



MCC's Thunderbird Flies Again at New Campus Location

When it was first constructed, MCC's stained-glass Thunderbird was a colorful beacon greeting travelers at the corner of Southern and Dobson.

A gift from the class of 1978, it was a work of art celebrating a new athletic mascot. The MCC Thunderbird was a silent sentinel to progress and growth all around it. The corner of Southern and Dobson became an even busier intersection over the years.

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The Thunderbird had endured more than 36 years, bravely standing through the worst dust, sand, rain, wind and lightening the elements could muster. But as the years passed, vegetation overtook its base and its profile shrank as construction hummed around all four corners of the intersection.

Then came the thunderstorm of August, 2014. A fierce blast from the sky toppled the statue, though luckily it did not



fall to the ground. It was found lying horizontally on top of the base, its bracket mounting bent but not broken. A student government project in 1978, it became a student repair project in 2015 when welding students helped return the Thunderbird to its prior glory.

Rather than fix the Thunderbird on site, MCC decided to move the statue to a place of more prominence on the Southern and Dobson Campus. It was repaired and cleaned, and on April 27 of this year the iconic bird was rededicated at its new location near the new Enrollment Center and Thunderbird Success Center.

Those at the dedication ceremony included retired MCC President Theo Heap, who was integral in selecting the Thunderbird as MCC's mascot; 1978 evening student government leaders Barbara Thelander and David Paolini, who helped spearhead the original effort to create the statue; Wade Denman, chair of the MCC Alumni Association; and MCC President Dr. Shouan Pan.

Paolini said student government members visited other community college campuses in the Maricopa County



Theo Heap, Barbara Thelander, David Paolini and Shouan Pan cut the ribbon at the rededication.

Community College District at the time and realized MCC "was the only campus without an identifying sign." The student body voted for Sharon Self's design, and it was approved by the District Governing Board. Architect Charles Hickman donated time and materials for the construction blueprints.

Heap was Associate Dean of Students and Athletic Director for MCC in the 1970's. He said student government



Retired MCC President Theo Heap attended the dedication.

selected the original mascot, the HoKams, in honor of "the ancient Indian tribes that inhabited the Salt River Valley in antiquity." But the college's American Indian Club asked Heap to reconsider the mascot name because they believed it was demeaning. In an early stance of

progressive leadership on such issues, Heap agreed. While current professional sports teams continue to clutch to their unflattering mascots, Heap proved to be decades ahead of his time. He changed the name to Thunderbirds, and the student body approved.

“Since that day the Thunderbird mascot has been enhanced and today is a beautiful rendition of this dynamic bird,” Heap said.

Originally constructed for \$8,200, the T-bird was designed as a landmark for a then fledgling community college campus.

Now standing in the eastern shadow of another campus icon—the clock tower—the MCC Thunderbird greets those coming and going from the athletic fields to the student center along the main east/west pedestrian walk that runs across most of the campus.

New monument signage consistent with other changes throughout the Fiesta District will now grace the northwestern corner of the Southern and Dobson campus. But the MCC Thunderbird will live on in its new nest,



Rendering of the new monument sign at Southern and Dobson.

soaring above the Thunderbird Success Center as an old beacon made new again, still inviting all to partake in its educational legacy of changing lives for the better and making dreams come true.



from the archives



President's column

by Peggy Gilbey



January 25, 1978, Legend/Bullsheets, President's column by Peggy Gillbey

“If you are wondering what the brown structure is at the corner of Southern and Dobson, it is a sign that will readily identify our campus to the public. We are currently viewing various drawings for the Thunderbird which will rest on the top.”

MCC Grad Returns as Disability Manager

Spina bifida may have robbed Mesa Community College's Tom Kusek of the ability to walk, but it couldn't suppress his drive to succeed.

A 2005 graduate of MCC and now the college's Disability Resources Manager, Tom was already walking with a cane at age 21. A birth defect where there is incomplete closing of the backbone and membranes around the spine, spina bifida affects up to 20 percent of the U.S. population, depending on the type of SB.

Tom has had 26 spinal cord surgeries, and in 1999 one that left him paralyzed from the waist down. A mechanical designer for 18 years in Pennsylvania, Tom and his wife Peggy decided that he couldn't "crawl and climb around in plants and take measurements with being in a wheelchair." They moved to Arizona in 2000 when Tom found a job in robotics.

A love of music and audio production led him to MCC, where he excelled. He received both a vocational certificate and Associate of Applied Science degree in Audio Production Technology, and graduated with honors as he continued to assist students with disabilities. He went on to achieve a Bachelor's degree in Management and then a Master's Degree in Education from Ottawa University, and is currently in the dissertation phase of his Doctorate studies in Higher Education Leadership from Capella University.

Tom now teaches an Audio Production internship class for MCC, and credits the late Judy Tausig, who was Dean of Student Services when he attended; now retired MCC Disability Resources Manager Jack Clevenger; Audio Production program director Keith Heffner; and

the Disability Resources and Services staff for their mentorship during and beyond his time at MCC.

Tom never talks about what he can't do, only what he can. He co-designed a work station for students who were blind and low vision with Keith Heffner. He and Keith re-activated an MCC club for disabled students to learn alternative music technologies. Their latest project involved a music therapy type device and used SoundBeam technology with an Innovation Grant to add an alternate musical instrument to the Audio Production

program. In his spare time, he volunteers for the Department of Arizona American Legion Baseball program as a commissioner and executive officer for the State of Arizona. He is also a member of Maricopa Veterans Education Taskforce for the District. He is also a past Commander of the Sons of the American Legion, Post 35, Chandler.

"It's never stopped me," Tom said of spina bifida. **"In my job I help students, not to jump over obstacles**

but to go around them," a humorous pun he uses to demonstrate his outlook on life. Kusek has been an active advocate for spina bifida patients since the 1980's, and he's works with homeless and disabled Veterans. He knew he found his calling when he counseled others, and says most of the time, fellow disabled people just want someone to talk to. "Often, they just want to talk, to get things off their chest." When they see his disability, they seem to gain a level of comfort and are more open to talk about their own needs.

"I know the people here (at MCC) and this is my home," he said of his fondness for his new job at MCC, which he started in March. **"With every transition I've been through in the past 16 years, my MCC family has been with me."**



Alumni in the News

At MCC, we never tire of hearing about the pursuits and successes of our alumni. To see a compilation of alumni newsmakers, visit www.mesacc.edu/alumni/newsletters/summer-2016. If you or a fellow alum is featured in the news, send the information to marcy.snitzer@mesacc.edu.



Message from the President

As many of you may know, I will be leaving Mesa Community College later this summer to embark on the next phase of my career as Chancellor of the Seattle Community College District.

Though I am excited about this new opportunity and challenge, it was a difficult decision to make because I will be leaving a special college that I love. It is not easy to say goodbye to so many wonderful community college educators and professionals with whom I share the same ideal and commitment: changing lives and enabling dreams. Without

question, the past eight years at MCC have been the most challenging, most enriching, and most rewarding part of my professional career.

Promoting student success and building an exceptional college has been our collective focus during my tenure. Despite various challenges, we have advanced on many fronts, from institutional planning and daily decision making to improved outcomes assessment. We received reaccreditation until 2025, obtained the Community Engagement Classification by the Carnegie Foundation, improved and developed shared governance practices, and were named by the Aspen Institute as one of the top 150 community colleges in the nation.

We also led the Maricopa Community College District in external fund-raising. We improved the College's website, completed more than \$110 million in bond remodeling and new construction and changed the faces of both campuses. We led sister colleges in many technological endeavors to better support teaching, learning, and student support services. We also won the NJCAA Division II National Championships for Women's Basketball and Baseball, and a Regional Championship for Men's Basketball.

If it sounds like I'm bragging, I am. But this has never been about me as the college president. It is about our shared success and pride; it is about our capacity to excel as an innovative institution. I have been privileged to be part of this journey, and I'm confident that MCC's best years are still ahead.

It has been an honor to serve MCC, Mesa and the East Valley together with many community, civic, and business partners, too numerous to list here. I benefited significantly from the advice and counsel of many others, including the Alumni Advisory Board.

I take with me many fond memories. With deep gratitude and humbleness, I thank you for your support and friendship.

Sincerely,

Shouan Pan, Ph.D.
President

Dr. Maria Harper-Marinick Named Chancellor

The Maricopa Community College's Governing Board appointed Dr. Maria Harper-Marinick as Chancellor of the ten college system, which includes Mesa Community College. Harper-Marinick is the first female and first Latina ever appointed Chancellor to a higher education institution in Arizona.



More information about Dr. Harper-Marinick is available at <https://www.maricopa.edu/press/maricopa-community-colleges-governing-board-names>.



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REMINDER - MCC HALL OF FAME NOMINATIONS ARE DUE JULY 8, 2016!

The MCC Alumni Association will host the second annual MCC Hall of Fame event this fall. The Hall of Fame honors alumni, community members, and MCC employees whose personal and professional accomplishments and positive contributions to the college and community set them apart.

Nominations are being accepted through July 8, 2016, in the following categories:

- Alumni Achievement • Community Partner • Service
- Distinguished Staff • Excellence in Teaching – MCC Faculty
- Athletics – Outstanding MCC Athletes and Coaches

To review criteria for each award and submit a nomination, visit www.mesacc.edu/awards.