

David and Mary Jo Morelli Interview on Forest Grove and Friends of Historic Forest Grove history

Recorded July 31, 2025 at their Forest Grove residence

Interviewer: Elle Griego, History and French undergraduate student at Pacific University

Note on the text: This transcript was made through AI in 2025 with manual corrections. We recommend checking this text against the audio recording before quoting the speakers, as it may contain errors.

[Recording begins mid-conversation.]

David Morelli 0:00

Forest Grove is a mill town that has a university in it, and that university is a leavening that raises this city to a higher level than other mill towns. So when you're looking at the history of Forest Grove, you have to realize that all the other mill towns in the state that don't have a university, don't come out the way we did. That's the reason for it.

Elle Griego 0:24

Wow, exactly.

David Morelli 0:26

Here's your starting point.

Elle Griego 0:29

Exactly. Well, first I just want to say for the context for people watching this in the future. I'm Elle Griego behind the camera, and I'm here with the wonderful Mary Jo and David Morelli. We are recording this interview at their residence here in Forest Grove, Oregon, on July 31, 2025. I will be asking them about their lives, the history of Friends of Historic Forest Grove, and how Forest Grove has evolved and changed over the years. Thank you so much for being here with me. And then I would first like to start by learning a bit about the beginning of your lives. Where and when were you each born? You can start first if you would like, Mary Jo.

Mary Jo Morelli 1:14

I was born in Portland. My family lived in Gresham, and had lived in Gresham since 1852 when they came to Oregon. My mother's family came to Oregon on a wagon train, and that family name was Stanley, and the other side of the family was the Merrell family, and I grew up my early years surrounded by them because many of them lived on what had been the donation land claim. And as it had just the land claim had dispersed. Many of them had residences on portions of that land claim. And it's now... the street we lived on was called Stanley road at the time, and it's now East 212th Avenue. That's from the Willamette River. Remember those? And it's in Gresham on 212th and Burnside. Burnside did not go all the way to Gresham when I was a little girl. And at one time, what I always called the Burnside extension was constructed, which took it from what people now call Ruby Station, or at the time, we called it Rockwood, out to Gresham, and it came through the family land claim. And so I sat in the backyard of the house, the 1900, approximately, house that we lived in, and watched all the road graders and everything while I was swinging in the cherry tree. From the cherry tree, I watched Burnside go in. And then my father had worked for Safeway and then

bought a store in Portland, and after he sold that store, he bought a store in Sandy, and that's where we moved when I was about 13 years old, I was in the sixth grade, and Sandy is where I graduated from high school.

Elle Griego 3:20

Wow. And did you say what year you were born?

Mary Jo Morelli 3:24

I was born in 1952, March 12 of 1952. I was born at Good Samaritan Hospital, and my mother was a nurse who worked there. That's where she took her nurses training.

Elle Griego 3:40

And then you David, where and when were you born?

David Morelli 3:43

I was born in 1950. In 1960 my family came to Oregon, and we lived on a small farm-ish piece of property when my dad worked at Tektronix, which was the largest employer in Oregon. And while there, he started this business, a side business, which a lot of people at Tektronix did, making plastics. And when I got out of the military, I went to work for him, and as his first employee, and grew the business, and we needed to expand, but we could not, because we were out in the county. So we moved Forest Grove to some industrial land, which is what got us into Forest Grove, because I was living outside of Cornelius at that time, and so we started coming to work here, and we eventually moved into town

Elle Griego 4:45

I didn't know you were in the military.

David Morelli 4:52

For six years.

Elle Griego 4:53

Oh, thank you for your service. Wow. And you said you moved to Oregon at 10 years old. What year did you move to Forest Grove? Roughly?

Mary Jo Morelli 5:05

We think around 1986.

David Morelli 5:08

I believe that.

Mary Jo Morelli 5:09

We'll call it 1986.

Elle Griego 5:11

And then how did you two meet?

David Morelli 5:14

Well, between the time that I enlisted in the Navy and went active duty, I was on the delayed enlistment, which is a six month delay, so I signed up in the summer and was going to report for duty in January. Some friends were having a party, and they didn't have enough girls there, so looking through the building, trying to find any... scare up any girls, and somebody knew one of the girls who lived in the building, so a bunch of us guys walked over and knocked on the door, and she wasn't there, but her younger sister was, and she wasn't interested in going to the party. So a little while later, we were still scouting through the building, and we ran into... down the laundry room, and there was the younger sister who was trying to do laundry, and one of our guys in our group had kind of cornered her, and that wasn't very nice. So we interrupted and said, "Would you like..." you know, we got him away from her, and she consented to come to the party. And at that point, she and I kind of started to bond.

Mary Jo Morelli 6:22

That was a very good abbreviated version.

David Morelli 6:27

It's a much longer story.

Mary Jo Morelli 6:28

Oh, we like stories, you know. Long stories.

Elle Griego 6:34

And then, what year did you two marry?

David Morelli 6:38

'72.

Mary Jo Morelli 6:40

That was in the fall of 1970 that we met. He went into the Navy in January of '71, and we got married in May of '72.

Elle Griego 6:51

I see. So where were you living before you moved to Forest Grove?

David Morelli 6:57

Well, she was living with her family up until she went to school. And she went to school at Portland State, which is where she was when I met her, and then she continued with her family after that, while I was in boot camp. And then I got stationed in Great Lakes, Illinois for the training. And she went back to Kenosha, Wisconsin to visit with family, who was only like 30, 40, miles away. So I would hitchhike up to visit her.

Mary Jo Morelli 7:28

My father's parents, he lived up in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

David Morelli 7:33

And we drove back across country, which is another long and interesting story, and I went back, and then went back to the military, and then she stayed. And then we got married, and then she came with me with the military.

Elle Griego 7:46
Wow.

Mary Jo Morelli 7:47
In Idaho Falls.

Yeah, Navy base in Idaho Falls.

Navy base in Idaho Falls. Another story.

Elle Griego 7:55
Yeah, wow. And then, so you're in Forest Grove. Had either of you -- I'm assuming you hadn't been to Forest Grove before you moved here? What was it like coming to this town? What were your initial thoughts?

David Morelli 8:15
When I was in high school, the speech tournaments... there was a speech tournament at Pacific University. And my high school would attend that, and so I'd come to Pacific University. In fact, I was in Old College Hall before it burned. [Mary Jo interjects: Marsh Hall.] Marsh Hall. I'd been to Marsh Hall before it burned. So I remember the inside of that building slightly. It was pretty cool.

Elle Griego 8:41
Yeah. How was it different?

David Morelli 8:44
Well, if you went to the center of the main floor or the center of the second floor, it was open to the third floor above it, which was a mezzanine. And so you could stand in the center there, and you could look up at the balcony all around you, and we could go up in the balcony and look down [from the thing?].

Elle Griego 9:05
That's so cool.

David Morelli 9:04
It's a good memory. I mean, so, like I said that it was... the speech tournaments were a big deal for us. I mean, it was a big speech tournament. It was very popular, and it was multi-day, and I commuted to it because I was local, but other people would come and stay in town. And it was a great speech tournament. There was the Linfield speech tournament, the Pacific speech tournament, were the two big ones in the area.

Mary Jo Morelli 9:36
You remind me that I was actually in Forest Grove before we moved here, but I'd never been to the downtown Forest Grove, but I was here. I came here because my family was Masonic and I was a rainbow girl, and what we call the Grand Lodge was... the Grand Lodge, which is the state offices of the Masonic Lodge, were and are located in Forest Grove. But it was the Masonic home that people lived in. And as a rainbow organization, our assembly had a grandma, a person who lived in the Masonic home, and we would come out several times a year and sometimes to have picnics on the grounds with some of the residents. But

also, I remember two in particular, one very particularly, but we did performances in what's now the compass room on the stage there. [Griego: Oh, wow. Yeah!] [Morelli: You've been there.] So we would do... we did the Grinch, I remember doing the Grinch story up there. And then we also did another Dr. Seuss one I think... I'm not going to say because I can't remember for sure which one that was, but yeah, so that was my total exposure to Forest Grove. Because when we went, when my family went to the coast, we never came through Forest Grove. We'd always go through Banks and take now Highway 26 from Sandy and go out to Tillamook that route, so I never knew anything of Forest Grove.

Elle Griego 11:32

That makes sense. The group I was talking to earlier this month, they mentioned how everyone would go through Forest Grove to go to the beach when they were growing up, and then with the highway, a lot less traffic was going into town for a while. And I never knew that, or even considered that, but that makes sense.

Mary Jo Morelli 11:50

Yeah, after the highway, you might even remember when -- we always called it Sunset Highway -- when Highway 26 was built.

David Morelli 11:55

Well, it was named the Sunset Highway because it was named after Sunset Division of the United States Army.

Mary Jo Morelli 12:05

Yeah, I was just trying to remember which...

David Morelli 12:08

Well, it was a much smaller road until the '50s.

Mary Jo Morelli 12:11

Yeah, that's true.

David Morelli 12:13

I mean, it was a two lane road.

Mary Jo Morelli 12:15

And I was never aware of Forest Grove, but I remember driving through the Tillamook Burn as a child, and obviously there had been a lot of fires, because, you know, it was a big deal to drive through to the coast and see signs saying this, you know, section was planted in this year, and then every year you'd see the different sections being planted, and how much growth... and that was... it was probably how my parents entertained us. "Look at the growth signs and see when the trees were planted." [Mary Jo laughs.]

David Morelli 12:49

When we were going through, there weren't those signs. You just drove for an hour or two through burned out forest. I mean, that was really quite... and it was, you know, it was a slow, long, slow drive. You went north on Main Street, when you get down there... where was it at? It was about even with where the radio station tower was, before you got to Willamina... Main Street stopped. [Mary Jo: Yeah, at Willamina.] Main Street stopped at Willamina.

Yeah, it did stop at Willamina.

There was nothing north of that, okay? And it made a right hand turn, went over to Sunset Drive.

Mary Jo Morelli 13:40

And it also made a left hand turn, because we knew people that lived on Concord, Willamina went down, and those were all new, newer houses between there and on the Gales Creek Highway.

David Morelli 13:51

There was nothing. No, there was, there's very little. I mean, it was made up of the houses on the north side of the street, basically. Beyond that was all open field. There was no... the high school was certainly not out there. Tom McCall was the high school. [Griego: Really?] Yeah, Tom McCall was the high school.

Mary Jo Morelli 14:12

Wasn't your sister the first... something?

David Morelli 14:17

I can't remember.

Mary Jo Morelli 14:18

Or she was like, her class may have been the last class to graduate, which was around 1981, I'm gonna guess. That's a guess.

David Morelli 14:27

So that was there. The area south of what's Tom McCall, across the road from it, were houses on the street, and behind that was farm. We bought milk at a dairy directly across the front door of the Tom McCall school.

Elle Griego 14:49

Would you say Forest Grove was rural at that time? Or just a small town?

David Morelli 14:55

Oh, at that time, Forest Grove had roughly the same number of jobs as it had working people. That's not to say that everybody worked in town, but the same number commuted out as commuted in. And so the biggest employer was Pacific University, and the city was a big employer. There was the forest lumber mill -- there were three lumber mills here in town about that time.

Mary Jo Morelli 15:22

There was a private bus company.

David Morelli 15:25

Private bus, yeah. Hendricks was a private bus company, and... it was pretty self contained.

Elle Griego 15:26

And off camera, we talked about the theaters. So there's Forest Theater, which I know closed down during

the pandemic. Was that thriving when you were first coming here?

David Morelli 15:51

That's where Ross worked. Our son worked there.

Mary Jo Morelli 15:53

Yeah, our son worked there when he was in high school. And, I mean, it was a typical place for kids to, you know, get a job when they were in high school. There'd be cafes, Scotties and Frye's all places. I mean, kids just got local jobs. There weren't any fast food places except for Scotties. Oh, there had been Ramblin' Rods. So somebody mentioned Ramblin' Rods to you?

Elle Griego 16:26

No, but I was gonna say that the Frye's... It's interesting. I just interviewed Laura and Jerry Frye. [Morelli: Oh, did you?] So it's kind of funny. It's like, wow. It really is a small, small town.

Mary Jo Morelli 16:40

Yeah, but, and you did. You got to know people, yeah, so easily. One thing I wrote down was that when that indoor playground started that I mentioned, and that would have been in the fall of 1978, people, families from Pacific University would join the indoor playground and things, and we all found there was a babysitting co-op at Pacific University for the families there, the faculty. But they couldn't all go when there were faculty events, because then they had nobody to babysit. So they merged, they reached out, and it became a larger babysitting co-op. And then, you know, they could... it dispersed children enough that they could all attend events, because they realized that they were the limiting factor of how they had had the babysitting co-op until that time.

David Morelli 17:55

And we were members before we came to town.

Mary Jo Morelli 17:58

Right, we were members when we lived outside of Forest Grove, yeah, because we've moved onto Winters Road in 1978, and so this was really the closest for services before I knew Forest Grove's library -- well, David's... your parents didn't move into Cornelius until '82. It was a real time of transition for us, but discovering a new place. But I know I found out about Lester Mooberry's book, "The Gray Nineties." I read my first copy of that from the Cornelius library, and through there, got to know some of the old timers in Cornelius. And then when we moved into Forest Grove, I also, well, found out that they were doing historic surveys and things like that here in Forest Grove. So there was just, there was a lot of change I felt like going on at that time, but it was still just such a totally small town place. One lady told me that, bless her heart, Gladys Haynes, [Mary Jo laughs] that we would not feel like members of the community until we had been here for at least 40 years. [Griego: Really?] That was her, and she... they had come when her husband became -- when the optometry school opened, which would have been around '48? [David: Mhm.] And she was telling me that in the '80s. So she'd been here for 40 years, so she was quite established, but I shouldn't have high expectations until I've been here for 40 years.

Elle Griego 19:46

Now, that's been 40 years.

Mary Jo Morelli 19:49

It's been more than 40 years! [Morelli laughs.] But apparently I've... knowing me, I just kind of went "Well, I'm not gonna fall into that trap." You know, so.

Elle Griego 20:00

Yeah. Well, it sounds like you've been pretty involved since you moved here. David, did you start getting involved in different organizations as well? Would you say it was a team effort? Were you guys in the same kind of groups, or did you have separate ones?

David Morelli 20:19

Well, Jo was in the babysitting co-op, and I didn't really help very much. She was in a swimming group that would meet with children at the pool, and I didn't help very much. We did get involved with the local church, St. Bede's, once our second child was born, and I was working at my shop, you know, the plastics plant. And I was involved with the planning commission, shortly after I restarted the shop, that was after the Marco Woodfold expansion. So because I'd spoken at that, and that's what brought us here. [Mary Jo: What year] I don't remember what year, but... so no, we were not... and Friends of Historic Forest Grove, Jo was involved with the historic landmarks board first, and then she got involved with the Friends of Historic Forest Grove second.

Elle Griego 21:30

So they were two separate things?

David Morelli 21:32

Two separate things, and then at some point, she convinced me to serve on the board and become an officer.

Elle Griego 21:40

How did Friends of Historic Forest Grove start?

David Morelli 21:45

Gladys Haynes.

Mary Jo Morelli 21:46

Gladys Haynes, bless her heart, and Kathy Pearson and Carol Drew and her cousin... I'm blanking on her name... and [unintelligible]. So the landmarks board had been... was organized, and Forest Grove apparently was kind of a test area. In fact, when the friends newsletter, next one comes out, what I wrote for that -- if I was timely, and I don't know if I was -- kind of does relate to this, because it was a time when a lot of it, there was a lot of interest in history and historic houses and things, and there were surveys going on. Well, the people on the landmarks board could not, you know, one of the things was to... that they were formed for, had to do with educating people, you know, informing the community. But they couldn't raise any money. They had no budget, and anytime, if they raised any money, it went into the city coffers, but didn't necessarily come back out. In fact, it didn't come back out. And so that's...

David Morelli 23:12

And they also could not do any advocacy. They couldn't advocate for certain things. They could teach people about it, but they had other things where they were limited on how much public things they could say.

Mary Jo Morelli 23:23

Yeah, so, and that's where we got the idea to form a separate organization, and organizations called "Friends of," which are typically -- and I didn't know at that time, I'd never heard of a "Friends of" -- really were meant to be raising funds. It was a fundraising concept, and so as a way to be able to act out some of the

goals and purpose of the Historic Landmarks Board, we formed Friends of Historic Forest Grove.

Elle Griego 24:10

I see. So you said you didn't know that about the "Friends of" term. Do you recall who came up with that name? Was it a group decision?

Mary Jo Morelli 24:16

I think Gladys Haynes probably had a lot to do with that, as I remember Gladys. I mean, Carol might recall too, because she was part of that group. Donna Parker was her cousin's name, [Mary Jo laughs.] Donna Parker. Yeah, because Carol was part of that, and Eric Stewart was here. You and he were some of the first officers.

David Morelli 24:44

Were we first officers? Good Lord, well, because you couldn't, because you were on the Historic Landmarks Board.

Mary Jo Morelli 24:48

I was on the Historic Landmarks Board. So those of us who were on the Landmarks Board didn't want to compromise anything by being both and having that challenged, and that could have been challenged politically, because not everybody was in favor of the historic recognition of buildings.

Really? Who was against that?

Everybody that owned a building that was historic.

A lot of the downtown business...

Elle Griego 25:06

People who wanted to renovate, I'm assuming.

David Morelli 25:11

They were going to prevent them from doing what they wanted with their property.

Mary Jo Morelli 25:24

Yeah, they were afraid of somebody else having control over what they did with their property. Because realize it wasn't until, what, just two or three years ago that there became a downtown district. I mean, it was a hard fought thing, and there was a conference that I attended here in town with this... it was support from the, I'm sure, from the State Historic Preservation Office, and they put on a conference here about the history of the area, introducing that to more of the general population. It was probably... the Landmarks Board had no funding, so it was probably funded through the state, the State Historic Preservation Office. And that's when I really, really got interested. That's when I first met Gladys, and she was always kind of a mentor to me in a lot of ways, but we disagreed on lots of things also, as in what is a craftsman style house, the difference between a craftsman and a bungalow. We debated that until the day she moved back east again, so.

Elle Griego 26:31

When did she move away, roughly?

Mary Jo Morelli 26:35

Roughly, 2000. Maybe somewhere in that time. And some other people would know that better than me, because they raised their children here... well, and Harold, when Harold died and both their children had... all three of their children were working back East. So she moved back east again.

Elle Griego 27:03

And what did these early meetings look like for Friends of Historic Forest Grove? Where did they take place?

Mary Jo Morelli 27:09

Oh, in people's parlors.

Elle Griego 27:12

I should ask, have you always lived in this house since you've lived in Forest Grove?

Mary Jo Morelli 27:18

Since we moved into town, yeah. And it was right at the time that we'd moved in here. I already knew a lot of the people because of the property three miles outside of town. This was, you know, the kids were going to school at Dilley school, that is part of Forest Grove School District, and sent, well, yeah, because we lived up there, it was Dilley. And then when we moved into town, they went to Central School.

Because...we only looked at houses within the Central School attendance area. We knew the attendance area, and we only looked at houses within the attendance area.

Yeah, that's true. We did.

David Morelli 27:39

That was an intentional thing, because we wanted -- we appreciated what Dilley was, and we wanted to replicate that with a small, personal school.

Mary Jo Morelli 28:00

With the small, personal school. And the neighborhood was fantastic at that time, because if there was an evening event, most people walked to get there, and kids walked to and from school, and parents walked. It was an amazing community. And it was that earthquake that just totally disrupted it, and it's never been the same since.

Elle Griego 28:23

And what year was that?

Mary Jo Morelli 28:24

We're thinking mid-'90s... had to be earlier.

David Morelli 28:28

Look up the Molalla quake, and you'll find it.

Elle Griego 28:30
Oh, I can look, yeah.

Mary Jo Morelli 28:32
The Molalla earthquake, that would be the year that... clarify that, because... [David works on getting out his computer] So really, an amazingly tight community in this neighborhood.

David Morelli 28:52
Push the button, or whatever you do.

Mary Jo Morelli 28:55
It won't do that. So, yeah, we're not very good at remembering years. We have to put them... just like I do. I was never good at memorizing history in school. I was so frustrated, because a topic would interest me, but it's like all I...

David Morelli 29:22
Scotts Mills earthquake, 1993.

Mary Jo Morelli 29:24
1993 was the earthquake.

David Morelli 29:28
It was also the "Spring break quake."

Elle Griego 29:32
I think I've heard of that term, "Spring break quake."

Mary Jo Morelli 29:34
So there... that was the second one, wasn't it? The one that I was in the hole in the room, on [unintelligible] building.

David Morelli 29:51
This one here was 5am. Okay.

Mary Jo Morelli 29:57
We were in this house, and the kids... Okay, it was at 5am, then that... okay. There was a later earthquake also when we had a history room on the third floor of the building that now has the Guidetti's. Friends of Historic Forest Grove had an office up there. Somebody's probably talked about that.

Elle Griego 30:20
I've heard of it once, yeah.

Mary Jo Morelli 30:22

And I know we were there in 1991... no, get this straight. 1991 is when I was chair of the Landmarks Board, and I opened up the newspaper and saw the article about the Smith house being annexed, and said, "That's not right! The Landmarks Board should have known about that. Why didn't we know about it?"

Elle Griego 30:46

Was that the first biggest problem or a challenge that Friends, or the Landmarks Board was trying to address?

Mary Jo Morelli 30:52

There were other challenges, certainly, but that's the one that really got the attention and yet, then from that event, when the garbage transfer station ended up on B Street, you know, we went back to all our kind of normal things, garden tours, home tours, farmer tours, progressive dinners.

Elle Griego 31:25

Those have been here since the beginning, those garden tours, and...?

Mary Jo Morelli 31:28

Early, pretty early, yeah. And, I mean, there's -- I just found a file of my own that has a lot of the brochures from those, and we did them early. Started out with, they were garden tours, and that we would just walk around the neighborhood and talk about the houses in terms of, you know, in gardens, just kind of reference. And then we started having them on a specific location, and it was always a garden tour or a house tour. Wasn't until recent years that they were combined very much.

David Morelli 32:02

And early on the meetings that were in the houses would have speakers. We were bringing speakers to talk to us.

Mary Jo Morelli 32:11

Yeah, pretty much every month we would have some kind of speaker. And Carol and I did a lot of the early newsletters together, and it was cut and paste. And I still have some of those cut and paste things, which mean, you know, it was before the kind, any of the abilities that we have now, it was pretty funny. I have some of those. I have a masters of some of those that we put together, because you'd have to cut things out of, like, a newspaper or something.

David Morelli 32:41

Did you already talk about the slide shows?

Mary Jo Morelli 32:44

And Eric and I did lots of slideshows. There is a big collection of slides at the train station, but a lot of his are also in the Forest Grove library, in the Eric Stewart collection there, and his collection was donated to the library, and... which turned out, that was a difficult time. He died in 1995 or '96, in there... and that was a difficult time, because we were really close. He lived just two blocks away, and he'd find a picture, and he'd come over here and say, "Come on over and see this picture. Let's figure out what..." you know, and one of them turned out to be the part of the house that used to stand across the street. And Eric would call it "The House That the Church Ate," was the theme of his talk. When he would talk about that.

David Morelli 33:40

He would write articles for the paper as well.

Mary Jo Morelli 33:43

Yeah, he wrote articles all the time. Gladys wrote articles... [Griego: For the News-Times?] For the News-Times, some for the Argus, too. And Joyce Sauber wrote for the Argus.

Elle Griego 33:53

When you first moved here, did everyone -- I'm curious how the News-Times has evolved, because it seems like it's kind of gone downhill. When you first moved here, did you subscribe to it? Was it something where most people...?

Mary Jo Morelli 34:05

Of course. We subscribed to both the News-Times and the Argus because they were the hub, they were how you got information.

Elle Griego 34:12

So they were in town here still. Do you know when they moved kind of, out of town, or?

Mary Jo Morelli 34:17

It was just within the last few years, but it was... the rapport with them early was great. I mean, and you would do a press release and it would be published, but that's how people, you know, knew what events were coming up.

David Morelli 34:36

Oh, this, of course, was before the internet.

Mary Jo Morelli 34:37

Yeah, and even our ability to type things was pretty limited. You should look at some of the binders for minutes, and you'll see that as that transition took place, because they were all handwritten minutes. And you've gone through some of the newsletter binders, haven't you?

Elle Griego 35:05

Actually, I haven't.

Mary Jo Morelli 35:08

And I've actually gone when we've talked, when the new group doing the plaques, and Carol Drew and I were part of the early plaques that we started putting out. And then they wanted to know which houses had been plaqued, and the only way I could figure out was to sit at the train station and go through our newsletters and find the dates that we were announcing in our newsletters, for when we were doing those. All the events that we did are there in those newsletters.

Elle Griego 35:42

Yeah, that's good to know. And something else I think that's prominent in Friends of Historic Forest Grove's history is the Old Train Station Museum. How did that get acquired? It seems kind of...

Mary Jo Morelli 36:05

It had sat vacant for several years. Some renovations had been started on it, and changes were going on

with... it was called Woodfold-Marco, and it was transitioning into Woodfold Manufacturing. And they'd started renovations on that, but one of the things I've heard is that when they bought that property, they didn't know that they bought that building, is part of what I heard and we would ask them periodically, we'd contact them, "What are your plans for the building? What are your plans for the building?" And it was right around 2008 when I contacted them, and they said, "Yeah, you can use it." And there had been a storm that winter, and what's now WSC -- or no, it's now assured partners, right? Had some frozen pipes and damage to the building, and Woodfold allowed them to store all their furniture in there. With their insurance, they got all the furniture. And so when they finally said, yes, we could use it, it was with what's in there, and heavy duty old metal desks and some of the dividers that are still there. But anyway, that's when we started using it, and made an agreement with them, because we had the 501(c)(3), and the community school took on, you know, the yard, part of it, so the community school would pay for the water and then pay for the electricity.

David Morelli 37:58
And it kept their building warm...

Mary Jo Morelli 37:59
And it kept the building being used.

David Morelli 38:01
So it didn't freeze.

Mary Jo Morelli 38:02
And they've put in improvements over the years. I mean, just recently, it was that HVAC system, because it was cold in there. And I spent one year, the year of 2008 basically -- well, between 2008 through 2009 -- all three of our boys got married in 2008, and so I was no longer full time childcare for Bella, who was right around eight years old at the time. And so I'd been encouraged for a long time to work on a book, and Arcadia was reaching out a lot at that time. They were very active on the West Coast, and maybe more so the Pacific Northwest, and they reached out, and Lisa agreed to do the technical parts of it, because I knew the history, and I could find pictures and do all that part of it, and she would then write the description, and they had to be in a certain format that the company dictated. And she understood all that with the experience she had. And so we spent, I spent about 10 months, and it was mighty cold sometimes in that building. That back room, that's now the, you know that Don and Cheryl use. [Griego: I know we're talking about.] Yeah, that was the room that I used. And there was -- we shared the building for a while with a model train, model railroad society.

Elle Griego 39:41
I'm just curious, is that kind of why the name "Old Train Station" is...?

Mary Jo Morelli 39:46
No, it was something that had been referred to as in town.

David Morelli 39:50
Well, it's called the Old Train Station because it was built as a train station. So, it's where the train station...

Elle Griego 39:58
Yeah. I was just curious if the train group had influence.

David Morelli 40:02

No, they wanted to have a facility inside of a train station. I mean, that's the goal of a train group, is to be inside a train station. That's the Holy Grail. And so we weren't using the building as a museum at the time, but we had the building, we had the room available, so they just, we gave them the entire use of that one room.

Mary Jo Morelli 40:25

The meeting room. They had train stuff set up throughout that whole room. They had a huge set.

David Morelli 40:32

It was pretty cool. And as we became more and more of a museum, we kind of needed the meeting space and everything else we had to, you know, say, invite them to find better... someplace else.

Elle Griego 40:44

Yeah. It seems like it's Don, Cheryl and Peggy who do a lot of work there, and transformed things to what it is.

David Morelli 40:53

Oh, yes.

Mary Jo Morelli 40:54

Yes, absolutely. They are the ones who made the transformation. But it is still, you know, the home offices for Friends of Historic Forest Grove.

Elle Griego 41:04

It's, I think, really impressive for a nonprofit to have such a museum like that. It's, I think it's incredible.

David Morelli 41:16

Friends is a pretty incredible group, when you get right down to it. [Griego: I think so, yeah.] They do all this, they do everything that they do on all volunteer labor for a really small budget, I mean, tremendously frugal. And the reach is far, you know, they're punching above their weight, so to speak. And so the train station stuff's done with A.T. Smith and all the other projects that -- I mean, you know, some people say, "Well, maybe you should focus." We don't focus. We do everything. And we have good success in doing everything.

Mary Jo Morelli 41:44

Yes, we want people to do what they want to do, what they love to do.

Elle Griego 41:51

And then to talk about Pacific University. Well, first, I think I should step back. When did you first start working at Pacific David?

David Morelli 42:02

I was hired in in preparation for the Y2K, so it was 1999. Summer of 1999.

Elle Griego 42:10

What do you mean in preparation for Y2K?

David Morelli 42:13

Well, there was a presumption that when the clocks rolled over from 1900s to 2000s, the computers would fail, because their numbering systems were based on six digits. Two for the month, two for the day, and two for the year. Well, if a year goes from 19 something or other to 20 something or other. All of a sudden, your numbers are smaller than the ones for the year before. And they thought that was going to cause a lot of stuff to collapse, so that a lot of anybody that was dependent on computers...

Elle Griego 42:44

Wait, so the university was?

Mary Jo Morelli 42:45

Everybody was. The whole world was.

Elle Griego 42:45

I thought it was just like, some teenagers who were worried.

Mary Jo Morelli 42:47

No, the whole world was worried.

David Morelli 42:53

Well, in fact, they did an all stop on all air traffic at midnight.

Elle Griego 42:59

No, wait, I didn't know that. That's actually kind of...

Mary Jo Morelli 43:02

You should ask your parents.

David Morelli 43:03

Yeah, they did an all stop.

Elle Griego 43:04

Like, I've heard of the phenomenon, but I thought it was just like, kind of some teenagers were like, "Oh my God." Like, "This is gonna happen." Because I know 2012 when I was a kid, I remember people were similarly worried, but that was...

David Morelli 43:19

That was for the Mayan calendar. [Griego: Yeah.] But in the case of Y2K, if a computer is doing a comparison of two dates, and it goes for the one that's the later of the two, and one's an 00 and one's a 99, which date is the bigger date? Well, the 00 is. But if it's thinking the other way around, it could turn something off that was essential. It's supposed to be off because it's now the, you know. And they were very concerned about that. And it could also cause problems for accounting. You know, if you're billing somebody, well, you're billing them from this date to this day. Well, if the date changes to before, [Mary Jo: To zero.] it's bad, you know. And so they had to go through and check all of their code and make sure that everything

was covered. And so they brought in extra people, and that's where I got hired and start working on that.

Elle Griego 44:08

Wow, that's actually incredible. I had no idea.

David Morelli 44:08

Yep, and then on New Year's Eve...

Elle Griego 44:08

Did the world end?

David Morelli 44:08

We stayed up to midnight and went to bed. There was no problems, because everything we found and remedied every problem in our system.

Elle Griego 44:25

That's good.

David Morelli 44:28

This is called proactive planning.

Elle Griego 44:31

And you stayed in the same position, or same department?

David Morelli 44:35

Same department. And moved on, I mean, there was other stuff they wanted us to do. And so I became, I was a programmer, and wrote code and built report. And then at one point they were talking about getting a reporting tool, and they were talking about changing our servers from one level -- one kind of server, to a different kind of server. We're going to go from a Unidata server to an SQL server, and we're also talking about reporting services. And they said, "You know, you can do this, or you can do that." And I says, "Well, I'd kind of like to do the reporting services using this new software that we're going to be getting." And that was a long time ago, decade or more. And I've enjoyed it, and continue to enjoy it. And we basically -- and this is part of my prime -- the software that we've got does... you can go out and buy a third party software and spend X number of 1000s of dollars to buy it, X number of 1000s of dollars a year, every year for license to use it, X number of 1000s of dollars per year for each seat of a person that makes use of the software, or you could use the software that came with the server for no extra charge, as many seats as you want, for no extra charge. And no annual licensing fee, you just have to pay for me to help people with it, and the other one would have to have somebody help too. So basically, I provide an entire reporting system for the cost of my pay. [Griego: Yeah, wow.] So we're very, very pleased about that.

Elle Griego 46:30

Yeah, that's impressive.

David Morelli 46:32

I think we accomplished a lot, and because of that, I keep, you know, constantly being stimulated. I'm constantly getting new things. And the stuff that we did, the old stuff, continues to work. It continues to work. I don't have to rewrite code every three months or every four years, whereas before that time, every

time they'd make a patch or change, we have to go to all of our existing custom work, all of our reports were built, and go and figure out what we had to do to deal with this new change, whereas now this one here doesn't affect us. It just keeps working. [Griego: That's impressive.] So that's why I enjoy what I do, and that's why I keep doing it.

Elle Griego 47:15

Yeah, and I know you worked -- off camera Mary Jo, you mentioned that you worked there briefly. I'm curious with Friends of Historic Forest Grove and Pacific University, is there any sort of relationship or overlap has... in the past, has Pacific University, I guess, donated any resources? Or have you always been connected to the archives at Pacific? I know that there wasn't -- before Eva, who's there now, there was one in the '90s, Rick Read, was he ever involved?

David Morelli 47:58

Oh, Rick. There was someone kind of between... well, it was in limbo after Rick died.

Rick was first. Yeah, go ahead and to answer Rick Reid first, and do Alex.

Mary Jo Morelli 48:04

Yeah. Don't even remember when... I may have met Rick through a tourism committee that I was part of when we have plastics plant, because we would meet at Main Street Bed and Breakfast, which was owned by Friends member, Marie Mather, and who became a really special friend of mine, and Rick was at the university. So we were working on tourism related, and saw Friends of Historic Forest Grove as a link to that tourism. And when I started working at Pacific, which was right when we sold our plastics company, '90, '91, was that period, and there was always, I don't know, it was just a good rapport there. And Rick's passing was a really traumatic, really traumatic thing for just in so many...

David Morelli 49:12

Just in case nobody knows, Rick Read was the archivist at Pacific University [Mary Jo: And curator.] And curator at the Old College Hall Museum.

Mary Jo Morelli 49:20

And actually, one year, his position was eliminated, and he then went to work for the Oregon Heritage Commission, and which still had, you know, [unintelligible], he still lived in Forest Grove, and it was shortly after that, you know, was the accident. And there was, there's never, since that time, been the kind of stability for Old College Hall. It was a good thing. Faith Gabelnick was committed to it. And prior to her being president at Pacific... no, Lee Creighton followed her, didn't he? Yeah, because Faith was president when Old College Hall was moved. And there were, I mean, there were a lot of people who just, "Get rid of this old building." [Griego: Really?] Yeah.

Elle Griego 50:23

So when...?

Mary Jo Morelli 50:25

So in 2003 was when it was moved.

Elle Griego 50:27

I always -- I know it was moved but I always, kind of forget, like, I mean, that's such an undertaking to move a building like that.

Mary Jo Morelli 50:36

And people thought that the... I mean, there was a feeling that money could have certainly been spent in better ways than moving that old building, and yet it was done.

Elle Griego 50:46

Did Friends have a part in that, or was it just...?

Mary Jo Morelli 50:49

No, just, I mean, supportive.

Elle Griego 50:52

Has Friends been involved in Old College Hall?

Mary Jo Morelli 50:59

Well, now we certainly are, but some of us who were members of Friends, also were members of Friends of Old College Hall.

Elle Griego 51:10

Now, that is a name I haven't heard of.

Mary Jo Morelli 51:12

There was Friends of Old College Hall, and Rick probably introduced the newsletters. There's files... I don't know if archives have them, or if they're still up in the office at, you know, because I don't know what's happened in the office at Old College Hall since it was moved. And, the changes over time, it's been pretty loose. But some of us who were docents then, you know, continued and COVID is what really disrupted, totally disrupted it. But people, a lot of the old docents died, you know, they'd been involved, and they were members of Friends of Historic Forest Grove, as well as being associated in some way with the university, just that overlap of people.

Elle Griego 51:57

Yeah, was it more regularly opened as a museum, then? Old College Hall?

Mary Jo Morelli 52:02

Yeah, well, it was opened monthly, as well as for other special occasions.

David Morelli 52:07

Well, his office was there too.

Mary Jo Morelli 52:09

His office was there. So the building is open, you know. So it was open a lot. It was very accessible. But even after he passed away, Lee Creighton became president after Faith left, and he put his wife in charge of the docents, which was really, really a good thing. He was Phil. She was Lee Creighton. He was Phil Creighton. And so we'd have regular meetings with her, and have goals and projects that we would work on, changing displays. Then once his presidency was gone, things just have never been the same. It's kind of passed off, there's just not that real dedication to the building, but those of us -- and then covid, which really

made changes, and David and Fletch and I and Marcus were the last of the docents. And then so Fletch and David and Meyer are pretty much it, and I've had no luck getting other people to come in.

David Morelli 53:26

They had two people show up as potentials last time we were open.

Mary Jo Morelli 53:30

Potentials, yeah, but they haven't... none of them have followed through with really wanting to be there the third Friday of every month.

David Morelli 53:38

It's like right now, Pacific is asking Friends of Historic Forest Grove to provide the docents.

Mary Jo Morelli 53:46

That's our agreement. So there's always been a decent rapport, one way or another. I mean, we received computers from the university when they were getting rid of them years ago. When the library was moving, Alex Toth, who was in charge of the library at that time, made sure that we had access to things that were being, you know, moved on... [David interjects: Deaccessioned.] Deaccessioned, and we had access to those things. There's always been.... and way back, Rick and I were the chair people of the fall festival, which we named. Rick and I named it with "On Common Ground," in order to represent that community and institutional relationship that needed to be represented.

Elle Griego 54:43

Yeah, a little off topic, but Old College Hall reminded me of St. Bede's, because that's where the chapel used to be, temporarily. I'm curious with St. Bede's, just how that's changed since you've been here. So a little of a separate topic. Have the demographics changed at St. Bede's?

David Morelli 55:10

When we started in St Bede's, it was on Cedar Street, across the street from the Methodist Church, and the building that's the...

Mary Jo Morelli 55:22

The Well. [David: The Well.] It's called the Well now.

Elle Griego 55:24

What's -- I haven't heard of that.

Mary Jo Morelli 55:25

Well, it's the only little church building between the 17th and 18th...

David Morelli 55:30

It looks like an English church.

Mary Jo Morelli 55:31

It's an old fashioned, tiny...

David Morelli 55:33

That was where St. Bede's was when we started. And St. Bede's was growing, because churches were still growing at that time, and they were looking for a new place to be, and they found that they could purchase the Catholic Nunnery, and they bought that building and commenced to fundraising to build the sanctuary.