PACIFIC PORTRAITS

The People Behind the Scenes at Pacific University

VOLUME THREE

BEE TREE
PACIFIC UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
Forest Grove, Oregon
The "Bee Tree", an iconic ivy-covered tree that stood on the Pacific University campus for many years, was already old and hollow when pioneer Tabitha Brown arrived in Oregon in 1846. Mrs. Brown started a home for orphans that would grow into Pacific University. According to the Forest Grove News-Times, the tree was "said to have housed a swarm of bees who furnished the little old lady with honey which she sold to buy provisions for her orphan children."
CLAIRE GADBOIS

narrative by Kimberly Su
photographs by Michelle Brown

Claire Gadbois works as the liaison between the Registrar and other offices on campus, is in charge of implementing electronic programs and systems that the office uses, and heads the credit certification for student athletes. Her official title is Associate Registrar at Pacific. It’s easy to see how busy she can get depending on the time of year. Claire loves her job even though it can be challenging. With a smile in her eyes and a fond voice she says, “When I was first starting out I had a lot of student contact which I really loved and I miss that being in this role. I don’t get to interact with students nearly as much as I did before. But I feel like the behind the scenes work I do is important to help students even if they don’t realize it.”

Claire has been the Associate Registrar at Pacific since 2008. Originally from northern Idaho, Claire graduated from Pacific University in 2003. After her time as a student, she worked in the Registrar’s office while an employee was on leave. That was the beginning of Claire’s work at Pacific. She started out managing the front desk of the office before switching to the Financial Aid office for a year and a half. After that she returned to be the Assistant Registrar for a few years before her current role.

It’s clear that family is important to Claire and while it’s obvious from the photos on her desk of her husband, Greg, and their young daughter, Eleanor, her love of family is even more obvious when you walk into her home. When you first step into her house, on the railing of the stairs right by the front door, are photos and colorful drawings done by her daughter. Shoes spill over the rack in the corner; bright colorful tiny shoes, sensible flats and tennis shoes sat together. Claire bends down to put away some plastic blocks to clear the floor and sits on the beige carpet with her daughter following. As Claire talks the one and a half year old Eleanor, plays with some toys, pouting at everyone in the room including her mother. “She’s normally pretty talkative, but she’s shy with strangers.”
Around the living room, there are framed photos of family on the mantel of the fireplace. Included are a few from her wedding day. Others are photos of nieces and nephews sent by in-laws living in Sioux Falls, South Dakota as well as photos of her only brother’s daughters, who live in the Portland metro area. On the wall just above the wooden dining table is a large photo print of a summery scene of Italy that was taken and gifted by family friend, Jim Flory.

“Jim took that when he and his wife were in Italy scouting for a trip.” When asked Claire mentions that her and her husband are close with the Florys and that Jim had bought a toy camera for Eleanor. On the wall between the TV and the other side of the dining table on is a large wooden clock. It used to belong to her grandmother, but when her grandmother passed away a few years ago, the clock ended up back with her parents and then fell to her. It’s clear that Claire was close to her grandmother, as her daughter is named after her.

“She was really special to me and really to all my cousins. She was just a really special lady, so we decided to [name Eleanor]. I was okay with a middle name but my husband was like no let’s do the first name. So I said okay.” Claire also points out a framed photograph of a farmhouse and recalls with some nostalgia about how it’s a gift from her grandmother of her grandparents’ farm in Idaho. Above the couch are some black and white nature prints of Mt. Hood that were taken by a friend of Claire’s husband. Right next to those are five large colorful glass ornaments hanging off hooks on the wall that Claire and her husband had blown in a guided class they took in Lincoln City.

Up the stairs to the second floor is the large box filled with a thousand origami cranes, many hung up in the stairwell. Claire, whose family are originally Okinawan Japanese, helped her fold them for her wedding as a tradition of good luck and she has kept them ever since. Another item of note is the large mounted deer head, a
treasure of her husband who is an avid hunter. He is also interested in woodworking and made the box that holds all those delicate colorful cranes. Claire points at a frame on the wall, “I don’t know if you know who Ingrid Unterseher is. She does crossstitch. She did that for us when we got married. She also did this one when Eleanor was born.” The pieces are relatively simple decorative flourishes on a white background of fabric. The first which has the couple’s names and their wedding date hangs by the stairwell while the other, decorated with Eleanor’s name, hangs in their daughter’s bedroom.

Claire met her husband off campus at the local Farmer’s market through a mutual friend even though both worked at Pacific (Greg was in charge of catering for Aramark). After sharing wine with their mutual friend and a long conversation where she converted him to huckleberries over blueberries, they started dating. They’ve been married now four years and have another baby due in March. The cozy warm home is hopefully going to be traded in for a large one to make for more space for the new addition to the family when they arrive.

Even though her family is expanding and they have plans to move to the Hillsboro area, Claire is still dedicated to her work at Pacific. She loves her work with students and enjoys the challenging puzzles that arise. Part of her job is to “make sure that all of our student athletes are meeting the academic requirements by the NCAA.” Even if it’s something like answering the many data requests from academic departments about students, or sending a monthly report to the National Student Clearinghouse so that they can tell the Federal government about Pacific’s enrollment statistics, or even things as ordinary as answering questions and emails about policies, Claire is poised. “It’s a lot of what I do and it takes up a lot of time,” she says, but it’s clear from her bright tone that even after nearly ten years, she’s not remotely close to closing this chapter of her life.