



Pillar & Post

A Life of Service—Pete Deluca



“They say, if you can remember when you retired—then you haven’t really retired,” Pete said. “So I try to hang around.” And with a career that spanned more than 40 years, few people are more closely identified with Trinidad State than Pete Deluca.

Pete was born in 1929 in the mining town of Delagua, CO. “Both sides of my family were in mining,” he explained, “my grandfather, my uncles, and other relatives. And my father worked at the company store. I was born into a Colorado mining family.”

His family would move to nearby Trinidad when Pete was in 2nd grade. Later, after graduating from TSJC in 1949—and then from the University of Denver in 1951—Pete would return to Trinidad after a short stint in the Air Force. He immediately went to work for KCRT radio.

“I covered news and sports for the station,” he said. “I’d spend three days a week on the Trinidad State campus, capturing the stories of the day. I’d also broadcast our football and basketball games.”

After 12 years at KCRT, Pete began exploring other opportunities. “I looked into a couple things, but I really didn’t want to leave Trinidad,” he said. “Guy Davis, who was the TSJC President, had approached me earlier about joining the College—and he followed up when the time came.”

“Guy was ahead of his time in so many ways,” Pete added. “Early in my time at Trinidad State, the Dean wanted me to move into an Admissions Counselor role. It involved lots of travel—time away from home. Before I accepted, Guy wanted to speak with my wife, Antoinette, to make sure she was okay with the travel. He was kind to consider the impact on my family.”

In those early years, Pete visited almost every high school in Colorado on behalf of Trinidad State. “We had a great campus and a great faculty,” he said. “Our professors could have taught anywhere, but they chose us. And it’s the same today. Trinidad State gets top drawer people—not the leftovers.”

The decade of the 1960s also featured social unrest, especially with the Vietnam War, and Trinidad State became a desired option for those seeking a college deferment. “In 1965, we had 465 enrolled students

and in 1966, we had 700—freshman!” Pete said. “Student housing was completely full, and many had to live off campus. Scheduling was a huge challenge. Every classroom was full, and new classes were added. But like always, everyone pulled together. We got it done.”

The 1970s brought the *English Language Services* program to Trinidad State. “ELS brought in a big influx of students from all over the world,” Pete explained, “from countries like Venezuela, Brazil, Pakistan, Korea, France, Greece, Taiwan and Japan—and countries all across the Middle East.”

“These students required a bit more support and guidance than traditional students,” he added. “Some schools were not accepting foreign students, but we did. And it was an exciting time for our campus. After college, many of these individuals decided to build their lives in the United States.”

Pete would also play a critical role in strengthening the TSJC Educational Foundation.

The Foundation was established in 1968. “The Foundation was just getting started, it didn’t really solicit or raise funds in the early years. Then in 1990, the Federal government offered a Challenge Grant to support higher education—where schools could apply for matching funds for up to \$500,000. The College president and cabinet discussed the Challenge opportunity and decided it was the way to go. When they asked me what I thought we could raise, I said ‘\$300,000.’ And they said, ‘okay, let’s do \$500,000’ and asked me to spearhead the effort!”

After applying for the Challenge Grant, Trinidad State was the 13th alternate school—on the waiting list, just in case other schools dropped out. “Some people felt relief, that maybe we weren’t ready to do this,” Pete said. “But enough schools dropped out and we jumped right in.”

“I immediately reached out to colleagues at colleges and universities around Colorado for recommendations about fundraising,” he said. “We hired a consultant. We found zip codes where pockets of alumni lived. And we started visiting people—not asking for money right away, just sharing the story of the Challenge.”

“It was a wonderful experience. The College community really got behind the effort, they saw it as a chance to do something big for Trinidad State. Everyone at the College made a gift. Local civic groups raised funds, also. And our alumni gave generously,” he explained. “Fulfilling the Challenge Grant is one of my proudest moments at Trinidad State.”

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Pete Deluca would continue to serve Trinidad State—and countless students—until his retirement in 2004. Frank Armijo, TSJC President at the time, would say at his retirement, “Pete is the personification

of TSJC. He has been here 40 years and has done so much for this college.”

In many ways, Pete has never left. “I like to keep in touch with things going on—and I follow the athletics programs, maybe to a fault sometimes,” he said, chuckling. And many alumni still ask about Pete when they contact the Foundation.

“Students are a little different today,” Pete said. “When I arrived at Trinidad State, students considered it a privilege to go to school. Many still do, but everyone should, really. Trinidad State has always provided the types of training needed—it has always adapted to changing needs in the workforce.”

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“I would encourage all students to grasp the opportunities they have,” he added, “to use this moment as a stepping stone to a career or an advanced degree, wherever the journey leads. Don’t take it lightly—take advantage. Fully appreciate this moment.”

The entire community is grateful to Pete Deluca for all of his contributions. He has truly given a life of service to Trinidad State.