

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.

DEL FILLMORE - Newsletter Editor and Honorary Life Member



Most of our members, when asked, would say that Trail Tips is a top-notch branch newsletter. Well, if you compare it to some of the other branches as I did, you will find that our members are right! Compelling content, superior layout, and prudent use of color and photos where necessary creates an easy to read, high interest monthly document. Since 2009 when Trail Tips was a 3,000 word, four page, black and white document, the newsletter has evolved into a 4,800+ word, six page, color document with photos, calendar, cartoons, activity events/results and a featured “Members Profile” article. Del Fillmore has followed in the footsteps of Jack Dyer, Jim Schlatter and Bob McKenzie as Trail Tips editors that changed/improved the Branch 35 newsletter to its current state. Here is a “profile” about Del.

In Del’s words, “It’s interesting to look back and see those events that made big changes in your life. I was born in Ripley (‘believe it or not’), OK, in the midst of the Great Depression. My father was a young schoolteacher just starting his career toward becoming a school administrator. As he progressed up the ladder, we lived in eight houses in five different towns in Oklahoma and Kansas by the time I graduated from high school in 1950. So I never developed many roots in the Midwest. During my freshman year at Wichita University, I saw an advertisement for summer work at Rogers Canning Company, a pea cannery in Milton-Freewater, OR, that used college kids as its labor force during the canning season. A friend and I bought an old 1940 Plymouth, drove west in two days and earned enough (at \$1.00 per hour, 12 hours a day, 7 days a week) to pay for the next year’s tuition. Traveling along the Oregon and California coasts convinced me that the west coast was where I wanted to live after college.

“I graduated from the University of Kansas in 1954 with a B.S. in Accounting and an Air Force ROTC commission as a 2nd Lieutenant. The commitment to serve three years with the USAF took priority. After a short indoctrination at Lackland AFB in Texas where it was determined that my eyesight was not good enough to be a pilot, I decided to become a flight navigator and was sent to Ellington AFB near Houston for training. I was near the top of the class as we approached the end of training and was looking forward

to an assignment with the Military Air Transport Command flying back and forth to Europe. But on my last flight exam using the drift meter, pressure-pattern, and dead reckoning techniques, I failed the exam and was put back into the next class to graduate two weeks later. As it turned out, I couldn't have had better luck! Upon receiving my wings at graduation I was able to select an assignment with the 6520th Test Support Wing of the Air Research and Development Command (ARDC) to be stationed at L G Hanscom Field, Bedford, MA, outside Boston. In the 1950s, Hanscom Field had emerged as a center of expertise in R&D of electronic command, control, communications and intelligence systems for the Air Force. MIT's Lincoln Laboratory was located there. Lincoln Labs was the center for development of the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) Air Defense System.

"The primary mission of the 6523rd Test Squadron, of which I became a navigator, was to test the SAGE system by flying sorties out over the Atlantic and to approach as the enemy. We flew in an assortment of airplanes including aging B-25, B-29 and B-50 bombers and in an EC-121 "Connie" with radomes above and below that was outfitted with consoles for radar technicians that could connect with the SAGE direction center. Since civilians did most of the development, our working hours were from 7:30 to 4:00, which was pretty nice, and I welcomed the flight pay of \$100 per month. I did get to fly on a couple unusual missions such as night flights in a B-50 with an antenna sticking out of its tail. These were missions to test the bounce of radio waves off the ionosphere and my assignment was to plot our course so we kept that antenna pointed directly at a TV tower in Portland, ME, as we flew for a couple hours out over the Atlantic. Another was a flight to Thule, Greenland, in a C-119 "Flying Boxcar" loaded with equipment to study the behavior of atmospheric electric parameters in connection with ice fog.

"But the main reason that my assignment to Hanscom was so fortunate is that I met my wife, Susan, within a couple of months of my arrival. A friend had given me a list of names of girls at Wheelock College in Boston and on a Sunday afternoon when I visited the college, she appeared like a dream out of one of the dorms. It was love at first sight. (Editor's note: One of the couple's first dates was going to hear the world-renowned jazz pianist, Dave Brubeck. What a suave move!) I proposed after six months of dating by asking her, 'Will you marry me and move to the west coast?' Fortunately she said, 'Yes', even though she had never been west of New York State. As soon as my tour with the USAF was done, we shipped our household goods to San Francisco although I did not have a job. But those were the days when accounting jobs were quite plentiful and I was offered a position as a Cost Accountant at Hewlett Packard within two weeks.

"HP felt like a small test and measurement company in 1958. As a cost accountant, I was one of a staff that developed standard costs for all HP's products. That meant we had a lot of interaction with the design engineers before production and with the production line personnel during production. These early years in Palo Alto were very exciting. HP was an exciting place to work, Susan found a job quickly as a teacher in

the Palo Alto schools, and within three years we had two children, a boy and a girl. During my 35 years with HP, I held a variety of accounting positions. The last position was in the Tax and Customs Department at HP Headquarters where I managed the transfer prices at which products were sold between HP's worldwide sales and manufacturing organizations.

"After retiring from HP in 1995, I tried helping young children by joining the Avenidas organization in Palo Alto to tutor first graders in reading. But after a couple of years, I didn't feel that I was successful in a one-on-one relationship with the students. A SIR friend told me about the Nature Education program at Filoli in Woodside where I could lead groups of children on nature interpretation hikes. I completed the required training and have found my time as a Nature Education Docent very satisfying. My wife and I travel a lot and will celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary in August on a river cruise from Paris to Prague. I also enjoy singing, have been the treasurer for my church for more than 25 years, and have held various positions in SIR Branch 35." (Editor's note: Del served as the Treasurer (3yrs), Auditor (3yrs) and now as Trail Tips editor. Del was inducted as an Honorary Life Member last year for his continuing service to Branch 35.)

Del's final thoughts are; "I find that to get the most out of an organization, you have to give of yourself in whatever capacity you are able."

How does a cost accountant become an editor of a top-notch monthly newsletter? After much grilling as a curious reporter that wanted to get to the truth, I've concluded that it boiled down to a willingness to embrace the opportunity and a discipline to execute. Del was willing to step into the editor's role when the previous editor vacated the position and employs a great deal of discipline working to a recurring timeline to assemble the inputs, piece together the various topics, edit and publish the newsletter before the end of each month. Make sure you give Del a pat on the back for a "job well done" the next time you see him.