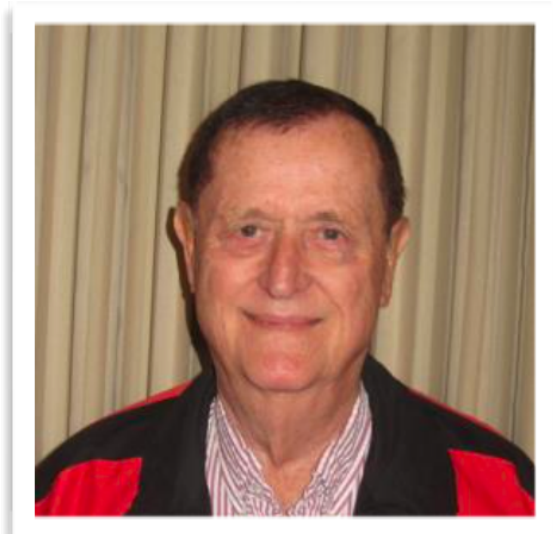


This monthly article highlights one of our branch members. We hope that you enjoy knowing a little more about your fellow members and the interesting life they have had. If you have someone you would like to nominate or if you would like to help author an article, please email the editor, Ron Nakamoto, at [ron.nakamoto\(at\)yahoo.com](mailto:ron.nakamoto@yahoo.com).

ROBERT “PORCHE BOB” JONES



Wouldn't an email address like porsche.bob@sbcglobal.net attract your curiosity about the owner?

It caught my interest when I first received an email from him in response to a call for “Member Profile” candidates. As we exited our lunch interview, Bob introduced me to his 2008 custom Maserati. The dark blue exterior contrasting with the beige, buck leather bucket seats and mahogany trim was stunning. Equipped with a 400HP engine you can expect he corners with the control that only high-performance race-cars can. “Porsche Bob” is a speed enthusiast and has owned/raced an estimated 30 automobiles and 55 motorcycles in his lifetime (to date).

Here is his story.

“I was born and grew up as a California native in Hayward, CA. One of my favorite pastimes as a child was playing with Lionel trains. I worked in my father's business after school and every summer. My father owned and ran the Jones Electric Company in Hayward. He worked hard, was entrepreneurial and able to grow his business to include branches in Guam, Hawaii and Sunnyvale. Frugal as always, he operated his business out of a World War II Quonset hut which I remember got quite hot during the summers. I attended Hayward High School and was a member of the swimming team and the Rally Club. I got curious with drag racing and eventually participated in a few races during my high school years. After graduation I enrolled at San Jose State College but after a couple years I decided to enlist with the Marines. Why the Marines? I had a roommate in college that was one year ahead of me who joined the Marine Corps Platoon Leader Course program. Of course the best recruiters are your friends and I wanted to be with the toughest military group possible which of course was the Marines ... “Oorah!” Unfortunately, due to family problems I did not get to complete the second part of the training and finished my stint in the USMC as a Staff Sergeant. The USMC was a tough but eye-opening experience early in my life that shaped my future. I completed my

enlistment working with Amphibious Armored Tanks, which was one of the keys on my resume for a future position working to help design the Bradley Fighting Vehicle with the FMC Corporation in San Jose.

“After I completed my eight-year enlistment I re-enrolled at San Jose State as a Business Administration major but soon found it too boring so I switched majors to Psychology. Coincident with attending school I volunteered at Agnew’s Mental Hospital in San Jose as the experience complemented my Psychology major but that experience drove me away from hospitals and therapy work. All was not lost as I discovered Human Factors Engineering (HFE), which complemented my academic pursuit and my Marine Corps experience and was more to my liking. Did you know that almost 80% of HFE professionals have a psychology background? *(Editor’s note: In the 1930s when airplane cockpit designs started to get very complicated, the industry hired Psychologists to help with the design.)* After graduation, I went to work at Philco Ford in Palo Alto working mostly on satellite control instrumentation designs. Later I moved to Lockheed working on the Polaris and Poseidon missile program. My job was to help design the maintainability and handling equipment, e.g. missile loading and maintenance designs and procedures while in their submarine launch tubes. While working at LMSC I was on a job at Cape Canaveral and was outside fairly close to the launch pad of a Saturn Apollo rocket. The actual power of this rocket was huge as it ignited and lifted off its launch pad. It was extremely loud and with the accompanying vibrations made it somewhat frightening, especially since we were fairly close to it if it failed during launch. Another time I was on the U.S.S. Observation Island (EAG- 154) ship and witnessed two Polaris A3 missiles launched from a submarine off the coast of Florida. This was the same ship that President Kennedy had been on earlier that year.

“While at FMC I really enjoyed driving the prototype Bradley tanks and my contributions to the many HFE design features. For example, did you know that the driver’s seat and controls had to accommodate the 5th to 95th percentile male, both in the up position with hatch open, to the down position with the hatch closed. *(Editor’s note: HFE specializes in engineering designs that accommodate humans, in this case using the same seat for a range of statures of drivers of varying heights. The 95th percentile male height is measured at 73.4 inches)*. I also remember driving the Bradley and firing its M240 25mm cannon at Fort Hunter-Liggett. This was a much better riding vehicle than the older amphibious tanks I had been in while in the Marines.

“I won my first race while a student at the Racing Driver’s School and later won again at the next regularly scheduled race at Stockton Airport. I was lucky enough to win quite a few more races, earned a good reputation and eventually was offered a position as Director. I served for one year and had ten nationally licensed race driver instructors assisting. I learned a lot and enjoyed the experience but gave this up because I wanted to get back to racing. I raced in the Formula Junior class of race-cars. *(Editor’s note: Formula Junior is a worldwide, open wheel, formula racing car class competition started*

in 1958 and regulated by the International Sporting Commission.) The BMC Formula Jr. race-car that I drove looked like the Indy 500 front-engine cars. The engine size was only 1,000cc but could reach top speeds of 120mph. I did most of my racing in Northern California but also some in Southern California. In 1963 I won the Formula Jr. championship. When I was racing with the Sports Car Club of America I started racing with a '58 Porsche Speedster. Later I raced a fantastic '58 Porsche RSK Spyder (first owned by Roger Penske). Jerry Seinfeld owned it for a while and recently sold it for 2.8 million dollars!



“I started racing motorcycles because it was much cheaper than cars. I did most of my racing on a Yamaha TD1C 250cc grand prix bike. I've owned about 55 motorcycles, mostly Japanese, two Harleys and one Ducati 851. American and Japanese bikes are basically just plain fun to ride. Do I have a favorite motorcycle?... Yes, one

stands out because it was unique and very challenging to ride. That was the 1986 Suzuki RG500 Gamma. This bike had a 500cc 4 square motor layout. It is a copy of the Suzuki GP race bike and its livery (the paint scheme that is put on race vehicles for advertising purposes) is for Walter Wolf (wealthy Canadian oil man who sponsored the Suzuki race team and several Formula One race cars). The street bike weighed only 340 pounds and had about 100 horsepower. Its top speed was 147 mph. This model is selling today for around \$30,000.

“As I got older (and wiser) I decided to become an instructor and soon got certified as a Motorcycle Safety Foundation instructor. Later based upon my knowledge, reputation and experience, I was asked if I wanted to become a Chief Instructor. I agreed and travelled to Maryland for that training. Crain Associates in Menlo Park hired me to help win the California Highway Patrol contract to develop the California Motorcycle Safety Program (CMSP). The main goal, of course, was to reduce the accident and death rate of riders. The contract goal was to start training sites all over the state. We won the contract and in 1987 we developed the CMSP program. After instructing awhile, I decided to start my own riding school with Mountain View/Los Altos Adult School. I trained about 100 instructors and have trained over 9,000 motorcycle enthusiasts over twenty-four years.

"I now spend my retirement time teaching and camping. When I was teaching my motorcycle classes, I had a Stanford professor in my class who suggested that I should teach at the Stanford Bechtel International Center. So, I started teaching there in 2000 and still do it every Monday morning. We show lots of videos and also include some history of the various vacation locations. My class "California Travel" is taught to visiting scholars.

"I currently belong to the Classic Japanese Motorcycle Club, which is a national organization. We go on monthly rides and participate in motorcycle shows. I currently have three Japanese bikes:- an '85 Yamaha 700cc Maxim-X, a Yamaha Fazer 700cc, and a '93 Suzuki GSX1100G. I prefer race-type motors in comfortable standard bikes; that way you get the best of both worlds. The problem is there are not many bikes that fit into this category as most are too specialized. At my age (mid-eighties), with a metal shoulder, I've had to "throttle back" on riding sport bikes.

"We have a small motorhome and often camp in northern California locations. Our favorite camping spot is Caspar Beach close to Mendocino (our favorite village). What I like about camping there is it's right on the ocean and in a protected valley. It is located between Ft. Bragg and Mendocino next to Point Cabrillo Lighthouse. This is a very popular location with abalone fishermen. We have lived in Los Altos since 1972 and I have always been interested in the history of the town and its local communities. The best way to learn about the history is to get involved with a history museum. So, I volunteer as a docent at the Los Altos History Museum. Here is an interesting tidbit for my fellow Los Altos natives. Sarah Winchester owned almost half of Los Altos. She bought 140 acres in 1888 for her sister and brother-in-law, who raised carriage horses. Later she sold the property because the train route eventually went right through her estate. Imagine how much more she would be worth if she had kept it. Come visit and learn about the town you live in at our museum.

"My parting message to my fellow members is from my club idiom 'You don't quit riding motorcycles when you get old, you get old when you quit riding.' I try to ride once a week, weather permitting."