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La Seniorita has Half a Century of Teaching Spanish at Campolindo

By Cathy Dausman



Lola Danielli Photo Cathy Dausmann

profesora.

"I'm a hard teacher," Danielli says of her refusal to water down her teaching. "I don't care if you're the governor's son or daughter," she added. It comes, she says, from being raised on a Santa Rosa ranch and living a work ethic which didn't include taking sick days off. She still spends weekends and summers there. Her first formal education was at a one room schoolhouse where her teacher encouraged her to speak English and not the Italian her parents spoke at home. She toyed with becoming a veterinarian but "can't stand blood." She also felt she owed a debt of gratitude to the grade school teacher who insisted she develop fluency in English.

She considered attending what was then San Jose State College before settling on U.C. Berkeley on the advice of her father's friend. She earned an undergraduate degree in romance languages and later earned a master's degree and nearly finished her doctorate. "I love learning," Danielli says emphatically. She encourages each of her students to become teachers and teachers of Spanish, but it is a hard sell when they are teens. "They laugh," she says. But later in life, even those who do not teach are proud of their ability to communicate in a second language, and Danielli is equally proud of them - most especially when they return to her classroom.

She counts among former students a Kaiser doctor whom she met on an ER visit, a Santa Rosa winery worker, a retired judge who was often the only Spanish speaker in his courtroom, several attorneys and a United Nations translator.

She is now teaching her second generation of estudiantes and delights to see parents of current students taking their former seats during open house. "Class of 2016 was a good year," Danielli says. Except for two C grades, her students earned "all As and Bs." When asked the inevitable, the tenured for five decades teacher says she has no plans to retire. "When it's third generation I'm going to worry," she said.

The year was 1963 or mil, novecientos sesenta y tres in Spanish, when Lola Danielli arrived at Campolindo High School fresh out of U.C. Berkeley. The Spanish teacher from the previous year was not returning.

"I thought I'd died and gone to heaven," Danielli said of her new assignment in a nearly new school. More than 50 years and two generations of students later, she is still behind a Campolindo desk instilling her knowledge of Spanish and a love of teaching to every student who takes her class.

It is finals week and Danielli is preparing an 800-point multiple choice test. Students are casually dressed, but the petite Seniorita is neatly coiffed in dress, sweater and her signature high heels. Danielli elects to sit in a student desk near the reporter but there is no mistaking just who is la

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