

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

Marilyn Gadway, Founder of the Wildflower Run

Marilyn Gadway, one of the earliest members of the Morgan Hill Branch, established the first Wildflower Run in 1984. Carol O'Hare and Carol Holzgrafe interviewed Marilyn in October 2015 at her home on Lilac Lane, the location of the branch's "charter party" on December 3, 1981, where she continues to live.

"I have always been proud of the Wildflower Run. I am particularly proud of the growth in attendance and in sophistication. For me personally it was a big step in undertaking something I knew very little about, but I always knew that I had all the great gals of the Morgan Hill Branch at my back, and that gave me much confidence."



Marilyn Gadway
October 2015

Background

Marilyn was born in Freeport, Illinois, 90 miles from Chicago, but soon her family moved west. "I was a severe asthmatic, and doctors said I wouldn't live if we stayed in Illinois. My father bought a trailer and we went to Oregon where the coastal air was supposed to be good for me."

Both of Marilyn's parents were teachers, although her mother didn't work after she was married. "I went to 14 different grade schools. [Her father changed jobs frequently.] I started high school in Forest Grove [Oregon], but my asthma returned, so we moved to Barstow [California] where my dad ran military housing. I graduated from high school in Barstow."

Education

"My parents had no money to send me to college, so I babysat for officers' children in Barstow and saved \$400 for college. I planned to become an occupational therapist. A local businesswomen's club gave me a \$100 scholarship.

This was probably one of the biggest influences of my life. I did not know any of the women, but somebody believed in me. San Jose State was one of two schools in California that offered Occupational Therapy as a major, so that is where I went.

“While in school I worked for Edna Anthony who became like a mother to me. I lived with her family for two years; she had 10 year-old twins and two older daughters. I am still close to the family.

“After I left Edna’s house I lived in an apartment with two other girls. I changed my major to architecture. One [male] teacher said, ‘You won’t pass this class.’ (I was the only female in the class.) I did not fail but changed my major again, to recreation. I was working for the City of San Jose as a recreation leader and loved working with kids. There were 19 in our recreation class at SJSU, and we were all very close.”

In 1958 Marilyn met Stan, her future husband, at San Jose State and was engaged a year later.

As part of her recreation major, she did field work for the City of Palo Alto, which was an unpaid position.

“A classmate and I rented a room in Palo Alto while I was at the City of Palo Alto. I had a car but no money at all. We didn’t eat much during the week. Stan would come up on the weekend and take us out to eat. My shoes had holes in them; Stan bought me new shoes for job interviews.

“I graduated June 17, 1960 and married Stan the next day. He was behind me in school because he had been in military and so got a late start.”

Career and Family

“My first paying job was with the City of Palo Alto Recreation Department where, after six months, I was promoted to supervisor. I was in charge of programs from junior high on and developed their senior adult program. I worked until the summer of 1964 after which I left to have our son Dean, born in April 1965; a second son lived only 2 days in 1967. Scott was born in August 1968. After that I worked in a convalescent home for a few years.

“Stan went into business in 1972 (Gadway Construction – he was a general contractor). He couldn’t afford a secretary, so I did the secretarial work while at home with the kids. After a year Stan could hire a secretary, but I continued to handle bids. That is a harrowing job: juggling costs, making bids.” The business was closed in 1997, the year after their son Scott died.

Marilyn also managed properties while raising children. She had taken her retirement fund when she left her Palo Alto job and invested in San Jose real

estate, which she later traded for other properties. She continued property management until retirement in 2008.

Morgan Hill and AAUW

“We moved to Morgan Hill in July 1981. Stan said, ‘I want to be in Paradise Valley.’ So we looked and looked and found this house on Lilac Lane.

“At the time I didn’t know AAUW existed. I belonged to the Country Woman’s Club in Campbell. But I wanted to meet people in Morgan Hill, so I followed the AAUW article in the Morgan Hill Times.” Marilyn attended the first meeting for those interested in AAUW at the library in September 1981. She quickly became involved and helped with planning and early programming.

“We decided that Barbara [Cate] should be first president and I would be second. However, Stan was Rotary president that year and I had to be involved with that. So we said Ruth Farwell would be the second president and I would be the third.”



In addition to AAUW, Marilyn joined an aerobics class that continues as a support group. “Those two things changed my life. If I get into something, I get into something all the way,” Marilyn stressed.

“I enjoyed my year as president in 1984-1985. Barbara said to me when I was going to be president, ‘Marilyn, if you can be president of AAUW you can do anything!’”

The Wildflower Run

Marilyn started the first Wildflower Run in March 1984. She was also Run Chair four more times: 1987, 1990 (with Kathy Sass), 1991, and 1992 (with Bob Blaine).

She tells the story in the Branch’s book, *30 Years of Scholarships for Women and Girls: the Wildflower Run.*

“When I was Educational Foundation chair in 1983-84, it was my job to come up with ways to raise money to support AAUW-EF, which provided fellowships and grants to graduate women continuing their education. I wanted to do something different, one big event, not have a bunch of bake sales like many branches did. I remember that the idea of a run came to me while I was attending an AAUW convention. It was such a strong feeling that I just knew that it was a good idea.

“There were only a few of us who organized that first run. Elena Moreno was in charge of publicity. She was the one who came up with the name Wildflower Run. Kathryn Buckley-Brawner designed the t- shirt (and continued to do so for many, many years, even after she moved to Massachusetts). She was also in charge of awards. Kathy Sass handled course and facilities, Kae Jenny-Spencer did registration, and Barbara Bayless went after sponsors. Running events were becoming popular at that time, so I attended other events to see how they were organized. We were pretty much just flying by the seat of our pants.

“Kathy and I laid out the 2K, 5K and 10K courses on the west side of town starting at the corner of Watsonville Road and Santa Teresa. It ran up over the Hayes Valley hill; it was a tougher run than now. There were no houses in that area at all at that time. Kathy hand painted signs. We had only one sponsor that first year. Long’s Drugs gave us \$1000. We couldn’t believe we could get that much money.



“The Run was only open to women and girls, since we were a women’s organization. Registration was \$6, and \$8 for those who registered late. We thought maybe only a few runners and walkers would come, so we were totally surprised when over 200 showed up.

“Others who helped in the early years were Marianne Thornton, Nancy Foster and Barbara Cate, as well as Marianne’s son and my son, who helped with the set up and take down. The Run continued on the west side in 1985. That was the year of the famous rifle incident when a man who lived near Watsonville Road threatened the women runners with his gun. After that that we decided to move the Run to Live Oak High School on the east side of town.

“In 1988, after men were allowed to join AAUW, we invited men and boys to participate in the Run.

“Each year the Run grew larger and more successful. It was always a ‘full membership’ event, as we needed all hands on deck to accomplish all the tasks. There were runs in the sun and occasionally in the rain. We were a very determined group in those days, and I do believe that the same energy is with us today, just with different people.”

Scholarship Activities: Campbell Country Woman’s Club, YMCA, San Jose State

“Ever since I received that \$100 scholarship to attend college, scholarships have been my mantra throughout my life.”

“I’ve maintained my membership in the Campbell Country Woman’s Club (CWC) while we have lived in Morgan Hill. That group was the first one I joined.” When Marilyn was in charge of raising money for scholarships, her group handled wine and beer sales at a festival. “We ended up making \$40,000.” Subsequently, CWC started an endowment, which is mainly used for Campbell high school scholarships. Marilyn is still involved with how the funds are invested.

“Stan is on the YMCA board. I helped them raise quite a lot of money. I also started the YMCA in Morgan Hill with two other guys in the 1980s. Because it was for scholarships, which had changed my life, I was comfortable doing these things.”

Stan is on also on San Jose State Spartan Foundation Board of Directors; his primary responsibility is to raise money for scholarships for student athletes. Marilyn has worked tirelessly with him. Last year they raised over \$60,000 themselves.

Why scholarships for athletics? “Athletes are in every [academic] department. These kids carry a full load, they practice, go to meets and games and have to maintain their GPA. For many of these kids, athletics are the only way they will make it to college; they come out of families with no college background or money.”

In 2003 the Gadways created the Scott Gadway Academic Center at San Jose State, named in honor of their son, who died in a skydiving accident in 1996. The Center offers student-athletes help with their studies so that they can achieve academically. “It has been so successful that now the GPA of the athletes is higher than the general university body of students.” In 2008 Stan and Marilyn established a charitable remainder trust that will provide support and enable the study center to continue in perpetuity.

Senior Advisory Activities

When the city had to disband the recreation department during the early 1990s financial crisis, Marilyn was the board chair for the Morgan Hill YMCA and worked with the city to establish a swimming program.

She also served on the City of Morgan Hill Senior Advisory Commission when it was still active. She has more recently been appointed to the new Senior Advisory Committee (SAC) that has been created to get Morgan Hill designated as an “Age-Friendly City” by the World Health Organization (WHO). Data will be collected from focus groups and an assessment survey.

“This is the first thing I’ve done in a long time not related to scholarships.”

“I now work once a month for Friends of the Senior Center as a cashier at Tuesday night bingo to help raise funds to keep the Senior Center operating.”

Current Interests

Marilyn is part of an investment club, started in 1996, that is still going strong.

She travels with her old aerobics group. (Stan doesn’t like to travel.) These adventures have included Greece, Italy, Russia, a Rhine River cruise, New Mexican Indian reservations, Branson, MO, and numerous trips to Hawaii (to see Kathy Sass). In 2016 they plan to tour Ireland. Marilyn has also visited Paris many times.

To keep active, she goes to the gym five mornings a week, followed by coffee with longtime friends.

“We have a place at Lake Tulloch. We never took vacations while we were working, but I had always dreamed of having a place on a lake. We used to camp in the Central Valley in the 1970s, and in 1976 we purchased a lakefront lot with a mobile home at Lake Tulloch. In 2000 we tore down the mobile home and built a house. It’s probably my favorite place on earth. It’s the place where our family and friends gather.”



Marilyn at 2004 Wildflower Run

Even though Marilyn isn’t very involved in the branch any more (except you can always see her helping with the Wildflower Run), she says, “I never thought of dropping my membership in AAUW. I believe in AAUW.”

Carol O’Hare and Carol Holzgrafe