

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.

DUNCAN MACVICAR - 2017 Big Sir



Wouldn't you like to know a little more about your incoming Big Sir? I did and so initiated a request for a "Member Profile". Duncan readily agreed and we met in early December to craft this introduction. Of course, we must start with a real life story in Duncan's own words.

"In 2001, my daughter Bryn was in graduate school in New York City. Jeanne and I travelled there to help her move home the weekend of September 8-9. On Monday, September 10 we all went to the Newark airport for our flights home. We saw Bryn off on her flight and then went to wait for our flight to San Francisco. We learned that our flight was delayed due to wildfires by the runway. Eventually, they told us that our flight was cancelled since our plane

had not been able to make it to Newark. We were given two choices: stay in Newark and fly home the next day or; grab our luggage and take a taxi (in rush hour) to JFK airport. I consulted the airline guide I always carry for work and told Jeanne that we could just stay in Newark and fly out early tomorrow. Jeanne decided that she'd rather take the chance on making the JFK flight. We took the taxi, made the flight and flew home. When we woke the next morning, we learned of the horrific 9/11 attacks and the downing of United Airlines Flight 93, the flight from Newark we were supposed to catch that morning."

Duncan was born in Cleveland, Ohio. His father was a doctor and his mother, a nurse. He was the younger of two brothers. At the age of ten his family spent a year with his grandparents in New Jersey. One day, his grandfather drove him to visit the U.S. Army Military Academy at West Point, New York. He was mesmerized with the panorama of parade grounds, the big stone buildings in formation as if in a permanent state of "Parade Rest", the cadets walking around in their student uniform. He was smitten and vowed to come back as a cadet.

Duncan returned to Ohio and attended Worthington High School. Never losing sight of his dream, he excelled academically and was Co- Valedictorian of his graduating class. He served as Class President in his freshman year. He played Football and Cross

Country, and earned several letters in Wrestling. (He made the varsity wrestling team as a freshman.) Upon graduation, the faculty voted and awarded Duncan the prestigious "Hall of Fame" award for outstanding student.

When Duncan applied to West Point, he learned that his congressional district did not have an opening that year. Disappointed, he applied to MIT using his National Merit Scholarship (given to less than 1% of high school graduates). But, on his last day of school, he received a surprise phone call from his congressman offering him an appointment to West Point. Duncan entered West Point in 1961 and graduated in the Class of 1965. He finished in the top two percent of his class and qualified for follow-on graduate schooling, for which he chose an MA in Physics at UC Berkeley.



Post graduation Duncan was assigned to Vietnam and served in the Army Corps of Engineers as a staff officer and later as a company commander of a engineering company.

Charley C - Duncan's radio call sign as Commander, C Company, 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, Vietnam 1968

(Editor's note: Combat engineers - also called pioneers or sappers - provided construction, demolition or road clearing duties under combat conditions.) War is hell and Duncan returned to California with many of the symptoms of what was known then as "shell shock" from his war experiences.

His next assignment was as a junior physicist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Duncan met his wife Jeanne, a single schoolteacher, in 1970 at a party in Livermore. (At that time, Livermore was a sleepy agricultural town in the Tri-Valley area with not much to do.) It was love at first sight and the couple were engaged in January 1971 and married in April. *(Editor's note: Jeanne was the guest speaker at our September luncheon on the topic of "The Orphan Train".)* They have one daughter, and two granddaughters. Duncan and Jeanne love to visit their two granddaughters in Colorado. Periodically, the couple also "Inn-sits" at a Bed and Breakfast owned by good friends.

Duncan's second big life change in 1971 was deciding to leave the military for a marketing position at Hewlett Packard. He spent the next eleven years in various jobs, eventually landing an executive position in 1980. After a short stint marketing laser systems at Spectra-Physics, Duncan decided to pursue a role as a management consultant specializing in strategies for the high-tech industry, new business planning and evaluation, strategic plan development, and mergers and acquisitions, with a worldwide clientele. Through the course of his career he founded three high-tech

companies, one of which exited successfully, and he co-authored *Managing High-Tech Start-Ups*.

For 30 years, Duncan succeeded in all that he undertook but continued to suffer from what is now known as combat-induced "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)." Nightmares, flashbacks and flare-ups were visible symptoms of his condition. He was so sensitive to loud noises that a truck backfire would find him under the table. The symptoms were so severe that his wife (thank goodness men have wives) forced him to seek therapy, which worked out well.

One day in 2008, Duncan learned that a young man he'd recruited for West Point, Sargent Binkley, was on trial for armed robbery. Binkley suffered from PTSD as a result of working in the mass graves of Bosnia and fighting Central American drug runners. He also was hopelessly addicted to prescription painkillers for an injury. For three years, Sgt. Binkley had gone from VA hospital to VA hospital to service his addiction. Eventually, he ended up stealing from local pharmacies armed with a gun. Duncan attended his trial as he was convicted but found insane and sent to a state institution. This tragedy was personal to Duncan as he knew that there should have been an alternative where the traumatized yet deserving veteran received medical treatment, not incarceration.

A man of action, Duncan researched existing law and in 2009 drafted a bill to improve the state's alternative sentencing law, which allowed judges to sentence troubled veteran defendants to treatment vs. incarceration. He sought out the various legislative members and lobbyists, eventually getting Assembly Bill 674 passed in 2010. Although not a lawyer, he co-founded the California Veterans Legal Task Force (CVLTF), an organization that advocates for special Veteran Treatment Courts (VTCs) throughout California. In this arena, he helps to assemble teams of criminal justice professionals and service providers and he guides them toward creating the appropriate form of VTC for their jurisdictions. Since inception, CVLTF has assisted in establishing about 20 of the 31 VTC's in the 58 counties of California. These VTC's cover approximately 90% of eligible veterans. From the Sacramento Bee: "*Bruce Bronzan, President of the Network of Care, an organization that aggregates information about services available for veterans, said the need for a veterans' court is acute throughout the country. Veterans courts help address the 'underlying issues' behind veteran criminality – mental health problems, substance abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder, among others – that often develop from time in combat.*" Further, "...the suicide rate among veterans is higher than the rate of combat deaths, according to data released by the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2013."

After six active years Duncan is looking to downshift to other interests. He has found time to volunteer at his church, city and school district. He previously served as President of the Board of Community Services Agency and co-founded a group working to build homeless/low-income housing in the area. He was recognized as the "Hometown Hero" by the CSA in 2012.

Duncan loves singing and directing choral music. Here is a story from his time as president of the West Point Cadet Glee Club in his own words. "The Glee club was invited to the Ed Sullivan show in 1965. We were required to show up all day to prep for the live show that evening. I spent the day in the chaotic backstage, as talent, extras, stagehands, etc. were all running around preparing for the show. I was thrilled to meet Rudolph Nureyev, Dame Margot Fonteyn and Petula Clark. When the Glee Club director introduced me to Ed Sullivan, Ed decided to interview me on the air. So at show time, I waited in the wings rather than taking my place with the Glee Club. But at the last minute, they ran out of time and had to cut the interview from the script. So I didn't get to be on the show at all! Talk about show biz."

I hope this Member Profile accomplished its intended purpose. All of you now know a little more about Duncan MacVicar, your 2017 Big Sir. His parting message for all is to "Volunteer! Have a reason to get up in the morning. We all have talents and experience; let the world gain from them."