The holidays wouldn't be the same without the "Davis Children's Nutcracker"

By Bev Sykes

Doris would be quite a different town if Bob Bowen didn’t like beer.

And girl.

Bowen was working with the city’s Parks and Recreation Department when he graduated from Davis High School. He attended UC Davis as a political science major, along with his best friend Tom Eddy, whose father was the manager of one of the downtown banks, and whose mother taught in the Davis schools for many years.

As a boy, he was up for rigorous classes, Eddy Bowen took to be a ballet class. Bowen asked what he’d get for the acceptance.

“I think I remember where he was involved,” he says, laughing. Bowen enrolled in Ens Curry’s dance class. Curry was delighted to have a male student, especially one who seemed able to walk and talk at the same time. Bowen weighed the pros and cons of continuing with the class.

“Twenty women in attendance and me. I could play a professional sports with a bunch of guys, or bang with some good-looking gals,” says Bowen, who now works as an assistant city manager.

The original sugar plum fairy was made with chicken wire and paper maché, but this newer version was a more realistic looking costume, instead of chicken wire.

Wong, who now works as an information technology partner for PriceWater, says he continues to receive Davis Nutcracker each year for a portion of the class.

He was able to twist the arm of some friends — Kate Boyce (now Bowen’s wife), and Dina Williams (now Dina Silver) — to make simple costumes: burlap tunics over tights for most of the basic roles. They borrowed a few costumes that had been made by the Davis Art Center’s Ann Osgood and Martha Pringle. So if any children’s theater existed in the time, they were available.

But also would be very much: a chair and a Christmas tree made out of cardboard boxes, with a green tree painted on one side for the party scene, and a snow-covered tree on the back for the snow fairy’s fantasy.

Bowen puts a notice in The Davis Enterprise, soliciting children between the ages of 5 and 12, for auditions at the Chestnut Park Roundhouse. He didn’t know if anybody would come, but he promised that everybody who auditioned would have some role in the production.

So it happened, about 50 children showed up.

Scott Caucutt, who was the first production. (I was 11 years old and was one of the taller guys,” he recalls.)

Now a software nonlinear in LA with his wife, Caucutt’s current job was working with Bowen: “I remember his enthusiastic. He made it a fun and pleasant experience.”

In the interests of full disclosure, I must confess a warm spot in my heart for the “Davis Children’s Nutcracker,” because all five of our kids performed in the first two productions. In fact, my son Ned first met the woman who became his wife, Marla Wilson, when both were in the clown group. (To commemorate that meeting, I decorated their wedding cake with clowns and a snowman, who became his wife, Marta Wilson, when both were in the clown group. (To commemorate that meeting, I decorated their wedding cake with clowns and a snowman.)

Bob Bowen coaches "Davis Children's Nutcracker." Below, from left, visions of sugar plums...
Clockwise from top left, Alastair Wandesforde-Smith (the Prince) and Amanda Altier (Clara) prepare for the 1984 production; the 2004 production received an award for its creative sets, costumes, and lighting; and three mice have a grand time between scenes of the 1985 production.

**TRADITION:** By the 10th year, the city had set up a lottery system to cast the show. "I had no idea," said Dyer. "I had no idea."