

Elk Grove Citizen ONLINE

LIFESTYLE

EGUSD – Super Grads – part 3

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Today, we give a huge HHH salute to a remarkable Elk Grove Super Grad who made the front page of the Elk Grove Citizen last week! Gerald Derr was named as Man of the Year for 2008, and that is an honor that is of no surprise to Elk Grove folks. Gerald Derr's middle name must be "fireman" for that is what many of us think of first when we hear his name—but the fire department is only one part of his many contributions to our community. Truly, he is a super super grad, and we can indeed be proud that he chose to become such an important part of Elk Grove. He has served as Elk Grove's fire chief, he was the first general manager of the Community Services District, and he was elected as a director of the district for two terms. If you recall we changed the name of the organization to Cosumnes Community Services District when Galt became a part of the service area. Born and raised in the Elk Grove area, Gerald Derr attended local schools, graduated from Elk Grove High, and began his fire fighting career as a high school student. He was chosen as Elk Grove Citizen of the Year in 1986.



We also give a huge HHH salute today to a very special lady who was the honored guest at a birthday party on Saturday because she had reached the remarkable age of 102. Katie Feickert Ehresman was born in 1907 in North Dakota, but she attended Elk Grove school for several years. I am going to consider her a grad even though she was not able to go on to high school. The school Miss Katie went to was known as the Elk Grove School at that time. The building still stands on the west side of Highway 99 just north of Wal-Mart, but it has not been a school since 1922. When I interviewed Katie Ehresman last fall, I asked her about her secret for longevity because I want to reach 100, as some of you may want to also. This is what she told me, "I have worked hard all my life..... but I have loved everything that I did."

That is good advice for all of us. Happy Birthday Super Grad, Katie Feickert Ehresman!

And, here is another HHH salute. We were saddened this week to hear of the death of Sheldon High School student Ben Underwood who amazed everyone with his courage and his extraordinary skills. Fighting cancer since he was a toddler, Ben was blind, but he taught himself to identify objects by making sounds with his tongue. The sound waves allowed him to stay clear of obstacles in his path. Although he missed graduating from high school, I am putting him on my list as a Super Grad, and we send our condolences to his family, his classmates, and all who knew him.

On with the Super Grads -----

Scott Boras (Elk Grove, Class of 1970)—There is probably no one in the world of baseball who is as well known as Scott Boras. But although this Super Grad is indeed a very important "player" in that sport, you are mistaken if you think he is an active first baseman or pitcher. Scott is the president of the Scott Boras Corporation, based in Newport Beach, and he is the most prominent sports agent in the world for professional baseball players. In fact, Scott practically created the entire process of agents negotiating contracts for college and semi pro baseball players. When you look at the list of baseball players Scott has represented, you are overwhelmed with their fame! And, behind it all is our EGHS Super Grad, Scott Boras. Scott is without question a most successful attorney and a graduate of McGeorge School of Law. The Boras family is active in the community as are Scott's siblings. They all attended Pleasant Grove Elementary and Joseph Kerr Junior High. Unfortunately, though, I cannot take any credit for having been his teacher, although I wish I had.

Mike Fischlin (Elk Grove, Class of 1972)—Super Grad Mike Fischlin is vice president of the Scott Boras Corporation, but before he joined Scott's company, he had a long career as a professional baseball player. As a shortstop, Mike played with such well known teams as the Houston Astros, Cleveland Indians, New York Yankees, and the Atlanta Braves, and I have been told that Mike was Scott's first client. Mike's family has longtime connections to the Elk Grove-South Sacramento area, and his siblings are actively involved in many

activities. As with Scott, I cannot claim Mike as my former student, although he did attend Elk Grove Elementary and Joseph Kerr—but I first knew him as our paper boy when we lived on Amethyst Way. He was a hard working young man even then!

Brigadier General Donald Ralph (Elk Grove, Class of 1974)—Regular readers of this column will recognize the name of Don Ralph because I wrote a series on him in 2006 when a group of his classmates traveled to Nebraska to see him sworn in as a Brigadier General. Don went to Pleasant Grove Elementary, and then on to Joseph Kerr. I was his teacher there, and have followed his career over the years. Don was a master musician, and he still is, but he chose to do something else with his career. He graduated from the U. S. Air Force Academy and went on to be a pilot. He is presently the mobilization assistant to the Director of Global Operations, U. S. Strategic Command, at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska. He is also an international pilot for Delta Airlines.

Jo Gusman (Elk Grove, Class of 1976)—My first encounter with this well known educator, now a national and world trainer of adults, was when she came to Joseph Kerr Junior High. She was in the 7th grade, and I was fortunate to be her teacher. Jo had lived in Sloughhouse and gone to Cosumnes River Elementary School, but even though she grew up in a Spanish speaking home, her English skills were great, and she was an excellent student. She started out as a bilingual teaching assistant, and then became a teacher, and now she is one of the best known educational consultants and keynote speakers on all topics related to the teaching of students who are English Language Learners. She was inducted into the Elk Grove HS Hall of Fame in 1991. Jo is also a lecturer at CSUS, a writer, and she serves on the advisory board of numerous organizations.

I will continue to recognize the contributions of our Super Grads, locally, in California and the nation, and worldwide—those who attended our schools years ago as well as those from recent years. My Super Grad list gets longer and longer and most of the names are from the school that was our only high school for almost a century. Just think how long that list will be ten or twenty years from now.

Continue to share your list of Super Grads and their accomplishments. If you spot any errors in what I have written or if I have left out important information, do let me know. I only write a short paragraph on each person right now, but I have interviewed some of our Super Grads, and I will do more in the coming months. Eventually, I will have enough material for another History Happened Here book! Thank you to all for your help.

To be continued.....

1. History Happened Here, Book 1-River, Oaks, Gold -- \$20
2. History Happened Here, Book 2-Fields, Farms, Schools -- \$20
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