

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 1



**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,'
teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages,
and dedicated celebrant of Halloween**

An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto

Written by Jean Bartlett

October 1, 2024



On a relatively recent tax-time visit to the Pacifica Community Center to have her taxes prepared, the man at the receiving end of the Pauletta Cravotto financial papers looked up and grinned with delight as he recognized his client. "It's 'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta.'" There was immediate recognition all around from people who had either been children in one of Miss Pauletta's preschool classes or was a parent to one of those children. As the complements and greetings poured forth, Pauletta wondered whether she should quietly slink away or quietly bask. But since she needed her taxes done, she chose the latter. "And then I slunk!"

←Pauletta at home in Pacifica, late September, 2024. (Jean Bartlett photo.)

Pauletta taught preschoolers in Pacifica from September of 1980 until she retired in August of 2012. That's when I met her. Writing for the *Pacifica Tribune*, I was

sent to interview her in honor of her retirement and it was clear immediately, Pauletta is one caring, hilarious and fabulous human being – all adjectives which still apply. But where did she get her funny sense of humor and her genuine appreciation of the individual personality?

"I really like silliness and I really like people," she stated back in 2012 and reiterated at the beginning of this interview. "But I didn't learn that from my parents. I also really like Halloween. It's my favorite holiday." Pauletta pointed to a nearby closet ballooning with Halloween outfits. She additionally highlighted the socks she was wearing for her interview, which were glow-in-the-dark pumpkin eyeballs. "My parents didn't teach me about Halloween either!"

* * *

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 2

"My parents were serious people," Pauletta began. "Well, they had to be I suppose because they had to run a farm. But they did have little things that would slip in. My mother, for instance, taught me how to play hopscotch and my father would occasionally play the saxophone."

Pauletta Diane Swanson was born on August 8, 1942 in Turlock, California, to Jane E. and Paul M.L. Swanson II.

"That 'M.L.' stands for Martin Luther and that came about because my father's family was Swedish and the Lutheran Church is the dominant church in Sweden. They were expecting a boy, but surprise! I mean what kind of a name is Pauletta? Anyway, once I came into the world, I went home to our farm in Hilmar, CA."

Paul II, Pauletta's father, was born on April 6, 1918 in Turlock, CA, and married Jane Lowell on September 3, 1940. His parents were Paul Martin Luther Swanson I, who was born in Oakland, Nebraska, in 1893, and Adela (Branstrom) Swanson, who was born in 1895 in Idaho Falls, Idaho. Paul I and Adela were parents to three children: Pauletta's dad Paul, Harold and Wallace. Pauletta's great grandparents were the ones who came over from Sweden.

Pauletta's maternal grandparents were James E. Lowell and Edith (Dalbey) Lowell. James was born in Michigan and Edith was born in Texas. And James and Edith were parents to three children: James, Jane and David.

"My mother's parents were my very favorite people," Pauletta recalled. "They were loyal people and so honest. They were also down-homey which I found to be a very likeable trait."

"My mother's mom came across the plains of Texas in a covered wagon when she was a little girl and her family then settled in Pueblo, Colorado. My grandmother's father drove a team of horses and that team was his business. There were no other hauling vehicle services in those days! Because they were the family's bread and butter, those horses took precedence over the entire family. Apparently, since they did not have a barn, my great grandfather kept those horses on the back porch of their home to keep them dry, and these were big, stocky horses. I'm not sure of all the reasons why the family moved from Texas to Colorado, but I'm sure opportunity headed the list. My grandmother told me that as a little girl she experienced some serious worry in Colorado, as there was a rumor that one of the native Coloradan tribes had an interest in scalping redheads, and Grandmother Edith's sister was a redhead. So she would hide her sister in the cornfield when she saw indigenous people."

"Now here's an interesting fact on my mother, that always struck me as quite unbelievable that she had no reaction to it. It's about how her parents chose 'Jane' for her name. My grandmother's sister, Dorothy, later became the matron at the Colorado Prison for Women. Most of these women were in prison because they had killed their husbands due to being abused by them. My great aunt gave them things to do like make quilts, and they made a quilt for my great aunt which she treasured. It was orange and white and I have it now. My great aunt's favorite prisoner was a woman named Jane and she told my grandmother all about Jane and that's how my mother got her name. My mother never had an opinion on this wonderful story which still amazes me."

"My Grandmother Edith was just different from her daughter, my mom. She had all these remedies. She was always interested in healing through visualization. She learned things through evangelist tent revival meetings as well as through the organization Unity. Unity has been around a long time and it's about prayer and affirmations and spiritual healing. So my grandmother had this desire to be an evangelist, and after her husband died and she was living with us, she tried to put that to the test but my dad squashed it. Here's that story!"

'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 3

"Gustine is about 17 miles from Hilmar where I grew up and it had a railway station. Drifters who rode the trains would get off in Gustine and then they would find their way to my family's house, because they talked amongst themselves and knew about this house that had a red mark on the post along the road. My grandmother put that red mark on it. Then they would come up to the house where she would feed them. But first, she would preach to them and they listened. Well, my father not too long into this, had a fit and erased the red mark so her career as an evangelist was short-lived. But again, my mom's folks were really nice people and though my grandmother was religious, she did not push it on you. She had a lot of faith but she wasn't too carried away."

Edith's husband was a ditch tender, a water distribution operator. He had to effectively and efficiently deliver water to farmers under the direction of the County's irrigation services management department.

"He would get the word out that the water was coming and he would be in charge of diverting it to where it needed to go. The farmers would line up and he would have to explain to some of them, that their water allotment would not arrive until the next week. This, understandably, really aggravated those farmers. I believe, besides dealing with unhappy farmers on occasion, his job was very complicated and acquired a great amount of skill.

"My father's parents were not my favorites. They were aloof. They were the original farmers of the land and it was quite a bit of acreage. By the time I came along it was still a great amount of acreage, but some of it had been sold off. My dad's parents, who owned the land, had their own home on the property.

"My father's mother sewed and played the piano. She did try teaching me piano but there were several problems. She had the only piano, which was at her house, so there was nothing at my house to practice on. In addition, she was not a caring piano teacher in that she would tell me to do something and then she would leave the room to do something else. The other difficulty in my learning the piano is I didn't want to learn the piano. Ha! Ha!

"My father's parents had expectations of their children. They were okay with my father and my father's brother Harold, but my Uncle Wally did something that sent them running.

"My father did not serve in the Second World War because he was a farmer and he was given an agricultural deferment." (Farming was considered essential to the war effort at home.) "Uncle Wally did serve overseas. When Uncle Wally came home, he brought back his Russian wife. What a scandal! I had never seen my dad's mom so disheveled! So she and my grandfather moved to a cabin in Santa Cruz to get away from this Russian woman and they never came back. Meanwhile, back on the farm, literally, my Russian aunt turns their part of the farm in Hilmar into a nudist colony. Now, we did have the Merced River that ran through part of the property, so the nudist colony wasn't in the middle of farm fields.

"As is the way of rivers, they decide to do what they want to do. On our farm that meant we owned the middle of the Merced River that went through our property. On one side of that was our farm and on the other side you could see the Stevinson Corporation, which had a huge conglomeration of farms. I thought that was a revelation that we owned the middle of the river!

"As to the nudist colony, I'm not exactly sure when that went in and for how long, but it would have been along our part of the river. I never saw it. But I do know that my aunt advertised for this Hilmar nudist colony adventure in various San Francisco papers and people came."

Pauletta's parents met in high school in Hilmar. Her dad, a 1939 graduate of the University of California, Davis, studied agriculture.

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 4

"He was a dairy farmer and he also tilled the fields. In order to feed the cows, you have to grow hay. We also had walnut orchards and Hereford cattle."

Pauletta is the eldest of her parents' three children: Pauletta, Gloria and Paul M.L. Swanson III. She is also the only one of the three siblings living. Her sister Gloria passed in 1992 and her brother Paul died in 2003.

"While I was not trained to be a farmer, which was okay with me, I learned all kinds of things about animals growing up and I did participate in 4-H in elementary school and part of high school, which I enjoyed. One of things I always remembered as being so fascinating, was my dad told me that cattle living on one farm cannot intermarry, well officially inbred, because it can cause genetic problems.

"My father would walk around with his note paper and write down if he saw his cattle having sex. That first offspring was okay but that offspring would have to breed with another farmer's offspring. Why is this? Say a male weighs 1,800 pounds and a female weighs 1,200 pounds. If they are related their offspring will have a weakening of the genes, so their legs may not develop the strength needed to support their own weight. I thought our cows were very sweet and loveable and having more cows like our cows was a good thing. But my dad educated me on that.

"What kinds of things did I do on the farm? I did not have to milk the cows. But I did admire my father's technique when he would squirt milk from a cow directly into the mouth of one of our farm cats and then each cat lined up for their respective and perfectly aimed treat. Our farm cats were ratters, meaning they took care of the rats and mice. Rats and mice like hay. We needed our hay to feed the cows and cows are not going to eat hay that has rodent poop all over it. So the farm cats had jobs, which I am sure they enjoyed. I, on the other hand, had pet cats and the two types of cats did not mingle."

The only farm work Pauletta recalls doing was picking walnuts.

"Picking walnuts is hard work and when nobody was looking, I sat in my walnut bucket. Eventually my parents didn't pick walnuts either and they hired people that came through the valley and did all these jobs that were essential. Picking walnuts involved knocking walnuts down with a stick. A little further along, my parents got a walnut tree shaker which made things a lot easier.

"Out of my parents' three kids, my brother was the only one they sent to agricultural school and when he was there, he learned all about animal husbandry, which included learning how to dehorn cattle to prevent injuries to other cattle or people. Additionally, he learned to rope cattle and he would do that in rodeos.

"My parents were hard workers but they were not fun. My mother was quite smart with business and she did know how to do a number of farm things, she had to, but she especially worked with the milk processing aspects. She was not much of a cook. She didn't really have time. She would make us oatmeal and she did know how to make Swedish sausage from a recipe from my dad's family and it was really good. My mom's mom taught me a little bit about cooking, but my grandmother was not a great cook. As to my father, he was really smart about farm things. He had the answers. My parents were very compatible. I didn't see a whole lot of smooching and carrying on, but they really cared about each other and they got what was needed done, done."

Still, a farming life is not always an easy life financially and when Pauletta was 9, she had a medical issue that could have spelled financial disaster.

"My dad had hurt his leg and I was trying to help him by getting the water to all the cows with one giant bucket. All of a sudden, bing! I couldn't walk for almost a year. My family thought it was polio, but I

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 5

thought, in more of a 9-year-old way, 'How in the hell can you get polio lifting a bucket of water?' My parents could not pay for the hospitalization but the March of Dimes did. I realized my parents would lose the farm if they had to pay for my extended hospitalization but the entire thing really annoyed me."

Pauletta could still sit up and a teacher came to her home during her convalescence. Her maternal grandmother really worked with Pauletta to help her visualize her healing and that education has always stuck with Pauletta and helped her.

"Finally, one day my family got me to a doctor who said, 'She has a herniated disc.' And he treated it, though that treatment came along late in the process. The visualization really helped with the pain."

Herniated discs can cause spinal injuries which in turn can cause temporary or long-term paralysis from damaged nerves. Untreated herniated discs might also create changes in sensation.

"In my case, the result was changes in sensation. Once I was able to walk again, when I stepped on something really hot, my nerves had a strong reaction. When I stepped on something cold, I didn't feel the cold. I had to learn all these different sensations to survive. But there was one benefit to this sensation loss. Later, when I had my children, there was no labor pain. Boom, there he was! Boom, there she was!"

Where did Pauletta's humor come from? Where did she learn how to bake or cook the things that she so boldly and passionately helped her preschoolers create in the classroom?

"My big inspiration was school. I was inspired by other kids. I wondered, in my own kid way, 'Where in the hell did they get the information they have?' I didn't know you could make stuff. I learned how to knit, because of school, when I was 12. I learned how to cook in high school. I took dance in high school. I was definitely born with a mind of my own but I had to keep it under wraps or I would get into so much trouble. Where did this mind of mine come from? Ha! Ha!"

Pauletta went to two elementary schools.



"The first one was a one or two-room schoolhouse, Riverside School, then, the County decided to send a school bus and we went to Elim Elementary School. I went to Hilmar High School which is right next to Elim Elementary School."

Pauletta didn't care much about her high school's dances until her junior year. She decided she did want to go to junior prom.

←Pauletta, senior year at Hilmar High."

"I didn't wait around to be asked, I asked this boy, Richard Freitas. He was a garbage man and he had purchased his own route. We went to the prom in his garbage truck. I think it might have had some stuff in the back still because there was a little rattling. I didn't care as long as we parked it where no one could smell it. We also went to senior prom together and in his truck. He might have asked me to that one."

What was Pauletta listening to on the radio? She liked rock 'n' roll, especially Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis. "I loved that music and still do."

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 6

Pauletta learned how to drive on the family tractor, before she turned 16, though her dad would not allow her to use it to plow the fields because, "In order to plant a crop you have to drive straight and I didn't." The family did have a car that was an automatic and when she took and passed her driver's test, that was her vehicle. As to jobs when she was growing up, when Pauletta was old enough she did babysitting.

"As a career, I knew I wanted to do something in business. So, after attending Modesto Junior College, I headed off to San Francisco and went to work at the Pacific Stock Exchange. I worked with documents and I enjoyed it. Still, when a friend of mine from college thought it would be fun to move to La Puente in Southern California, I went with her. Her aunt owned some cabins in Lake Arrowhead, where we would go on the weekends, and that wasn't too far from our apartment in La Puente."

Pauletta worked for Clayton Manufacturing Company. Still in business, they are an industrial steam boiler manufacturing company. Their industrial steam boilers can be found in places like hospitals and refineries. Industrial steam boilers provide the heat or electricity needed to operate machinery.

"On the weekends, friends from San Francisco came down, and along with my roommate and me, we would go to the cabins and have wild party weekends—though really they were pretty tame—with people coming in, especially during the winter, to ski. There was so much skiing nearby, though it does seem like most of the people we met skied at Lake Arrowhead or Big Bear."

At one of these parties, Pauletta noticed a guy sitting there quietly and she thought to herself, "He should be mingling with everybody. I am going to liven him up!"

His name was Herbert "Herb" Cravotto and he was at that time a sailor and he worked as a radioman at the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco.

"Herb had been with someone and they broke up and he knew some of the people at this party, so he came down for the weekend. Then he started coming to the area a lot on the weekends. He liked us!"

Herb and Pauletta began dating and Pauletta moved back to her family's home in Hilmar, got resettled a bit and then moved to San Francisco where she rented an apartment in the garage of a family who lived in the Richmond District. She went to work for PG&E (Pacific Gas and Electric Company) in San Francisco.

"Shhh," Pauletta whispered confidentially. "Don't tell PG&E, but when I worked for them I threw away stuff that they can never replace. But wait, I think they asked me to do that."

The couple dated for five years and in that time, Pauletta's mother's aunt, who lived in Berkeley, took Pauletta aside for a heart-to-heart opinion.

"She said to me, 'If you have children they are going to be dark.' Then she patted me. I thought to myself, 'Are we still doing this?' And that was way back then. But I decided not to take offense and just say nothing. And of course we are still doing this."

Herbert Cravotto was born in the Philippines on January 5, 1931. His dad, Anthony Cravotto was born in Italy and was a naturalized U.S. citizen. Anthony served in the U.S. military in the Philippines during the First World War. Herb's mom, Generosa, was from the Philippines. Anthony and Generosa had eight living children, two died in the Philippines, and they were: Joseph, Henry, Vincent, Herb, Rudolph, Rosie, Lily and Jasmine.

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 7

"Herb's family came to the U.S. when he was 7, in July of 1938. They moved from the Philippines because WWII was coming. Herb's dad said, 'The war is making its way to the Philippines and we're out of here,' and they got on a ship and left."

The family moved to an apartment on South Park Street in San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood (SoMa). His dad taught music and art to the visually impaired.

"Their apartment was not far from the train tracks and bananas would fall off the cars sometimes, and so Herb's mom would send them out there to pick up bananas. This was war time and families all over the country used ration stamps to purchase various food items. Bananas were, I'm sure, a luxury."



When Herbert Cravotto signed up with the U.S. Navy it was before the Korean War. But he did spend a lot of time at sea as a radioman and Guam was one of the places he was stationed.

←Herb, in his early service days.

"What did I like about Herb? He was quiet. He was in charge of himself; he was comfortable with himself. And of course, he had a sense of humor. Otherwise he would have run away screaming on the first day."

Pauletta and Herb dated for five years and eventually married on a whim at a chapel in Lake Tahoe.

"Apparently, I followed my Grandmother Edith's advice. She told me, with the utmost emphasis when I was growing up, that I was never to marry a man younger than me. Herb was 11 years older. She didn't explain her reasoning, but I sense she had trouble!"

Herb spent his career as a radioman and communication specialist with the Navy. He did leave the service but remained an employee of the U.S. Navy, and moved with them when the shipyard closed in 1974 and the Navy moved their base needs to Alameda.

"Herb was coming home from the (now former) Naval Air Station in Alameda when we had the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake. He was five minutes off the Bay Bridge when the shaking happened."

On October 17, 1989, at 5:04 p.m. local time, the central coast of California experienced its most damaging earthquake since the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Measured at a magnitude of 6.9, the Loma Prieta earthquake lasted 20 seconds. It created extensive damage to San Francisco's Marina District, downtown Santa Cruz and to the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. One person died when an upper section of the bridge collapsed onto the deck below.

The couple was living in Pacifica then with their two children. But, what brought them to Pacifica and when?

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

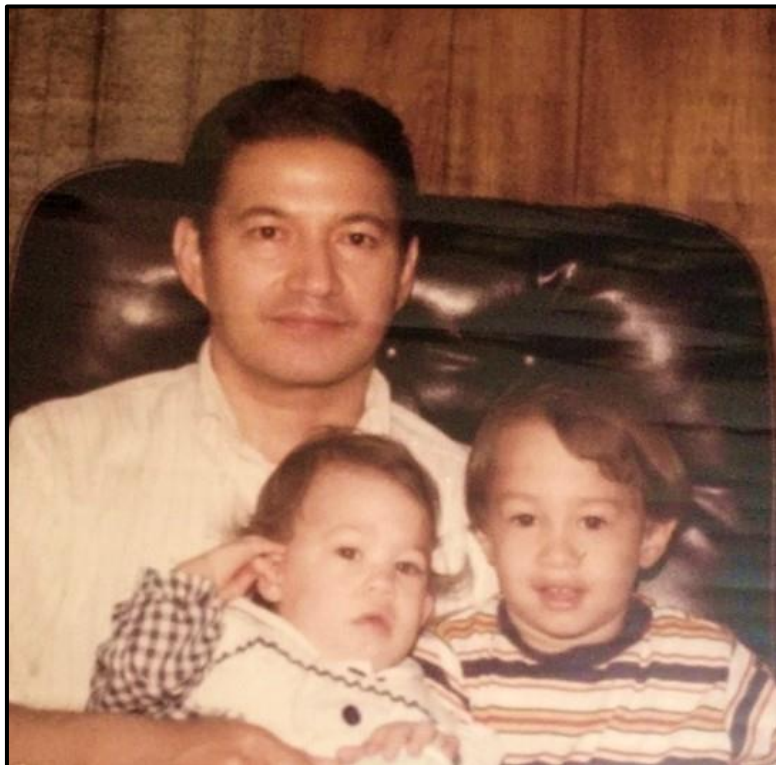
Page 8

"Our first place was an apartment in Daly City. It was down the street from Westlake Shopping Center. That is where we encountered the woman with a toilet. She and her family were our upstairs neighbors and they were noisy. Herb didn't care about noise. He was one of eight kids, what's to hear? But he did notice when she threw a paper diaper in the toilet which eventually plugged everything up to the point that water came through our ceiling. We started looking for houses.

"We looked around Daly City, but this one, the one I still live in, had no stairs and I thought, 'Aha! This will be easier to clean.' And on top of that, the view is fantastic."

The couple's Pacifica home is in the Fairmont neighborhood and is close to the Daly City border. It was built in 1967 and when Herb and Pauletta bought it in 1972, they were the second owners.

"Of course, we've destroyed it since then." Pauletta does one of her mischievous smiles, knowing that her interviewer is not buying that last comment.



So their kids, Eric and then Karen, came along in the late 1970s, and other than working nonstop as a mother, Pauletta was not officially working then. But things changed when her kids became preschoolers.

←Herb with Karen and Eric, 1980.

"These two women, Ellen Kirrane and Judy Landini, told me that the City of Pacifica needed individuals who could teach preschoolers and there was a class. They also told me, 'We are taking the class and so are you.' Pauletta grinned, acknowledging that she was completely interested and was not strong-armed into working with children. And so, along with her two friends, Pauletta was hired by Pacifica's Parks, Beaches and Recreation Department in September of 1980.

When the job began, the City rented rooms for its preschoolers at its Fairmont, Fairmont West, Pedro Valley and Sanchez elementary schools. When the City opened the Pacifica Community Center in the late 1980s, a permanent preschool location was created. Pauletta worked with 2-1/2 to 5-1/2 year olds. In addition, on the weekends, Pauletta taught babysitting classes to 10 to 12 year olds.

"My supervisor at that time said, 'We have a teacher who had to leave and she had a cooking class. Can you do that?' And I said, 'What?' And then she told me there was a puppet thing. 'Can you do that?' And I said, 'What?'"

Pauletta found a group of puppet masters, since moved to Oregon, and immersed herself in learning the art of puppet making.

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 9

"They showed me how to make so many things, including gruesome things, and I particularly enjoyed learning how to make puppets with eyeballs hanging out. This, again, is something my parents never taught me though I'm not sure why!

"My assignment was essentially to teach cooking, arts and crafts and each session was five weeks. My goal was to always try to make something that the children would like because their parents often wanted them to start out with spinach and tofu. I taught them how to make things like cinnamon rolls, pizza, cinnamon toast, cookies, fruit salad, pretzels and quesadillas. We made candy cane cookies and pizza cookies. The sauce for those latter cookies was frosting, which we dyed red, and then we loaded it with a few gumdrops and it was, in the end, about two inches tall. We did the same thing with art as in cooking – only, they couldn't eat it. My thinking was, they always make it their own way. This was essential in all our sessions but particularly with cooking because they would only eat it if they did it their way.

"If we were making a cinnamon roll, for instance, I would give them a piece of dough, knowing they would mangle it and roll it until it looked like a long, smashed thing. But whatever it looked like, it tasted wonderful. I don't remember exactly how big the oven I had was, but let's say it could hold a two-foot long cookie sheet. One of my favorite stories involves longtime PB&R employee Shirley Rose's grandson Javier. Javier made his pretzel and it was two feet, or maybe longer. So we baked it and it was of course, delicious. This is recreation, so we recreate!

"I would try to be very professional like Julia Child, but interesting things often happened to throw me off that course. If I forgot something when I was teaching, or our family dog really did eat up part of my planned event, then I invented on the spot. The children didn't care. Nobody ever knows where 'this' day is going. Maybe it will be magic."



In the kitchen with Pauletta, circa 2010.

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 10

"My rules were they must learn to say, 'no thank you,' if they didn't want to taste what was on the menu. My rule was also to encourage children. They are 3 and 1/2, who knows where this teaching moment will take them, but let it take them to a wonderful space." At least two of Pauletta's students became chefs.

"It was all about exploring and life. When these kids go to regular school, they get set rules. We did have rules. Don't hurt each other and make it to the bathroom.

"With our seasonal crafts we might make finger puppets for pilgrims and we would also make turkey puppets, and then we would invite the pilgrims to come on over.

"I think kids need to know that they are perfect exactly the way they are. They have 60 or 70 years ahead and they need to know, they don't fit into a mold, nobody does. Give them some space and who knows what they will accomplish."

Here are some of Pauletta's classes throughout the years: Cooking Academy for Kids, Art Academy, Natures Wonders Big & Small, Mother's Day Gift Class, Father's Day Gift Class, Babysitting Workshop, Santa Workshop, Valentine Cooking & Crafts Workshop, Spring Break Adventure Camp, Halloween Cooking Class/Abracadabra and Ghoulish Gourmet.

For many, many years, Pauletta was one of the stars of PB&R's annual haunted house. Outfits, which she created, or found at rummage sales, included: Mrs. SpongeBob; Alice in Wonderland; Almost Ragedy Ann; a fortune teller; a witch; the New Year's Baby both at the end of the year and in the beginning of the year, this was one costume; and so very many more.



A Chicken About Town and a Smurf, are joined by Mr. Doom the Snake Charmer and Alice the Daytime Preschool School Teacher.

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 11

"I never wore anything that covered my face in the classroom because the kids wouldn't come into the room. You have to be the regular person you are but in different clothing, or they will go home.

"Now, when I did Nicole Acquisiti's Haunted House, (Nicole was then recreation coordinator for Pacifica's PB&R), I could be covered with the worst outfit, and children would say, 'Oh! Hello Miss Pauletta.'"



Pauletta's friend Gladys Bancroft-Crampton, who owned the extremely popular pet food and accessories store Coastside Critters in the Pacific Manor Shopping Center and still is in the pet supply business, kept the haunted house full of Halloween creepy crawlers, all safely caged. There were snakes and cockroaches, tarantulas and scorpions.

"We had a worm counter. It was this great big plastic tub that we filled with tons of candy corn and we put mealworms on top and closed it. People took a guess at how many worms were inside of it. It was fascinatingly gross and volunteers were fighting over who got to be in charge of it, so we had to arrange the volunteers in shifts."

Pauletta said she should have known from her earliest days of childhood, when she would fire mud pies at her visiting cousins with unbelievable precision, that teaching preschoolers would be the perfect job for her.

"I got paid for playing," she said of her years in the teaching field. "I thought, if anybody catches on, I'll be out of here!"

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 12

Meanwhile Pauletta's and Herb's kids, who attended both elementary and high school in neighboring Daly City, grew up inspired and aware of their mother's antics and have many of their own engaging stories.

"Years ago when the Community Center first opened, the City would offer night classes and they would have a building supervisor person who, as it turns out, was me. I also did some of the night teaching on certain days, from 5 to 9 p.m. My kids heard about women getting attacked and they worried about me. So one Mother's Day, they gave me a male dummy for my car. They thought it would keep me safe when my job ended late.

"The first thing that came in the mail was a pair of legs and then the torso arrived. He was beautiful, tall, 6 feet. I named him, Anre. I wanted the name to sound as French as possible. I strapped Anre in the passenger seat and put sunglasses on him. He would ride in the car with me. One time I got him a can of beer. It became a joke. The police knew about Anre. Sometimes they would drive new recruits into the Community Center's parking lot where Anre was sitting weirdly alone in my car."

Occasionally, to keep herself entertained, Pauletta would seat the dummy in the back of the room during a meeting. However, that came to a stop after a guest speaker mistook the dummy for a dead audience member.

"Anre was a safety dummy that went to places with me. We went to a restaurant together. Ha! Ha! But he never rode in the carpool lane.



Claiming Anre was waiting for her in the car, Pauletta shopped for the humans in her family, 2015.
(Jean Bartlett photo.)

"Thankfully for me, Herb found this all entertaining and the only question he ever had in regards to any of it was, 'Is this food item in the refrigerator a school project or can I eat it?'"

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 13



Herb, Pauletta and Karen address the nonworking heater in their home in blanket style. Circa, late 1990s.

Following her retirement, Pauletta filled in, in the classroom as needed for a time. She also took up knitting with Erika Vulcanoff's Knitting Class at the Senior Center. One of the special projects the group did was knit nests in 2014 to support the call put out by San Rafael's WildCare, a wildlife rehabilitation hospital in need of knitted nests for the orphaned baby birds in their care.

"I still knit," Pauletta noted. "But I don't drive anymore so I limit the classes I attend. I do, however, make myself a presence at both the Pacifica Senior Center and the Half Moon Bay Senior Center for their Rosen Method classes."

The Rosen Method defines itself as, "A bodywork and a movement modality that is about presence, breath, body awareness, releasing tension, reaching the unconscious, and creating new, more regulated pathways in the nervous system." It allows, "An individual's experience and who they truly are (as opposed to who they were taught they ought to be) to flow through them and into how they move through their lives."

"The Rosen Method reminds me of what my Grandmother Edith taught me so many years ago with visualization. It also teaches you how to move without pain."

The pain for Pauletta is the result of a leg break several years ago, which she didn't feel at first due to her old herniated disc injury.

"Two weeks after the initial hospital and X-ray visit, I had to go back to the doctor for a follow-up. During that in-between time, I went into what my grandmother taught me and I envisioned the bone knitting back together. When I went back for that next visit, the bone had knitted back – though there is still pain which the Rosen Method is helping. It also helps me with scoliosis."

**'The Fabulous Miss Pauletta,' teacher of Pacifica preschoolers, all ages, and dedicated celebrant of Halloween
An interview-biography with Pacifican Pauletta Cravotto**

By Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

©2024 Jean Bartlett

Page 14

On February 21, 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Pauletta and her children lost their longtime leader, Herb. He was 91.

"He wore down," Pauletta said of her longtime love, "And COVID did not help.

"Do I have any wisdom to offer preschoolers of all ages? 'Let's just get along.' But I would also like to close with what I would say at the end of class. 'I'm going to see you next week and we are going to have more fun. Got any ideas, bring 'em!'"



Pauletta at the Pacifica Senior Center, first Wednesday in January, 2015. (Jean Bartlett photo.)



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is also a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and a published author.

(Copyright 2024. Author Jean Bartlett, City Biographer. This biography is available online at www.bartlettbiographies.com. A printed copy is available in the Bartlett's Biographies binders at the Pacifica Coastside Museum at the Little Brown Church.)