changes came so fast and furious that one might find a long time resident sitting on a bench in the ever-changing Plaza with his head in his hands, watching the once dusty roads filled by buggies and lined by bars and stores transformed into bustling streets with bumper to bumper BMW's and surrounded by boutiques. To cover this time period in a publication such as this would do history a disservice. So let us quickly examine some of the causes of the transformation and then look at some photographic reproductions, which serve to emphasize our point.

The population of the Healdsburg area doubled in 20 years. This time period also saw the interaction of environmental and business interests, as some no-growth measures appeared on county ballots. Sonoma County introduced measures to prohibit some vineyard development, such as the proposed Gallo vineyard on the former MacMurray ranch property. The noble grape and its desirable product however were here to stay and the wonderful climate and perfectly suited soils proved to bring on the vines. Prune orchards were gone and vineyards decorated almost every available open space.

Perhaps the most significant collision of economic and environmental interests involved the fate of the Russian River. Various interests, including ranching, viticulture, gravel mining, tourism, municipal water consumption, and fishery management, were brought to bear on the question of how to best manage the river and its resources. The Warm Springs Dam and the Army Corps of Engineers both battled and coddled many local interests but finally convinced



*The Gazebo in the Plaza Square, circa 1989*

most that the concrete structure would serve the area well. In a hard fought and deeply divisive campaign, a ballot measure finally "paved" the way for construction and Healdsburg and its part of Northern Sonoma County would never be the same.

New wineries popped up everywhere and long lines of vines proliferated. Some founding fathers of the local wine industry showed that they could hang in there with all the new money and technology. Seghesio Winery celebrated its 100th anniversary and many of the early names of Scatena, Vercelli, Cuneo, Simi, Haigh, Young, Foppiano and others maintained their rightful place in the grape boom.

An important economic change occurred in northern Sonoma County during this period. Indian gaming became a new economic force with the opening of casinos north of Healdsburg, including the River Rock Casino, owned by the Dry Creek Rancheria Band of

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Pomo Indians. This brought another industry to the greater Healdsburg area, adding Indian gaming revenues to the local economy that had been dominated by viticulture and agriculture.

Numerous construction projects, both large and small, were completed between 1980 and 2000. The Healdsburg Plaza redevelopment project was completed and the center of the community received a thoughtful "makeover." Groundbreaking for the new library took place, and the senior center opened on Matheson Street. In 1988, the Raven Theater was restored and re-opened for presenting films and live entertainment. The Healdsburg Museum opened in the refurbished Carnegie Library in 1994 and provided a much needed "sense of place" to celebrate the history of Healdsburg, a place where history is made and traditions are created daily.



*The former Carnegie Library now the home of the Healdsburg Museum.*

The redevelopment of the plaza provided a renewed focal point for the local community as well as visitors. In particular the plaza has become a gathering place for the growing Latino community of Healdsburg. On Sunday afternoons, families gather on the plaza, which many Latino residents say reminds them of plazas in their hometowns in Mexico. This portion of our community continues to grow, and Healdsburg now has one of the highest per capita Spanish speaking communities north of San Francisco.



*Oakville Grocery took over the site of the City's second City Hall.*

In 1997 the building which was considered by many longtime residents as an "abomination" and an "insult to the founding fathers and 'their' City Hall," was left for a new city hall. When the new one opened, the old one became Oakville Grocery. Many of the Healdsburg natives with whom I spoke, "felt it should have been used as a grocery in the first place." In 1992, the new fire station opened and the world was a safer place for our burgeoning city. With such meteoric change and growth, it is necessary to hold tightly and embrace our slowly shaped and sculpted shared past. We must also see through those shadows so largely cast and follow the rapid flight of footstep, which shape our future.

#### **Source:**

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Edwin Langhart Museum, City of Healdsburg.  
Healdsburg Cultural Resource Survey, Final Report. 1983.

LeBaron, Gaye. "Healdsburg, Wine Capital of the New World." Santa Rosa Press Democrat. 1989.

George Snyder. "County Signs Off on Russian River Restoration." San Francisco Chronicle. 1997.

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## AND THE BAND PLAYS ON!

by Lew Sbrana and Charlotte Anderson

Concerts in the Plaza go back a long way to the 1880's when the Sotoyome Band would perform in the Gazebo (situated where the fountain is now) on Saturday nights. "The Plaza Saturday night band concerts drew large crowds until the 1950's when they finally gave way to that revolutionary new invention the television." (*Healdsburg Tribune*, 15 January 1993, p.4:6) Also in the 1950's the Healdsburg Municipal Band had disbanded.

In November 1982, Healdsburg High School band teacher Lew Sbrana received a phone call from Judy Price. Mrs. Price and husband Larry, both trombonists, were looking for other brass players to perform Christmas carols in and around the Plaza during the holidays. Before the conversation ended, the seed for starting a local community band was planted. Thirty years after the Municipal Band dispersed, the baton was again being picked up and a local town band was re-created. In January 1983, the Healdsburg Community Band was organized with Sbrana as founding conductor. Some of the first to join the band were former members of the Municipal Band; Milt Brandt was joined by Guerdon Miller in the percussion section, and Lee Engleke played alto saxophone. The HCB performed publicly for the first time at the dedication of the Boys and Girls Club's new gymnasium. Rehearsals continued throughout the year on Tuesday nights and the band improved.

The Plaza concert series returned in 1984, sponsored by the Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce and the Healdsburg Merchants' Committee with businesswomen Carla Howell and Jane Oriol coordinating, when four public concerts were held: June 16, Rose and Thistle, a Dixieland jazz band; July 14, the Big Band sounds of the Santa Rosa Junior College Jazz Band; August 18, the Rohnert Park Community Band; and September 15, "Heartland," a blue grass country group, along with hay rides and harvest-related activities such as pumpkin and scarecrow contests. The concerts were free, but contributions were accepted for the building of a gazebo.

In 1985, the "2nd annual concerts in the Plaza" were sponsored by the Downtown Business Association with Healdsburg's Park and Recreation Department. The series of four concerts was begun with a "Pops for Pop" concert featuring the Healdsburg Community Band, their first performance in the Plaza. This year's series was an attempt to bring back the "good ol' days of Healdsburg" as Carla Howell was quoted as saying to the *Healdsburg Tribune*. There



*Lew Sbrana in his uniform as John Phillips Souza, circa 1990.  
Photo courtesy of Lew Sbrana*

were activities going on in and around the Plaza during the day and then the concerts occurred in the early evening.

The Downtown Business District (DBD) presented the 1986 summer concert series again with evening performances. On the last date, Saturday, September 6, the new Gazebo was dedicated in conjunction with the reopening of the Healdsburg Museum at 132 Matheson (prior to the move to the Carnegie building). The two events began at 4 p.m. with the ribbon cutting at the Museum followed by the 5 p.m. formal dedication of the Plaza Pavilion. The musical christening was provided by Charlie Krinard and his Apple Knockers Dixieland Jazz Band who entertained until 9 p.m.

On July 18, 1987, "Swing Fever" kicked off an expanded 8-week "Picnic in the Plaza" concert series marking an "official return to the days (1950's and before) when the Healdsburg Plaza hosted Saturday evening concerts each summer for many years." (*Healdsburg Tribune*, 15 July 1987, pp.1 & 11) Sponsored by the DBD, most concerts were from 5 to 7 p.m. with a number of special concerts being in conjunction with other downtown projects occurring during the day. On Saturday, July 14, 1987, a Flag Day Concert

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was held at 2 p.m. with the Healdsburg and Rohnert Park Community Bands and the Healdsburg Community Chorus providing the music. Unfortunately the Healdsburg Community Band found the Plaza pavilion to be ill-conceived for them. The gazebo proved to be too small for a concert band of 40-50 members, not acoustically treated to project live music, and located on the east side of the Plaza thus forcing the performers to look into the afternoon sun. (Although a concrete extension and canopy were later added to the structure, the HCB and the HHS Band still performed from the shady grove on the west side of the Plaza.)

Also in 1987, Community Band Conductor Lew Sbrana grew a mustache, put on his naval uniform, and portrayed John Philip Sousa, "The March King," reenacting a typical Sousa concert of the early 1900's. The performance with Reverend Marvin Bowers as master of ceremonies was so successful that it continued for fourteen years. Because of size constraints and sold out ticket sales, concerts were moved from the Raven Theater to the Luther Burbank Center for the Performing Arts in Santa Rosa where the band played before over a thousand people at each performance. In 2002, the band performed a tribute to the American circus, complete with ringmaster and imaginary circus acts. (Note: The May 2004 concert is in the planning stages at this time. The Sousa sesquicentennial—150th—year is about to begin and Lew Sbrana is planning another "Salute to Sousa" concert!)

As wonderful as it has been for the band to perform in the Plaza, there is a definite need for a performing arts center in Healdsburg. At the present time (2003) the performance venues in Healdsburg are very limited. The HCB has performed in Jackson Theater on the Sonoma County Day School campus and the Luther Burbank Center. The band performs in Cloverdale for the Christmas holiday concert at the Citrus Fair building. Nov. 11, 2003, the band appeared at the Raven Theater. A concert band of 50 members needs room to spread out and the stage at the Raven is not very large. The band, along with other performing organizations, hopes that the town will some day have a performance venue like Truitt's Theater, a 1200-seat performance hall that at one time graced Center Street. Only time will tell!

"Picnic in the Plaza" continued in 1988 with an eleven-event series, many concerts now being scheduled for Sunday afternoons from 1 to 3 p.m., but with still a few special events being on Saturdays. Although a great many of the groups scheduled were from out of town, the HCB always played at least one summer date, 1988's performance being a July 3 "Independence Day Concert." Healdsburg's own "Making Music Trio" of Tony Amoruso, Patty McCann, and Ken Fisher performed light jazz for the Aug. 7 event.

The 1992 season was touted as having an international theme. "From Sousa to salsa and swing to Shakespeare, the annual Summer Concert Series runs the gamut of musical styles in its weekly (Sundays 2-4 p.m.) offerings starting June 7 and concluding 13 weeks later on the last Sunday in August." (*Healdsburg Tribune* 15 May 1992, p. A-7) An example of the diversity of performances included the opener by "Steppin' Out" and their Big Band Sound (June 7) and the Community Band's Flag Day Concert, June 14. An extra event, on Saturday June 20, brought the Caravan Ethnic Music and Dance Ensemble from noon to 3 p.m. June 21st was Family Play Day featuring "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown" by the Performance Place Players, story telling, face painting, etc. from 1 to 4. July's music included Dixieland, Cajun, rock and roll, and folk songs. August had "Opera in the Park" with Robert Hinkson, Sharon Davis and Stephen Walsh, "an informal afternoon of William Shakespeare" performed by Raymond Comstock Skipp, and the final concert on August 30 "drawn from the classics by Cadence."

The next five years, 1993-1997, the varied concerts continued. Each year the Community Band played early in June. Interspersed with the music were dance performances, an afternoon of Shakespeare, a family playday on Father's Day, and three antique fairs. Although these concerts and events were brought to the community by the DBD and the City of Healdsburg Community Services Department, many were being individually sponsored by local businesses.

The 1988 season featured 13 concerts kicked off by the Community Band sponsored by Mid-town Realty. The third concert, sponsored by Bear Republic Brewing Company, was provided by the Air Force Band, featuring marches and big band sounds. Mid-town Realty also sponsored "Different Drums," a group specializing in Caribbean and World Beat music. The Healdsburg Arts Council joined the DBD and the City of Healdsburg as "providers."

Setting the tone for the next century, the 2000 "Music on the Square" featured 15 free "concerts," sponsored by the Healdsburg Arts Council, the DBD, and several local businesses. The first concert was the Community Band (sponsored by Mid-town Realty), and the final one was "The Aces" with blues music (Felix and Louie's Restaurant) with a great variety for the other 13 events.

"Music in the Plaza," "Picnic in the Plaza," "Music on the Square"—whatever it is called—has just, in 2003, completed its 20th "revival" year! Returning with 4 Saturday concerts in 1984, the idea gained popularity over the years to where the Healdsburg Plaza is once again, on Sundays now, filled with music and almost as many people as there were for the Owen Sweeten Saturday night band concerts of the 1930's and 1940's!

# THEATER BUILDINGS AND COMMUNITY THEATER

by Don Osborn

As William Shakespeare said in "As You Like It" (ACT II, Sc.vii, A1.139), "All the world's a stage," but when your "world" is Healdsburg, finding a stage to accommodate plays, musical performances, and large audience attractions is a difficult, but hopefully not an insurmountable task.

The Aven Theater on North Street ("Aven" coming from the original owner's wife's name spelled backwards!) replaced the old West Street (Healdsburg Ave.) Plaza Theater in 1950 as Healdsburg's sole movie house. Then in 1987, Healdsburg residents John Holt and Don Hyde purchased the Aven to convert it into a "state of the art modern movie palace." Christened "The Raven," it sported a large, although cut down from its original 30-foot size, raven on the marquee. The 600-seat art deco theater re-opened in May 1988 providing a venue for both movies and live productions.

By 1992 it became clear that the Raven needed to add more screens in order to remain competitive. Thus in 1994, the Raven Film Center, in what had been a JC Penney's store, opened a four-screen theater. With the support of the city of Healdsburg's Community Redevelopment Agency, the Film Center also boasted a live performance space. Seating 133, Theater Two, on most days a regular film venue, can, for special performances, roll up the movie screen to reveal an intimate professional stage, with a dressing room and back door equipment access.

When movie presentations moved to the Film Center, the original Raven was purchased by 50 limited partners calling themselves the RAVEN THEATER ASSOCIATES. Hoping to preserve the building as a place for performing arts, the partnership, with Don Hyde as managing partner working with Jane St.Claire as founder of the Healdsburg Arts Council, leased the space to the Healdsburg Performing Arts Theater in 2001. H-PAT, an organization of citizens dedicated to preserving and enhancing artistic expression in Healdsburg, has since had the Raven used by local performance groups, dance troupes, musicians, festivals, and uncommon cinema.

The most recent arrival to the Healdsburg theater scene is the RAVEN PLAYERS performing at the Raven Too Theater at the Center

Street complex. This new community theater group, with Wendy Tennis as artistic director, opened with Neil Simon's "Rumors" in October 2002, followed by "Deathtrap" in March 2003. Their third production, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)" is being performed in November 2003.

Healdsburg has become a popular destination for people from all over the world in recent years. They come to share in all that is beautiful and bountiful here. Our proud theatrical tradition is certainly an important part of Healdsburg that we will be happy to share with all who visit or live here in the years to come.

## THEATER PERFORMANCES 1980 - 2000

by Charlotte Anderson

Beginning in 1976 with an original script "Josefa and Captain Fitch" (copies of which can be found in the Library of Congress and the archives of the Healdsburg Museum), the Camp Rose Players had been performing several shows a year in the renovated basement of the Camp Rose Inn. Their 1980 season of a record six plays ended with a November-December production of "Cinderella," originally performed in 1976 as the group's second show and now back by popular demand. The play featured Jack Armstrong as the evil step mother, Larry Ness and John Trouette as the evil step sisters, Valerie Hayes as Cinderella, and Fran Trouette as the fairy godmother. The production, with direction by Jane Settle and music by Pat Aldrich, also included Nellie Lamberson, John Ballachey, Anika Settle, and Elizabeth Green.

In the spring of 1981, The Mountain Rose Players, now a separate group, left the inn which was up for sale. They worked on their first production, an original script "A Rose by Any Other Name," a "singing, dancing, and laughing look back at the five-year history of the Camp Rose Players. The production, staged August 13-29 at Tayman Park Clubhouse and directed by Pat Aldrich, included Carol Maser, John Green, Barry Cameron, Steve Williams, Joanna Noble, Sara Anna, Rick Lawson, and Cathy Fairlee.

1982 through 1984 found The Mountain Rose Players performing more than half a dozen productions including "Don't Drink the

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*The first production of Joseph and Captain Fitch, circa 1976*

Water," "Once Upon a Mattress," and "The Exercise" all done at the Isis Oasis Lodge in Geyserville. Regulars in the group some of whom were, and would later again be, Camp Rose Players included Peter Immordino, Nancy Anderson, Marti Oberti, and Cheryl Ricci. Ending their season, and their run at Isis Oasis on June 30, 1984, with their final show "Dear World," a musical adaptation of "The Mad Woman of Chaillot," the Mountain Rose Players were hoping to return to Healdsburg.

In the summer of 1982, the restaurant at Camp Rose was reopened by local women Donita Proctor and Pat Nees. The Camp Rose Theater was reopened in 1983 by the Camp Rose Players with one of their "oldies but goodies," "Snow White Goes West," directed by Jane E. Moore and the musical direction by J. Anna Settle. Stealing the show were Larry Nees as Queenie, the dragon lady of the Wild West, along with George Baker as Mr. White (Snow's dad), Sneaky Sam, and the voice of Queenie's talking mirror." (*Healdsburg Tribune* 20 Jan 1983, p.5).

Performing upstairs at the Inn and occasionally at the Senior Center, the Camp Rose Players once more became local favorites with such productions as "The Reluctant Debutante," "Dames at Sea," "Gigi," "My Fair Lady," and "Arsenic and Old Lace." In March 1985 Camp Rose Inn hosted, and Jane E. Moore directed, "I'll Get My Man," with Players Darryl Webb, Susie Engdahl, Gene Hill, Christina Trouette, Francesca Trouette, Florence Huffman, Alice Oberti, Scott Wright (usually behind the scenes) and directed by Jane Moore.

In 1989, the Camp Rose Players performed three super plays at the Senior Center, the first of which, "The Odd Couple" featured Pete Foppiano as Oscar and Dennis Mintum as Felix. Directed by John Green, the Players included Stephen Tice, Gene Hill, Michael Shelton, Cathryn Fairlee, and Robin Jordan. Next, "The Captain's Paradise"

reunited many of the original Players. Last in the year came "Elementary My Dear."

In 1991, The Camp Rose Players moved back to downstairs at the Camp Rose Inn and since then have been regularly performing 3 plays a year, usually in January, April, and October.

In 1997, the Players, to thank the community for their support over 20 years, performed "Guys and Dolls" as a benefit show for the Raven Theater for the Performing Arts. In July, they gave a reprise of "Josefa and Captain Fitch" at the Railroad Depot, and in October the Players returned to the Raven with "Annie Get Your Gun."

The 2003 bill at the Camp Rose Inn included "Born Yesterday" in February, "Something's Afoot" in May, and "Tom Jones" in September.



*Camp Rose Players in the production of Charley's Aunt, circa 1990.  
Photo courtesy of Jane Moore.*

"The Camp Rose Players' high level of professionalism is owed mostly to Director Jane Moore and Stage Manager Suzanne Salvon whose tireless work behind the scenes have set a standard that the rest of the troupe achieve with every performance. The most striking thing about watching a Camp Rose production is the obvious fun they seem to be having. As an all volunteer group, they put new meaning into the phrase 'Community Theater.'" (Dan Zastrow, HEALDSBURG ARTS COUNCIL NEWSLETTER, winter 1997) Getting tickets to this intimate, 36-seat theater is not an easy task. The Players do 3 productions a year so with 12 shows apiece, there are only 432 tickets available for each different play.

As Jane E. Moore, Resident Director had said, "I believe the key to our success is not only the unique space in which we perform, lending a new meaning to 'little theater,' but that we have a group which works well together doing something they truly enjoy – entertaining!"



# COMPETITIVE SWIMMING IN HEALDSBURG

by Charlotte Anderson

## THE FIRST DECADE

Over the years, "Lake Sotoyome," the water backed up by the seasonal dam at Memorial Beach, had been THE PLACE to be during the summer for swim lessons, recreational swimming, boating, water skiing, and the like. In the last few decades of the 20th century, more people were looking for a more year-around venue for swimming, and issues concerning the Russian River water flow, gravel skimming, and the height of the dam became more involved. The idea of a community swimming pool had been gaining momentum, and there already had been individual, club, and community fund-raisers to begin generating funds.

Even as the building of a pool finally got under way in 1979 at a site on the Healdsburg High School campus (after a great deal of controversy), there were complaints—particularly about the dropping of a shallow "training" pool for children and the handicapped. Finally settling the training pool issue and finding the funds, construction on it AND the "big pool" continued. Community members contributed time, effort, and materials to complete the landscaping.

Finally the pool complex—the culmination of a two-year funding drive, untold hours of volunteer labor, and around \$576,000—was due to open. The official opening was Monday, August 25, 1980, at noon. "The opening day anticipation award" went to Lee Plato, 9, who showed up at 9 a.m. The distinction of being the first paying customer went to Hawaii resident John Anderson, 77, who was visiting daughter Charlotte, and training for the National Masters Swimming Championships in Santa Clara. The grand opening and dedication of the Healdsburg Community Pool was held September 12, 1980, at 5 p.m.

Swim lessons, from beginning swimming to water safety, were moved from Memorial Beach to the Community Pool with classes scheduled around existing programs from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

In July 1982, the Healdsburg Swim Club, financed by Rotary, elected its first board of directors which included Will Johnson (Rotary), Carol Reiter (City of Healdsburg.), and Jerry Schroeder (local educational institutions.) The parent representatives were Fred Wetzel, Judy Conte, Steve Phelps, and Sherry Gehrman. About 40 swimmers were in the club which joined the U.S. Swim Association. Club practices began Wed. July 7 from 6 to 7:30 a.m. However, if competitive swimming were to become a reality in Healdsburg, necessary equipment had to be purchased: 8 starting platforms, 7 lane lines, kickboards, hand paddles, and so on to the tune of over \$6,000. Contributions were again requested by Dick Lopeman, the swimming coach.

In August 1982, the swim team and lap swimmers "pooled" their efforts so that the team could have two hours for practice, from 6 to 8 a.m. during which time lap swimmers could use specially designated lanes. Special events were scheduled to raise money, one of which was a "lap-a-thon," an event used for many subsequent years, and a Bingo night both proving to be successful.

The first "swim meet" was an intra-team affair which featured stroke swimmers from five classes in both boys' and girls' divisions in five events: freestyle, butterfly, back, breast, and individual medley. As this was a "first," all times were pool and team records! The results (no times included) were as follows: Boys 8 and under: Joshua Parent, Ross Gill; boys 9-10: Mike Hollingsworth, Brian Arndt, Jason Shallon; Boys 11-12: Brian Wetzel, Jim Provost, Jesse Reiter; Boys 13-14: Bryan Cartwright, Nate Pile; Boys 15-18: Robert Maddock, swimming to records in three events. Girls 8 and under: Skye Phelps, setting times and records in all five events; Girls 9-10: Summer Phelps, 3 events, and Wendy Heitz; Girls 11-12: Susie Hollingsworth, two events, and Anne Grace, two; Girls 13-14: Patti Hollingsworth, two events, Mary Callahan, and Michelle Wetzel; and Girls 15-18 Julianne Cadd, three records.

In 1984, Healdsburg High School opened the pool on April 9 for classes in April and May from 9 to 3 with the Swim Club taking

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over at 3 p.m. and with one hour set aside for lap swim. Public access began June 9 and summer Red Cross approved lesson charges increased to \$10.

After not winning a dual meet during the 1983 season, the HEALDSBURG SWIM FINS tasted victory three times during the 1984 season with victories over Sebastopol's Sea Serpents, the Wikiup Warriors, and the Santa Rosa Neptune B team. The Fins added members and all swimmers improved. The Swim Fins entered 65 swimmers in the Redwood Empire Swim League finals in August 1984, and 64 topped their best previous effort in at least one event.

At the end of 1985, Dick Lopeman, coach of the team from its inception, was so impressed with the increasing quality of his swimmers and their commitment and work ethics that he felt that year around swimming would have to be addressed soon. That year Tyler Gleason achieved AA time in his age group in the 50 yd. freestyle joining Lainie Bebbler who had earned hers in 1984 in the 50 yd. breast stroke. In competition, swimmers compete only against swimmers in their own age group. In addition, they strive for personal records and Pacific Swimming Association Standard Times (A, AA, AAA). AAA equals "Q time" which qualifies a swimmer for the Far Western Meets with some of the best young swimmers in the western region.

In 1986, the City was awarded a \$60,000 state parks grant to



*"Swim Fins Clan" featured the nine great-grandchildren of the late Chalmers and Samuel L. (Wood) Wattles. Back row, left, Shannon Smith, Carey Conley, Christy Wattles, J.J. Wattles, Casey Conley, front row, Lainie Bebbler, Chal Bebbler, Amy Brandt and Todd Brandt. Circa 1986. Photo courtesy of Jane Conley.*

add solar heating at the Pool and hoped to reduce the operating costs and extend the local swimming season. The Swim Fins steadily increased the number of A, AA, and AAA times. A TRIBUNE photo (18 July) was entitled "Swim Fins Clan" and featured the nine great-grandchildren of the late Chalmers and Samuel L. (Wood) Wattles. The cousins pictured were Shannon Smith, Amy and Todd Brandt, Casey and Cary Conley, Cristy and Jason Wattles, and Lainie and Chal Bebbler. At the Western Regionals in Napa in August 1986, the Fins' 9-10 year old girls medley relay was one of the most exciting races of the day. After Katey Welty, Azure DeCurtis, and Cary Conley had completed their legs, Lisa Seppi entered the water in 7th place, turned it on, and finished third!

*Healdsburg Tribune*, 30 January 1987, p.4, reported that "Healdsburg High School has a new sports team. For the first time ever, a Greyhounds swimming team will compete in the North Bay League's eight-school spring season beginning March 7." Although a budget was approved, a team coach hired, and student athletes already training, there was a delay due to the higher costs of an extended season. The Swim Fins' board resolved the issue and the Hounds were in business. After their first win, the Lady Hounds threw coach Amy Zimmer in the pool. The pool opened for laps and lessons in June with the Sonoma County YMCA operating the pool, conducting open swims, lessons, and lap swimming. The Swim Fins beat the Sonoma Sea Dragons for the first time ever in July, setting new team records—four individual and two relays: Cary Conley, 9-10, 100 IM; Logan McEwan, 8 & under, 100 IM; Tyler Gleason, 11-12, 50 back; Lainie Bebbler, 13-14, 100 breast. The two relay records were both set by the boys' 11-12: 200 yd. medley relay—Tyler Gleason, Joshua Jones, Casey Conley, Willie Seppi, and the 200 yd. free relay with Tyler, Casey, Willie, and Dustin Cordova. In the Redwood Empire League finals, the Fins were 8th, but racked up 123 time improved swims including Cary Conley's AAA time in the 50 fly.

In 1988, the Fins took 52 swimmers to the league finals at SRJC. They entered 293 individual events and set 159 p.r.'s. At the Ukiah Invitational, Nathan Salazar came within one point of being the highest point scorer. The Greyhound's swim team placed 4th at the NBL Swimming Championships. Also, the Greyhounds had a diving squad for the first time in school history, and diver Chris Duval missed first by only .6 of a point.

Denise Beer was the Healdsburg Swim Club coach in 1989, and the club continued its improvement taking 8th of 14 teams at the Ukiah Invitational and drowning Rohnert Park 331-184.

# THE SECOND DECADE

## DO SHARKS SWIM THE BACKSTROKE? IN HEALDSBURG THEY DO!

Now called the Sharks and coached by Gary Higgins, the Healdsburg swim club's 1990 season went from March 12 to August 15. In beating St. Helena 261-216, they were particularly dominant in relays, winning 7 of 8 events. Greyhound coach Rob Gronbach initiated 6 a.m. practices, and in their first meet freshman Tyler Gleason won the 100 M back, and junior Seth Chastain won the 100 free and the 200 IM.

The 1991 Shark season began on April 27 at Indian Valley College with Rob Gronbach and Sophie Ellis as coaches. In June at the Oak Park Short Course Invitational Seth Chastain, Greyhound league champion in the 100 fly, won three events and Kurt Peterson, 10, collected six A times! For the first time in 50 years, the Greyhound swim team sent several swimmers to the North Coast Section swim meet. The last time any Greyhound swimmers made it to the NCS meet was in 1941. At that time the team took 5th thanks to a 2nd and 3rd place by BILL AUTRY and a third by a HARRIS male. When Coach Gronbach, who had never heard of the pair, asked, "Where did they practice?" the answer was "probably Lake Sotoyome which was deep then and sported a platform with high and low diving boards!"

In the ensuing years, money matters threatened both the Sharks and the Greyhounds, but they managed to keep swimming. There were many, many fundraisers, including a swim-a-thon where swimmers attempted to swim the length of the Russian River, 99.2 miles. They did 100 for good measure!

In 1992, the Sharks' Board of Directors voted to adopt the Greyhound teams and assume operation of the pool through mid-June. A valuable asset to the community the Sharks provide training and education in competitive swimming for youths 6 to 18. Team swimming gives everyone a chance to compete; there are no "cuts" or "tryouts," just commitment. Members gain confidence, self-esteem, and a positive attitude toward life. Another example of family commitment is the Chastains. Seth began swimming early and later received the Buck Nardi Scholarship to continue at SRJC. His sisters Casey and ZanD both swam for the Sharks, and Casey also won gold medals in the Special Olympics!

In 1994, the Greyhound team, led by captains Danny Workman and Brittany Mache, was coached by Rob Gronbach; divers were coached by former Greyhound Seth Chastain and Mark Diaz. A great season spurred on by a couple of three-way sweeps of teams was marked by several wins by Cary Conley, Dennis Workman, Shane Collins, Dennis Sager and James Phillips. The Sharks scored big wins, too, one being against St. Helena where 4 Sharks won 3 events each and 5 Sharks won 2 events each.

The Healdsburg Swim Club began operating the Community Pool in 1995 with Aquatic Director Steve Skidmore running it to stay open all year long. That year Greyhound swimmer Cary Conley became the first Healdsburg High School swimmer in over 50 years to place at the NCS Swim Meet, as she took second place in the 100-yard backstroke and "shattered the Empire record by over two seconds in a time of 57.76 seconds." (*Tribune*, May 31, 1995, p.A-9) Another Greyhound record fell in the 400 freestyle relay as swimmers Tiffany Miller, Laura Russell, Liz Wistrom, and Conley finished in 3:54.97, eight seconds better than the previous record.

In the August 9 *Tribune*, a headline read: "Local Family Has Water Teeming with Swimming Sharks." The article featured the six Opperman cousins, Brian, Andrew, Stefan, Mallori, Jordan, and Whitney who combined for seven personal bests at the Willits Otters Invitational in August to help the Sharks take first place from among 15 teams. Later that season, the Sharks, taking 82 swimmers, placed third at the RESL finals with Steve Skidmore as coach. Tiffany Miller, who took 2 firsts and 4 thirds, attributed her improvement to the year around program having been established.

On June 1, 1996, the Healdsburg Community Pool was re-dedicated, with thanks, to its original founders—organizations such as Rotary and individuals such as John Max, Douglas Pile, and Walter "Buck" Nardi. Parents, in 1995, gave over 2,000 volunteer hours to keep the pool operational. Swim Club members took advantage of all year swimming, with Senior level swimmers Scott Valley, Ryan Hall, Tanja Gromala, Damien Carranza, Aimee Lords, Sara Donlin and Ryan Arata all turning in times that ranked them in the top ten percent of boys and girls swimming in the U.S. Interest extended to the "age group" youngsters, ages 9 to 13, coached by Bob Gregg, a group of 15 members who averaged a phenomenal daily attendance rate of 90 per cent.

The razing of the old swim center building in 1999 and the construction of new locker rooms and offices in 2000 forced swimmers to temporarily train at the Airport Club south of Windsor. Even with this obstacle, the Sharks kept improving. In the Zone Three Championships held at USE, Katie Van Horne won two events and

*Please see page 12*

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took third in two events. Crystal Silva took medals in two events and placed in two more. Malcolm Barrack topped personal bests in four events. The Greyhounds, also with a traveling obstacle, were touted as "a force to be reckoned with within the SCL. (*Tribune*, April 12, 2000, p. 5) Coach Laraine Carter's girls kept dropping times and improving.

Among the many fund raisers for the renovation project at the pool was "Paint-a-Tile." The community was invited to become part of local history and to purchase a tile that was then used in the new construction project. The tiles were painted by the purchaser or by a Swim Club volunteer who followed the purchaser's design. That proved quite successful, and when the pool project was completed and opened in June 2000, the tiles could be viewed at the entrances to the two locker rooms where they can still be seen today!

Healdsburg can be proud of its many dedicated swimmers (and their enthusiastic supporters) who have made names for themselves over the years.



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