

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](mailto:ron.nakamoto@yahoo.com).

## DARRYL WALKER



Here, in his own words, is an introduction to your Branch 35 Secretary, Darryl Walker.

“I was born in Portland Oregon four days after Pearl Harbor. My mother was in a movie theater when she went into labor watching a movie produced by Darryl F. Zanuck and I was branded for life.” *(Editor’s note: Darryl’s mother was watching “How Green Was My Valley”, directed by John Ford and produced by Darryl F. Zanuck. The movie was based on the 1939 Richard Llewellyn novel that tells of the Morgans, a hard-working Welsh mining family living in the heart of the South Wales valleys. The story chronicles life in the South Wales coalfields, the loss of that way of life and*

*its effects on the family. The movie featured Walter Pidgeon, Maureen O’Hara, and Roddy McDowell. It was nominated for ten Academy Awards beating Citizen Kane for Best Picture, Director, Cinematography and Supporting Actor.)*

“I lived in the family home in Portland, Oregon until I left for college. My early years were spent playing sports and games in the street and suburban neighborhood from morning to night. Our parents had no idea where we were or what we were doing and luckily we rarely got caught. One not so smart adventure was riding our bicycles through a railroad tunnel, one mile long in North Portland. It occurred to us half way through that this was not too smart but we made it through and on our way back we rode through the streets.

“My father was a general building contractor and he employed me as a laborer during the summers from high school through college, probably to keep me out of trouble. He did not want me choosing a job in the construction business where the wages were very attractive. I ended up assigned to all the toughest jobs on the construction site. I dug holes, carried 4’ by 8’ concrete form panels, jackhammered, and unloaded/carried a lot of heavy lumber. As a result I was very physically fit to the point that when I entered college I max’d out of my physical proficiency test (sit-ups, pull-ups, push-ups) and filled the requirement with alternative courses like bowling, tennis, dancing and archery.

“I enrolled at Oregon State University majoring in Electrical Engineering. I joined the Delta Chi Fraternity that developed my sommelier palate for fine wines like Gallo and beers like Olympia. My college years were uneventful partly because engineering required almost all of my waking hours and the other reason I can come up with was the

guy-to-girl ratio was about 8 to 1. In my senior year, I specialized in control systems which is part of the motion control of Radio Frequency/Microwave antennas which I have employed the rest of my work career.

“My first job was with Westinghouse Defense Division in Baltimore, MD. I designed motion control systems for various antennas, a torpedo, and electro-optic systems. Interestingly enough, I heard later that our torpedo almost shot down the reviewing stand in a demo for the Navy. I think the Navy funded the production contract for the torpedo.

“One Easter weekend we travelled to Palo Alto for our family reunion. I recall it was 80 degrees for the entire week. We left Baltimore in the snow and a few weeks later returned to three feet of snow. I immediately started sending my resume to various California companies. I was hired by Dalmo Victor in Belmont to work on communications antennas for the Apollo project for both the lunar orbiter and the lunar lander. I performed the original computer simulations for both antennas and then became project manager for the manufacture, test, installation and check out of the antennas for thirteen Apollo missions. The TV picture broadcast during the moon landings came through our antennas. (*Editor's note: The previous Mercury and Gemini programs used separate radio systems for voice, telemetry and tracking. The Apollo program redesigned the communications systems to a single Unified S-band system. This communications subsystem was used throughout the Apollo missions to include 9, 10, and 11, which orbited and landed on the moon.*) Later on I visited the Smithsonian in Washington DC and saw the lunar lander spacecraft on display. I mentioned to a friend that the antenna probably had my fingerprints all over it.

“I worked for several small companies over the next few years and then joined Ford Aerospace Communications Corporation (FACC) working in their engineering antenna design department. Over the next 32 years at Ford/Loral/Lockheed I worked on antennas ranging from 2' to 32m in which I participated in the design, installation and/or testing on sites in the US, Europe, Asia and the Pacific. My trips ranged from antenna checkouts in freezing temperatures 600 miles from the North Pole and in Greenland, to being roasted/steamed in the heat and humidity of Thailand. I was originally hired to work on the NATO Integrated Communications System (NICS). (*Editor's note: NICS was a NATO program to upgrade and integrate the various over-the-horizon and line of sight communication systems into one backbone system for all members. As with all multi-national programs, NICS is operational but has never achieved its original objectives due to the competing desires of the various NATO nations funding the project.*) I designed the control and tracking electronic assemblies for the antennas. The first two installations I participated in were in Iceland and Greenland. The next antenna was in Turkey, which I declined to visit. The site had a tracking problem for which I told the program office that I could fix it over the phone. The next antenna was in the Black Forest in Germany. When a problem arose I immediately volunteered to travel to the site. Unfortunately, the response from the program office was ...'we can fix it over the phone.' Darn! Another opportunity arose with a month-long installation in Hawaii. The company rented a condo right on the beach. The only sad ending to this adventure was

that I ended up working 12+ hours/day, seven days a week. I was able to hit the beach once in all that time so I didn't even get sunburned!

"In 1980 we were living in the Redwood City area in a two-bedroom, one-bath home. My wife and I had one son and were soon blessed with twins. At that time, unfortunately, home interest rates had soared to 18% so I decided that I would add to the existing home. (*Editor's note: Those of you that have undertaken this task while living in the home know what is coming!*) I sketched the modifications and then drew up the architectural plans for a second-floor addition. I followed that up with some research and added the structural, electrical and plumbing changes. I met with the city planners and after several attempts secured approval for replacement of the family room and addition of a second floor for our new home. Doing most of the work myself while I still had a full-time job, I spent every free hour, nights, weekends, foregoing vacations to try to complete the addition before the end of the year. Our entire family enjoys the fruits of my labor, which is personally satisfying, but my lesson learned is I would never do that again! When I regained my life as a parent, I was soon 'volunteered' to coach my children's teams in basketball, baseball, and little league, serve as both a Cub Scout and Boy Scout leader, and serve on the School Board of Education.

"I retired from Lockheed in 2010 but continued as a consultant for the next five years. In addition to the part time consulting my retirement has consisted of traveling, enjoying SIR, and chasing grandchildren. Since I hadn't played golf in 40 years and I had more time, I decided I could become a Golf Pro amongst those old guys in the SIR golf club. After seven years of playing and practicing I have since managed to improve my golf game to one of the highest handicaps in SIR. I can say that the highlight of my career to date was embedding a golf ball in a maintenance shed at Poplar Creek golf course. Look that up in the golf book of rules for relief. I also recently got my first (and probably last) hole in one.

"I joined the SIR bowling league and again, after 50 years off, I was able to improve my average from a starting 120 to 168 over a three-year period. My high series (three game total) was 618 scratch.

"I have five wonderful children and seven grandchildren ranging from one year to 24 years. I have two daughters living in Minnesota who both married engineers (poor girls). My oldest son has a Masters degree in Computer Security and works as a subcontractor for NASA on the SOPHIA project. My youngest son works for a startup that develops and markets medical applications. My daughter lives with me and is studying at Palo Alto University. A large part of my time is now occupied being "papa" to my 5-year-old granddaughter and taking lots of orders. My 1-year-old granddaughter is all eyes and ears and is quickly learning how to also give orders.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my seven years in SIR even though I was drafted to a five-year term as secretary on the Branch Executive Committee. I am continually impressed by the friendship, patience, and support by all of my fellow SIR members."