

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).

## **KEN JONES— Former Membership Director**



Did you know that we have a stock car racer in our midst? In his time he has clocked over 100+ races winning over 50 times. You won't see him in his racing leathers with his helmet tucked under his arm. Those days are past but his love for cars and motorcycles still lives high on his list of life priorities.

Ken was born in Independence, Missouri, and vaguely recalls walking past Harry Truman's house on his way to school. He moved to Ft. Worth, Texas, when his father, a machinist, took a job as a tool & die planner at General Dynamics. He spent his early years (age 12 on) building soapbox derby cars and racing them. He soon migrated to the Cushman motor scooter and Harley Davidson motorcycle.



**Cushman 765 Eagle Scooter**  
**1950**



**Porsche 911E Targa**  
**1970**

In his junior year of high school at the age of 16 his parents decided to move to Denver, CO, for another job. Ken, already an independent doer made the decision to stay and finish high school with his friends and hobbies. He bunked with a high school friend working on his off time to support himself. As a young adult he made his first major decision to purchase a 1949 Ford two door Coupe promptly turning it into a racing hot rod. He certainly became a self made man graduating from Castleberry high school and then enrolling at the University of Texas in Arlington majoring in chemistry. As adept as he was, he quickly realized that Organic Chemistry was not his “cup of tea” and transferred to the University of North Texas majoring in business with emphasis in accounting and finance. One of his fondest memories during this period was serendipity finding a vacant former girls sorority house. The rent was quite low so Ken contracted with the owner and overnight became a landlord renting beds and rooms to fellow classmates with a reasonable return. He even hired a football lineman as his rent collector so cash flow was always positive! To keep the tenants happy and new ones coming in the door, Ken would hold a Friday night keg party ...every other Friday ... all you could drink for three dollars. Is that business savvy or what?

As the “live for racing” became his life, he bought a 1955 Chevy, modified it with a '63 Corvette engine and proceeded to compete and win races. (*Editors note: The Corvette engine had high compression pistons (11:1); 2.2 inch intake valves; Eldebrock intake manifold with two 4 barrel carburetors; Mallory dual point distributor; a Crane roller camshaft and Custom dual exhaust headers opened under the wheel well. The transmission was a Corvette 4 speed; rear differential with a 4:88 gear ratio; and rear 11 inch racing slicks.*) He raced the quarter mile in speeds over 100 mph with tachometer readings over 7,000 rpm. One of the highlights of his racing years was his First Place trophy at the National Hot Rod Association sanctioned High Altitude National “C stock” quarter mile race in Colorado in 1964. As a pragmatic person, Ken eventually decided to sell his vehicle so he could pay for the balance of his college education. Upon graduation Ken bought himself a new 1968 Oldsmobile 442 (current value is over \$100K). Ken worked for LTV in Garland, Texas, and soon decided to buy a Corvette convertible, which he used as his driving around car and of course to attract chicks. (*Editors note: LTV operated an aircraft manufacturing plant during this period producing*

*the Convair II, the Navy workhorse aircraft during the Vietnam War era.)* Understanding the value of a job, Ken was at work every day helping check out the aircraft that was in such demand that production required one plane every day.

After a few years in the business and having developed a reputation as a tough but fair procurement components buyer, Ken got a call from the Purchasing Manager at Philco Ford in Palo Alto. He had dealt with Ken and wanted him on his team. Garry Wride (SIR Branch 35 member), the Procurement Director, took an interest in Ken and helped mentor him through his career at Ford Aerospace (aka Philco Ford). Given Garry's encouragement and company support, Ken completed his MBA from Pepperdine University in 1980.

Ken continued to excel and work his way up at Ford Aerospace (which eventually became part of Lockheed Martin) for over 35 years. He retired in 2010 as Director of Procurement. During his tenure he was noted for his tough negotiations with subcontractors, his sense of fair play with his employees and his subcontractors even challenging senior management on occasion to do right by them. On the day of his retirement he discovered a beat up 1965 Porsche 356C in his driveway. It was dented and rusted, the interior was rotted, and there was no engine in it. His wife presented him with a retirement card that read "...this car is to keep you out of the house and not to worry about the interior and wiring as she would do it." He had his doubts! However after his first year of retirement the car was completed and the bright red exterior looked really nice. *(Editors note: Porsche designers of the 356 made the decision to utilize the engine case they had originally designed for the Volkswagen Beetle. It was an air-cooled pushrod OHV flat-four engine. They designed new cylinder heads, camshaft, crankshaft, intake and exhaust manifolds and used dual carburetors to more than double the VW's horsepower. While the first prototype 356 had a mid-engine layout, all later 356 have had a rear-mounted layout. )*

His next car came from his neighbor's garage where it had sat for over 15 years. It was a 1970 Porsche 911E. This car was stripped down and completely repainted. *(Editors note: The original 911 series is often cited as the most successful competition car ever. Dubbed "The Secret Weapon from Zuffenhausen," the 1970 Porsche 911S was the quickest model in their product offering at the time.)*

Now fully transitioned into a comfortable retirement routine, Ken and his wife can normally be found at their vacation home in Arnold. In addition, if you arrive a little early at our luncheon meetings at the Elks Lodge, you may find him in a racquetball court beating up on Maureen, the local athletic director. She is a good-natured Hawaiian native so she probably lets him win. Ken has served as Membership Director and is currently a Director on the Branch 35 Board. He enjoys camping and of course, found a damaged Mercedes AirStream camper which he purchased at auction. He contracted to repair the fiberglass top and did the remainder of the repairs with his wife. Since parts procurement is his specialty he found everything he needed on the Internet and delivered by Amazon.

Ken has been married to his wife Nancy for over 31 years. They first met at the Bridge to Bridge 8 mile run in San Francisco. Together they have two children, Heather and Zackary. Zack is currently completing his PhD at Colorado School of Mines in

Environmental Engineering and already attends symposiums in water treatment around the world. Heather has been teaching for the last five years teaching English in Thailand, Mexico and Guatemala.

Ken reminisces that, "It is kind of interesting how my vehicle cycle has changed over the years; scooters/motorcycles, hot rods, off road 4 wheel drives, classic cars. Seems as if the cars have aged with me." *(Editors comment: I guess one could say that the older you get, the more wheels you want under you ...riding or walking.)*

From Cushman to Porsche Ken knows his cars, what they are worth and is a master at the art of how to close on a good deal. You do not want to sit on the other side of the table negotiating with him unless you want to know what the new definition of "fair and reasonable" is going to be.

His message to his fellow Branch members is to "Gear Up". By that he means, like all of our generation, he has worked very hard at full speed to get to where he and his family are today. He plans to continue to "Gear Up" to enjoy the many treats that life and health bring.

We close this profile with a quote from Harry S. Truman: "Fame is vapor, popularity is an accident, riches take flight, those who cheer today curse tomorrow and only one thing endures – character." Ken has character.