

## Senior Profile: Susan Brazelton: Retired P.E. teacher thrives taking photographs throughout the world

**Susan Brazelton started photo club in 2008**

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*By Robert Airoidi*

Susan Brazelton loves photography. The Morgan Hill resident and retired teacher has been hooked on her camera activities for many years. Although her subject matter ranges the gamut, she has a stand-out talent for taking wildlife and landscape photos.

Save for a few African wildlife photos, Brazelton's photos do not adorn the walls of her west Morgan Hill home. Instead, she has her photos printed on pillows, coasters, dish towels and a magnetic pendant she wears around her neck. She has 10 magnets affixed with her photos she can alternate into the pendant depending on her mood.

Now 69, she has traveled extensively in her photography safaris because she finds a passion for exploring the world with camera in hand. She's traveled to the wilderness regions of Africa, Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons.

She described Yellowstone as "like another world, the thermal pools, steam coming out of the ground in an amazing landscape." Plus, she said, "it's a good way for a single person to travel."

She recalls on the first of her two excursions in Africa, she saw a herd of Cape buffalo chase a male lion up a tree — "he tried to remain proud" — and a baby elephant walking under its mother. "Just a beautiful place. It was just amazing," she said.

After her second Africa trip she told herself it was time to see more of America. "Now my trips will be closer to home," she said.

Born and raised in Englewood, Brazelton graduated from with a degree in physical education for the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1967. She earned her teaching credential and a masters in the same subject from San Jose State University and shortly after landed a job at Pioneer High School in San Jose.



*Photo by Robert Airoidi*

Susan Brazelton in her west Morgan Hill home with several couch pillows adorned with her photographs.

There she met her husband and she transferred to Lincoln High School because married couples could not work at the same school. She worked at Lincoln until 1980, then transferred to Steinbeck Middle School in San Jose.

In 1980, she and her husband moved to Hollister. After they divorced, she found herself with a major decision to make.

“I didn’t want to move back to San Jose,” said Brazelton, who was still commuting at that time to Steinbeck Middle School. “I knew one person here. She and I were good friends so I picked Morgan Hill.” Today, she and Jackie Zeller remain friends and attend local events such as the Taste of Morgan Hill and the Mushroom Mardi Gras, but “we go early and leave early,” she said. “I’m not much into crowds, which is why I like Morgan Hill.”

When she eventually retired in 2005, she realized most of her friends were colleagues and “I really didn’t know too many people.”

The following year was the city’s centennial celebration. She saw a flyer looking for volunteers. “So I volunteered,” she said. “That was a great experience.”

During that time she was at a meeting and she sat a table with several women with the American Association of University Women. While talking, she mentioned she was interested in the organization. They encouraged her to join she still remains involved, photographing the AAUW’s annual Wildflower Run. Brazelton also started the popular Morgan Hill Photography Club in April 2008.

“I didn’t know any photographers and thought I’ll just start a club,” she said. The first meeting was held in the cafe area of BookSmart.

“I just put out word hoping to get five people to show up,” she said. “Twenty-one people came to that first meeting.”

The group grew so large that the photography club had to move its next meeting place to a bigger room and settled on the Centennial Recreation Center’s Senior Center. It’s been there ever since. They ended the first year with slightly fewer than 100 paying members — each paying \$20 in annual dues. The Morgan Hill Photography Club now has about 180 members.

The club’s motto is “fun, friendship and photography.”

“That’s partly why the club has been so successful”, she said, “We emphasize friendships, not competition.”

And, it’s one of the things she’s most proud of “because of the friendships formed by members who get together outside of the club.”