

Diablo Honors.....

Marlys Worden

By Tony & Dee Geisler

Marlys Worden has lived in Diablo for 57 years. During a long, successful teaching career at Green Valley School, she taught many Diablo children. She proudly remembers the many wonderful Diablo parents and students in her classes and has been able to keep up with some of them through the years. Marlys was often seen at the Post Office with her gold '74 Mercedes 450 SL which she drove all over Diablo.

Marlys was born in 1936 and grew up in Rochester, MN where her French teacher pronounced her name "Mar-lees." Marlys moved to California after being recruited at the University of Minnesota to work as a teacher since many of the books used in California schools were written at her university. She taught third grade at Decoto school near Union City and lived in a garden apartment with friends. Marlys met her longtime husband Earl Worden at their garden apartments in San Leandro in 1959.

Earl Worden was born in Rye, NH in 1931. He received his Bachelors and Masters degrees at the University of New Hampshire and then applied to the University of California, Berkeley, in 1954 to enter the Doctoral program in Physical Chemistry because California had the most Nobel laureates. He received his PhD from Cal in 1959. During his lifelong tenure as a physical chemist at Lawrence Livermore Labs, he received a number of awards for his work including collaboration on the discovery of the new elements curium, berkelium, californium and einsteinium. In 1985, he received the Louis A. Strait award for outstanding accomplishment in various areas of spectroscopy.



Marlys & Earl in 1985



Mrs. Worden's 1966-67 1st Grade Class

Earl and Marlys were married in 1960. After one year teaching at Decoto, Marlys was hired to teach at Green Valley School in Danville. They lived in a rental cottage by the river in the Greenbrook area in Danville and then a rental in Alamo before deciding to buy a home in 1964. They chose Diablo for its beauty and its location near their jobs. They looked at several homes in Diablo but ultimately bought a house on what is now Verda del Ciervo.

They fell in love with the neighborhood and made lifelong friends with some of whom Marlys still corresponds. Several others from Marlys' home state of Minnesota lived near the Wordens in Diablo including Bev and Jack Gilbert, Bob Nilssen, Jacquie Baggett and Nancy and John Olander. Diablo was friendly and

welcoming to the Wordens, and Seth, their son, remembers it as a wonderful place to grow up with easy bike rides to any destination within Diablo and fishing in Diablo Lake. There was little traffic, no stop signs and few street signs.

In the early 60s, the Diablo Services District asked the residents to come up with good Spanish names for their streets. El Nido at the time was called "La Salida East," but Marlys' cul-de-sac was unnamed. At that point, Diablo didn't seem to need street names because residents knew the locations of houses by the names of the families and the homes. The Wordens and their neighbors came up with Vereda Del Ciervo which means "path of the deer," but the wooden sign was incorrectly printed with Verda Del Ciervo which means "no such word of the deer."

Their son Seth was born in 1967 and attended Green Valley, Los Cerros, Monte Vista and San Francisco State.

Tame, partially tamed and wild animals have always had a presence in Diablo. Years ago when there were no stop signs, an old basset hound looked for a sunny spot and slept in the middle of Alameda Diablo. When he saw a car coming, he would slowly move but luckily was never hit by a car. Samantha, a “tame” deer with part of her tail missing was a local sight always seeking a handout. Quail and mockingbirds were common along with an occasional opossum or raccoon. Occasionally a peacock that probably lived on upper Alameda Diablo would land on their house. Last year, a bobcat with beautiful markings was seen in Marlys’ yard about ten feet from the house.



Marlys remembers getting her mail at the Post Office which was in the Milk Barn, now part of the Keane’s home next to the upper parking lot. On very hot days, stepping inside the Milk Barn was very cool and refreshing. Mrs. Stott, one of the Postmasters, lived in a small home near what is now Anne Coleman’s house. Bettye Johanson, another Postmaster, lived at the Carriage House above the garage at what is now the Corkern’s home on Calle Arroyo.

Marlys and Earl shared a lifelong passion for hiking and the outdoors, and Mount Diablo was a favorite place for them to hike. Marlys has continued hiking after Earl’s passing in May 2020.

Earl also enjoyed swimming, gardening, cooking and skiing. He had a passion for poker which started at Cal with friends and lasted for 60 years ending with Covid. There are now only three surviving members.

Marlys described life in leafy, green, park-like Diablo during the early years as innocent and safe. A popular special event for the adults in Diablo was the annual Property Owners’ dinner. Marlys and Earl attended all of them. They looked forward to dressing up, joining their friends, meeting new people, having drinks and playing the “last person standing” game with the longest residents. The last ones standing were always Dorothy Peterson and Penny Adams.

Marlys has had a fulfilling, interesting life. Like the other Diablo Honorees, she is a delightful person. If you were in one of her elementary classes at Green Valley, be sure to stop her at the Post Office and tell her what you have been doing. We are lucky to have such a wonderful neighbor in Diablo.



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