

A Piece of Sonoma Elementary History

Interview and Article by Darleen Hunt - June 2007

Traveling back to the days when Sonoma Elementary was a clapboard schoolhouse is an easy trip for ninety-two year old Marie Robinson Foss. Marie was the custodian and guardian of the small wooden structure that used to rest on two acres on the north side of B Drive South just a stone's throw away from the current Sonoma Elementary. With a twinkle in her eye and a razor sharp memory, Marie can escort you back to a time when children used to arrive at school on foot carrying their lunches in lard pails or paper sacks.

Marie's first job of the day was to fill the coal stove with coal and make certain the temperature was comfortable for the teachers and their charges. Once school was in session, Marie would travel home across the street and wait for school to dismiss. After school, clad in a dress, she would head back across the street to resume her custodial duties of cleaning, mopping wooden floors with oiled mops, and washing the chalkboards. On occasion she would carry on a conversation with "Pete", the little guy who was often kept after school as a result of his behavior and numerous altercations with other children.

Marie remembers one unusual morning when she was greeted with tipped-over flowerpots and a cat resting on the top of the school's piano. The school had been vandalized the night before, and the intruders had left a convenient hole in a window for the cat to squeeze through, allowing him to spend a cozy evening in the coal-warmed schoolhouse.

Every summer brought the task of waxing floors. It is a necessary tradition that still carries on at the current Sonoma Elementary.

Marie grew up, married and raised her children in the Harper Creek school district. We are most fortunate and honored to have senior residents in Harper Creek that have been the foundational support in creating the beautiful progressive school district that we have today.



Marie Robinson Foss.
Age 92 years old
Married in 1933 to Harvey Foss. They were married for 70 years.
Children: Two
Brothers and Sisters: Two sisters and four brothers

Interesting Facts:

- Marie refers to herself as the runt in the family as there were twenty-six years between her and the next older sibling.
- Her father farmed and raised corn and potatoes. She refers to him as a potato man.
- Marie loves Norwegian Wolf Hounds and still has one today. Five years ago she traveled to Iowa to pick her most recent wolfhound friend.

Marie is the great aunt of Karen Ganey, Sonoma Elementary librarian.

