



## Claremont City Treasure: Marilee Scaff

By Ellen Taylor, Mayor of Claremont

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When I was asked to write a short article about a person in Claremont I admire very much, the decision was difficult to make.

There are so many admirable people in town, and I have been blessed to have had contacts with many of them. After pondering the choice, I decided to write about Marilee Scaff.

Marilee grew up in Texas, Arizona and California. She and her husband, Alvin, did graduate work in Chicago, then went to the Philippines. During World War II they were caught in a raid in the interior mountains where they "became guests of the Japanese government in two internment camps." They were rescued by the U.S. Army in 1945 and eventually returned to the United States.

In 1947, they settled in Claremont where Alvin taught Sociology, and Marilee got involved in a large number of community activities: League of Women Voters, Parent-Faculty Association, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, educational director for the Claremont Church (now United Church of Christ), assistant to the chaplain of the Claremont Colleges.



Claremont Mayor Ellen Taylor, left, and Marilee Scaff, right, stand in front of Porter Hall at Pilgrim Place in Claremont April 4, 2008. (Thomas R. Cordova/Staff Photographer)

In addition, Marilee was elected a trustee of the Claremont Unified School District, taught and was a counselor at El Roble School, finished a Ph. D. at Claremont Graduate University. During these years, she and Alvin returned with their children to the Philippines, spent some time in East Africa while he worked for the United Nations in Ethiopia and in Uganda.

They went to University of Iowa where she was a counselor in the University Lab School, and taught graduate courses in counseling. After seven years there, they went to University of

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North Carolina Greensboro to teach.

They "retired" in 1978, returning to teach in the Philippines. Then they came home to Claremont. Marilee now lives in Pilgrim Place.

Marilee held leadership positions in the League of Women Voters at the local, county and state levels. She was instrumental in forming the LWV Environmental Action Committee for Southern California. She chaired a LWV conference called "What's Next for Our Hillside" in 1989.

She researched and wrote a LWV study, titled "Child and Adolescent Welfare in Pomona Valley," in 1991. Currently, she is the co-chairwoman of the LWV Water Task Force, working to resolve water issues in Claremont and considering possibilities of establishing a wetlands and urban park at site of Thompson Creek Reservoir. She is also a member of Board of Overseers of Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, where she has volunteered for 25 years. In her spare time she volunteers with Community Friends of International Students, helped organize and served as first Chair of the Clinebell Counseling Center at Claremont School of Theology, and has held various office in the United Nations Association. She, along with several other Claremont women, attended U.N. World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

Not surprisingly, she was named Claremont's Honored Citizen during a Fourth of July celebration.

While pondering her life, Marilee wrote: "Like

many women, I have had not one career but three or four, each challenging and deeply satisfying. I've enjoyed many opportunities to travel and appreciated long periods of living among the diverse peoples who share our world. And when all that is admitted, I treasure Claremont and Pomona Valley as wonderful places to come back to and to call home."

To me, Marilee Scaff has served as a role model, but one that has raised the bar almost too high - so few of us will be able to look back at our lives and say we have done as much for so many as Marilee has.

I am proud to call her a friend.

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