

Diablo Honors.....

Mary Fairman

By Dee and Tony Geisler

Mary Fairman, a 59-year resident of Diablo, has a true love for both people and animals. In addition to her dogs, she has cared for horses and peregrine falcons on her property in Diablo, and just loves wolves.

Mary was born 89 years ago in Seattle, Washington. She went to Highline High School next door to her home in Burien, which had a feed store, grocery store, drug store and beauty parlor. Mary went to Whitman College in Walla Walla for an English Literature degree and then the University of Washington for a Teaching Credential.



Mary's high school graduation



Mary and Val's wedding day

In 1956, Mary moved from Seattle to the Bay Area where she got a teaching job in South San Francisco. She met her husband Norval (Val) at a guest house or residence club that attracted college professionals.

Mary and Val, who was from Piedmont, were married in 1957 in Seattle. Val had completed college on the G.I. Bill and graduated from Stanford Law School. They moved to Diablo in 1962 when Mary took a first grade teaching job at Rancho Romero. Val practiced law with Cal Trans and retired in 2000.

In 1963, the Fairmans built the home in Diablo in which Mary still lives and where they kept two horses for many years. The Osmers next door also had a riding area next to their house. Mary fed the horses every day, rain or shine. She enjoys seeing the Dickersons' brown and white horses outside the kitchen window of her house and deer and squirrels through the large picture window of the living room.

The license plate on Mary's car bears the name "CHLTLAB" to show her special love for Labrador Retriever dogs. Liza, her twelve year old yellow lab, who is friendly and constantly in motion, has to share the back yard with the squirrels and let them have their peace. While we visited Mary, Liza entertained us with enthusiastic hand-licking and bringing us her toy to be thrown.

Mary's son Jeff, who lives nearby, was born in 1964 and attended Green Valley School, Monte Vista and Cal Poly where he met his wife Katy. Jeff and Katy's



Mary's wolf memorabilia

Mary's lifelong interest in wolves began along with her love of animals, especially dogs, and she shared it with her students. A favorite exchange between Mary and her students was "Ahh-wooooooo." On the first day of school when she returned from retirement to do a job share in fourth grade, past students from her prior first grade class greeted her with "Ahh-wooooooo."



Neil Thompson, Mary's father



Kylie, Jeff, Mary, Katy, Colter and (of course) dogs

Mary's son Jeff, who lives nearby, was born in 1964 and attended Green Valley School, Monte Vista and Cal Poly where he met his wife Katy. Jeff and Katy's son Colter is a junior at Colorado State, and their granddaughter Kylie is a freshman at Cal Poly. Mary's parents, the Thompsens, had a home in Diablo near Woody, the carved squirrel. Katy's grandmother was a Burgess and visited the Robert Burgess home in Diablo. Val and Mary were married for 60 years, until Val's death in 2016.

There are many things that are special to Mary about Diablo. Halloween was always fun for everyone in Diablo. Once, they had a bonfire in the middle of the road but had to dis-

continue it when outside kids came in and disrupted it.

She likes that houses in Diablo aren't all alike and aren't "scrunched together." Over the years, her family stayed in Diablo because of friends, large acreage for homes, no mortgage, visits to the Post Office and seeing the residents. She likes her home because of the views and the feeling that she is by herself but surrounded by other people. Though Mary has always been outgoing, she feels that meeting people in Diablo was easy partly due to a low turnover rate in homes and their commitment to building a good life in the Diablo community. She loves the "people we have on this street." Close friends of the Fairman family, all neighbors and other residents of Diablo, are Shirley Osmer, Nina Dickerson, Bruce and Sue Millar, Jack Imrie and Larry and Joan Porter.



Diablo was also a great place for Mary's son to be raised. Jeff sat on the fence between the Fairman and Osmer properties watching the Osmer's play baseball. When he was asked to join them, it began a lifelong friendship with Mark Osmer and others. Another Diablo family with four boys, the Tiernans, arranged themselves by height like "stepping stones" and took in Jeff Fairman as their brother when he fit in as the shortest one.

As they raised their children, they also helped to save an endangered species.



When Val was dating Mary he developed a serious interest in peregrine falcons, the fastest animal on the earth. Soon Mary shared his interest in this truly remarkable bird. Val hired a rock This was only the beginning. Val and Mary built two units for breeding pairs and three smaller houses for single falcons. Peregrines, like some other raptors, have a preference for other fine-feathered friends, especially pigeons, putting a dent in the Fairman's bank account. They would bring in 200 frozen pigeons at a time to feed their growing family.

Val and Mary are to be credited as key players in saving this highly endangered species. They released 30 peregrine falcons into the wild, many of them from Diablo. When visiting Mary you are greeted with a sign with a picture of a peregrine falcon and the phrase "230 MPH." The fastest Lamborghini would be envious of 230 MPH.

Thank you, Mary, for being such a great neighbor, lover of all creatures, and friend!



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