

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).

## JOHN FAUCETT



Here is John's Profile in his own words.

"For me it all began near the end of the "Great Depression". I was born in a one-room shack in Lamar, Arkansas, a small town of less than 500 residents. At one time the town was a thriving community with two banks, several churches, a three-story hotel, a saloon and a two block long bustling Main Street, but in 1939 most of the businesses were closed and the buildings were starting to crumble from lack of maintenance. My grandfather Obadiah, "OB", was the Justice of the Peace, an elder in the Methodist church and owned two of the remaining businesses, a gas station and drug store. He was the Postmaster during the depression and managed to provide well for his wife and six children. Roy, my dad was the youngest and suffered from polio as a child. Consequently, his right leg was three inches shorter than his left which caused him to walk with a pronounced limp, but it didn't stop him from doing anything he set his mind too. Just before WWII my dad and his two brothers built a two-room house for my family across the street from the church that we attended. As the population continued to decline, there wasn't enough work in town so my dad travelled to work in Kansas for the wheat harvest and my mother worked during the local peach harvest. When I was three or four, I remember standing in our front yard looking up at what I later learned were P-38 fighter planes crisscrossing the sky, watching and wondering what it was like to be up there. I think this is what drew me into the field of aviation.

"Jobs were plentiful during the war and my father soon found one at Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond, California. On our way to meet my dad, we boarded a train in Lamar filled with service men headed west. When we finally found an empty seat, it turned out that a service man had been sitting in it but had gone to the dining car. When he returned and requested his seat, my mother gave him a choice to either let us keep the seat or hold my baby sister until we got to Oakland, CA. He graciously gave us his seat so we wouldn't have to stand. My mother, Aunt Jean and dad all worked at the shipyard. Mother worked days in

accounting, my aunt worked swing as a welder and my dad worked nights as a pipe fitter. I remember walking to school alone, attending Kindergarten during the day and taking care of my sister at night.

“After the war ended, we moved back to Arkansas where I started first grade. I remember, in the winter, carrying coal in for the heating stove from the shed out back, digging a hole for the outhouse to set over and using the Sears & Roebuck catalog for toilet paper. In the summer, several of us street kids would steal ice chips off the flat bed truck when ice was delivered for our wooden icebox. Also, I would dig up a plot of ground for a vegetable garden and for fun slid down a mountain of cotton hulls on roofing tin at the cotton gin across the street, catch June bugs, tie a thread on the bug’s back leg and hold one end while the bug flew around my head. For spending money, I would collect wheat and corn grain from boxcars after they had been emptied at the Scott County Milling Company a block from our house and selling the grain for fifteen cents a gallon to people in the neighborhood who owned chickens. On Saturdays, I went to the Malone & Rex theatres to watch cowboy shows, cartoons, cereals and newsreels. On Sunday we went to church. At the appropriate ages, I joined the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts and enjoyed scouting activities.

“After graduating from high school in 1957, I went on a two-week Navy Cruise from Long Beach to Seattle on a Destroyer Escort. I was bunked in the forward mess haul, top bunk. One night the ship took a steep roll. I fell out of my bunk and woke up on the mess deck the next morning. When we returned to Los Angeles for the flight back home I looked up a friend from high school who was living in Glendora, CA with his uncle’s family and decided to stay for a while. We bought a “51 Chrysler Convertible that leaked when it rained but fortunately it didn’t rain often. We moved into a motel room for \$21/week. At the end of ’57 the economy took a dive and I was not making enough to live on so I flew back to Missouri where I received a notice from the Navy directing me to report to St Louis for induction into active duty. From there I was sent to the Philadelphia receiving station and was interviewed to determine what would be the best assignment for me. I chose to add another year to my two-year enlistment obligation to go to aviation mechanics school. After basic training, I went to Millington, TN, north of Memphis, for a twelve-week helicopter mechanics school. I was first in my class of eighteen and consequently was given my choice of duty stations.

“I served on active duty during the cold war as a Navy enlisted man from 1958 to 1961. I was an aircraft mechanic assigned to Patrol Squadron Six located at Barbers Point Naval Air Station near Pearl Harbor. I was assigned to the Power Plants Shop responsible for aircraft engine maintenance. In addition to my shop duties, I was assigned to Flight Crew Nine on a P2V-5F Neptune as

“Plane Captain” (Flight Engineer) responsible for directing the aircraft maintenance related activities of an eleven man crew. We flew four to sixteen hour missions over water doing Anti-Submarine Warfare and observed shipping lane traffic. Occasionally, we would fly to Midway Island to observe Russian missile recovery ships. Once during bad weather we broke out of the clouds and found ourselves over land just north of Vladivostok. Subsequently, our radar man, who sat behind me, informed the Patrol Plane Commander (PPC) of blips on the radar screen. The PPC informed the crew over the intercom that he was going to make a dash for Japan. We flew fifty feet above the white caps, low enough to frequently observe water on the windshield. This was a maneuver he hoped would help us avoid radar detection. We flew this way until we were intercepted by F-104's and escorted back to Japan. That was an exciting time I'll never forget.

“Although my time in the Navy was exciting for a single man, I decided that if I ever got married, a military life was not conducive for a happy family life, so when the time came I elected to be honorably discharged and was separated from the Navy at Treasure Island. I returned to Sikeston, MO, a farm community of about 15,000, and attended South East Missouri State University. During this time I fell in love with a beautiful lady and we were married on August 31, 1962. My wife and I decided that my best work opportunities were in California so on Thursday, October 4, 1962 we packed our '57 ford with our wedding gifts, withdrew our \$87.00 savings from the Planter's Bank and headed west. We drove straight through, stopping only for gas and food and arrived at my uncle's home in Mountain View on Saturday morning with \$17.00. I can remember the surprised look on his face when he opened his front door and saw us standing there. I was 23 and my wife was 19 and pregnant. *(Editor's note: One month earlier, at his wedding, his uncle had invited the couple to visit if they were ever in the area.)* On Monday I started looking for a job during the worst fog I had ever seen and was hired by United Airlines. My wife and I raised four kids (two boys and two girls). I earned my Aircraft & Power Plants License from Palo Alto High School and graduated from San Jose State University with a degree in Business. At United, I developed my own personal development course and moved to a different position about every two years. Ultimately, I moved from A&P Mechanic to Engine Inspection Manager overseeing eleven work centers with a workforce of approximately three hundred inspectors. In 1984 I received the UA Mechanic of the Year award and flew and stayed in Chicago in style. I had not planned to retire when I did but after 9/11, United was forced to downsize the workforce by 25% so I decided to retire to make room for some younger employees. I had worked for 39 years and one day.

“Since I wasn’t quite ready to retire I first taught V2500 engine maintenance at the Pratt & Whitney engine maintenance facility in Columbus, GA. Then I joined Bombardier, a Canadian cooperation and participated in the development of a regional aircraft repair facility in Tucson, Arizona. I was the Chief Inspector and the primary contact with the Federal Aviation Administration. However, my wife didn’t respond well to the summer heat, so after seventeen months, I resigned my position and we moved back to our home in Cupertino, CA where I finally decided to really retire.

“I tend to be a restless person who needs to remain active. After retiring from my work life and from raising my four children, I have been involved with the Gideon organization responsible for Bible distribution in our area. For a while, I took flying lessons until I learned I couldn’t pass the physical because of the medications I take. Then after being away from bowling for over 40 years, I decided to try it again and joined the SIR Bowling league where I met a league member who was into sailing. Although I had sailed years before, my new SIR friend introduced me to the Nautique Sailing Club in Sausalito and Alameda where I learned how to sail the right way with confidence.



“I have lived for 78 years and somewhere along the way I have learned to live one day at a time and enjoy what I’m doing, when I’m doing it, without stressing about it. Also, I don’t beat myself up about the mistakes I’ve made. There are plenty of people who can do that.”