

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).

## CHRIS LEACH



*Editor's Note: As we just enjoyed Memorial Day, I thought it appropriate to highlight one of our members who lived through WW II. The bombing of Britain started in June 1940 with the German "Blitz", and evolved to intermittent raids from 1941-43, then to the "Baby Blitz" from Nov. 1943 – Jan. 1944 and finally, to the campaign of flying bombs (V1) and rockets (V2) from June 1944 – March 1945. The total deaths from these attacks was estimated at 43,000. This month's Member Profile starts with this member's memory of his early childhood in Wales during World War II.*

I was born in 1938 in the town of Dorking, Surrey, England. In early 1943, I was sent with my sister to a Butlins Holiday Camp in North Wales to avoid the German V bombs and stayed there until the end of the war in 1945. My Dad worked for the Ministry of Food as a principal, recounting attending cabinet meetings with Winston Churchill

presiding. *(Editor's note: During World War II, England elevated their Food Department to a cabinet level Ministry to oversee the management and production of all foods, diet and health for its citizens. The Ministry of Foods under Lord Woolton, immediately enforced rationing and promoted various diet plans. One such plan was termed a "basal diet" which consisted of potatoes, bread, vegetables, oatmeal, fat, some milk, and no meat. The plan was reviewed and vetoed by Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who enjoyed his food. Appalled at the idea of such a spartan approach, he wrote to Lord Woolton, "The way to lose the war is to try to force the British public into a diet of milk, oatmeal, potatoes etc. washed down on gala occasions with a little lime juice.")*

I was educated at St Aubyn's Rottingdean Sussex and then Marlborough College, both private schools. I graduated with a Business degree and most remember the wonderful friendships I made and the awful food we endured. (Our dining hall chefs may have continued to practice their war diet skills.)

Immediately after graduation, I entered and served my two years of National Service with Her Majesty's British Army as a Second Lieutenant. I served with the Royal Hampshire Infantry Regiment near Lemgo near Bielefeld (Old Gestapo Barracks) in Northern Germany. Our principal mission in 1957 was to constantly train to repel an attack from the Russians, previously, our ally in 1945. I recall the endless lectures on

Russian behavior and tactics and how their troops would train to dig holes in the snow and wait for days to later emerge to defend their position. We, with our cotton uniforms and inadequate shoes had a difficult time doing the same, even with the famous English “stiff upper lip” demeanor. These NATO winter exercises were joint operations so our (now) German allies would participate, positioned on our flank. While we endured the bitter cold, ate cold rations from our tins, and drank from our cold canteens, our German brethren, outfitted in their wool, winter uniforms, thick socks and winter boots, would dine on hot meals and drink from their steaming cups, provided by their meal trucks that pulled up next to their position. I wondered, who rescued who?

After my service was completed, I resigned and decided to work for British Steel. I chose the job because it required nine months of International travel per year. I specialized in export sales of hot and cold rolled sheet to Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, India and Pakistan. In the post WW II period, steel was an important, in-demand commodity for the extensive construction and manufacturing occurring throughout Europe. East Germany was a huge, highly profitable market for hot and cold rolled sheet. I also secured big sales in Scandinavia from Volvo and Saab. I qualified for a company expense account, so I stayed at the best hotels, enjoyed the most wonderful meals, and entertained clients at the many attractions around the city. My only rub during this period was having to return to my small, dingy apartment in London between trips and eat those bland English meals.

My father would periodically host formal functions which is where in 1964 I met Joe Wilson, Founder and CEO of Xerox. He offered me a job in sales in New Haven, CT. I was their first British sales rep to be hired which worked out well as they had plans to expand to England. In 1969, I was promoted and sent to Rank Xerox in London, UK as a Marketing Specialist. (*Editor's note: Rank Xerox was a joint venture between Xerox Corp and Rank Organization to manufacture and market Xerox equipment to Europe, Africa, and Asia.*) Xerox Learning Systems, at that time was known for providing excellent training such as “Professional Selling Skills” which I received. This training was excellent and helped me throughout my life.

I spent a year at Rank Xerox and was able to tailor a highly successful education plan for Scandinavia. I returned to America and worked for seven years in various sales and marketing positions with Xerox until Joe decided to leave Xerox to allow him more time to pursue his philanthropic interests. Coincidentally, after eight fantastic years I decided to move on. I joined Pitney Bowes which at that time held 90 % market share of the mail market, postage meter business and had recently expanded to computerized cash registers. I played a key role in convincing the company to enter and compete in the plain paper copier business. The copier business at that time was dominated by Xerox, IBM, and the Japanese companies. My strategy was to sell a low cost, easy to use, plain paper copier to our customer base of small businesses that used our postage meters. (Most copiers at that time used expensive, special photography paper.) I spent the next 24 years executing the company's entry and growth in this market. We achieved over \$200M of sales and I exited as Vice President for the Mid-Atlantic Region for the company.

I did well, took early retirement, and after a month's stay at home, my wife came up to me one day and said, "It's time for you to get another job." I guess they can tell when you are restless. I knew I was good at working with people and after some searching ended up as a consultant specializing in outplacement counselling, working out of Horsham, PA. I specialized in helping senior Executives find a new job and career. This turned out to be the most satisfying job that I have ever had. I worked as a consultant for the next twelve years and eventually retired at the age of 72. I don't remember how many people I placed but it was a lot. I do remember my most challenging group of thirty, laid off Managing Directors from Bear Sterns when their company narrowly avoided bankruptcy with a convenient buyout by JP Morgan. Not all ... but many were bitter, prima donnas and forgot what it was like to look for and interview for a job. Harumph!

I met my wife through my roommate who tried to get us together. After some six months we managed to finally get together on a blind date to Guy Fawkes Restaurant and Bar on 14th and 1st Ave in New York City. We immediately hit it off, had a great time, and after a period of courtship, we decided to get married. I can say that I have been happily married to my wife Dee for some 52 years. We have two children, my son David who works in Finance and Susan, my daughter who is a "Charge" Neo-natal ICU nurse at CPMC.

All in all, we have moved some twelve times and now reside in San Mateo. In retirement, my routine includes periodically attending the Peninsula Speaker series, working out in the gym (I have a personal trainer twice a week and walk two plus miles, daily), and reading the business and stock market news daily ( I love to buy "beaten down stocks"). My wife and I travel extensively. My best trip was travelling from Cairo to the Aswan Dam. Our best site visit was to Tutankhamen's Tomb. I most remember how friendly the people were to us. Our second-best trip was on a cruise from Dubai through Oman up to Jordan to visit Petra, the ancient capital of the Nabatasean Kingdom in southern Jordan.

As I reflect on my life, I have to say that my proudest moments were getting married to my wife and obtaining US citizenship in 1991. I have to say that the citizenship gauntlet process was long, and taxing on your patience at times. But, when I was finally sworn in by the judge, I felt so proud and happy to become an American, a Yank!

I will wrap this up by saying that I think SIR is a great club with very nice members. I hope to meet some of you in the coming months. Until then, a friendly "Cheerio" will do.