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Last day of school and still diggin' it

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It wasn't all that long ago, 1995 -- the year our trusty Mazda was built and O.J. Simpson was acquitted -- that I wrote a column about the first day of kindergarten.

Not a single one of the boys wore a necktie. . . . Several girls came in dresses, though. The fanciest was a pretty purple floral number worn by a girl whose name tag said "Shelby." Her gown went nicely with her spotless white Pocahontas shoes.

I mentioned that my son and sole heir dressed for the occasion in the matching shorts and top that his grandmother sent from Philadelphia.

With 27 classmates and their parents all wanting to meet and speak with the teacher, Mrs. Austin was in big demand. When at last Max got a chance to talk to her, he showed her the temporary Batman tattoo on his leg.

I noted in that column 13 years ago that some parents brought along video cameras, which back then weren't much smaller than the ones TV cameramen shoulder.

His dad's camera rolled while one little boy presented Mrs. Austin with a pot of pretty yellow flowers. Smart kid!

We parents were allowed to tour and linger in the kindergarten room until Mrs. Austin rang a tinny little bell and told the 5-year-olds what that meant.

(I)t was time for the parents to leave and for the new classmates to sit together on the green carpet.

Max plopped down cross-legged. Then our baby, within a couple inches of 4 feet tall, waved bye and turned his attention to the new adventure and new friends at hand.

We parents, especially the first-timers, shuffled out the door feeling proud and sad and liberated and guilty to be turning over our darlings to the public school system. I wondered all day how Max was doing and I couldn't wait to ask him how the first day went.

"Oh, I loved it," he said. He said they'd been able to take a bunch of stuff out to the playground.

"We dug the biggest hole ever!"

On Friday, Max and the other kids from Mrs. Austin's kindergarten attended their last day of high school, and that evening graduated.

My little boy is almost 18 now and nearly 6-foot-1. He'll go off to college in September and start burrowing into the specialized knowledge he'll need for a career.

We weepy Class of '08 parents appreciate the assurances from veterans that the heartache will soon be displaced by the pride of seeing our kids move on -- and the joy of opening the fridge and finding there's actually some milk in the bottle.

70 YEARS LATER: Some high school grads from long ago are being invited to one of the most generous and heartfelt reunions anywhere.

On June 26, winemaker/ entrepreneur Steve Ledson will welcome to a dinner at his grand Sonoma Highway winery all Santa Rosa High alumni from the classes of 1938 and earlier.

George Conners of the Class of '36 (433-1419) is the guy compiling the guest list.

Ledson gathers the alumni to honor them and the memory of his dad, Noble Ledson, a proud member of the Class of '34 who was 87 when he died in 2004.

FUTURE GRADS: The underground work that for months has rattled drivers and residents on Hahman Drive at Montgomery Village finally is wrapping up. Everyone's happy to see the final touches by the Fedco Construction workers in their monster machines.

Almost everyone. The rumbling of the steel-jawed earthmovers thrilled little ones who peeked through the fence at the preschool at Church of the Roses. They and their teachers were grateful for the spectacle, thus the little table of cookies and lemonade that appeared at the construction site Friday.