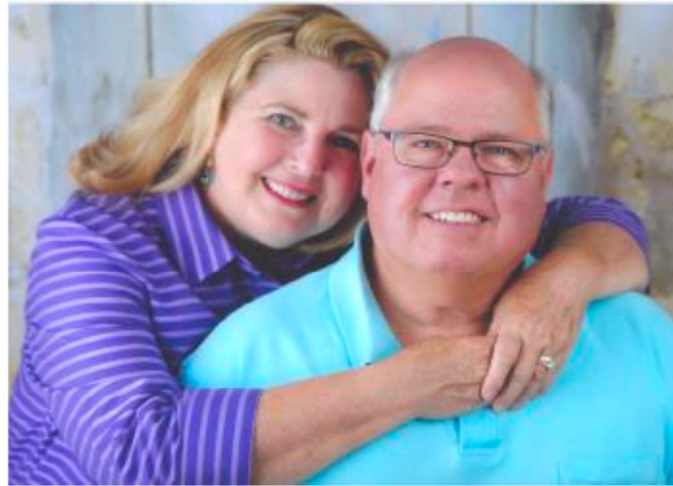


This monthly article highlights one of our branch members. We hope that you enjoy knowing a little more about your fellow members and the interesting life they have had. If you have someone you would like to nominate or if you would like to help author an article, please email the editor, Ron Nakamoto,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

## BRUCE KARNEY



Bruce with his wife, Twana

Many people say a book changed their life. For Bruce, it was a movie

– “*An Inconvenient Truth*.” In 2006 he and his wife were mesmerized by Al Gore’s Oscar-winning film, which examined the causes and consequences of the rapid increase of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. He was awakened to the severity of the climate crisis and the necessity of taking urgent action to combat it. He embarked on a lifelong journey to study the subject and has become an expert on greenhouse emissions and how to reduce it. Here is his story.

Bruce was born in 1952 in the capital city of Washington State on the day of the Presidential election to parents who worked for the State government. Is it any wonder then that he’s been involved in civic activities and politics for most of his life? 1962 was the most memorable year of Bruce’s young life. The Seattle World’s Fair opened that spring and its theme was “Living in the Space Age.” The Space Needle and Monorail are lasting reminders of what the fair’s planners expected our current century to be like.

Later that year Bruce remembers the Columbus Day Storm, a hurricane-force gale that blew down millions of trees in Oregon and Washington. Bruce’s dad was out of town on business, so Bruce and his mom, who was eight months pregnant, hunkered down in a closet on the ground floor that the family called “The Civil Defense Closet” because that was where they were supposed to go if the air raid sirens wailed to warn of an Soviet ICBM attack. The house shook as the winds howled throughout the night. As morning dawned and the winds subsided the only damage was a few dozen missing shingles.

Two weeks later the US and USSR were on the brink of nuclear war. Remember the Cuban Missile Crisis? Bruce remembers going to bed the night the Soviet cargo ships

were to be intercepted by the U.S. naval blockade of Cuba. He was terribly afraid yet managed to fall asleep. Awakening to a world that not been blasted to bits was the happiest morning of his life. Perhaps his early realization that humanity had the power to annihilate itself primed him to focus his life on doing what he could to mitigate the arrival of the sixth great extinction – the one that is now unfolding due to human-caused climate disruption.

Bruce attended Olympia High School and was most interested in their math and science programs. He was co-winner of the Bausch and Lomb and Rensselaer Science Awards and was voted “Boy Most Likely to Succeed”. He captained his school’s team on the “Hi-Q” quiz show, which was like the “GE College Bowl” show for Seattle-area high-schoolers. His entry into the Westinghouse Science Talent Search was a design for an ion rocket using cesium fuel.

Due to his excellent academics, Bruce was recruited by many colleges and he decided on Harvey Mudd College in Claremont (near Los Angeles), which at the time admitted only about 100 students a year. (*Editor’s note: Harvey Mudd, established in 1955 is one of the premier engineering, science, and mathematics colleges in the U.S. The total student body is low (below 1,000) and the faculty to student ratio is high- 1 to 10.*) His freshman year was enjoyable but after a year of living in one of the smoggiest places in the country and where potential girlfriends were rarer than clear days, he decided to transfer to the University of Washington for his sophomore year. Unfortunately, UW lacked sufficient academic challenge for him, so the last leg of his college journey took him to Stanford University where he graduated with a BS in Mathematical Sciences – a combination of Math, Statistics, Computer Science and Operations Research. He was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon and worked during summers for the US Forest Service.

His first job after graduation was with SRI International as a Research Assistant on a project studying Negative Income Tax (what is now called Universal Basic Income). The idea was that rather than providing poor people with a hodge-podge of different benefits, it would be far simpler and more cost-effective to provide them with supplemental grants that decreased as their earnings increased. This research led to the creation of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit in 1975. (*Editor’s note: Today the EITC is one of the largest anti-poverty tools in the United States. Read Wikipedia to understand why.*)

In early 1976, at age 23, Bruce became very interested in the candidacy of Gov. Jimmy Carter. He learned that delegates were selected for the Democratic National Convention at separate local caucuses for each candidate. Any registered Democrat could throw his or her hat in the ring to become a delegate. Jerry Brown was running for the nomination that year and his caucuses attracted most of the local attention. The Carter caucus was lightly attended, and about a third of those present were friends of Bruce’s who came to support him (and to enjoy the free post-caucus pizza he’d promised). In addition to securing the votes of the pizza lovers, Bruce got enough support from others to be the

top vote getter. According to California Democratic Party Convention rules, the top two vote getters are invited to the Convention. Unfortunately, there was also a rule that the State party could re-arrange the order of finish to help send individuals from under-represented groups to the national convention. Bruce was moved from first to third. The person who was moved into first belonged to the category “Former Mayors of Palo Alto,” which is certainly a minority group! He notes that “I learned that if you don’t fully understand the game you’re playing, you’re unlikely to win.”

In 1977 Bruce enrolled in the Cal’s business school and earned an MS in Management Science. Management Science is quantitative analysis applied to business problems.

Bruce spent the bulk of his career at HP in the Bay Area. He worked in a wide variety of departments. He always enjoyed challenging assignments and learning new things more than climbing the ladder in one function. He did have some jobs that involved managing people but found that he preferred managing programs and projects. At HP he was best known for being the first person to deploy Lotus Notes as a groupware platform for users who were not information technologists. In his case the users were HP’s training professionals. The “Trainers Trading Post” that Bruce set up in Notes was a major success that ended up being written about in several books. When he took early retirement from HP in 2005 Bruce’s picture appeared on the cover of the October 2005 issue of “Inside Knowledge” magazine and a flattering article described his work in the field of Knowledge Management and included his “Top 10 Knowledge Lessons”.

Bruce met his wife Twana through an ad that he placed in *Trellis Singles Magazine*. He had previously written ads that drew little response. After thinking deeply about the problem his “target audience” was trying to solve, he came up with an ad that resonated with more than one hundred women who responded to it – including Twana. “YOU’RE TOO BRIGHT for most men. Worse yet, you want one who can make you laugh, make you dinner and make your friends think you’ve got all the luck.” The rest is history as Bruce and Twana will be happily celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this August.

After retiring from HP Bruce was doing some volunteer work with Acterra, the Palo Alto environmental non-profit. He learned that a new start-up called SolarCity was offering 35% discounts to residents of local cities if they could organize a large enough “group buy.” He organized a group in Mountain View that resulted in the installation of 119 solar systems. SolarCity’s CEO was so impressed by Bruce’s work that he recruited him to organize similar community purchase programs throughout California. He retired a second time in 2012.

In retirement he has focused his energy on the climate crisis. He is the Chair of the Board of Carbon Free Mountain View (CFMV), a grassroots environmental group. Its goal was to bring 100% carbon-free electricity (CFE) to their community. CFMV lobbied the Mountain View Council to join with Sunnyvale to fund a feasibility study, and later a technical study to determine if community choice made sense for Santa Clara County.

The studies concluded that 100% CFE was feasible and would be beneficial to residents and business and the risks were quite low. CFMV members spread the word at City Council meetings around the Valley urging City Councils to join what is now known as Silicon Valley Clean Energy (SVCE). *(Editor's note: SVCE started operation in April, 2017 and has been delivering carbon-free electricity for two years at rates that are slightly lower than PG&E's. Go to <https://www.svcleanenergy.org> to learn more about SVCE.)*

Bruce has played golf since he was a boy and sees a parallel between his concern for the environment and the golf etiquette he was taught as a child. In particular, he learned that when exiting a bunker, a golfer should not only rake his own footprints, he should rake any other footprints he finds. Our "climate bunker" has been devastated by too many unraked "carbon footprints." Bruce has dedicated his remaining years to raking as many as he can, and to encouraging others to do the same.