

VOICES OF THE VALLEY

LOYALTY AND PRIDE

By Victoria Kidd

Entrepreneur billionaire Richard Branson has said: “Train people well enough so they can leave; treat them well enough so they don’t want to.” Branson was talking about managing employees, yet there are many parallels to educating college students.

Institutions like LVC spend four years teaching high-achieving students how to leave them, then encourage them to do so—all the while instilling pride in their alma mater, so they feel connected for a lifetime.

Colleges and universities thrive when their alumni remain engaged in the life of their alma mater. One favorite way alumni stay engaged is through annual giving. The Walter Society, which has more than 1,250 members, recognizes

LVC alumni who give to their alma mater for five or more consecutive years, or for recent graduates, every year since graduation. It honors the College’s “most loyal donors for their consistent dedication to supporting educational excellence at The Valley.”

The following distinguished LVC alumni share the individual stories of why they give to LVC, ranging from their professor becoming a lifelong friend and mentor to realizing through personal experience that everyone deserves a chance at achieving a quality education—and a fulfilling life. Although their journeys have taken them in vastly different directions, these alumni all share a deep loyalty to, pride in, and appreciation for the institution that gave them their start.



Patricia Lutz Walter '57, P'85, P'91 and Judge John A. Walter '53, H'06, P'85, P'91

THE ORIGINAL “VOICE OF THE VALLEY”

When the late **Judge John A. Walter '53, H'06, P'85, P'91** returned to LVC as a new grad to keep stats for a basketball game, he couldn't have dreamed he'd meet his future wife that night. Nor could he have known that he was launching a lifelong engagement with his alma mater that would lead to his second career as the legendary “Voice of The Valley” basketball announcer. Who remembers “Eins und Eins?”

“I think John had blue and white blood in his veins,” said **Patricia Lutz Walter '57, P'85, P'91**, the cheerleader John first met that night on the sidelines of LVC's basketball court. He later proposed at that same spot.

Today, 18 years after her husband's passing, Walter continues the legacy they built together as two of the most loyal alumni in the institution's history.

After Patricia graduated from LVC, the young couple began their engagement with The Valley much like other active recent graduates have done. They went about applying their LVC educations to the “real world,” returned for alumni reunions, and made annual gifts to the College.

As the years went on, their careers blossomed. Their family grew, and life rushed onward. Yet the Walters' commitment to LVC never wavered. Even as “The Judge” rose to the bench in the Lebanon County Court of Common Pleas, and Patricia built a career as a music educator and the first woman to serve on the board of the Lebanon School District, the couple continued dedicating their time and resources to LVC. Together they established The Hon. John A. Walter Scholarship; became members of the Lifetime Vickroy Society, which honors donors whose lifetime giving exceeds \$100,000; and administered the Robert A. Nichols '41 Memorial Scholarship. The Walter Society, established in 2004, is named in their honor.

“There was never a question about returning to campus for activities, volunteering, announcing basketball games, or serving on the Board of Trustees,” Walter said. “There was always time in our schedules for Lebanon Valley College.

“We had such good experiences at Lebanon Valley,” added Walter, who manages her annual gifts through reoccurring monthly installments and has given for more than 30 consecutive years. “We loved the institution as students, and that love continued through life.

“We were committed to The Valley, and I'm happy to continue that tradition.”



June Herr '34

SUSTAINING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Each spring, as vibrant red tulips bloom in her garden, **Dr. Lynn Garrett Phillips '68** thinks of the late **June Herr '34**, professor *emerita* of education, who became a lifelong mentor and friend. “They once grew in her garden,” Phillips said of the tulips. “They are an annual reminder of her steadfast support.

“When she knew me as a homesick freshman, she encouraged me. She visited me in my first ‘real classroom,’ followed my career as a superintendent and then as director of executive education at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business. At all times, she was encouraging. There aren’t enough words to describe her impact on my life.”

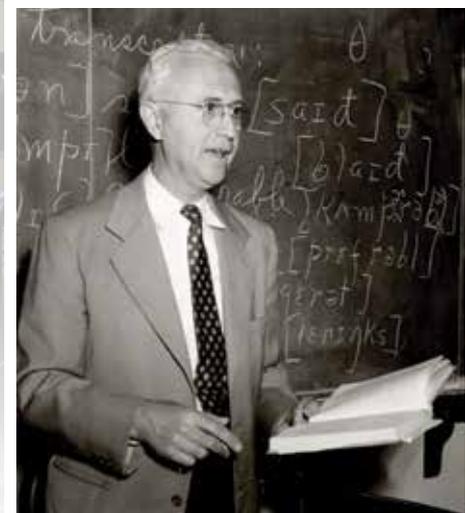
After graduation, Phillips embarked on a nearly 40-year career in public education as a teacher, district superintendent, and executive education administrator. Supporting her at every turn was her late husband, **Dr. Edward Phillips**, a distinguished educational leader in his own right.

The couple’s philanthropic support of LVC has included gifts to The Valley Fund [Annual Fund], Business Department, faculty development, funds honoring Herr, and the Phillips Dining Hall in the Allan W. Mund College Center. Individually, Phillips recently supported the establishment of a classroom in the new \$20 million Jeanne and Edward H. Arnold Health Professions Pavilion.

A member of LVC’s Board of Trustees since 2006, Lynn Phillips served as chair of the board from 2009 to 2012. She currently serves on the board’s Executive Committee, Finance and Administration Committee, and Marketing and Enrollment Committee.

If her years working in education and supporting her alma mater have taught her anything, it’s that teaching is hard work. “The transition from experiencing, to understanding, to applying the most appropriate strategies for the best education requires much more time and focus than is available in a ‘normal teaching load,’” explained Phillips.

With gifts from grateful alumni like her, Phillips said she hopes they will provide LVC faculty with “the time and opportunity to explore and design the most effective teaching and learning strategies to ensure that LVC graduates continue to be career ready and ‘life ready,’ too.”



Dr. George Struble

A LIFE TRANSFORMED

Dr. Si Pham '79 never knew a time when his homeland was not at war. Growing up in a small town in South Vietnam, his childhood was marked by the sounds of artillery shelling and gunfire in the Viet Cong mountain strongholds that surrounded his village.

When Saigon fell on April 30, 1975, Pham escaped the chaos on an abandoned South Vietnamese Navy ship, along with about 2,000 others fleeing the city. He had no belongings, no family, and no idea what would happen to him as the boat headed for international waters before the U.S. Navy eventually rescued it.

Once in America, Pham was sent to a refugee camp in Fort Indiantown Gap, where he met the late **Dr. George Struble**, professor *emeritus* of English. The meeting further changed the trajectory of Pham's life.

Just four months after fleeing his homeland, Pham was enrolled in LVC's chemistry program and on his way to becoming a world-renowned surgeon. "Looking back to those days, I still cannot believe it. It could only happen in America during that period," said Pham, who today is chair of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the Mayo Clinic's Jacksonville, Fla., campus.

Pham was one of 12 Vietnamese students to enroll at LVC that year as part of an initiative by then-President **Dr. Frederick Sample '52** to sponsor refugees from the camp. They were mentored and given English language training by

the late **Glenn Woods '51**, associate professor *emeritus* of English. Pham also spent evenings and holidays with Struble and his wife, **Lillie**, refining his language skills and learning about American culture.

Dr. Owen Moe, professor *emeritus* of chemistry, enlisted Pham as a research partner and the pair ultimately published two papers together. They were Pham's first published work—and even now, with more than 170 scientific papers to his name, he considers those two papers among his proudest achievements.

Renowned institutions across the country have appointed Pham to faculty and medical staff positions, and he was part of the surgical team that performed the combined heart and liver transplant on the late Pennsylvania Gov. Robert Casey Sr. This past spring, LVC bestowed on Pham its highest honor, naming him a Distinguished Alumnus.

Pham continues to return to his "home away from home" at LVC and support its students and faculty. His contributions have benefited summer research and helped establish the Glenn H. Woods Vietnamese Students Scholarship.

Pham said he gives back to LVC because of everything the College did for him and other Vietnamese students when they came to the United States. "We are so grateful for the great education, the compassion, and the generosity the LVC family gave us," he said.



HONORING THE LEGACY OF OTHERS

Karen [Nester] Lewis Schmitt '80 was not always as involved with her alma mater as she is today. By the time she graduated with a degree in actuarial science, the self-described theatre geek with a penchant for numbers was already married, had a child, and was gearing up to become a successful actuary in the reinsurance industry.

Schmitt began her career with Prudential Property and Casualty in central New Jersey and then left Prudential after nine years to join American Reinsurance (now Munich Re), where she became vice president. In 1999, she joined GMAC Re to serve as the company's chief actuary, later becoming its chief operating officer. When Bermuda-based Maiden Holding purchased the reinsurance arm of GMAC in 2008, Schmitt stayed on, becoming president of the U.S. subsidiary.

Schmitt attributes her success to a combination of "hard work and dumb luck." It's a combination she traces back to her time at LVC. It was hard work raising a family and going



LVC Professor Georgios Stylianides and Dr. Maurice Lewis

to college, she said, but she had the good fortune of finding a school with an Actuarial Science Program within commuting distance of her home.

Her luck continued in the form of the late **Dr. Bryan Hearsey**, longtime chair of the LVC Actuarial Science Program and professor *emeritus* of mathematical sciences. He was "extraordinarily kind and supportive," and pushed his students to achieve more than many thought possible. "We always felt proud after doing well in one of his classes; there was a strong sense of accomplishment," Schmitt said. "We have a lot to be thankful for, in the time we had with him."

It was Hearsey's impact on her life that brought Schmitt back to LVC about 20 years ago to attend dinners for actuarial science alumni and later participate in the Lazin Distinguished Leaders-in-Residence Series [established by **Malcolm Lazin, Esq., '65** in honor of his father, **Dr. Norman Lazin '37**]. As a Lazin Resident, Schmitt upped her level of engagement at the advice of a current trustee who suggested she join LVC's Board of Trustees—and the rest, as they say, is history.

In addition to her service on the board, Schmitt and her husband, **Andrew**, established the Karen Schmitt '80 Scholarship for Actuarial Science in 2014. They also supported the new Arnold Health Professions Pavilion with a lead gift that established the Lewis Human Performance Lab in honor of Schmitt's father, **Dr. Maurice Lewis**, who practiced medicine in the Harrisburg-Camp Hill area for decades before his retirement at the age of 79.



SETTING A COURSE FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW

When **Marsha Curry Banks '04** decided to attend college, no one thought she could do it. With a criminal record and eight children at home, it seemed like an impossibility. But doing the impossible is what Banks does best.

A domestic abuse survivor, Banks was arrested and jailed for leaving her children unattended when she tried to escape her abuser. A neighbor called the police that fateful day and unknowingly saved Banks' life.

"I could not have written enough thank-you letters to her," Banks said.

Although only in her early 20s, Banks had already experienced homelessness, drug addiction, and rape. She had survived three suicide attempts and was pregnant with her seventh child at the time of her arrest.

Banks said she went to prison "angry, bitter, and broken," but thanks to three older inmates who took her under their wings, she didn't leave that way. Instead, she left prison strong, determined, and filled with faith.

Nonetheless, the road to recovery for her and her children was long and arduous. Banks had to learn to work with the child welfare system and other supportive services while under parole supervision to get her children out of foster care. Once she did, her family was able to rebuild their lives together in Harrisburg.



Nancy Diaz '19

The process took years, but along the way, Banks not only received her sociology degree from LVC, but she also earned a master's degree and began a career as a counselor and teacher. By then, her dreams had grown even more robust.

In 2008, she founded Amiracle4sure, a nonprofit offering supportive services to women transitioning from incarceration. Today, the organization includes a youth support group and services for formerly incarcerated men. Working alongside five of her eight children, Banks assists others who face challenges like hers as a way of repaying those who helped her.

"Sometimes our thank you has to be our give back. That's how others grow through your experiences," Banks said.

Her "give back" to LVC established the Amiracle4sure Educational Scholarship for students with an ALANA (African/African American, Latina, Asian, and Native American) background, who have a family member who was "system involved," or who are nontraditional college students.

Nancy Diaz '19, a business administration major, is the first recipient of the current-use scholarship, which will require ongoing support to sustain it in the years ahead. When her father was in prison during her childhood, Diaz watched her mother struggle to raise her alone. She said she sees the same strength in Banks as she witnessed in her mother as she raised her children in Hanover.

"I look up to Marsha as much as I look up to my mother for being a woman who overcame such adversity in her life and still chose to focus on creating opportunities for others."

Inspired by what Banks has accomplished, Diaz said she is determined to carry on her legacy at LVC and beyond. Planning to graduate a year early in spring 2019, Diaz is clearly on track to be the next "Voice of The Valley."

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