

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@yahoo.com.

BUCK KENDRICK Former Big Sir, Area Governor, Regional Director, State President



How often do you meet someone that comes from an ancient lineage with their own family Coat-of-Arms? The Clan Kendrick dwelled in an area now known as Staffordshire located south of Manchester, England. In 1635, probably during “The Great Migration”, his ancestor John Kendrick immigrated to the Boston area. *(Editor’s note: Many Scots emigrated to America during the eleven year period when Charles I ruled without parliament known as the “Eleven Year Tyranny”.)* The clan subsequently moved ever south through Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama as pioneers, homesteading on open land. Following the end of the Civil War the clan settled in Florida. Buck was the third generation, born in Florida. He was the only son of three. His father worked as a dairy

foreman, auxiliary police officer and in other capacities to support the family. His mother took care of the family and later worked to add to the family income. Buck grew up in a small truck farming community and did things like picking strawberries for spending money. He went to Plant City High School playing football, baseball, basketball and track. He lettered in each sport while he excelled in school. He states that he received recognition for his scholastics (American Legion Award for Scholarship) but his best memory was “... chasing girls at school.”



Buck was the first to graduate in his family with an Engineering degree from the University of Florida and entertained many job offers from across the country. Young and yearning to carve his own path in life he accepted a Research and Development position with Lockheed in Van Nuys, CA *(Editor’s note: This Lockheed research facility was later relocated to Palo Alto and was known as the Advanced Technology Laboratories.)* Here he spent time on the studies and proposals that lead to the development of the Polaris missile *(Editor’s note: The Polaris missile was the first of a family of submarine-launched intercontinental missiles for nuclear deterrence.)* He left Lockheed to marry his college sweetheart and to report to duty with the US Air Force to serve out his military commitment. When he reported he found out his induction was

delayed for several weeks so he quickly found a position with Northrup at Cape Canaveral working on the pre-delivery launch team for the SM-62 SNARK intercontinental missile (*Editor's note: SNARK was a defense department project to build an intercontinental, ground-launched cruise missile.*) He remembers observing a SNARK launch and recovery. He lived near the launch facility so he and his wife would sometimes gather on the beach to watch the various missile launches (and failures). It was exciting times but he recalls that this experience was a reason for him to decline the opportunity to become an astronaut.

Buck reported to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX and was subsequently relocated to Malden, MO for flight training. He spent seven months with additional training at different bases to finally become an F-102 all weather interceptor pilot, home based in Vermont and later Texas. He enjoyed his four years flying immensely but "with two kids on the ramp and one still in the hanger..." he left the Air Force and joined the Aerospace industry. His first job was with Dynatronics Telemetry Tracking, Inc. Here he worked as a System/Project Engineer producing satellite ground terminals to track missile telemetry. Early in his career he was given the responsibility for delivering and installing six tracking antennas for the Western Test Range (*Editor's note: You can see the WTR satellite antennas located at Pillar Point, Half Moon Bay; at Barking Sands, Hawaii, and at Point Mugu, Oxnard, CA.*) The company was in the process of being bought by General Dynamics and engineers and key personnel were leaving for greener pastures. Buck was introduced to "crisis management" scrambling to work to complete the deliveries. He moved on to Philco-Ford Western Development Labs (WDL) in 1967 to work as a program manager for Satellite Communications. He was responsible for providing and installing Earth Terminals (96 ft. diameter dishes) for both West (Karachi) and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and Indonesia. He recalls having to board a small aircraft with an armed, steely-eyed Bengali soldier that used the barrel of his machine gun to lower Buck's newspaper so that he could see Buck's eyes through the course of the flight. The terminals all became operational and improved communications throughout the country. Soon after, Buck led the multi-year program to upgrade Embassy communications with small Satellite terminals. All together Buck worked for some 41 years before "hanging it up".

As a former USAF fighter pilot, Buck naturally migrated to "birds of a feather" friendship with Marty Knutson, one of the original U-2 pilots for the CIA. Buck recalls how Marty related waiting in Norway for Francis Gary Powers to arrive with the U-2 aircraft that he was to fly back across Russia to Pakistan. (*Editor's note: Of course Powers never arrived because he was shot down flying 70,000 ft. over Moscow by a SA-2 surface-to-air missile on May 1, 1960.*) He also recalls flying over Russia's Red Square while they paraded their armaments. The Russian bombers would fly in a "race track" pattern to disguise how many they really had. Marty took pictures of the bombers on the ground at their bases later so they could be counted accurately. Buck also met General Jimmy Doolittle who was famous for the "Doolittle Raid" flight of 16 B-25 bombers, launched off of the USS Hornet bombing various cities in the Japanese homeland. Doolittle recited a true story of how in 1932, he set the world's high-speed record for land planes at 296 miles per hour in the Shell Speed Dash. Later, he took the Thompson Trophy race at Cleveland in the notorious Gee Bee R-1 racer (notorious for its very dangerous design)

with a speed averaging 252 miles per hour. After having won the three big air racing trophies of the time, the Schneider, the Bendix, and Thompson, he officially retired from air racing stating, "I have yet to hear of anyone engaged in this work dying of old age."

Buck was married to his long time sweetheart, Eleanor, for some 57 years. They had two sons, two daughters and thirteen grandkids together, which Buck calls his "earthly treasures". Both enjoyed life with many trips, vacations, and backcountry camping usually travelling with his personal aircraft (Cessna C170 and Beechcraft Bonanza). His love of flying brought them to many parts of the country to attend mathematics conferences as well as vacations in Baja, Mexico, Western Canada and Alaska. In more recent years, they began using a motor home for vacations as far as Texas to attend church synods (councils). Eleanor unfortunately suffered from serious heart issues and passed away in March 2014. Throughout her journey, when not in the hospital, Buck chose to take care of her at home even as he was suffering from treatment for prostate cancer and heart problems of his own. In 2015 he had heart surgery to correct a heart valve problem, which has put him on a road back to full health. As life continued to unfold, he met Shirley at church and they are now companions planning motor home trips to all the National Parks.

Buck joined SIR after retirement so that he could play golf with his buddies. He eventually learned the game and managed to make two "Hole in One" during SIR tournaments over two consecutive years. He even won the coveted "Orion" Trophy in 2011 with a net score of 61. It was shortly after joining SIR that one of his golf buddies asked him to help with Branch Membership duties. A few months later, his friend moved up to Little SIR and Buck became Membership Chairman. He actively worked in this role for several years and was then asked to become Little SIR. In the course of events, he did that, and then became Big SIR (2003), Area Governor (2004- 2007), Regional Director (2007-2008), State Vice President (2009) and finally State President (2010).

Buck says, "My message to my fellow Sirs is to accept the challenge to assume a position of responsibility when it comes to you. You will never have to do more than you are capable of doing. You can do the job just as well as the next guy, and ... you get a chance to do it your way."

In ancient Scotland the ancestors of this member's family were part of a tribal confederation called the Picts. The word "Pict" means "painted people", probably referring to the Pictish custom of either tattooing their bodies or embellishing themselves with "war paint". (*Editor's note: In the 2004 movie "Arthur" with Clive Owen and Kira Knightly, Arthur's allies against the Celtics were the "Woads", aka Picts, who painted themselves in blue.*) Buck's heritage is fierce and independent yet you find him friendly and approachable. His "just do it" attitude of helping his church, his community, SIR and himself is refreshing and a life's testament for all of us.