

# Diablo Honors.....

## Kay Batts

**By Marilee Headen**

Katherine (Kay) Siemssen was born in 1938 in Alexandria, MN. After completing high school, she embarked on a distinguished academic journey, winning a National Merit Scholarship to Marquette University, from which she graduated summa cum laude. She then traveled by train and ship to the University of Munich, where she had been awarded a full scholarship and a Fulbright Travel Grant. Enjoying her time in Europe, she then began a Master's Degree program in Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University in Bologna, Italy. She returned to the United States to complete her MA studies, and in 1963 received her MA degree from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD.

Armed with those impressive academic credentials, she was hired by Chase Manhattan Bank to work in the international department and was subsequently chosen as the first woman to participate in Chase's Management Training Program. She advanced through the ranks to become an "Assistant Treasurer, with loaning authority".

Kay met her future husband, Elmer Batts, while on a safari to Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Elmer had earned his M.D. from Harvard University Medical school, interned at San Francisco General Hospital, and completed his residency in dermatology at Stanford University School of Medicine. Early in his professional career, Elmer was an associate clinical professor of dermatology at Stanford University, and he was also the dermatology consultant at San Quentin Prison. From 1955 to 1957, he served his country as a Captain in the US. Army Medical Corps. He then concentrated on the practice of clinical dermatology. Elmer had moved to Diablo in 1963 in order to continue breeding and showing his beloved Arabian horses. An avid equestrian who had ridden to the summit of Mt. Whitney, he also enjoyed his bonsai and orchid gardens, and playing his violin in chamber music groups.



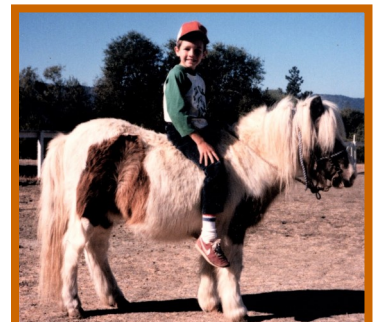
**Kay in 1971**



**Elmer & Kay's Wedding**

Kay and Elmer married and Kay resigned her job and moved to Diablo as a bride. Their honeymoon was a trail-ride sponsored by the American Forestry Association in the Colorado Rockies, where Kay remembers helping to pitch tents, with snow coming down, at an altitude over 10,000 feet. During Kay's early days in Diablo, she remembers the potluck meetings of the San Ramon Valley Horsemen and of the Diablo Arabian Horse Association. Present at these meetings were many of the area ranchers whose names are found today on subdivision signs and street signs. Their long-time horseshoer, Bill Hardy, known as "Tardy Hardy" regularly had one Diablo day where he started out in the morning at the home of Bill Hale on the Alameda Diablo, where after doing his work he received a home-cooked breakfast. By lunchtime he managed to travel to the Caballo Ranchero Drive home of Brig. Gen. Frank J. McSherry, U.S.A., Ret'd, and his equestrienne wife Elizabeth. After Bill tended to Mrs. McSherry's horses and ponies, "the General" would personally cook beef stew for lunch. By mid-afternoon he moved up the road to the Batts' residence. After taking care of the horse/pony hooves at the barn, he would come up to the house, where Kay served a coconut or banana-cream pie made from scratch, and Bill, Elmer and Kay sat around the dining table hearing Bill bring the latest "news" from ranches in the Valley, on the mountain, and on the other side of the mountain.

Elmer and Kay have two sons, Ed and Harper, who attended Green Valley School, Los Cerros Middle School, and Monte Vista High School. Both sons practice law in the State of California. Ed is a partner in a large law firm, based in its Palo Alto Office, and specializes in corporate law. Harper is a partner in another large law firm, based in its Silicon Valley Office, and is an intellectual property litigator. Kay's grandchildren are enthusiastic about skiing and swimming. One grandson studies the violin, and is now playing the violin Elmer had played.



**Harper in 1985**



***The Batts family in 1979***

Elmer passed away in 2017 at age 97.

Kay loves the water. In June 1956, she was certified as a water safety instructor by the American Red Cross. She taught swimming and lifesaving for the American Red Cross in the summers of 1956, 1957, 1958. In the summer of 1959, she was a waitress at Swiftcurrent Lodge in Glacier National Park. In the summer of 1960, she was the aquatics director at the JCC Children's Ranch in Colorado. Kay is a dedicated lap-swimmer and still swims one-quarter mile almost daily, rain or shine, at her swim club.

Her favorite snorkeling vacations with family members have been at Ras Muhammed on the Red Sea, Benguerua Island off the coast of Mozambique, Lanai, Bali, and Palau. Especially after Elmer's retirement, Kay and Elmer traveled frequently not only to music festivals in Germany and Italy, but back to their favorite continent of Africa, revisiting not only the game parks in East Africa, but also the game parks in Botswana and Namibia.

At the time of the pandemic lockdown in March 2020, Kay had served 33 consecutive years as an organist at St. Isidore Church in Danville. She holds both the "Service Playing Certificate" and the "Colleague Certificate" of the American Guild of Organists, and has also served as interim/substitute organist at churches of many denominations in the East Bay.

An avid hiker, who has long worked for the preservation of trails, Kay was honored when the DCSD in 2016 named "Kay's Trail" in Diablo in her honor. Kay feels privileged to live in Diablo, and appreciates its tree-lined streets, its safety, and its immediate access to Mt. Diablo.



***The Batts family on horseback in 1991***



***The Batts family in 1997***

Kay Batts is a remarkable woman and we honor her for her many achievements in life and for being a great neighbor and friend.

***Sponsored by the Diablo Property Owners' Association***