

*This is the 5<sup>th</sup> in a series of interviews with Morgan Hill's charter members. The branch will celebrate its 35<sup>th</sup> year in December 2016.*

## **Judy Garrett: Charter Member**



Judy January 2016

Judy prepared for her interview as if it were a ten-minute speech for Toastmasters, including the standard three main points that she wanted to get across. But her life story could not be condensed into a brief presentation, as she found out 1½ hours later.

“AAUW is very important. It encourages women and girls to be educated.”

### **Background and Education**

Judy Garrett was born in Chicago in 1941, the middle of three children, into an Irish Catholic family. Her mother had come from Ireland at the age of 13, along with nine siblings. “My mother was always proud to be Irish, and my grandmother loved John Kennedy. My father was of German heritage, and he was also a very devout Catholic.”

“I had a wholesome growing up with lots of Irish cousins,” Judy said. “I was brought up to believe that America was the most wonderful place in the world. They were very proud to be American.”

Judy attended Catholic schools and Loyola University, Chicago, a Jesuit college that had just recently begun to admit women.

“I wanted to go to Loyola to meet boys, as I was very shy.” That proved successful, but she also found “career inequity” in the nursing program.

“Our teachers said, ‘you don’t need to know this,’” Judy said about the limited curriculum offered to nurses. “It was demeaning.” Judy received her B.S. in nursing, a career she had wanted since age 16.

She met her first husband George Sachtleben at Loyola and was married right after graduation in 1963.

## **Nursing Career**

Judy and George had two children right away and moved to North Carolina when George was in Marine Corps officer training school at Camp Lejeune.

“I couldn’t work as a nurse because I had no license in North Carolina, so I took five years off to be with my young children.

“George went to Vietnam and returned with ‘issues.’ We didn’t know about PTSD then; he stayed in the Marine Corps until about 1971.” (George was recently buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery.)

“We moved to the Bay Area, where his sister lived, and were very happy here.”

George applied to become a policeman, worked as a dispatcher, then as an officer in San Jose for a few years.

Judy first worked at Peninsula Hospital, part-time because of the children. When they moved to Cambria Park, she worked at San Jose Hospital, then at Santa Teresa Kaiser where she found a home for 27 years. At Kaiser Judy worked nights on the medical floor for a year, then moved to the ICU, followed by the cardiac cath lab where she worked under Wendy Bell. Her final six years at Kaiser were spent in outpatient surgery.

“I hardly ever worked full time, usually four days a week,” Judy said, “but I loved working as a nurse.” However, when the increasingly busy surgery center work was getting harder, she retired in 2008.

While at Kaiser, Judy recruited Wendy Bell for AAUW. Although Lila Washington was also a Kaiser nurse, Judy met her on an AAUW field trip to San Francisco. “She is a good friend and was such a good nurse!” (Lila has been a branch member since 1984.)

## **Morgan Hill**

In 1981 she “split with George,” sold their San Jose house, and moved to Morgan Hill. “He was still pretty messed up psychologically from his time in Vietnam.”

Judy first rented a condominium in Countryside Estates off Watsonville Road (where Wendy lives.) Then she purchased a townhouse in Del Monte Village for \$57,000. It had been low income housing and needed lots of work. She has been in the same house now for 30 years.

In December 1985 Judy married for the second time, to Michael Garrett. "I met him at Parents without Partners. He was a fine person and was nice to my children," she said. "But he was gone all the time, and never had enough money to repair his truck (he was a truck driver), to buy gas, or even to pay his taxes, which was difficult. He was just not good with money."

That marriage ended in 2003; Michael died a few months later.

Judy learned something important from the experience: "Women need to be educated about finances!"

However, at least one pleasant memory survives: not long after the marriage her daughter came for a visit and they attended an AAUW Christmas party together. "The members sang a little ditty for me about being newly married," Judy remembers.

## **AAUW Morgan Hill**

As with most other charter members, Judy read in the Morgan Hill Times that an AAUW branch was forming and went to the meeting at the library. "I hardly knew what AAUW was, but it seemed to be a wonderful way to meet other women. I was 40 and didn't know anyone in town. In AAUW I also got to meet older women like Elena Moreno, who was a marvelous role model," she said. "She was so dynamic then."

Judy quickly became involved with the new branch and held several positions. She was the first Hospitality Chair, 1982-84, a job she repeated twice in later years. She was secretary when Marilyn Gadway was president in 1984-85. "I didn't know how to type [she had gotten a 'D' in high school typing], so I would write the minutes in longhand and give them to a friend to type. I wanted to do something," she said. One year she helped with membership, doing write-ups on new members for the newsletter.

Judy was also camp nurse at Tech Trek Stanford in 2009.

In 1989 Judy was one of 29 members who each made a quilt square depicting various aspects of Morgan Hill history. The completed quilt was presented to the historical museum, where it is still on display. "I did one of a padre that represented the California missions. It was a really a fun AAUW project to work on."



Judy 1989

“In those first years, I remember the activities, meeting in homes. There was lots of drinking – mostly wine. I had a hilarious time at these gatherings. As a young club we really partied!”



Judy WFR 1999

Judy, like most members, has always worked at the Wildflower Run. “I remember the guy with the gun near Machado School in the early years,” she said. “Lila and I were first aid nurses sometimes, but we didn’t really know what we were doing. We were there the year when Chuck Wilson collapsed near the finish line, but fortunately he was okay. I think that he was just dehydrated.”

Judy has worked at tally, water stops, and at the 2K kids run for several years. She used to work at the 10K (before chip timing) but says “I got demoted to the 2K; little kids are more fun. This year I really had a ball cheering on the seniors in their 2K walk.”

## **Current Activities**

Judy remains close to her children. Connie is married and has three children. An elementary school teacher, she recently went to work in Compton where they couldn’t keep first grade teachers. “It is a challenge, but she loves those kids.”

Judy’s son Karl (a software engineer) lives closer. He and his wife have a “beautiful little boy, Jackson” and live in Prunedale.

Judy doesn’t travel much, mostly to Southern California to see the grandchildren, but last December she visited Little Corn Island off Nicaragua. “Connie and her family all went with me; it took three plane flights and a boat trip,” she said, but the 5-star hotel made it all worthwhile. “I loved it.”

Her dog Buddy (a cocker spaniel) has been her pal for five years. “He is the man in my life,” Judy says.

She volunteers at Gilroy Gardens at least eight hours a month and especially enjoys it when school kids visit. Judy is also in the choir at St. Catherine Catholic Church and has joined Toastmasters with Margaret McCann. Son Karl also belongs where he works. “Toastmasters helps us to feel comfortable in front of people, and it’s fun.”

## Importance of AAUW

In answer to the question, what does AAUW mean to you, Judy immediately replied, "Friendship." She is in the YES group and that resonates with her.



Judy December 2001  
AAUW MH 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

"I think AAUW is very important, in my view, because it encourages women and girls to be educated. My mom and dad (who was a teacher) supported me totally. Lots of women go into poverty after a divorce, and I am so grateful to my parents when they were able to pay for my education, so I didn't end up like that. I had a wonderful advantage as a nurse.

"I'm so glad that I got my college degree. Education gives you power, can help you make decisions. It made me independent and gave me choices."

"Oh golly, prepare for your future!"

Carol O'Hare and Carol Holzgrafe