

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.

Richard (Dick) Wilson



Geneva, Switzerland is a global city, a financial and worldwide center for diplomacy. The population is almost half foreign due to the presence of numerous international organizations, agencies of the United Nations and the Red Cross. The landscape is scenic with Lake Geneva on one side and three mountain chains surrounding the city. Veyrier, a municipality of Geneva is comprised of open countryside/fields/woods and very close to the Saleve mountain range. Dick recounts his memories of this place and time in his life.

“What an amazing possibility! I was offered a promotional opportunity to lead Hewlett-Packard’s European Computer Hardware Support organization headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. This, of course was the big topic over dinner with my wife, Helen and two pre-teenage daughters. Helen seemed quite intrigued by the possibility but our daughters had real reservations about leaving our home and their friends. Helen and I took advantage of a preview trip which Hewlett-Packard provided where we could investigate housing, schools, the city and where I could meet with my future management team and co-workers. We decided this was a superb opportunity and in August, home furnishings were placed in storage, the home was rented and the family was off to a new life in Switzerland. This was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.



“HP provided housing – a single family home within sight of the French border. On weekends, we could watch the hang-gliders float down from the Saleve (a tall rock formation in France) to an open field across the street from our home. Winter weekends were usually spent skiing in the Alps. Friday nights was our regularly scheduled bowling league including members of the ‘ex-patriot’ community from other U.S. companies (DuPont, Caterpillar, Union Carbide, etc.). The husbands would plan their air travel to ensure they were back in time to bowl, which was followed by wine, dinner and merriment at an Italian restaurant. What a wonderful life.”

Dick was born in Akron, Ohio and, at age three moved to the small town of Neenah, Wisconsin. Neenah was the center of the paper making industry, which dominated the Fox River Valley. Neenah’s population was just over 10,000 but it was an amazing place to spend one’s youth. Dick’s early years revolved around sports thanks to an amazing parks and recreation department. He played baseball for the Fifth Ward and then discovered tennis by taking lessons during the summer. He quickly developed an infatuation for the sport and won his first tournament when he was twelve. During his junior high years Dick played basketball on the school team, traveled the state to play in tennis tournaments during the summer, and grew to his present height of 6’ 2 1/2”. Upon entering high school he added football and proceeded to earn nine varsity letters, four in tennis where he won the state high school doubles championship, three in football where he earned all-conference and all-state honors and two in basketball. As a senior, he received the annual American Legion award as the top athlete in his class.

Having suffered a separated and later, dislocated shoulder playing football, Dick was advised against playing college football – a major dream of his for many years. So he focused his collegiate choice on academics and chose Stanford University since they offered a major in statistics. It also gave him the opportunity to walk-on (there were no scholarships) to the tennis team and this subsequently gave him the opportunity to play against world-class players like Rafael Osuna and Dennis Ralston – both elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame and who won a Wimbledon Doubles Championship. At a Pac-8 tournament in Ojai, Dick and his partner actually were ahead in the first set, 5-4 before Osuna/Ralston got serious and “...blitzed us”. Dick lettered all three years he was eligible for the Varsity team and graduated Cum Laude with a B.S. in Statistics.

“I met my wife, Helen in kindergarten in Neenah. We were good friends early in life and lived in the same part of town. Our classmates were a close group and life-long friendships were formed, which



Dick in high school at 6’ 2 1/2”
Whoosh!!

continue to this day. Helen and I continued our friendship through grade school, junior and high school and kept in contact when she went to the University of Wisconsin while I attended Stanford. We began dating the summer after our sophomore year. We committed to each other when I 'pinned' her in the spring of our junior year and we were engaged in Neenah during Christmas break. After graduation, we were married in August of 1964 and spent our honeymoon traveling to California where I attended the Stanford Graduate School of Business and Helen taught 8th grade in Santa Clara.

"I first worked for HP as a summer intern while pursuing my MBA. It was a terrific experience and although I had numerous offers from many corporations decided to return to HP and began full time employment in July 1966. I moved into my first management position within two years and worked in Worldwide Customer Support (part of Corporate Marketing), then Commercial Services Manager for the Intercontinental Sales Region and later was chosen to be the Controller for a newly created Computer Support Division. It was this assignment which 'opened the door' in 1981 for my opportunity to move to Geneva. The two-year foreign assignment evolved into a four-year tour when I was promoted to Director of Finance and Administration for the European Southeast Region. Some of the unique challenges in this assignment included helping to create a sales subsidiary in Greece, transforming a distributor into an HP subsidiary in Israel, and significant work with my team in South Africa as they experienced severe devaluations of the rand and were struggling to survive financially. In my career at HP I was fortunate to interface with CEO's John Young, Dean Morton, Lew Platt, etc. but spending time with two Silicon Valley icons like Dave Packard and Bill Hewlett was a real highlight.

"I met David at a dinner during my second year at HP. I had attended a management meeting, which was followed by a dinner at Ricky's. I had walked over to 'grab' a drink at the bar and as I turned, there was Dave extending his hand and introducing himself. I could hardly believe he was talking to me, and when he asked what I thought of the meeting I hardly knew what to say. But, that was Dave, outgoing friendly and willing to talk with anyone. (*Editor's note: Knowing Dick, can you believe he was tongue-tied?*) That encounter left a life-long impression on me. I met Bill Hewlett at several meetings and events with the most memorable time taking place while I was working in Geneva and had the opportunity of sitting with him at both lunch and dinner. The conversation with Bill ranged from his extensive knowledge of European history, to what was happening at HP in Europe to how things were going at Stanford (since we both were graduates).

"My family and I returned home to Cupertino in the summer of 1985. I assumed Administrative management positions in HP's North American Sales Region followed by a move to the Computer organization in charge of establishing two major call centers in the U.S. (Roseville, CA and Rockville, MD). After 36 years (34 in management positions) I was lucky enough to receive a generous early retirement offer. I must say that it was a great ride with a phenomenal company that adapted and changed from electronics to computers/printers and grew from \$300,000 in annual sales to multi-

billions. The company provided me with both challenging and rewarding assignments but it was time to move on.

“My management roles at HP afforded me the opportunity to travel the world and to enjoy experiences like a day tour to East Berlin when the wall was still in existence (yes, we went through Checkpoint Charlie), a day trip to see the Taj Mahal, a weekend at Machu Picchu, several opportunities to enjoy Wimbledon and countless hours enjoying the splendor of the Alps in both France and Switzerland. I have travelled to over 35 countries in six of the seven continents and have the old passports filled with stamps and visas plus countless worthless coins from many countries to prove it. I feel truly blessed to have seen the world.

“My daughters graduated from San Diego State and Stanford and fortunately for us they continue to live in the Bay Area. We have been blessed with two great grandsons who have inherited my love for athletics. As a result, we spend countless hours watching baseball, basketball, and flag football games all over the Bay Area. Stanford football and basketball games are great opportunities to enjoy family gatherings.

“In retirement, my wife and I are charter members of the Cupertino Hills Swim and Racquet Club (where I still play tennis) and I have served as President of the Board on multiple occasions. We regularly attend Los Altos United Methodist Church where I was chairman the Finance Committee (2008-2014) and where I regularly usher with fellow Sirs Ron Lau, Ken Newton, Russ Ayers and Herb Petersen. I joined SIR in 2004 and served as a Director on the Executive Committee from 2009 through 2012. I have been an active participant in the Branch 35 Golf activity and organization.

“My parting message to my fellow members is simply to enjoy every day and when you do have a bad day, remember ‘... the sun will come up tomorrow’.”