

This is the 7^h in a series of interviews with Morgan Hill's charter members. The branch will celebrate its 35th year in December 2016.

Patti Trantow: Charter Member

Background

Patti Trantow was born in La Crosse, WI, and mostly grew up in that state. After living in Kansas and Indiana, her family moved back to WI when she was nine, when her father bought a hardware store in Manawa, a town of 1,000 residents, in a county populated with dairy farms. Patti's mother worked as a bookkeeper in the store. One of Manawa's claims to "fame" was that Joe McCarthy went to high school there, which aptly describes the political climate of the area.



Patti May 2016

Her family consisted of her brother, Jim, who is three years older, and a "surprise" brother, John, who was born when she was 10 years old. John's birth made a remarkable difference in her life, as she had to grow up overnight to help with his care and assume many household responsibilities.

Patti attended Little Wolf High School, graduating in a class of 83 students. Typical small town, her life in Manawa consisted of a church youth group, church choir, teaching Sunday school, 4H, school marching band, choir and yearbook staff. There were no sports activities for girls or girl clubs. Social activities consisted of visiting family on Sunday, including 45 first cousins.

Education

Patti had wanted to attend the University of Wisconsin in Madison, but because she was "a little bit of a wild child," her parents would not permit that and decided that UW Oshkosh was a safer place for her. She majored in political science but left school in 1970.

"I could not take Wisconsin any more, so I moved to Chicago and worked there for a couple of years. I cannot over emphasize how much fun those years were!

"I fell in love with a man and moved with him to Carbondale, IL. Of course, my parents were unhappy at this. I attended Southern Illinois University, majoring in Social Welfare. I was a good student, more serious than my peers as I was a couple of years older, and received recognition in the department there. I was

awarded a student grant, worked on campus and as a teaching assistant in my senior year, and graduated debt free.

“I had always wanted to be a social worker and help with adoptions, but the field changed with the introduction of reliable birth control. I was also interested in law and took the LSAT, but social work was a better fit.”

A couple of months before graduation, the boyfriend was history, freeing Patti to move on to the next chapter in her life.

California

“Right after graduation in 1974, I moved to California. I was ready for a change. I had a friend in Berkeley and stayed with her at first. I got a job with the Social Security Administration in San Francisco. I had a great affordable flat in the City, across from Golden Gate Park. I worked in the SSA office in the Tenderloin; we didn’t deal with typical seniors but with people who were long-time drug and alcohol dependent. (That experience could fill a book!) It was an eye opening experience for a young woman from the Midwest.

“I actually met [my husband] Steve [Pearson] on a blind date my first weekend in San Francisco. We immediately started dating, and he proposed a month later, but of course I said no. It was too soon. However, we were married a year and a half later in 1976 during our school breaks.”

Morgan Hill

“Steve graduated dental school in June 1976, and in August we bought a house in Morgan Hill. Steve opened his dentistry practice in November 1976 in the same office where he is now on Hale. He wanted to live south of San Jose so he could be within driving distance of his family’s ranch. Since I was still so new to California, I had no idea of what I was getting into but cried when I saw Morgan Hill’s downtown since it reminded me of Manawa. Our efforts to improve the community were partly because of those initial tears.

“I was in my second year of graduate school in Social Welfare at UC Berkeley by then. My emphasis was Organization, Planning and Administration. I did my internship with Economic and Social Opportunities, Inc. (ESO) in San Jose, which had many social service programs serving the underprivileged. It was a great place to work at the beginning of my professional career.

“As soon as I completed my internship and received my master’s degree, I was hired as a grants writer for ESO and worked at that a couple of years and then hired as the assistant director of Outreach, a new non-profit spun off from ESO.

“We became active in Morgan Hill pretty much right away. We were involved in Measure E in 1977, the first growth control initiative. Schools were on double sessions, so something had to be done. We had meetings at our house; it was our chief interest for several years and formed the nucleus of our social life. We were involved in local city council elections.”

Steve also served on the planning commission and on the city council in 1980. Patti was involved in starting La Isla Pacifica, a shelter for women (now part of Community Solutions), and served as its board president in 1983-1984.

AAUW Morgan Hill

“In September 1981 I saw article in Morgan Hill Times about a new AAUW branch starting. I had stopped working because I was a new mother [Stephanie was born in June 1981.], so I was looking for something to do. If there had been a League of Women Voters I probably would have joined that instead, but AAUW was available and I supported its purpose.

“Barbara (Cate) and Marilyn [Gadway] were such a dynamic team; they just oozed fun; Irene Blaine was Ms. Organization; like the principal of the school. Barbara and Marilyn had very attractive leadership qualities.

“The balance of the two—Barbara [Cate] and Marilyn [Gadway]—with Irene [Blaine] was perfect.”

“We had wonderful role models in the early group. You just wanted to be around some of those people. This is the key to why this organization has been successful; people are attracted to those doing interesting things, being involved, and having fun.



“I was on the board in many capacities: program, policy, hospitality. I helped with the first Candidates’ Night in 1982 at City Hall. I continued to be actively involved even after Drew was born in 1985. I was branch president 1988-1989.

Patti 1989 with Morgan Hill Historical Society quilt square:
1926 Seagraves Fire Engine

"After I returned to work in 1993, I did less, although I helped with membership and finance a couple of years and with planning the branch's 20th anniversary event in 2001.

"I have many fond memories of all the activities at Kathy Sass' house. Gourmet group was always a memorable event. I have a 3-inch binder filled with all the menus and recipes from those years. The summer barbecue at Mary Cox's is another highlight, where Steve and I work the bar.



Patti Dec 2001



"Of course, I always volunteer with the Wildflower Run working at registration."

Patti 1999 Wildflower Run

Work Life

"When I returned to part time work [in 1993], I started at the State of California Employment office in Gilroy. In 1995 I moved up to the City of San Jose where I worked full time. I ended up running the Return-to-Work program for injured employees. It was a tough but good job, and I received recognition for my efforts. I was there for 10 years. Then Steve needed me to manage the dental practice. I have been there for 11 years and we work three to four days a week. It's just the two of us, so the work includes everything from scheduling, bookkeeping, and managing the building to cleaning the toilet! This has worked out well, when we were dealing with the needs of Steve's elderly parents and now that I provide weekly care to my young grandsons. Steve's patients are like extended family to me, and I really enjoy seeing them."

Other Activities

"We go to Steve's family ranch almost every other weekend during warm weather. It is 2 ½ hours south of Morgan Hill, closer to San Miguel than to Coalinga. Steve's great-grandfather had a meat packing business in Santa Cruz

and a beer business; he and his wife homesteaded the property 130 years ago. The house next to ours was the stagecoach stop. There is abundant wildlife, plus the cattle. The ranch takes a lot of work and there are many projects on our list. We also love to travel and enjoy hearing about AAUW members' travel adventures.



“At this time of my life, I am not as active in AAUW because of my time constraints, but I will always be a member. AAUW supports political things I believe in, as well as fosters wonderful friendships and community. And Morgan Hill is our home. We are not moving.”

Patti 2006 Branch 25th Anniversary