

This is the 4th in a series of interviews with Morgan Hill's charter members. The branch will celebrate its 35th year in December 2016.

Jeanne Gregg: Charter Member



Jeanne January 2016

Jeanne Gregg spent an afternoon with Carol O'Hare and Carol Holzgrafe being interviewed for this article, although she didn't think that she would have anything interesting to share.

"The remarkable thing about my life is how unremarkable it has been," she stated, but the stories she tells are never dull.

About AAUW, "I have always really liked what AAUW stood for and the role it played in the community. It fits in with my vision of what's important. AAUW is a great group of people to be around, too. Like playing tennis with people better than you, they upped your game."

Background

Jeanne was born in Storm Lake, Iowa, a place that has been called "the quintessential American small town. Everybody was like everyone else. If you were poor, Kiwanis would send your kids to camp. If you were rich you lived like everybody else or it would be crass.

"Dan [her husband] and I grew up together in the same small town and were so similar: same religion, same values, attended the same schools, all four grandparents were farmers.

"I didn't realize how similar our upbringing was. We didn't have to talk about things. For educated people we were quite provincial. We went to college and having experiences helped; but it was easy to have a provincial view of life. There was no conflict."

Jeanne said she first dated Dan's older brother, Dick, a double date where Dan and his friend were the other couple.

Education

Jeanne spent two years at Colorado State at Fort Collins, then transferred to Iowa State where Dan was in veterinary school. She majored in history.

“We got married in 1970 when I graduated, though Dan was still in school. Then I taught history in junior high and high school while he finished.

“Dan’s first job was in the suburbs of Chicago; I substituted in schools. The way we came to California was this: Dan’s brother Dick was doing a combination medical school and Ph.D. at Stanford. We came out to visit him in January and Dan fell in love with the clean cars [no wintertime salt and grime]. We moved here because of the clean cars!”

California and Morgan Hill

“We moved to the Bay Area in 1973 and lived in the East Bay, near San Pablo. Dan was a surgeon at a big veterinarian hospital there while we looked around for a place to set up our own. To open a viable vet hospital with small animal focus, you must have an area where people value caring for pets.

“Dan wanted to have his own practice. We looked all over the state, found Morgan Hill and thought there was a need here in a growing area. We looked at land and built the hospital while still working in the East Bay. The Morgan Hill Animal Hospital on Monterey opened in late 1975; we moved to town in 1976 when Morgan Hill had about 8,000 people.

“We lived in an apartment first, then moved near the library [Piedmont Court] and to our current house [La Tierra Drive] in 1987.

“I was happy to come to a small town since I had come from a small town. I liked Morgan Hill.”

Work Life

“I didn’t teach while in California since I would need a master’s degree. I had planned to get a degree in library science, but then I got pregnant. Our son David was born while we were building the hospital, and Annie was born in 1979 after we moved. After that, my job was at the animal hospital. We couldn’t get a loan from a bank to start our business, so Dan’s parents mortgaged some family property. I was worried about starting our own business, but Dan was sure it would be successful.

“At work Dan was the vet; I was everything else: vet assistant, receptionist, janitor. I managed the office and did all the paperwork, finances, and taxes. It was like Dan was chairman of the board and I was CFO and head of HR.

“Although there were several other vets in town, most handled large animals. There were only two with small animal practices. Our practice grew rapidly and we hired bunch of staff within the first year. But we were still there six days a week and two evenings, plus weekend and emergency calls all the time. The kids were there all the time, too. That is where they grew up.

“We sold the practice in 2009. For awhile Dan worked part time a few days a week and filled in but not for the past two years. Once all the paperwork was done, I also retired.”

“We own rentals that were built on land behind the hospital. When we bought land, we had to buy the entire plot, so there was room for two duplexes, which were built in 1985-86. Now we have eight rental units. Managing them is a hassle, but it allowed us to retire.”



Jeanne 2006

AAUW Morgan Hill

“We worked so much those beginning years; I knew nothing about AAUW except that the newspaper covered something the Gilroy branch had done. I thought that I really should join something like that, but I just didn’t have time.”

“I first heard about the AAUW in Morgan Hill because Barbara Cate was a neighbor down the street. Then another neighbor came around and said, ‘Okay, we’re all joining AAUW because they need college educated people to join.’ We lived on Piedmont Court then. It was a close knit neighborhood – we raised our kids communally. The selling point was promoting educational opportunities for girls. Also, they told me, ‘You don’t have to go to meetings. Just do as much as or as little as you want to do.’ So I attended that charter party in 1981 and became a member.

“I remember the first Wildflower Run in 1984. Annie was little. We stood on Sunnyside directing runners up the hill.

“I helped with a voter registration drive that went door to door. I was shocked at the lack of knowledge about the political system. This would not happen in Storm Lake.

“When the kids got older, and we had more help at the hospital, I had time and became more active for 15 or 20 years.

“The first office I held was membership vice president when Patti Trantow was president 1988-89. [Dues were \$40.] I was president elect under Laura Brunton in 1991-92. She was so awesome.

“I was worried about being president. It was time consuming, had to do all those reports. I was hesitant to take on the job, as Dan was seriously ill, but he pushed me, said you really should do this. AAUW had to be only a part of my life; family, work, Dan’s health, all took a larger part.”



Jeanne 1992

“After I was president in 1992-93, I did scholarships with Laura. I loved doing anything with Laura. Over the years, I was hospitality chair more than once. I also did Programs and Interest Groups, and some other jobs. The job duties were smaller then; now they are more formal.

“One of my favorite AAUW memories was the state convention held on the Queen Mary in Long Beach in the early 90s. At the celebration dinner, which was held in the Spruce Goose hangar, one woman wore her 1950s prom dress.

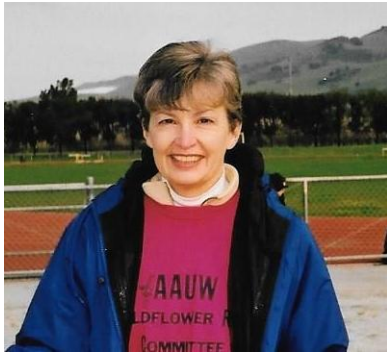
“I also remember the program with Tracie Cone, editor of the Pinnacle newspaper, who spoke of troubles with hate mail. I found her incredibly inspiring. We from the Midwest have a tradition of taking care of yourself. So I am comfortable with people handling their own problems, like Tracie at the Pinnacle.”

“AAUW is a group I have always been proud to be associated with. It is a membership of individuals, and you can always find a role model for anything. And as a whole, they are wonderful people and often truly inspiring. I went to visit Elena Moreno in the nursing home after her stroke. She looked like she had just come out of a movie set; she has always been like that. Joanne Rife is another admirable one. Laura Brunton was one of kindest, most supportive people. These are just a few examples of the smart and interesting women in AAUW.”

Current Activities

Jeanne says she is not doing very much now in AAUW, although she continues to attend branch events, afternoon book group, and coordinates Mamas in the Kitchen cooking group. Of course, she always helps with the Wildflower Run. She volunteers with the historical society and helps with the Friends of the Senior

Center bingo. She is also a proud grandmother and keeps busy with other family responsibilities.



Wildflower Run 2006

“We’ve enjoyed our life in Morgan Hill and have prospered here. AAUW has been an important part of my life, and I am grateful for the friends I’ve made and their support.”

Carol O’Hare and Carol Holzgrafe