

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).

DOUG ERICSSON — Former Assistant Treasurer



(Editor's prolog: The main purpose of the "Members Profile" is to get to know our fellow members a little better. A secondary purpose is to educate and entertain when the opportunity arises. I requested this profile because of Doug's most recent and difficult loss of his wife. While his loss is personal and painful, it is an experience that some of our members have had and sharing might help him as well as our members. I would like to express my condolences for his loss and to thank him for his courage in taking the time to do this profile.)

If there is such a thing as a true "Love Story" then Doug and Cathy were it. For 45 years they were married and enjoyed each other's partnership in life before she passed away a few months ago. He feels blessed to have found her and proud to have called her his wife. It is sad that as we age we are inevitably bound to experience losses in our life. But Doug does not want this to be a story of loss and sadness but one of thanks and celebration for the life he has enjoyed and while he struggles with his loss he is determined to move forward.

Doug was born in Los Angeles, California. He spent his early years in Oildale, CA (North Bakersfield) where his father worked as a doctor and his mother tended home. *(Editor's note: Oildale probably got its name from being adjacent to three large oil fields, the enormous Kern River, Midway and the Kern Front oil fields. An interesting historical fact is the original U-2 spy planes were built at a secret location in the area that was disguised as a tire factory.)* He was the oldest of three with a brother and a sister. He attended North High School and was the lead pitcher on his high school baseball team. As a leftie, he was hard to hit and remembers pitching a two hit, 15- strikeout shutout with his signature "chest to waist" curve ball. As with most of the kids growing up in the area he would work at one of the oil fields as a 'roustabout', a general hire to do any needed work in the field. It was good pay and allowed him to earn the money he needed to attend college. He went to Occidental College, graduated in Biology and was ready for medical school when he experienced a calling and decided to devote his life to God in ministry. He redirected his focus attending Fuller Seminary and graduated with a Masters in Theology and started his journey working with the Inter- Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) organization as a campus minister. After four years at UCSB, Doug

moved to Palo Alto where he led a team of eleven to support Central California from San Francisco to San Luis Obispo.

Doug met Cathy while he was in college. As devout Christians his parents would regularly host a college Christian fellowship group. One spring his mother tried to introduce Cathy to Doug during one of those gatherings when Doug was on a school break but Doug was young and did not want any “assist” and took off back to school. As faith would have it, at another gathering he saw “... this gorgeous blond across the kitchen ...” and asked his mother to introduce him, which she now refused to do. He went ahead and introduced himself and after a courtship which spanned his completion of college at Occidental and her attendance at UCLA they were married in 1969. Life was hectic for the young couple with young children and demanding life of ministry. After seven years Doug resigned from IVCF to pursue another career. Recognizing that he had to earn more in order to support a growing family he started exploring where he could apply and be competitive. He knew that while he had a graduate and a Bachelor of Science degree it was not directly applicable to most jobs. He decided to focus on his soft skills of diplomacy, patience and gift-of-gab and was soon hired by Watkins Johnson as a contracts administrator. He quickly learned the legal lingo and the rest as they say is history. He worked for several other companies along the way and settled with Lockheed Martin as the Senior Contracts Manager before retiring. He dealt with many contract situations such as contract terminations for convenience and default, customer belligerence, management meddling, continuing changes and in each instance his “diplomacy, patience and gift-of- gab” won him a reputation as an honest broker and someone you could deal with.

Doug and Cathy had four children together; Stacey, a teacher at RFK High School in Delano CA, Anna a Physical Therapist at Stanford, Mark an ESL teacher at Willow Glen High School, and Stephanie who works at Kings Academy. Together with four grandkids, the close family along with his church and friends provides Doug with a strong support network for life.

His most prized heirlooms from his grandfather are:

- i. An autographed baseball signed by Ty Cobb and the 1921 Detroit Tigers.
- ii. Letters and pictures from Harry Houdini who was a friend.
- iii. A World War I shipping chest marked for “R.B. Ericsson, 1st Lieut. (168 3rd IA) Red Oak, Iowa, 42nd DIV, A.E.F. France”

(Editor’s note: His grandfather knew Dapper Dan Howley who was the bench coach of the Detroit Tigers from 1921-1922 when Ty Cobb managed the team. Harry Houdini everyone knows. He was a customer at the Ericsson Drug Store in Arcadia, CA. The 42nd (Rainbow) Division saw more days of combat than any other American division during the Great War and suffered 14,683 casualties. A particularly tough battle ensued when the “Rainbow” went into the Argonne battle on October 11. They attacked on October 14 and inched back and forth in an attempt to penetrate the Hindenburg Line at the Kriemhilde Stellung, one of four German defensive lines. On October 16, at a hill called Côte de Châtillon, they successfully assaulted the most formidable part of an in-

depth network of wire and carefully prepared German defenses. That hard fought victory was influential in establishing a place for the United States at the peace table. The (Alabama) 167th and the (Iowa) 168th shared equal honors for their parts in the battle.)

Cathy contracted breast cancer in her mid-life, her family had a predisposition to this disease. She underwent treatment and after five years her cancer was in remission. Unfortunately, three years later when she was examined with a CT scan for a back problem the doctors identified an unknown growth on her kidney. During surgery they discovered extensive metastasized breast cancer on her omentum. The final three years were an ordeal dealing with Stage Four cancer. Cathy was able to continue working as a resource teacher at Sunnyvale Middle School until she entered El Camino hospital at the end of March 2015. She declined rapidly over the three weeks she was in the hospital. Cathy passed away on April 18, 2015 surrounded by her family, friends and fellow church members.

As we conclude this profile we quote from some of my interview with Doug: "The shock, loneliness, disorientation, sadness and overall grief over the immediate days after are still with me. Cathy was a beautiful woman, schoolteacher, mother, wife and best friend. I am a widower. The grieving process is ongoing for me these days. SIR's, my 12-Step group, church, family and friends all help me stay sane and connected as I adjust to my new changed identity as a single person." It seems appropriate that we end this profile with some thoughts from Cathy's memorial service:

"CANCER IS SO LIMITED. It cannot cripple love, shatter hope, corrode faith, destroy peace. It cannot kill friendship, suppress memories, silence courage, invade the soul. It cannot steal God's gift of eternal life. It cannot quench the Holy Spirit. It cannot lessen the power of the Resurrection."

--blog by Judy Squire

Many people are uncomfortable with death. As a result, they don't know what to do or say. They don't realize that it is okay to mention a spouse's name, or look you in the eye, or to give you a hug. A sincere opener, "How are you?" will go a long way. As life goes on....