



At the Centennial Celebration of the Marin Circle Fountain last Sunday, Sara Holmes (top left) was honored by City Councilmembers Susan Wengraf and Laurie Capitelli. Looking splendid at its 100th birthday, the Marin Circle Fountain. Rosemary Mucklow, former Mayor Shirley Dean (above left), John Aronovici (center), of the Berkeley Historical Society, and Taylor Kempf (right), selling Marin Circle Fountain stationery.

Marin Circle Fountain, Northbrae District celebrated at centennial fete

Close to three hundred people gathered for the centennial celebration of the Marin Circle Fountain and Walk last Sunday afternoon – an event with many interesting features. Many of them centered on Sara Holmes of Shattuck Avenue, who is the unofficial but highly recognized leader of the Friends of the Fountain and Walk – the group of volunteers that helps maintain the Marin Circle Fountain. Holmes also coordinated Sunday's centennial celebration at which she was introduced by Councilmembers Laurie Capitelli (District 5) and Susan Wengraf (District 6).

Once she was introduced, Holmes did not hesitate when speaking into the microphone to express her gratitude to the many who have contributed to the Friends of the Fountain and Walk – especially those who through the years have volunteered on the first Saturdays on every month to

maintain the fountain area.

Holmes also reminded the crowd that the Friends are embarking on a capital campaign to raise sufficient funds to repair the balustrade that surrounds the fountain. Many of them are deteriorating and need repair.

By selling postcards and t-shirts and by accepting donations on that day – including two \$500 contributions from anonymous donors, \$12,000 was raised. Later, Holmes said that was a good start to a campaign that she sees happening in phases over several years. The next step Holmes says is to create a design team that will create an architectural scheme for the project.

Other goodies

There were freshly baked cookies and treats, mounds of fresh fruit, as well as tins of Peet's coffee and a grand carrot cake donated by Virginia Bakery. There were centennial items for

purchase including Friends of the Fountain and Walk t-shirts, and Marin Circle gift cards – all proceeds going to newly announced capital campaign.

John Aronovici from the Berkeley Historical Society was there too, standing beside a poster covered with historical photographs and describing to guests how the Marin Circle (and fountain) was constructed above the Solano Tunnel.

Former Mayor Shirley Dean was there too, wearing a velvet hat decorated with silk flowers that her husband Dan's grandmother, Margaret Dean, had worn to the original dedication of Marin Circle 100 years before. Dean's hat was a big hit with the crowd, and it begged lots of storytelling.

For example, Holmes told the story of the neighborhood coming together in the mid 1990s to rebuild the fountain – which had not operated since 1958, when it was demolished when a truck traveling down Marin Avenue lost use of its brakes.

Joe Kelly, who now resides on Eunice Street, remembered the day of the accident. In 1958, Kelly was 12-years old and a newspaper carrier for the Berkeley Gazette. More often than not, Kelly delivered two routes and picked up his newspapers every afternoon on the grassy island between Mendocino and Los Angeles Avenues – the same location of last Sunday's centennial celebration.

On the day of the accident, Kelly was folding newspapers on the grassy patch when he heard a loud boom. Scampering up the street with a few other boys, Kelly was

among the first to arrive to witness the accident. In the middle of the Marin Circle, a half-ton truck was on its side and its heavy-set driver – all bloodied – was cursing and yelling for help. Yellow roofing tiles spilled everywhere, and the fountain was gone – completely obliterated by the collision.

Kelly remembers that the fountain had been dry for years – a place for children to play and hide. So, no water was spilled in the accident, just lots of yellow roofing tiles.

More recognition

As part of the celebration, Bill Anderson, a Regional Director for the American Planning Association, acknowledged the Northbrae District of Berkeley as one of this year's Great Places of America – a distinction shared with 10 streets, 10 neighborhoods and 10 public spaces throughout America. Other designations in California this year include Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood and Fairmont

Park in Riverside.

According to the APA, the Northbrae District of Berkeley stands out for its environmentally sensitive plan: how the streets and residential lots were platted in order to capitalize on views of the Bay and fit into the contours of the hilly terrain; its compact and walkable design, including a network of connecting footpaths; and the inclusion of interesting features such as the Circle Fountain, Indian Rock Park and the North Branch Library. Anderson also cited the residents, civic and business organizations for their continued involvement in maintaining the district's special qualities. With the help of District 5 Legislative Aide Jill Martinucci, Anderson presented a plaque commemorating the honor to Holmes.

As guests departed the celebration, some of them traversed car traffic in the circle to stand beside the fountain. Many photos were taken, as children splashed in the fountain waters and squealed in delight.



District 5 Legislative Aide Jill Martinucci and Bill Anderson of the APA