

## Senior profile: Lifelong resident, former educator, enjoying retirement to the fullest

**Jean Pinard plays the piano, paints and volunteers**

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*By Robert Airoidi*

Jean Pinard is enjoying all life has to offer. After a long career as a teacher and administrator in the Morgan Hill Unified School District, she now spends her time painting, playing the piano, volunteering with the American Association of University Women and gardening in her backyard.

Born and raised in Morgan Hill, Pinard graduated from Live Oak High School in 1945. During her junior and senior years, her then-boyfriend would ride his bicycle with her on it, pedaling along as far they could go. They would then walk the rest of the way up to the top of Nob Hill in downtown Morgan Hill. From the top of the hill, they would take their two-hour turn watching for Japanese fighter planes.

“That was my war effort,” the petite yet spry 86-year-old woman said.

After graduating from high school, she attended San Jose State University where she started majoring in physics. But when the war ended and the men came home and enrolled in college, the field got a lot more crowded and she changed her major to music. In 1947 when she was a sophomore, she married and decided to change her career to education so that when she graduated SJSU she could support her husband’s efforts to get a veterinary degree.

While he was earning that degree at the University of California, Davis, Pinard taught in Dixon.

After her husband got his degree, the family moved to Dos Palos where she taught and he worked in a clinic for large animals. A few years later, the family — which now consisted of a son and daughter — moved to Morgan Hill so her husband could start a practice here. She got a job teaching at P.A. Walsh Elementary



*Photo by Robert Airoidi*

Jean Pinard in the backyard of her west Morgan Hill home displays one of her watercolors of Half Dome in Yosemite.

School. She also played the organ at St. John's Episcopal Church for 40 years and taught music to many children who attended P.A. Walsh.

Later in her career she went into administration at the school district, where she worked as the curriculum coordinator. Then in 1973, she became the principal at Burnett Elementary School. In about 1980, she went to Nordstrom Elementary School and worked there for several years before retiring in 1986. After that, Pinard served as a substitute principal at just about every school in the district, she said.

"Being a principal was difficult," she said. "Half the parents want something and half something else, but you had to focus on the kids when you're getting pulled in different directions. But my good memories are of teaching. I loved teaching."

She has a spectacular view of El Toro mountain from her kitchen window and a panorama of the eastern foothills from her backyard deck. "I didn't think Morgan Hill was so great as a kid," she said. "But after living in other places, I realized how great a place Morgan Hill is, especially to raise children."

When she retired, Pinard got involved with the Morgan Hill branch of the American Association of University Women. She enjoys playing the piano in her living room, but it's getting more difficult to perform with her arthritis acting up. Still, she said, it just takes a bit longer to warm up.

"When I get the urge to play I can go two to three hours without stopping," she said. "I get really intense and I just feel so lucky."

When she was 81, Pinard married "the most wonderful guy," she said. Frank Leyva was born in Morgan Hill but the two had never crossed paths until they met six years prior to marrying. He was a sheriff deputy, a marine and then joined the Secret Service. He was in charge of operations during the Vietnam War Peace Talks that included Henry Kissinger and Lyndon B. Johnson. He died just two years after the couple married, but the walls of her small home office are adorned with photos of Frank with Kissinger and other political figures and commendations.

Now, she loves gardening in her backyard, something she said is "probably what keeps me healthy," though she refused her son's request to wear a helmet while she gardens.

Last October she spent a week in Yosemite taking watercolor classes. Pinard readily admits she's a novice in her artist skills but found she's enjoying it more and more.

"It's just absolutely fascinating," she said. "I have enough interests that I have a pretty exciting life, at least for me, and some great friends."