

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).

JOHN RICHARDSON



“When I was about 10 years old, my grandmother used to take me to her church--the Quaker Church in Whittier, a town founded by Quakers in the late eighteen hundreds. It was tough for me to sit on the hardwood benches for 30 minutes of silent prayer. My grandmother was devoted--her most emphatic “swear” word was “pshaw”. However she did make a good Sunday dinner and years later I developed a strong interest in serving the church, volunteering for missions to Tijuana, Guatemala, and Costa Rica to help others. My mother taught me perseverance and hard work, “... you didn’t have to be the smartest, but you have to be totally committed ”, and my father

taught me how to speak publicly (imagine an audience that is completely naked) and deliver your message as he did as a post-war top real estate salesman and later as Mayor of Whittier.

“I was born in Ventura, CA and spent my very early few years in Palm Springs where I dug foxholes in the sand with my younger sister; hiked, always careful to avoid rattlesnakes, and listened to my mother practice her violin. She often soloed with USO orchestras across the US. In my early elementary school period, I lived in Corpus Christi, TX where my father was stationed at the Naval Air Station. Later, I attended Whittier Union High School (*same school that Richard Nixon attended and where he did well academically -all “A’s” with only one “B” in physical education during his junior and senior years*). I lettered in Varsity Water Polo (CIF Champions in 1951) and was awarded the Cardinal Key for scholarship, athletics and activities in my senior year (top 5% of class). I enjoyed jazz and played the trumpet, learned to skin dive and was fascinated making fireworks. The latter was an outgrowth of my interest in chemistry. I veered over towards chemical engineering because I learned in my freshman year of high school that chemical engineers made more money than chemists.

“I lived with my grandmother and mother while my father was deployed to the Pacific theater in WWII. He served as a Lieutenant in the Navy and was Beachmaster on the APA 170 Troop Transport that was converted to a Casualty Evacuation Transport for the wounded. On April 7, 1945 he was seriously wounded in a Kamikaze attack at Kerama Retto, Okinawa. (*Editor’s note: Soldiers of the 77th Infantry Division landed on the Kerama Islands which served as the staging area for the assault on Okinawa.*) When I visited the National Museum in Tokyo, Japan I toured the Zero airplane exhibit used in the Kamikaze attacks. I witnessed the wall of photos of the pilots who were trained to fly those airplanes to their last mission and read the farewell letters from those teenagers to their parents. It was heart breaking.

"I worked through high school, - first, part time, hand cleaning out dog poop from cages at a veterinary clinic. The summers passed with different jobs (digging ditches in the oil fields; as a roustabout scraping oil sludge out of storage tanks; as a derrick man; as a roughneck handling tongs for the drill pipe; and as a lab assistant at the Brea Research Lab of Union Oil.

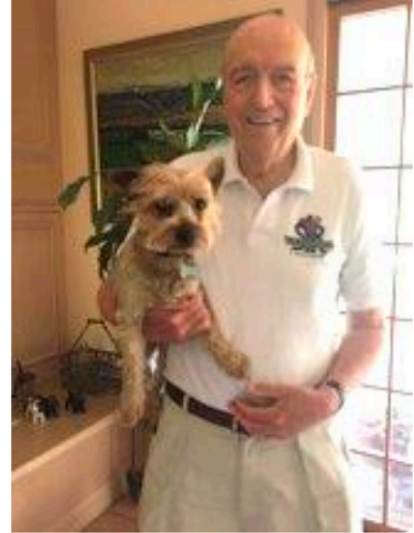
"I attended Stanford and received my BS and later my PhD in Chemical Engineering. My favorite graduate course was Irreversible Thermodynamics in which I received an "A" (eat your heart out SIR Jim Schlatter, though I am sure he had a much higher overall graduate GPA than I did.) I left school in Jan. 1961 as I had two small boys and I needed to earn money to support our growing family.

"My first job was as an R & D engineer with the Aeronutronic Division of the Ford Motor Co., Newport Beach, CA. What attracted me to this was not only a good starting salary but also work in an area that was related to what I had done for my dissertation: "Energy and Mass Transfer in Reacting Fluids". As fate would have it, two weeks after I arrived, I was told they had a new project that they wanted me to work on: 'membrane desalination!' My career and expertise was determined by this occurrence as the next thirteen of my forty three years of work was in the field of desalination with the objective of using plastic films to filter the water from salts in either slightly salty water or from sea water. Our work was trailblazing in this emerging field. I filed and was granted five patents as co-inventor for tubular reverse osmosis. Today Israel leads the world in the use of this approach with multimillion gallons processed per day to provide for their population. We later adapted this technology to clean up electroplating waste streams from chromium and nickel-plating operations for the automobile industry after we sold our technology to Occidental Petroleum Corp. (Hooker Chemical, Parker Division and then Udylite Div.). I went to Detroit to continue with Hooker.

"After six years I opted to move my family to Vancouver, Canada to head a new venture in sea water desalination with some interesting core technology in energy recovery developed by a physicist-inventor. We teamed together, built a small operation, got orders for our equipment (hand held, residential, commercial and industrial scales). Some of our systems were deployed onto Canadian Oceanographic Vessels; one on the Caribbean Island of Mustique; and one at the Chilean Naval Base at Punta Arenas. I returned to California and the Bay area to accept a CEO position with a biotech startup in Menlo Park and to be near our kids. (Interestingly, four out of the eight members of the Technology Advisory Board for Theranos early this year were part of that biotech venture either as founders or staff in ~1985.) We had a strong technical team, ultimately winning a million dollar contract from Eastman Kodak. However, after four years, the funding partners grew "tired" of not seeing a profitable return so we shut down the operation and sold the technology and assets to a pharmaceutical start-up. This completed the first 27 years of my career.

"My second career was as a technology management consultant. At first I worked from California servicing two consultancies on the east coast (MA and NJ). One of their

principals and I decided to break away and partner for our own consultancy projects closer to home. This was a lot of fun, but with an uneven monthly cash flow. Most of our clients were Fortune 200 type companies eager to squeeze the maximum benefit out of their technical programs. The most important lesson I learned from this experience was that to be successful at this, my partner and I had to be good “entertainers” and convincing teachers. The deliverables (project reports, presentations, etc.) had to be first rate so that project renewals happened and our reputation expanded. After an eventful sixteen years, I finally decided to retire. I had worked in five different industries over forty-three years always supported by my fundamental education and training in chemical engineering.



John with his “son” Ted

“My extracurricular activities throughout my adult life involved diving and jazz. I started diving when I was thirteen, mostly trying to spear fish. Later, I graduated to anything edible in the ocean, which included lobster and abalone. I took my family on camping trips to Baja and mainland Mexico for the abundant sea life there and the relaxing environment. In Baja one summer, I was able to extract a large spiny lobster--from a kneeling position on the beach and holding it up by its antennae as high as I could, its large tail dragged on the sand! It fed ten of us that night for dinner. My diving career finished in my 70’s, abalone diving off the northern CA coast with my second oldest son who could go deeper and stay down longer than I.

“I am blessed with five children. Two went to Cal and the other three went to Stanford. All are successful in their careers in the Bay Area, and the Central Coast. We are blessed with ten grandchildren now progressing in life and career. Sadly, I lost my first wife after 55 years of marriage, due to a stroke. It was heartbreaking to lose her but the Lord must have a need for me because I was lucky enough to meet Alice, a retired banker, at a Valentine's Dance at the Stanford Singles Club. We immediately formed a bond so strong that we later decided to get married, now four years ago.

“My love affair with jazz really took off when as a college student, I was able to sit about ten feet away from Dave Brubeck/Paul Desmond (“Balcony Rock”, “Take the A Train”, “Take Five”), as well as Miles Davis (“Blue Haze”), and Chet Baker (“My Funny Valentine”) at the Blackhawk Club in SF nursing a stinger for the evening show. What great and mellow musical moments. My wife and I now go to SF Jazz and the Stanford Shopping Center “Summer Series”.

“My life now involves being the senior handyman for both our home and yard in Portola Valley and as the co-captain of the Bocce Ball activity. I have been a member of Branch 35 for seventeen years and continue to enjoy the many social aspects of the club. Part of my experience was serving as Little and Big SIR (2010 and 2011). My most memorable SIR luncheon speaker was Stanford Football Head Coach Jim Harbaugh

who spoke at our April 15, 2009 meeting. The “Cold Plate” lunches started under my tenure, and membership reached 400 members.

“I will end on this observation: My SIR leadership experience further reinforced in me the critical need of a leader being fully committed to the success of those you lead in an inclusive sense.”