20 Years Ago

EDITOR’S NOTE: For this 20th anniversary issue of The Post, we asked some of our friends to reminisce about what they were doing 20 years ago. We know you’ll find their responses as interesting as we did. It seems only fair, though, to begin with my own.

My flashback is to FORTY years ago. It was a little like a moment from “The Graduate” – except the family friend advising me on my future didn’t say “Plastics!” Instead, he said he’d always wanted to publish a small town newspaper. In 2004, I called to tell him I had taken his advice.

In between, I raised two wonderful daughters, wrote and directed films, videos and stage shows, owned a SCUBA travel agency, and visited more than 30 countries in Europe, Africa, North and South America – as well as most of the United States.

My father was right. If you love what you do, you’ll never have to work.
-- Terry Smith

Von Hurson is a wine educator and The Petaluma Post’s wine columnist.

A 20-year flashback....

Immediately a song came to mind: “Those were the days, my friend....” And back then I thought they truly would never end. Twenty years seems like a lifetime ago – and like just yesterday. The lifetime ago part goes back to the days when air travel was something wonderful. Sadly, the pioneer of aviation, Pan Am, no longer exists -- but it was the heart and soul of air travel and I was proudly a part of its airborne spirit. Twenty years ago I was providing care, feeding and smiles to passengers traveling to London, Germany, France and Central America. In those days, Pan Am served up drinks and hot meals on flights as short as one hour. My, how things have changed.

Now, twenty years later, I have a happy second life – in wine. But it’s so easy to mentally go back, traveling on memories, to my former life. Recalling the first “Welcome on board” to the last “Thanks for flying with us”, brings me a big, happy-memory-filled smile.

Jean Grant-Sutton is the Owner and Director of BodyWorks Integrative Yoga and Stress Management Center and a frequent contributor to The Post.

In 1987 I was living with my husband of two years, renting a house on Mountain View Avenue in Petaluma. We were new parents of a one-year-old, and I remember putting her in a backpack and walking to downtown Petaluma to visit the newly-opened coffeehouse called Christian’s Cafe. Coriether’s was still on the corner of Kentucky and Western. Marette’s was still open down the street and Petaluma’s Mill was just opening with little shops and restaurants. It was a sweet time in Petaluma. I remember driving down Sunnyslope Avenue and it was partly dirt. There were so many potholes and bumps that we had driven down it when I was pregnant to help induce labor. Soon thereafter, they annexed that neighborhood into the city and put in sidewalks and repaved. I’ve enjoyed every minute of life here in Petaluma, watching it grow as my family has grown, and as I have grown now to own a business and become a grandma!

Cheri Sweet is the owner of Seasons on Kentucky Street in Petaluma.

1987 was the year that I moved to Petaluma. I had just seen an article about Petaluma in The San Francisco Chronicle with a picture of Patty Hilligoss – a female mayor. I liked it. Most of that year was spent renovating the home we had purchased, and the big treat for my husband and me was to go to Le Bistro restaurant on Sunday for the $6 Champagne Brunch.

Terry Bryant is owner and chemist at MoonEssence, now on Western Avenue in Petaluma.

1987 – An eternity ago. I was in my 25th year working for the U. S. Postal Service and was Director of Customer Service for the Stockton Management Sectional Center. The job was traditionally held by men in those days, but women were finally able to get closer to the glass ceiling. (I think there were only two of us nationwide.) I was responsible for almost a thousand employees, over 100 post offices and stations, marketing, dictation, labor disputes, employee evaluations – not to mention dealing with all kinds of crisis situations. I could go on and on. Five years later I was able to take an “early out” and retired at age 48! The postal service was good to me and I gave 120% in return. I was able to be creative in a different kind of way. I tell people that the postal service made me grow up, thickened my skin to criticism (Isn’t the boss an easy target!), and taught me to appreciate all the hard work that most people do for you. My usual cliché was “I don’t feed monkeys” -- an adopted management philosophy mentioned in a Harvard Business Journal article.

Today, the curiosity to understand the world around me that served me so well in the postal service continues to serve me well at MoonEssence. I’m still able to be creative, but in more traditional ways (oil painting and product formulation). I’m all grown up (Yes, 5’1” is grown up!), and time and MoonEssence have softened my skin somewhat. But I still don’t feed monkeys.

Linda and Michael Gonzales own and operate Gallery One on Western Avenue in Petaluma.

Congratulations to The Post for 20 years of excellence. Karen Phillips and Terry Smith have made significant, positive changes since assuming ownership. Best wishes for at least another 20.

What were we doing 20 years ago in 1987? Twenty years is a mere speck in geologic time.

Linda was teaching full time at St. Vincent High School. She started in 1971. She taught art, photography, art history and appreciation, and was the yearbook advisor. On the side, she did fundraising for the school and taught stained glass for adult education.

I was also a full-time teacher at St. Vincent. I taught classes in Spanish, speech, and debate and coached the debate team. I was student activities advisor, President of the Golden Gate Speech Association, and a member of CHSSA and NFL (National Forensic League, not the National Football League).

1988 was a very special year for us. While the year began somewhat routinely, it turned out to be a very busy, exciting and challenging year. In January, we took a bus full of high school students on a ski trip to Tahoe. During spring break, we took a bus full of St. Vincent students and their French guests from Aix-en-Provence on a Disney/Universal Studios trip. In June, we took a two-week trip to northern and eastern Europe, including Russia and Berlin. We were chaperoned by about 16 students.

During the summer, we had our fifth annual open art studio at our home. What had started out as a small show in our living room had expanded to our entire house and basement. We were available anytime of the day or evening. We wanted our life back.

So, in very early September, we decided to take over a former chiropractor’s office on Liberty Street. We spent every free moment after the school day cleaning and painting the interior and exterior of the former basement office. Labs, examination and changing rooms had to be changed into a gallery.

Lighting had to be installed. City permits had to be obtained. We wanted to open Gallery One before the holidays.

Oh, yes. Inventory! We contacted friends at the Terra Linda Art Association and Marin Society of Artists for wall art. Pottery, fused glass, soft sculpture, stained glass and jewelry from friends, and some of Linda’s work completed the original project. The rest is history. We have come a long way. In October, we will begin a year-long celebration of our own 20th anniversary.

Karen Phillips and Terry Smith celebrate their 20 years of excellence.

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