



Margaret Harloe History

Our school is named after Mrs. Margaret Harloe who taught in the Arroyo Grande Valley from 1926 until her retirement in 1958. In honor of her memory, "Margaret Harloe Day" is celebrated each February. Students study about Mrs. Harloe and participate in special school/classroom projects. The following is from a classroom publication created by a former teacher, Mrs. Delta Newby.

Margaret Harloe A Real Lady

Where did the name of our school come from? Well, there was a teacher with that name. Let's take a look at her and see why her name lives on.

It was February 18, 1884 when Margaret Eliza Phoenix was born in Casmalia, California. She was the fourth child born to Charles Phoenix and Emma Kinney Phoenix. She had two older brothers and a sister.

There were eight younger children in the family. In 1890, when Margaret was six years old, the family moved from Casmalia to Arroyo Grande, California. They built their home at 417 Traffic Way. The house was torn down in 1921 and another one built on the lot.

Margaret attended school in Arroyo Grande. She loved sports and was an avid basketball player. Her friends remember her playing basketball with her hairdo falling down in her face. Perhaps the fact that she had seven brothers had something to do with her love of sports. In fact, it was said that she was somewhat of a tomboy - always playing games with the boys. Many years later, when she was teaching, she coached a girl's baseball team that could beat any team in the county.

Mrs. Phoenix was very adamant about her children getting an education. Four of the five girls became teachers and the other one went to Business College. Margaret loved to read and the family was worried that she might lose her eyesight from reading late at night by kerosene lamps. She would read until one or two o'clock in the morning.

Margaret graduated from Arroyo Grande High School in 1902. She took a county teacher's exam and was hired to teach in the Santa Margarita area. It was the Rinconada School, a one-room school, and she was the only teacher. She boarded with a family and rode her bicycle five miles to school. She always said that was the longest five miles because there were no fences and she was afraid of cattle.

In 1905 she entered UCLA Normal School and graduated in 1907. She paid her own way through school. In July of that year, she was hired to teach in Arroyo Grande. She taught there for two years, but she really wanted to move to a larger city. She got a teaching position in Tustin and taught junior high from 1909-1912.

In 1912 she married Archie M. Harloe in San Francisco. They moved to Taft, California where she taught from 1912-1915. In 1915 a son, Leon M. Harloe was born. They moved to Bicknell and she took time off to be a mother and housewife. In 1921 another son, Archie M. Harloe was born.

In 1925, when Margaret was expecting her third child, tragedy struck. Her husband died of sunstroke. The insurance company did not cover sunstroke at that time.

Margaret moved back to Arroyo Grande and took a job teaching at Oso Flaco. She taught one semester. Then on March 22, 1926 a daughter, Norma C. Harloe was born.

In September of 1926 Margaret started back to teaching. She taught in Arroyo Grande until retirement in 1958. The first school in Arroyo Grande was a large two-story building and a small building for the primary grades. It was located on the corner where Mullahey Ford now stands. In 1935 the Orchard Street School opened and Margaret Harloe was the eighth grade English teacher. She always said that she wished she could start all over again. She loved every minute of teaching.

The Arroyo Grande School Board decided in 1953 that a new elementary school was needed. They wanted to name the new school after someone in the school system and since Margaret Harloe had taught in Arroyo Grande for so many years, they thought it would be appropriate to name the new school after her. A groundbreaking ceremony was held in November 1954. By December the uprights for the walls and the beams for the roof were in place. The school was completed and ready for classes in September of 1955.

Margaret Harloe lived 23 years after the school opened, but her name lives on in the lives of thousands of students who have attended Margaret Harloe Elementary School.