

This monthly article highlights one of our branch members. We hope that you enjoy knowing a little more about your fellow members and the interesting life they have had. If you have someone you would like to nominate or if you would like to help author an article, please email the editor, Ron Nakamoto, at [ron.nakamoto\(at\)yahoo.com](mailto:ron.nakamoto(at)yahoo.com).

Bob Simon –Former Big Sir and Honorary Life Member

“You owe me big time, Mr. Jake At least, that’s my initial take I’ve sent so many skills your way So many traits, such DNA”

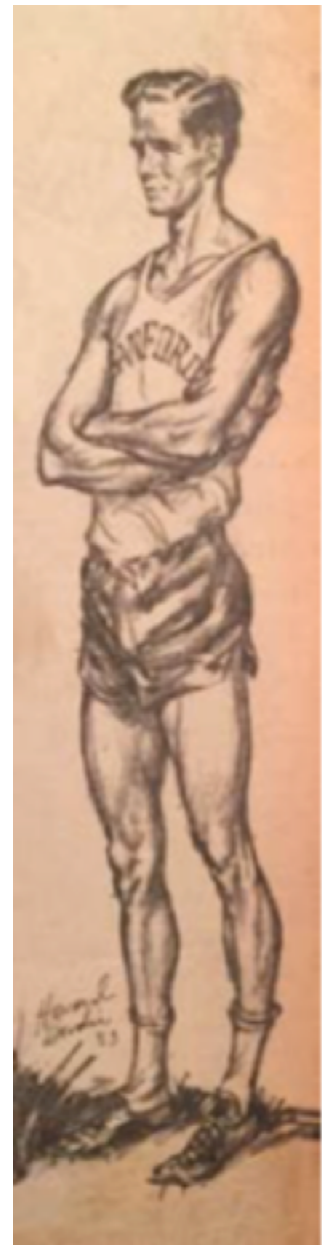


Bob recited this verse from a poem he wrote for his first grandchild, Jake, on Jake’s wedding day on Jan. 5, 2008. Bob especially likes this poem because “... it has a poignant ending, and a surprising punch line ...” that he hopes will leave you smiling and as reflective as he was on that wonderful day.

Bob is a true Centennial Californian, born in San Francisco during the Big “D” (Depression era) to a family that lived in California since the very early 1900’s. He grew up in Claremont and Pomona, California, as the family moved to where his father’s work would take them. Bob’s father

enlisted in the Army Air Corps at the beginning of World War II, and after Officers Candidate School was assigned to Luke Field, a pilot training base in Arizona, where the family joined him. *(Editors note: Luke Field became Luke Air Force Base in 1951 named in honor Frank Luke, a Medal of Honor recipient and the second U.S. Ace in World War I. Luke AFB is the largest fighter-training base in the U.S. and has graduated over 12,000 fighter pilots.)*

After the war, during his junior year at Pomona High School, Bob discovered what athletics could do for one’s social standing. He beat the top-ranked school miler in an intramural run. He liked it! He lettered in his junior and senior years and broke the school’s records in the mile and the half-mile. His athletic skills and grades got him admitted to Stanford on an athletic scholarship, where his best time in the mile was 4:12.8.



His class of 1953 also included Bob Mathias. (*Editors note: Bob Mathias represented the U.S. in the '48 London Olympics decathlon and won the gold medal at the age of 17. He duplicated that achievement in the '52 Helsinki Olympics and was the first athlete to win the event consecutively.*)

Beyond his athleticism Bob wanted to be a pilot and enrolled in Air Force ROTC in college. He was commissioned in January 1954 and, after completing pilot training, was stationed at Travis Air Force Base in the Military Air Transport Service for the next two years. He co-piloted a C-124 Globemaster, commonly known as “Old Shaky,” and his primary route was to Tokyo, Japan. During that period shopping on the Ginza was a real deal. He was assigned to Reese AFB in Lubbock, Texas, for his advanced pilot training. As a young, slim, dashing Air Force pilot he was in his prime when he met Annie, a Texas Tech student, on a blind date set up by Annie’s Pi Phi sorority sister. They were married in 1955 (yes, they will be married 60 years on July 10)—and have three children. Bob subsequently was discharged from the Air Force and returned to Stanford to pursue his MBA.

Early in his career, Bob worked for Stanford Research Institute (SRI) in the Economics Division. There in 1967 he was invited to join an SRI project in Dacca, East Pakistan (Bangladesh) working on a Ford Foundation project to facilitate the forming of small and medium sized businesses. His title was “Marketing Advisor to the Government of East Pakistan,” so you can imagine how tough a time he had fitting that on a business card.

After his SRI years, in 1970 Bob became Assistant Dean for Corporate Relations at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Arjay Miller, former President of Ford Motor Company was dean of the GSB. (*Editors note: Stanford has subsequently established the “Arjay Miller Scholar” academic honor for the top 10% of the graduating MBA class.*)

In 1985, Stanford began gearing up for a billion dollar Centennial Campaign that would culminate in 1991. Bob and Annie moved to New York where he directed Stanford’s Eastern Office during the campaign. He would coordinate and routinely accompany Don Kennedy, Stanford’s President, as they called on high profile, prospective donors in the East. Bob recalls numerous VIP sightings (Anthony Quinn, Howard Cosell) and watching Tom Brokaw’s Nightly News broadcast from the control room of NBC Studios. He reminisces of his Manhattan apartment’s view overlooking the East River and Triborough Bridge. As life would have it, beyond all the work and time he put into the campaign his special recognition and deepest satisfaction came from a hobby he started in 1968. He authored and Ted Koppel recited lines from his “Stanford Centennial Poem” at the University’s 100th birthday celebration.

Bob became a member of SIR Branch 35 in 1999, sponsored by Skip Ross, our longtime Webmaster. Since that time he has been active in the organization, always striving to contribute where his special talents are needed. You know him from his humorous parodies introducing our guest speakers. You also know him as volunteering to serve as our Little SIR in 2005 and Big SIR in 2006. Did you know he is one of our ten Honorary Life Members and is our Branch Historian? In addition to SIR, Bob volunteers at the Los Altos Library and is currently president of the library’s endowment board. He published “Fleeting Rhyme, Poems for the Rest of Us” in 2000. His other

hobbies include graphic arts, photography, and he even has a website, LogoToGo.com for logo creations.

Bob's life philosophy is to: "Follow your dreams in ways that leave you in charge. When I 'made a movie,' when I 'wrote a book,' when I 'gave a program,' I always had what they call in show biz Creative Control. I was not 'reading someone else's script.' That's the way to be able to look back with the certainty that you were responsible, no matter the outcome. I'll take that chance, when I'm in charge. And, often enough. I think I've won."

It is only fitting that we end this profile with the final verse of the poem that Bob wrote for his grandson Jake's wedding:

"About the debt I said you owe
On second thought, that isn't so
We're just as even as
can be— You made a grandfather of me"

From athlete, to pilot, to philanthropic fundraiser, to poet, Bob has led a full life with still more to go. Track must be good for longevity as Bob continues to sprint through life.