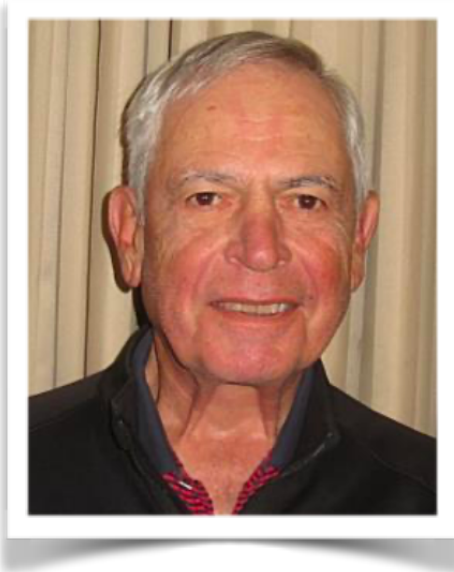


This monthly article highlights one of our branch members. We hope that you enjoy knowing a little more about your fellow members and the interesting life they have had. If you have someone you would like to nominate or if you would like to help author an article, please email the editor, Ron Nakamoto,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

JOSEPH A. "JOE" CIONI



"On my first day as a young accountant just out of college, the senior accountant to which I was assigned said to me, 'You will find that your advancement in this firm will depend not on what you know, but who you know'. I have found that statement so true over a 40-year career as every significant position I have landed was a result of knowing the right person.

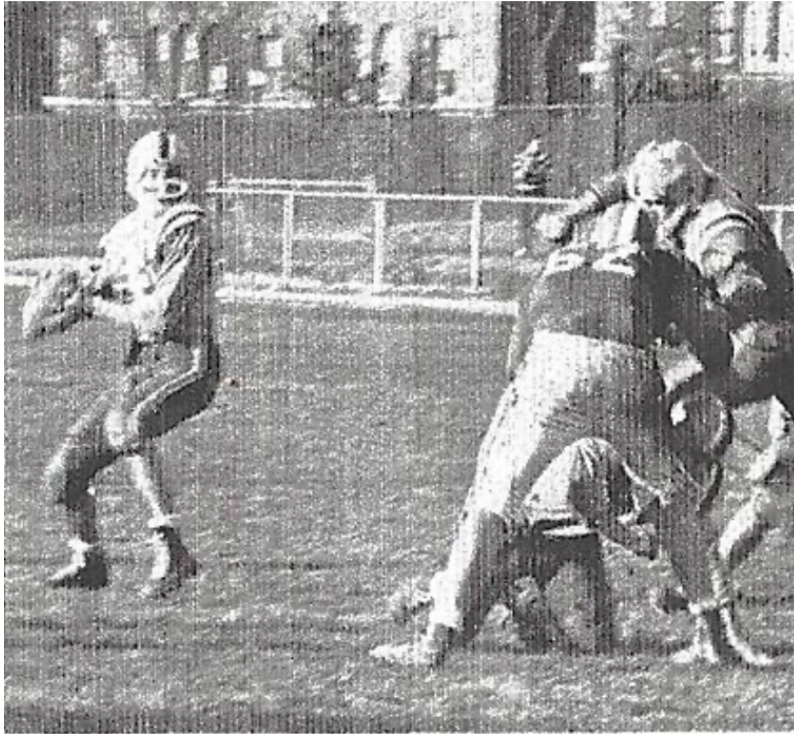
"I was born eighty years ago in Cumberland, Maryland, a sleepy city located on the Potomac River, between Baltimore and Pittsburg, in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains. My parents were first generation Americans of Italian immigrants from the Abruzzi and Umbria areas of Italy. I was the oldest of four children. Baptized a Roman Catholic, I was taught by elementary school nuns and served as an altar boy for eight years.

"I attended LaSalle High School taught by Christian Brothers. I found that football was my favorite sport and was the starting quarterback my junior and senior years. In addition, I joined as many extracurricular activities as I could. My senior year, I was editor of the school newspaper, captain of the bowling team, president of my senior class, and valedictorian of my graduating class. I received awards for 'Outstanding Student-athlete' and Excellence in Mathematics, Physics and Journalism. Nice resume in 1957. Today, that might get me wait-listed at top colleges.

"My father was a self-taught electrician. He taught me how to repair and rewind burned out fractional horsepower motors. I remember working next to him in his electric motor repair business in our garage. My first real job was delivering newspapers earning \$3.50 a week. I worked as a pin-boy in a bowling alley earning \$0.05 per line, stock-boy for a clothing store earning \$10 a week, and pump jockey at a gas station also at \$10 a week. The local daily newspaper noticed my journalistic qualities and gave me a job as a sports reporter covering weekend athletic events and my by-lined articles appeared in the Sunday edition for a year. That job paid me \$1 per hour.

"During my junior year in high school, Congress enacted President Eisenhower's Reserve Forces Act (RFA) of 1955, an alternative to the draft wherein you served six-months active duty followed by 7 1/2 years of reserves in the U. S. Army. I joined the

reserves five days after my 17th birthday. Two weeks after graduating from high school, I shipped off to Fort Jackson, South Carolina for eight weeks of basic training, then spent four months at Fire Control Instrument Repair School (MOS 403.1) at Aberdeen Proving Grounds. This was my first time outside of Cumberland and it was a culture shock. I learned quickly that the world is not full of nice people.



Quarterback at Johns Hopkins, 1960 season

“After the Army experience, I applied to several colleges. I was accepted to Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore with a full scholarship. I earned a degree in Business and Industrial Management with an emphasis on accounting. Hopkins, better known at that time for its Lacrosse team, did not offer athletic scholarships so I tried out for the football team. I played on the freshman team and then earned varsity letters each of my final three years. I was awarded the game ball in 1961 after throwing three touchdown passes in an 18-6 upset over Hampton-Sydney (we didn’t have very good extra point kickers in those days).

“My junior year, I started dating Susan Cibelli, who I met when she was dating my sophomore year roommate. We got married in 1963 and will be celebrating our 56th anniversary this year. We started and then lived in the New York area until we decided to move to California in 2011 to be near our children and grandchildren. Our son, Joe and his wife, Patti, have produced a handsome grandson, Enzo, and our daughter, Anastasia and her husband, Pat, have produced a beautiful granddaughter, Abigail Anne.

“My career has taken many paths. Upon graduation, I took a position with one of the Big-Eight public accounting firms in New York City. I passed the CPA exam on my first try and rapidly advanced from junior, to senior, to supervisor accountant. When I was promoted to Account Manager, I noticed I was working harder and longer and got fed up with public accounting and decided to switch careers to corporate financial management.

“Somehow, I got drawn to consumer product companies with difficulties, so I morphed into a turnaround specialist. I have taken a company public and taken another through bankruptcy. I have been the CFO of two significant turnarounds, and have also been a CEO, COO, Treasurer, and a Facility General Manager, among other positions.

“Here is an interesting story from that time. I landed a position as VP and CFO of Pollio Dairy Products, Inc., a Long Island-based, family-owned Italian cheese company (the Federal Prosecutor of the Eastern District of Long Island was on the Board, a friend of mine and recommended me for that position). The company had significant operating and financial reporting problems. The President, brought in by the family to turn things around, was literally managing the company by the size of the daily bank balance since there was no meaningful management data emanating from the accounting department. Employees who had access to inventory were stealing it; employees who collected customer cash were stealing it; employees who delivered product were not required to account for it. The warehouse manager wore an ankle holster with a loaded pistol. The accounting department, however well intentioned, had no leadership, guidance or purpose. I put my skills to work and instituted, first a basic then later a fully integrated, management information system. After several months, the plant manager of the cheese manufacturing plant in Corning, New York resigned. I volunteered to act as the plant manager while a replacement was sought. During that period, I learned how to make vats of mozzarella and ricotta cheese. All of this activity in the first year as CFO earned me the ‘Employee of the Year’ Award. Once the operating and financial problems were resolved the company grew and became profitable. The family eventually sold the business to Kraft who appointed me President of the company. After two years, Philip Morris acquired Kraft and I learned that being a small fish in a Fortune 50 Pond wasn’t any fun. I resigned after a year of dealing with MBAs who never had any real world, bottom-line responsibilities.

“Several stops later, I was named VP Finance of Remington Products Company (the electric shaver company, not the gun company). I was part of a new management team brought in to turn the company around. Victor Kiam owned both Remington and the New England Patriots at that time. Facing financial difficulties, Kiam made a decision to sell the Patriots to Robert Kraft (current owner) and take on a 50% partner for Remington. You can form your own conclusions about that decision. In any case, Remington was mired in operating difficulties and losing a lot of money. The new management team turned the company around in two years and it was later sold to a leveraged buyout firm which installed their own management team so I departed... with a reasonable payout. I was soon recruited by a turnaround management firm, for which I consulted for the next three years. I was constantly on the road providing consulting and leadership roles to companies in difficulty around the U.S. including Memphis, TN, Enid, OK, Fayetteville, NC and Chicago.

“My work has taken me across the world. I lived in Italy for a year, spent a month in Rio de Janeiro, reorganized businesses in England, Australia, Japan and Canada, negotiated deals in Spain, Netherlands, Switzerland and Scotland and did some tax business in Liechtenstein (how many people have ever been to Liechtenstein?) The

issues I encountered would fill a textbook (someday, I might write one). I tired of the continuous travel and retired in 2002. Two weeks later I was bored, and, again through knowing two of the right people, managed to get hired by both St. John's University and the State University of New York-Farmingdale as an Adjunct Professor of Accounting, teaching two to three courses a semester at each school. Teaching was enjoyable. The good students loved me and the not-so-good students didn't because I made them work. Today's "snowflakes" would probably boycott my class because of my unreasonable expectations – like doing homework and passing an occasional exam.

"When we moved to the Bay Area in 2012, our son introduced us to a couple who took us to dinner at the Olympic Club. The husband, aware that I liked to golf suggested I look into an organization called the Sons In Retirement. I checked it out on-line, in particular the golf programs and decided to join Branch 35. I also got involved in the Golf Committee of Branch 35 and this past year was named Golf Chairman to succeed Bob Garten who retired after 18 years. I also joined the NCGA as a Tournament Official. Golf now keeps me busy over 100 days a year. I managed to shoot my age for the first time on Labor Day of 2012, shooting a 73 at Crystal Springs (17 pars and one bogie) and have managed to do it a couple of times a years since then. The feat of which I am most proud is shooting 74 at Spyglass Hill when I was 75. I also won the NCGA Senior Net Championship in 2016.



NCGA Senior Net Champion 2016

"Having just turned 80 (can't believe I am an octogenarian), I have been fortunate with health, family, friends, and the ability to enjoy life, mainly on my terms. I hope your retirement is the same."