

Diablo Honors.....

Patti Miller

By Jan Novak

Patti McGrath was born 95 years ago, a third generation Bay Area native with family roots here that go back to the 1860s. She was and at heart still is “an Oakland girl”, one of four lively sisters. She attended Holy Names High School in Oakland and then went on to Holy Names College. Her college education was interrupted when she met Bob Miller and fell in love. Bob and Patti’s parents were long-time friends. Bob had attended Santa Clara University for one year when World War II interrupted. He was sent to the University of Kansas for naval officer training. While there, he played football and ultimately completed his degree in mechanical engineering. He served 2-1/2 years in the Navy and then returned home to the Bay Area.



**The McGrath Sisters:
Anita, Patti, Dottie & Shirley**



Bob & Patti’s Wedding

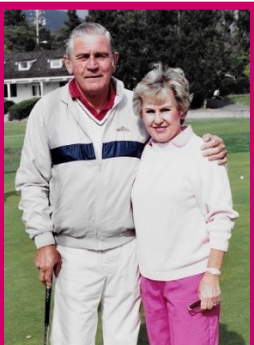
Bob’s parents brought him along to dinner at the McGrath’s one evening in 1946. While there, he asked if any of the four McGrath sisters wanted to go to the movies. Patti said yes and the romance began. Patti’s father insisted that she either complete college or attend business school so she would always be self-sufficient before marrying. She rather reluctantly complied with the business school option as it was the shortest. Bob and Patti married in 1947. Patti’s father and uncle started a business, Pacific Rolling Door (PRD), which made the rolling gates you see in shopping malls and aircraft jetways. Before Patti and Bob met, Patti’s dad and uncle asked Bob to come work for the company, as they needed a mechanical engineer. Bob did not realize at the time this would turn into a 45-year career, with him serving as President and part owner of this family business, with its tight-knit group of long-time employees. A few years after Patti and Bob married, Jeff (who has lived on Club House Road for 30+ years) was born and the Miller family moved to Walnut Creek. Jeff was joined by brothers and sisters Tim, Sue, Terri, and Tom.

In Walnut Creek, Patti and Bob met and became great friends with Betty and Ted Merrill. When the Millers moved to Alamo, they convinced the Merrills to move as well. While living there, they also built a cabin on Clear Lake which remains a cherished family compound, where most of the summer and every Thanksgiving are enjoyed. Clear Lake was always Patti and Bob’s favorite spot away from home.

After 15 years in Alamo, Betty brought Patti to Diablo where El Nido was just being developed. The Merrills bought a lot and the Millers bought one two doors down. They paid a whopping \$25,000 for the lot. Bob was integral in the design and building of the house that Patti still lives in. He built many of the original cabinets himself, one of the dozens of projects he took on for the family over the years. Patti still loves the house. It is shaded by a beautiful heritage oak in the back which has become her favorite reading spot on nice days. She is an avid reader.



Terri, Tom, Jeff, Tim & Sue



Bob & Patti golfing

In Alamo, the Millers had belonged to Contra Costa Country Club. They sold that membership and bought the cheaper (!) Diablo Country Club membership for a few hundred dollars. Bob and Patti played both tennis and golf. Patti was the Captain of the Holy Niners in 1990 and worked on the DCC Inferno for years. She was also the consummate volunteer at schools and church and always said yes to any social activity: bocce, bridge, book club, mahjong, bunco. Bob was on the Board of the Diablo Community Services District. At the time, Diablo’s security was provided by a private security company, the Diablo Patrol, which reported to Bob. Bob was named the Diablo Property Owners’ Association Citizen of the Year in 1984.

The kids (with the exception of Jeff, who was already off to college) played tennis and enjoyed living in Diablo. Patti and her children remember a much more rural, horsey Diablo with large sections of El Nido and Caballo Ranchero yet to be developed. They jokingly refer to Tom, the youngest, as their “country club” brother as he was still quite young when they moved to Diablo and thus received the full benefit of a childhood spent in this idyllic place.



Patti with her family in Ireland

Bob passed away in 2007 but the Miller family remains exceptionally close. Patti now has 13 grandchildren ranging in age from 19-37 and three young great-grandchildren. They share many memories of holidays in the Miller home. And they have created more memories through big family trips to Italy, a dude ranch in Wyoming, Vermont, Ireland, Washington, Laguna Beach and Paris.

When I asked Patti why she has stayed in Diablo for so many years, she talked about all the wonderful memories and great friends she has in our community. “I loved the tennis and golf groups. And it’s such a friendly neighborhood, especially up here on El Nido.” She has especially appreciated her long-time friendship with the Merrills (whose son Charlie is now a Diablo resident) and her neighbors Carol Santa Maria and Dick and Gail Breitweiser.



Patti is a funny, lively, interesting woman. Diablo has been lucky to call her our friend and neighbor for 50 years.

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