

This is the 6th in a series of interviews with Morgan Hill's charter members. The branch will celebrate its 35th year in December 2016.

Linda Tarvin: Charter Member



Linda April 2016

Linda Tarvin is a Texas girl who has put down deep roots in Morgan Hill. She has also a long history as a member of AAUW, first joining in Richardson, Texas, in 1967.

In preparation for her interview, Linda had compiled a collection of memorabilia, including her first ukulele and some of her hats. "I love hats!"

Background and Education

Born in Lubbock, Texas, Linda grew up in Plainview farm country, in that state's very flat panhandle.

"I had wonderful parents," she said. Her mother ran a cake decorating business from their home, producing cakes for all occasions. She had artistic talent, had been a music major in college, played piano, painted and worked with ceramics.

Her father's jobs were all farm-related. He was an agriculture teacher, county agent, and sold tractors. His long-time career was with Farm Bureau Insurance. Linda was the middle of three children.

"Plainview was a great place to grow up," Linda said. "There was only one high school; the class is still very close and has lots of reunions and their own web page."

Linda started piano lessons at age six and was given her first ukulele as a Christmas present in 4th grade. "Before opening the package, I thought it was another doll," she said, "and I was glad it wasn't."



She still has the uke with palm tree decorations.

Education and Career

In 1962 when time came for college, Linda attended Texas Tech University in Lubbock; she majored in elementary education with a specialization in music. Future husband John appeared in her freshman English class; it took them four months to begin dating because both had other “friends.” They were married in 1965 after their junior years. After Linda graduated, she got a job teaching 5th grade. John graduated a year later with a degree in electrical engineering.

The couple moved a considerable amount: from Lubbock to Dallas, where she taught 5th grade, and then to Garland, Texas. At first John worked at his father’s business in Dallas, then was hired by Collins Radio. When he was transferred, they moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1968. Linda was back in the 5th grade classroom for 2½ years in the “wonderful school system in DeKalb County,” she said.

A memorable highlight was the day that Mrs. Gray, the 6th grade teacher, wore pant suits to work. “Lightening did not strike and there were no reprimands,” she said. After that, skirts and dresses were no longer required teacher apparel.

While teaching in Georgia, Linda began working on her master’s degree at the University of Georgia. Another transfer took them back to Garland where she continued teaching. Linda returned to Georgia during the summer to finish her master’s work, just before the Tarvins’ first baby, Jay, arrived in 1973.

“After that I stayed home,” she said, “and rejoined AAUW.”

AAUW

In 1967 while living near Dallas, Linda had joined the AAUW branch in Richardson, Texas. Another teacher had a friend who told her about AAUW, ‘You need to join AAUW,’ so we did. It was a great branch.”

Linda was not a member of AAUW while in Georgia but rejoined Richardson when they moved back to the Dallas area. She also became a charter member of the newly formed Garland branch, while maintaining her Richardson membership. Garland AAUW’s fundraiser was a Lollipop Soup Book that included crafts and recipes for Play Doh. “I helped sell books by demonstrating the crafts.” By then daughter Jennifer had arrived.

Morgan Hill

The Tarvins’ final move was to California in 1979. John was offered a job in Santa Clara, and they bought their current house in Morgan Hill, on Shadowlane Court.

“I was sold on Morgan Hill the weekend we found the house,” Linda claims, “and I was thrilled to be moving to California. The weather wasn’t hot (by Texas standards), and there was no humidity. I loved it. The people were so gracious.”

Her first local job was writing a gardening column for the Gilroy Dispatch that she continued for seven years. She also obtained a California teaching credential and substituted in the Morgan Hill elementary schools.

“I volunteered at San Martin/Gwinn where our children attended,” she said. “It was a pleasure not to be responsible for the entire class; I did the fun stuff.”

Linda also taught exercise classes at Get Fit but stopped when she re-damaged her knee and another surgery was needed.

By the mid ‘80s John was tired of commuting and thought Morgan Hill needed a good print and copy shop. After training in Texas the couple opened a Kwik Kopy franchise. Three years later they opened their own business, Hot Spot Printing. After 20 years as printers, they sold their business in October 2008.

AAUW Morgan Hill

Linda never joined AAUW Gilroy, but in 1981 she heard about a start up branch in Morgan Hill from the Morgan Hill Times. “I was really excited that it was happening. I remember Marilyn (Gadway), Irene (Blaine), and Nancy (Foster). We started the Morning Book Group right away. Mary Louise Keig and Jan Smith were in the group.” (Both are now deceased, as is Irene Blaine. Marilyn and Nancy are still branch members.)

“Since I had a busy life,” Linda said, “I decided to be a loyal member while keeping a low profile.” She distributed the newsletter when Kathryn Buckley Brawner was editor. And for certain women’s history presentations she portrayed Catherine Murphy Dunne and Julia Morgan. She has, however, never accepted a board position.

“I have been a good follower,” Linda said. A quote she likes is, ‘Followership is a discipline of supporting leaders and helping them lead well.’ I’ve always thought that our AAUW members are among the most dynamic women in Morgan Hill. The town is lucky to have AAUW as a vital part of the community.”



Linda 2000

Like all other members, Linda has always worked on the Wildflower Run. “In the early days I had been a runner and knew that doing ‘course’ well was really important.”

Her early AAUW memories include: “Irene Blaine invited me to see her beautiful iris garden. I worked on the quilt project where my square was the 21-mile house designed from a picture loaned by Elena Moreno.” The completed quilt was donated to the Morgan Hill Historical Society in 1989 and is on display in the museum.



Linda 1989

“John and I participated in a couple’s bridge group in the 1980s. There was also an evening gourmet group that included spouses. The most memorable for me was a Tunisian dinner held at the home of Kathy Sass.”

There was also a craft group and Linda still has the tie-dye scarf she made at Marianne Thornton’s house using KoolAid as the dye.

Linda enjoyed participating with the Poppy Jasper Singers and was inspired by Deb Prieskop’s (the leader) hats. “I’ve always liked wearing hats and, of course, it is important to be protected from the sun.” Linda is still singing, but now it’s when she plays and performs with the Ukuladies.

Current Activities

Linda volunteers with the Friends of the Morgan Hill Senior Center, which she and John started with a few other friends. The group holds weekly Bingo games to raise funds for the senior center. “My job is publicity and getting donations for the monthly attendance prize.” Bingo has been so successful that \$98,000 has been given in grants and endowments over the past four years.

When the Tarvins had their print shop, Linda was an ambassador for the Chamber of Commerce and received several awards.



Linda is also a member of the local Hill Red Hat Society, the Stinkin’ Red Roses, which provides even more opportunities for her to wear some of her fun hats. She and John also belong to the Photography Club.

The couple likes to travel, mostly taking one big trip a year plus several shorter ventures. They have visited many national parks in Utah, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Montana, and South Dakota.

After retirement the Tarvins picked The Old Buzzards as their nickname and created a website and Facebook page. They frequently share their travel adventures at the Morgan Hil Senior Center.

Linda's life is full with her various activities, which includes time with their three grandchildren.

She may never have held a leadership position in the branch, but AAUW means a lot to Linda. "I deeply treasure the friendships I have made in the group. I am proud to be part of an organization that does so much to support educations for girls and women."



Carol Holzgrafe and Carol O'Hare