

# Staying Connected

PCC Retirees Association

June 2024

## After 50 years, Marcie Ambrose is Still Standing 9 Feet Tall on the Corning Wall

*By Marcie Ambrose*

Who hasn't grown up with at least one piece of Corning GlassWare in their home. They were and are staples for most homes. And if you're fortunate enough, you might have a piece of Steuben Crystal (owned by Corning) gracing your China cabinet. My husband (now x-husband) and I moved from Virginia Beach, VA to Corning, NY around 1974-75 and we both worked for Corning Glass Works.

Corning is about 90 miles south of Syracuse. It is a small town with friendly people. Back then, you could leave your door unlocked when you left your house, and you could leave your car doors unlocked when you went shopping.

The people in the local stores knew you by sight and/or by name. And, of course, you knew your neighbors and they knew you. There was a creek behind our duplex and a small farm across the street. In 1970, the population was 15.8K. Now the population is about 10.53K.

I never imagined my "15 minutes of fame" would be in Corning, NY. If I recall correctly, there was an ad in the local newspaper asking for people to bring their pets to be photographed. Well, who doesn't want a professional photo of their pet. At the time, my husband, William and I had a cat we named Aphrodesia.

On Saturday, March 20, 1976, we stood in line with other residents, some with their pets, patiently waiting to have Aphrodesia photographed.

When it was our cat's turn, the photographer asked William and I to be in the photo.

We didn't even know how or where or when these photos were going to be used. The photographer gave us a leash for Aphrodesia so she wouldn't run away.

Had we known we were going to be photographed, we would have put on nicer clothes, and I would have put on some makeup. We posed for the photos and that was it. Well, at least, we thought that was it.

A few months later, our bigger-than-life, 9 ft photo was on display along with all the others. We were shocked. Every so often, one of the town folks would recognize us on the street or in a store after seeing our photo on the wall.

In 1978, our twins, William and Xandrea were born in Arnot-Ogden Hospital in Elmira, NY. A few months later, we moved to Weedsport, NY, leaving our photo behind. In 1979

we moved to Santa Ana, CA. I kept in touch with my boss at Corning Glass Works, who later moved to Anaheim Hills.

He went back to visit family and friends in Corning on a regular basis and each time, he would let me know our photo was still on display. I figured that someday, the photos would be removed.

In March 2021, I got a Facebook message from Barbara Blumer who told me she was serving on the Public Art Committee in Corning and re-searching the people on the people Wall. She sent me a copy of our photo. She asked me a few questions about what departments we worked in and what we were doing now.

From 2020 to 2023, Barbara Hall Blumer tracked down and found the 150 people on the wall and collected their stories.

These stories are now in a book. All proceeds from the sale of the book go to the Corning-Painted Post Historical Society

If you would like to read a more detailed background about this wall online, go to [peoplewallhistory.com](http://peoplewallhistory.com) or find Barbara Hall Blumer on Facebook.

The mural has been up for almost 50 years. Our 15 minutes of fame has been extended indefinitely. I have shrunk a couple inches in height, but I will always be 9 feet tall on the Corning People Wall.

## **Louis Holly Moves from Los Angeles to South Africa with a Stop at PCC**

*By Louis Holly*

*I want to preface this article with a shout out to one of my favorite teachers, Professor Mikki Bolliger, she gave me the skill and nerve to write this!*

I am proud to be a former student of Pasadena City College but even more proud of being a former employee of the PCC. During my time at the college, I was able to learn on the job and in the classroom.

In my journey of life, I lived in several places and found that each one gave me life lessons as well as opportunities to find my better self.

I am a perfect example to show that it is never too late do something new; I found the love of my life Andre Radford, late in life. It is a true blessing to legal in America, here in South Africa it is in the Constitution and thus it is more widely accepted. So now we live in a beautiful community called Midstream near Johannesburg, South Africa.

I am able to enjoy my retirement years here where the weather is always sunny and even in the winter, it is not as cold as in America. The people here are quite friendly.

I continue to play my passion tennis and enjoy playing with my beloved dogs Downton and Sebastian. It was important that I have them here in South Africa, so we used a pet relocation agency that flies them via Amsterdam first then to South Africa. This is so they are not on the plane for more than eight hours at a time. Both my dogs have adjusted well, except for when Sebastian decided to chew up two TV remotes!

I have begun getting involved in the community by mentoring South African orphans, but that is still in the early stages, and I am learning from them as they learn from me. We purchased a 5,000 square foot dwelling which we have modified to accommodate our American lifestyle. In South Africa there a thing called load shedding. This is when the power goes completely out for 2 to 3 hours at a time.

To avoid this issue, we have upgraded the solar panel system to run continually even during the hours of load shedding!

I begin my days with 30 minutes on my treadmill. I then get cleaned up and go out for a walk in my community or take a drive in my new car, which I named Sporty Blue, a 2023 Honda HRV. Driving is unique in that here we drive on the right side of the car. I have been asked how hard it was to learn how to drive differently here than in the states, I found it to be simple and easy to adjust! I find that as in the states traffic is based on time of day, so I avoid rush hours and do my errands on off hours of the day.

We have found so many new friends here in South Africa, including a group called, "African Americans in South Africa." This is a group of expats and native South Africans who enjoy getting together and celebrating their newfound home. It is important for me to emphasize that I retained my American passport and all the rights there in, such as voting in Presidential elections and being able to return to my birthplace whenever I want. I am in the process of applying for permanent residency here so that I may live without having to renew my retirement visa every four years. This is a long process, which takes about two years to complete, but it can be done while residing here in South Africa.

We have already been on a Safari in Kruger National Park. I had the pleasure of seeing so many wild animals in their natural habitats. I saw elephants, giraffes, hyenas, lions and even a black mamba snake. That was the scariest of all the encounters! I went on four outings, but Andre only did one. He did not enjoy the rough ride into the bush. It was like a roller coaster to me!

I want to take a moment to thank some of the wonderful people I worked with and learned from while at PCC. First, I want to thank Marcie Ambrose for giving me great advice when I need- ed it, my co-workers Karen Luchsinger, Dr. Ted Young, Denise Albright, Pat Krause and many others who shared their time and laughs. I want to thank my professors, Dr. Mel Donaldson, Professor Rita Gonzalez, and many others who taught me the value of the classroom. Lastly, I want to thank Dr. Jim Kossler for being a great leader and inspiration for me. When I was a student working on the PCC

newspaper, "The Courier" he granted me an interview. His advice has been extremely helpful in my life.

In closing, I am truly happy to share my new experiences with PCC retirees. In this new chapter of my life, I am learning that living in a new country can be extremely enlightening and exciting. "In my life, I have been blessed beyond belief!"

## **Rob Lee Selected to Lead Retirees Association**

*By Rob Lee*

Greetings Fellow Retirees:

I am now the president of the Retirees Association of PCC, which makes me laugh because I've only been retired for 2 years! It all started when Alan Lamson strong armed invited me to join the Retirees Association board soon after I retired from the college in 2021.

I have enjoyed being a part of the Retirees Association because I get to see so many old friends, most of whom I knew when they were still at the college. I miss the "good old days" including being a rep on the Academic Senate when everyone got along and all seemed to be focused on helping the college serve students better.

Pauline Crabb was one of the first administrators to evaluate my teaching. Although she liked my teaching, in my official evaluation, she criticized my crooked writing on the blackboard (not one of those new-fangled whiteboards). I also remember Bill Goldman observing my ESL class and telling me afterwards that he learned fluent English really quickly as a child because every time he spoke anything other than English, his teacher would whack him on the head.

I don't think he was advocating a return to that style of teaching, but it did highlight how much education has changed.

### **Local boy makes good**

Do any of you remember the first Chinese restaurant in Pasadena, the Mee Jin Inn, over by Bob's Big Boy in East Pasadena? That was my grandfather's restaurant and I spent countless hours there as a child, mostly just getting fat on all the fried rice, fortune cookies and almond cookies I could eat.

I graduated from John Muir High school (the GOOD high school in Pasadena) in 1977, UCLA in 1981 (BA) and USC in 1986 (MA).

When I started teaching at PCC in 1992, Jack Scott was the president and I served under seven more before I retired! I believe that my arrival at PCC as a faculty member caused two deans to retire: Paul Kilian had been my first

trombone teacher and band director when I was in 7th grade, and I had dated Dick Chamberlain's daughter and hung out a lot at his house during my high school years.

I think they both decided that it was time to leave PCC when the young kids were now their colleagues.

I was blessed that Alan and Shelagh Lamson took interest in me when I started at PCC.

I clearly remember them inviting my entire family over to his house for dinner several times. I was so grateful for his welcoming me to the English Department.

I remember the weekly faculty & staff \$5 (all you can eat!!!) lunch in Circadian when we could mingle and hang out with others who were not just from our own departments. I wish that those lunches had not gone away.

I tried my best to foster collegiality and fun at the school during my years at PCC: I joined the Social Activity Committee way, way back when VP Rod Fleeman formed the group. I remember leading families to the Mount Baldy trout ponds where many kids caught their first fish. We hosted a few coffee/ tea/cookies events and other activities open to any college employees.

If you ever sat in our little grandstand at the Rose Parade, you'll remember how much fun we all had, regard- less of our status as faculty or staff. I sure do miss leading hundreds of raucous faculty and staff on January 1st every year. Those are actually some of my favorite memories of my years at PCC!

I am hoping that more and more retirees will participate in our activities. They are a lot of fun!

I would like to encourage them to consider contributing to the Retirees Scholar- ship fund, which helps truly deserving students who have overcome many obstacles. I have had the pleasure of meeting many of our award recipients in the past few years, and it's inspiring and humbling to discover how much adversity they've each overcome and yet have excelled in their studies.

I have no doubt that many of our scholarship recipients will become leaders and change-makers. If you'd like to help with the scholarship committee, consider donating to the Retirees Scholarship Fund. Any amount is welcome.

You can contribute online by going to the Foundation donation website - <https://10933.thankyou4caring.org>. You can choose the amount to donate and be sure to designate it for the PCC Retirees Association Scholarship Fund. You can also send a check for the Retirees Scholarship fund to the PCC Foundation at 1570 East Colorado Blvd., Pasadena 91106.

Finally, if you'd like to meet some of our award recipients this coming May, please let me know! I'd love for more of you to be inspired by them as much as I have been.

## ***St. Barnabas Has Been Meeting the Spiritual Needs of Pasadena for 100 Years***

*By Michael Mims and Marcie Ambrose*

In the early 1930s, the Dobbins family donated the property at 1062 North Fair Oaks to establish the St. Barnabas Church. That church has been a landmark in Pasadena for more than 100 years.

You may remember Michael Mims who was a photography instructor at PCC for over 30 years. He retired in 2005 and enjoys all the benefits of being retired. Michael has attended St. Barnabas since he was about 3 years old. He currently serves as the Church historian.

St. Barnabas Episcopal Church is one of the oldest historically black churches in the area. Back in the early 1900 All Saints Episcopal Church Church came.

During the episcopate of the Right Rev Bertrand Stevens, missionary expansion of the diocese was given priority and St. Barnabas' congregation was given more notice and encouragement. St. Barnabas was admitted into union with Convention as a Mission in 1932.

That same year, Bishop Stevens heard of the Rev. W. Alfred Wilkins, a dynamic young African American priest in Fleming to New York would not allow Blacks to attend their services. Not to be denied, on June 16, 1909, a meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Georgia Weatherton on South Fair Oaks Avenue, "to organize an Episcopal mission," soon known as Saint Barnabas Guild, according to handwritten minutes in the diocesan archives. The fledgling members supported their ministry by holding food sales. By 1911, services were being held in the Grand Army Hall on Colorado Street.

St. Barnabas Church was founded in 1923 by eight women. Among them were Ellenstein Bevans, Rosebud Mims (Michael Mim's aunt) and Georgia Weaterton in whose home the first services were held. They started small, with about 29 members each Sunday morning. The congregation was served by a lay reader from All Saints Church and an organist

Fr. Wilkins came to St. Barnabas as its first resident vicar in December 1933, accompanied by his wife Lydia. Services attracted neighborhood residents, as well as family and friends of the original members, and the congregation grew.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Fleming made a gift of the current sanctuary, which was dedicated by Bishop Stevens in June 1933. The parish hall was a wood frame building already located at the site.

In 1984, the congregation participated in a self-study and in August 1987, a report was submitted to the Diocese, identifying short-and long-range goals. Eventually, at the Bishop's Committee meeting April 8, 1988, a motion passed unanimously to apply for Parish status. St. Barnabas was granted Parish status at the Annual Convention of the Diocese of Los Angeles in December 1988.

Mike's mom went to Friendship Baptist Church on Delacy, in Pasadena but Michael loved riding in the neighbor's car, a yellow and black Lincoln Continental, when they came to pick up his great aunt Laura Kennedy. He enjoyed serving as an altar boy in his youth. And always served in various church auxiliaries throughout the years.

In June, Michael Mims joined the crowd of members past and present, local and out of state guests and local political representatives, including Rep. Judy Chu, D-Pasadena; Assemblymember Chris Holden, D-Pasadena; Pasadena Council member Justin Jones; California Assembly candidate Phlunté Riddle; and Allan Edson, president of the Pasadena branch of the NAACP, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church. The theme of this beautiful celebration was "St. Barnabas 100 - Still We Rise"

In Michael's position of historian for St. Barnabas, he said, "Who knew we would be here for 100 years?" Mims said. "I certainly didn't. No one told me." He can give you an oral history and back it up with stories, photos and articles he has collected over decades.

He remembers lots of chicken dinner fundraisers, Lenten dinners, annual beach parties, afternoon Sunday tea fundraisers and Christmas programs. Since the church is along the parade route for the annual Pasadena Black History Parade, Michael sets up a display of historical photos and articles he has collected.

Marcie Ambrose who worked in the Office of Campus Use at PCC, and a 2014 Retiree, also attended St. Barnabas Church. Her childhood friends remember her as Bootsie. Her mother, Anita Conerly, is memorialized in the rose garden with a double delight rose bush for her service. Her father, Leon Conerly, was a Lay Reader at Saint Barnabas for over 40 years. He also served as Senior Warden. Her mother and father served in various auxiliaries at the church. After her dad passed away in 1997, Michael Mims, who was President of the Men's Club, spearheaded an annual Golf Tournament fundraiser in memory of Leon Conerly. The funds were used to provide scholarships to PUSD students.

Over the decades, St. Barnabas has become a pillar in the Pasadena community, not just for Black residents but for all community members. Its current congregation is racially diverse and focused on serving. Its notable efforts have included:

- Sponsoring the Northwest Pasadena Little League
- Providing meals for Union Station residents on the third Friday of every month (ongoing)
- Granting scholarships each year to Pasadena Unified School District graduates
- Maintaining a community food pantry (ongoing)
- Hosting three Alcoholics Anonymous groups in its Parish Hall on week-nights (ongoing)
- Hosting a Spanish-speaking Catholic congregation on Sunday afternoons (ongoing)
- Hosting a Spanish-speaking Pentecostal congregation on Friday and Sunday evenings (ongoing).

## **Sandra Collins Meets Emmy on the Set of Abbott Elementary**

Abbot Elementary was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Casting for a Comedy Series.

Quinta Brunson, a former Tik Tok phenom, took home the Emmy as lead actress in a comedy series, and a Golden Globe for Best Actress in a comedy series. The party and awards did not end at these events. The wonderful people at Abbott shared the stellar year with all cast and crew. As a thank you to the people behind the scenes and to those who sit quietly on camera, awards were handed out on set.

I have been fortunate to appear in six episodes between Season 2 and Season 3. After rushing through hair and makeup, I headed to the holding area and found my award waiting.

I'd like to thank all those who believed that, if you work hard, life provides the awards.

## **Members of Retirees Group Tour Homeboy Industries**

*By Mikki Bolliger*

Over the last few months, I have had people ask me who does the Retirees Newsletter. I thought that was funny that they would ask me because I am the one who does it. That's when I realized I haven't included the name of the editor for several years. Why? My guess is that I deleted it when I needed the space for an article, and I never put it back in.

I thought that this would be the perfect time to identify myself because this issue marks 15 years that I have been editing and designing the newsletter. I remember being contacted by the Association's president one month after I retired to see if I would take over responsibility for the newsletter. I am sure he thought that I had been teaching journalism and advising the Courier for so long, I could I do it. Well, I said yes, and 15 years later, I am still doing it.

However, a few years ago, my job got easier when I managed to get Marcie Ambrose as my assistant. She is exceptionally good at finding story ideas and tracking down missing information. She is not only good at what she does, but she is a lot of fun to work with. I don't think I could get along without out her now. I would double her salary if I could, but neither one of us gets paid. She will just have to settle for compliments for now.

Our retirees do so many interesting things, but many of them think that no- body would want to read about what they do. We know there are so many good stories out there to tell, but we can't publish them if we don't know about them, So, if you know a fellow



retiree who took an interesting trip or who has an interesting hobby, let me or Marcie know. My email is [dgbolliger@earthlink.net](mailto:dgbolliger@earthlink.net), and Marcie's is [abuelitamarcie@gmail.com](mailto:abuelitamarcie@gmail.com)

## The Retirees Association Celebrates This Year's Scholarship Winners at a University Club Luncheon

*By Alan Lamson*

The Retirees Association honored 10 scholarship winners at a luncheon at the University Club on May 10. Each student received a check for \$2,000. We have designed our scholarships to award returning students who have achieved success at the College despite experiencing adversity in their lives.

Each student was introduced by a major donor, including the college president, Dr. Jose Garcia who introduced a youthful looking woman sitting next to me.

Turns out it had been 24 years since she decided to return to school. But what really jolted me was finding out that she is a recovering addict who has been incarcerated and has suffered the devastating loss of two children out of the six she had.

No doubt Dawn Garcia is an extreme example of the challenges that our scholarship recipients have faced. But she isn't alone. Others have faced similar challenges. Casey Redd has been also affected by drug addiction, as well as the incarceration of her father, and the death of her ex-boyfriend. Steve Valez—with prominent tattoos—spent ten years addicted to alcohol and drugs. He was often homeless, and he has spent several stints in prison. Room service and food were terrible, he commented.

The other award recipients, most of them immigrants, with the exception of Stephen Wells, also have compelling stories. Steve, introduced by Jan Sutherland, has suffered from mental illness and ADHD.

But his penchant for science has motivated him to pursue a career in medicine. He now works as an EKG technician and is most proud for having saved his aunt's life last year using his medical skills to revive her.

Hao Qing Li, introduced by Alan Armstrong, is a single mother from China who is intent on becoming an electrical engineer. Despite mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, she says "I have become a more determined person, and more brave in the face of difficulties . . ."

Lorena Corona, introduced by Harry Smallenburg, has faced her biggest challenge following the death of her mother who gave her both financial and emotional support. But she says that "Pasadena City College has allowed me to dream that a real opportunity awaits me with open arms." She surprised everyone by singing a song in Spanish that expressed her appreciation for the award.

Hye Bin Kang, introduced by Dona Mitoma, was ill much of time when growing up. Her biggest problem, she says, has been insecurity. But after having four children, she has become more secure and is now pursuing a degree in psychology to help those with “broken” families.

Clay Ngo, introduced by Liliane Ribeiro from the Foundation, spent a decade working at odd jobs, before returning to PCC “to choose a different path in life.” His enrollment in a ceramics class and his leadership within the department provided him with the courage to believe in himself and find career fulfillment.

Our awards luncheon ended with a group photo and with students sharing cell numbers. Our awards event convinces me that our donations and recognition of students do make a difference in the lives of our award recipients.