

This is the eighth and last in a series of interviews with Morgan Hill's charter members. The branch will celebrate its 35th year in December 2016

Nancy Foster: Charter Member



Nancy August 2016

Nancy Foster moved to Morgan Hill in 1965 on a one-year trial basis -- and never left.

A founding member of the branch, she has served AAUW MH in a variety of ways, including Run chair and president, but interest groups were always what she liked best. "Interest groups keep you going" and provide "friendships and camaraderie."

Background and Education

Nancy was born in Stockton and lived in Lodi until age 7. Her father was a high school principal. When they moved to San Jose in 1946, he became Director of Instruction at San Jose Unified School District. Nancy and her older brother grew up in Willow Glen, where Nancy graduated top of her high school class in 1957. Her degree from San Jose State College (later University) in 1961 is in K-8 education, and she has a lifetime teaching credential.

Career and Family

"I first taught 3rd grade at Quito Elementary School in Campbell Union School District. My father wouldn't let me teach in the SJUSD because of his position as superintendent. It wouldn't have been illegal, but he thought it would be improper."

Nancy had met Bob (her husband) at Willow Glen High School. He also went to SJ State and majored in history but didn't know what he wanted to do. "I think I made the decision for him."

"Bob went on to law school at Bolt Hall [UC Berkeley]. We were married in June 1962. We lived in Berkeley and I taught in San Lorenzo."

Nancy was pregnant the last year of Bob's law school. She missed his graduation because she delivered their son Del in June 1964.

The couple did not return to San Jose as planned, as Bob was soon retained by the State Legislature as Deputy Legislative Council in Sacramento.

Morgan Hill

The following spring, 1965, Bob got call from a dentist friend who had a patient whose husband was looking for a lawyer for his new firm. These were Katherine and Ernie Rusconi, a long-time Morgan Hill couple. Bob interviewed with Ernie and was offered the position.

Nancy was **not** impressed with Morgan Hill in 1965 "I had been told, 'No one moves **to** Morgan Hill, you move **away** from Morgan Hill.' But Bob wanted to go there. He had decided that he'd rather be a 'big fish in a small pond than a small fish in a big pond [San Jose].' So I agreed to give it a try for one year.

"Bob immediately got involved in local politics and the school district. He was eventually on school board for 12 years and city council for seven years at two different times. He also joined Rotary early on. [Now three Fosters are members: Bob and two sons.]

"We became so involved in the development of the community and this little town, because we had just come from Sacramento where the city center was falling apart and there were commercial developments on every corner. I wanted a town with a center that would bring the entire community together."

When Mervyn's wanted to come to Morgan Hill, the Fosters worked to get them to locate near downtown. They lost that battle when Mervyn's built their store on Cochrane. However, they were more successful when they encouraged the city to build the community center on the site of the old Morgan Hill School at the corner of Monterey and Dunne.

When the Fosters first moved to Morgan Hill, they lived on Peak between Main and Wright. After two years they moved to Rancho Encino in Paradise Valley. Eight years later in 1975 they build the Woodland Acres house where they live today.

"I would have liked to go back to teaching after coming to Morgan Hill, but Bob didn't want me to, given the kids. We had four boys: Del, Chris, Blaney, and Corey." Nancy was active in Home and School Club and chaired the fundraising carnival. She was a

member of the Children's Home Society for a couple of years, again helping with fundraising. She also substituted in local schools for almost ten years

AAUW

"My mother was a member of AAUW in San Jose while I was growing up, so I knew you had to have a college degree to become a member. I became more aware of AAUW when my mother decided to drop out. It was because AAUW was too much of a lobbying group. They became too political."

After moving to Morgan Hill, Nancy joined the AAUW branch in Gilroy in early 1970s but didn't really connect. "I attended a few meetings, but they were at night and in Gilroy. I didn't stay a member; it just wasn't a good fit for me then."

AAUW Morgan Hill

"Irene Blaine called me (our children knew each other from school) and said she'd like to start up a branch in Morgan Hill. Irene had been an AAUW scholarship recipient and wanted to pay back by starting AAUW here. (She was already a member in Gilroy.) This was 1978 or maybe even before. We had a group of about seven women, including Connie Sidebottom, Maryanne Stark, a school board member, and a few others. For a year we met each month at one of our houses, trying to solidify enough to get a charter. [15 members were required to start a new branch.] For another year we met at the library but still weren't getting enough interest. None of us wanted to take on the leadership, so after trying for two years, we finally fell apart.

"Then Irene called again. 'Nancy, I finally found someone who will lead us, so we can have a branch.'" Irene had found Barbara Cate who had been active in other branches and was a member in Gilroy.

"I told her, 'Irene, you may have my money; you may have my name, but you can't have my body.' By then I was too busy with school and kids and sports to be very involved. Plus Bob was on City Council at that time."



Bob and Nancy 1989

Still, Nancy was on the board for five years starting in 1984, serving as issues chair and interest group chair. In 1987-88, when she was Educational Foundation vice president, she worked with Laura Brunton to start a scholarship for a Gavilan College re-entry student.

After that, her involvement was mainly with interest groups. She led the afternoon book group, started the biking group, attended gourmet, and participated in choruses. "Interest groups keep you going."

"Kathy Sass (branch president) heard that I now had a little more time, so she called and asked me to be Run chair. I was hesitant because I had not been on the Run planning committee, although I had always helped out. But a new chair was needed. Since I didn't know much about how the Run was organized, I really relied on the committee chairs."

Nancy was Run chair in 1999 and had planned to do it a second year. Then Doris Cross, who was president elect, died and Nancy was asked to step in and be branch president for 1999-2000.



Nancy 1999

"My goal as president was to increase membership and to get some new members on the board. Karen Anderson was new to town and took over interest groups; Joan Ensign did programs, and Carol O'Hare was Legal Advocacy chair. I got Phyllis Kaiser to take over the Run. After that year, I haven't had any board positions."

Other Activities

Nancy stays busy with her family: two sons and families who live in Morgan Hill, the others in the Bay Area, and 15 grandchildren. She manages the gift shop at the Morgan Hill Car Wash, and does all the buying. She also likes to sew and knit.

The Fosters have done a lot of traveling: cruises from South Africa to Greece and Buenos Aires to Santiago.

"We went to Switzerland with Peter and Elena Anderson and Carolyn and Chuck Wilson. When Corey was in college, he spent a summer in Ukraine. Joanne Rife told me we were 'dumb' not to take advantage of this opportunity to visit Ukraine and Russia, so of course we did. We've also been to Bali, New Zealand, Australia, and some places closer to home, including most states. We also like to take the grandchildren on Road Scholar trips."



“AAUW is a wonderful organization for women to help women, to expand their relationships, to increase and use their leadership abilities, and to explore their talents. I especially have enjoyed my experiences with interest groups: biking, chorus, books/study group, gourmet and dining out. Each group encourages greater friendships. I like going to community events and meeting AAUW members at that event—ready-made friendships.”

Carol O’Hare and Carol Holzgrafe

Nancy 2006 25th anniversary