

Bio for HMC —Mitzi Mihaila Howard, Friend of the Class of 1974

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This is a great idea. I'm not sure how to condense 50 years into something anyone would like to spend time reading, but here goes. Even though I did not graduate from HMC, I have always appreciated being included in the class loop.

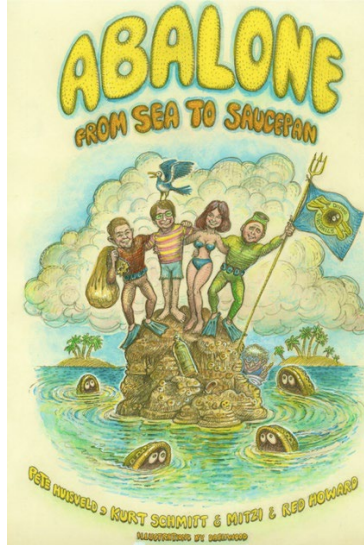
I transferred to Scripps after 2 years because there were not enough hours in the day to get all the biology classes I wanted and complete the HMC core requirements. I got my BA in Biology in 1975. A few days after graduation, I married Robert "Red" Howard, HMC '72. Those that knew us back in the day thought it an odd pairing, but it has seemed to work well for the last 50 years.



We settled in La Jolla (San Diego) for a few years while he finished his PhD in Oceanography, and I worked as a lab researcher at Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation and UCSD School of Medicine. Thanks to HMC, I had a saleable skill upon graduation. I had several horses and competed in Combined Training at the local level. I have rarely found anything to compare to the thrill of galloping a 1000-pound horse at 30mph over solid obstacles.



Red is an accomplished pilot, and I earned my private pilot's license. We published the 2nd addition of our abalone cookbook that sold over 50,000 copies.



We moved to Miami, Florida for Red to get an MD in 2 years. I worked as an anesthesia tech at the veterinary teaching hospital at U of FL Gainesville. I loved the teaching and got to treat a lot of exotic beasts (cougars, elephants, tigers, crocodiles) as well as horses, dogs, cats, and cattle. It was hard to be separated for those 2 years, but we were both so busy that the time passed quickly.

After Red graduated in 1985, I finally got to veterinary school at UC Davis (10 years later than planned), where I concentrated in companion animals (dogs, cats, pocket pets and horses). I did some riding with the UC Davis Equestrian Team, but by then, my favorite horse (and I) was getting a bit old for that. Red worked on his anesthesia residency and after graduation we moved to Australia for him to finish his training. I got licensed there and worked in various hospitals and shelters. As a new graduate it was a shock to go from a high-resource, world-class vet teaching hospital to a place with almost no resources, but it did teach me to be adaptable, confident, and independent. It was fun to get to work with various Australian exotic animals.



We returned to La Jolla in 1991 and I worked at various vet hospitals for a couple of years before settling into my dream job where I practiced emergency and critical care medicine for the last 20 years of my career. We were the largest vet teaching hospital in Southern California, and I helped train over 100 young veterinarians. I loved the teaching and am a bit of an adrenalin junkie, so the ER was the place for me. I oversaw way too many home renovations that turned into art projects and we have been in the same home for 33 years.



I started collecting antique carousel horses and memorabilia, so decorating has been a challenge. Carousel horses don't eat, poop, colic or need shoes. Red became an avid cyclist and I tried to keep up with him. We were fortunate to be able to travel to Europe several times on bike trips, as well as Japan, China, and Africa.



One day, I got tired of 14-hour, high-stress shifts and retired at 62. I miss the people and helping animals, but, like many in my field, I got burned out.



Retirement has been great. We were able to travel before Covid but stay close to home these days. We love our home and community and have been blessed with mostly good health. I've had quite a few orthopedic replacements and salvage procedures but am still trying to be active. Last year, I graduated to an e-trike as my orthopedic surgeon nixed further 2-wheeled adventures.



The last decade, I have focused my energies on more artistic projects: gold/silversmithing, sewing, weaving, mixed media, and mosaics. As a person who is equally both right and left sided in my brain, I have neither the ability to be a world class scientist nor an accomplished artist, but I have had a moderately successful career in a science-adjacent field and some fun with art. I was the first person to win "Best in Show" at the Del Mar Fair with jewelry made from silver and semi-precious stones (as opposed to gold and diamonds). You can see more of my art jewelry at MitziHoward.com. My arthritis has slowed me down some, but not stopped me yet.



Life lessons:

Like many others, HMC was a shock to my internal belief system. Not only was I not the smartest person in the room anymore, but I was also way, way down the list. My agricultural high school, literally built in the middle of corn fields, was an inadequate preparation. But 2 years at HMC gave me a wonderful knowledge base in hard sciences that served me very well throughout my career and for that I have been grateful. I also learned that once you find your proper field, life is much more enjoyable. Biology and medicine just make sense to me, and it is easy for my brain to organize that knowledge—something I could never do with physics and chemistry.

My life did not include children, but we have found great happiness with our parade of child-surrogate dogs, horses, birds, and rabbits. You can't always get what you want, but you sometimes get what you need (apologies to Mick Jagger).

The secrets to a long and happy marriage include not spending too much time together (have your own interests and friends), letting the small stuff go and saying yes as much as possible.