



Jim Lenhoff  
Class of 2012

James Lenhoff graduated from Oroville High School (OHS) in 1949 and earned membership in the Honor Society in each of his four years. He also played on the tennis team all four years and was very active in student body affairs. He was senior class vice president, business manager for the Tiger Mirror newspaper for two years, business manager of the Nugget Yearbook for one year and won first place in the annual Lions Speaking Club Speaking contest as a senior. He also found time to act in several school drama productions during his high school days. Outside of school, Jim was active in the YMCA and church activities.

Following his graduation from OHS, Jim earned his AA degree from Yuba College where he was president of the honor society and a member of the drama club. He then went on to earn his AB degree and teaching credentials from Chico State College (CSC) in 1956, and later received his administrative credential.

Between attending Yuba College and Chico State, Jim served in the United States Army from 1953-1955, attaining the rank of Private First Class. He was awarded the National Defense Medal and received an honorable discharge.

Jim's career in education spanned forty-three years where he spent time teaching secondary education at Paradise Unified School District (PUSD) and the Oroville Union High School District (OUHSD), and later teaching classes at OUHSD adult school. While at PUSD, Jim also served as advisor to the student staffs of the school newspaper and yearbook.

Jim has been a local history enthusiast since he was a teenager and his leadership in preserving the history of Oroville and the surrounding area is exemplary. He was a charter member of the Butte County Historical Society and not only served as editor of its periodical "The Diggin's" for over 21 years but also named the publication. He was instrumental in saving the Ehmman Home, the Oregon City Schoolhouse, and the Bangor Community Church. He erected the arches over historic Miners Alley, and saved it and several buildings between Huntoon and Myers streets. He was a major player in seeing that the parking meters were removed from downtown Oroville.

Other community preservation and restoration efforts saw Jim restoring two Victorian homes on Montgomery Street, one of which has served as his family residence since 1961. He erected state monuments at Cherokee and Oregon City and installed several bronze plaques at various historic sites in downtown Oroville as well as erecting the Liberty Pole, which is a replica of the original one built there in 1857. Key historic preservations also included the Mother Orange Tree and the Bidwell Bar Bridge and Toll House.

Jim is a charter member and served as president of the Oroville Heritage Council. While president, he played a vital role in saving several historic landmarks in Nevada City and played an important role in saving the Old United States Mint in San Francisco.

Then-governor and later President Ronald Reagan asked Jim to represent him in Utah at the centennial celebration for driving the Gold Spike that connected the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific Railroads. It was there that Jim introduced John Wayne and J.C. Penney and each thought that Jim was an old friend of the other, although he had not met either man before.

In February 2011, Jim was honored by the City of Oroville for his many, many years of service to his community. The City bestowed on Jim, the prestigious Sam Norris Award for Excellence at the Oroville Economic Development Corporation dinner.

Jim is widely considered the local expert historian of Oroville and is still active in community affairs, serving on various boards both locally and statewide. He also continues to write articles for the Historical Society and is its only living charter member.