



# Pillar & Past

## Remembering Trinidad State Junior College

Mark Hellenschmidt

*Trinidad State was surprised and pleased to learn of a generous estate gift from Mark and Glee Hellenschmidt. Mark was kind enough to share a few words about his experiences at TSJC.*



Mark and Glee Hellenschmidt

TSJC significantly impacted our family. I attended Trinidad's gunsmithing program from 1967-1969, and my wife, Glee, attended the LPN program from 1967-1968. Glee's brother, Arlon Johnson, also attended the gunsmithing program from 1967-1969, and later returned to the computer repair program from 1977-1978. These educational opportunities opened important doors for all of us.

During high school, I thought a career as a mechanical engineer might be a good choice. Since I had hunted from a young age, and my father was an expert shot on many rifle teams through the years, I naturally enjoyed shooting and firearms. Integrating my enjoyment of shooting with engineering prerequisites—and recognizing a path to a trade—pointed me toward the

TSJC gunsmithing program. I knew I could not afford to continue college without learning a trade. And I worked to pay for the rest of my college.

The gunsmithing program gave me an excellent skill set for trades work after graduation. Initially, I went to work as a prototype machinist at Lawrence Radiation Lab. The Lawrence Lab job was fun and challenging, but ended shortly after the Draft Lottery System was implemented. My lottery number was five! Shortly after, I enlisted in the US Marine Corps.

After leaving the Marines and Vietnam in 1973, I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in both Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences from UCCS, graduating in 1977.

Since Glee was a young girl of four years old, she knew she wanted to be a nurse. While considering her options, Glee was impressed with the Licensed Practical Nursing program at TSJC. The program was very demanding, requiring 22 credit hours per semester plus additional work at one of the area hospitals. During this time, Glee also became Vice President of her class. The LPN program instilled both discipline and knowledge, so much that everyone in her class passed their state board examinations on their first attempt!

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After initially working in a nursing home, Glee found government civil service work at the Ft. Carson Hospital from 1969-82—including the remaining years of the Vietnam War. She also treated infants from the 1975 Operation Babylift from Vietnam.

As mentioned, Arlon Johnson, Glee’s brother, attended the TSJC gunsmithing program from 1967-1969. Arlon would find gunsmithing work around the country for several years, before coming back to TSJC for the computer repair program in 1977. From there he found work with Sperry-Univac, repairing computers on the Trident submarines.

In so many ways, TSJC prepared us for our careers, gave us great basics and advanced training for the future, and left us with lifelong friendships and many memories.

Glee and I are grateful for the many ways Trinidad State impacted our lives. And we are pleased to give back to the College through our estate planning.