

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.

## Carl C. Clemm



Have you ever met a person in the Merchant Marines? Do you even know what that means? I suspect that not many of us do. Well, I am proud to say that one of our members served as a Merchant Marine and he will tell you how he qualified for a U.S. Coast Guard license and what he did in support of our national interests. He is one who can say he sailed the seven seas and thoroughly enjoyed learning about many of the seaports/countries around the world. Here is his story.

Carl Clemm was born in the coal mining town of Wilkes-Barre in Northeastern Pennsylvania. His father was a lace weaver for two decades until the business closed, and he was laid off. Struggling, he decided to start a printing business with equipment he inherited from his uncle. Carl and his two brothers helped their dad by learning how to set type, operate and maintain the printing press. Carl and his brothers still made time, with the support of their parents, for Scouting where Carl achieved the Eagle Scout rank.

Carl attended Meyers High School in Wilkes-Barre. He was active, on the wrestling team and a member of the glee and drama club. During his junior year in high school, Carl went with his Scout Troop to the Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. for a campout and tour. This led to Carl considering West Point for college. Carl started the process, but his Congressman already had his quota filled for West Point, so he offered Carl a nomination to the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York on Long Island Sound. Carl qualified and soon after high school graduation, he reported to the academy at Kings Point to start his academy experience.

*(Editor's note: The United States Merchant Marine Academy is one of the five Federal service academies (US Military - "West Point", US Naval - "Annapolis", US Air Force, US Coast Guard and US Merchant Marine - "Kings Point"). The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy was created "... to further the development and maintenance of an adequate and well-balanced American merchant marine, to promote the commerce of the United States, and to aid in the national defense." With 95% of the world's products transported over water, one can see why an effective merchant marine fleet for both commercial and military transport during peace and war is vital to the national interest.)*

Cadets are trained in marine engineering, navigation, ship's administration, maritime law, personnel management, international law, customs, and many other subjects important to the task of running a large ship. Carl chose to major in Marine Engineering because of his early experience working with machinery and electrical equipment in his father's print shop and on other projects.

During his freshman year, the Kings Point Regiment of Cadets marched in John F. Kennedy's inauguration. Carl was thrilled to see JFK and Jackie up close, as their regiment marched past the reviewing stand. Sadly, in November 1963 Carl, now a Cadet Battalion Commander, oversaw the Academy tribute to a fallen President with a 21-cannon salute as he was buried. The thunderous canons reverberated throughout the Queens and Bronx area of New York City. It was a terribly sad day.

One of the most important parts of the Kings Point curriculum is the Sea Year. Each Cadet is required to serve a full year at sea on commercial U.S. flag ships. This is usually done during their sophomore and junior years. Carl's sophomore sea time involved an around-the-world voyage in an old WWII cargo ship with stops in San Francisco, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Egypt, and Boston. His junior year sea time was on two cargo ships that travelled to South and East Africa and to several western European countries. What an experience it was for this young man to traverse the seven seas and experience each country's people and culture. He recalls, as he ported in Saigon in 1962, how surprised he was to see a US Army jeep drive up and an army sergeant get out to supervise the unloading of their cargo that was loaded in Oakland. Vietnam really did not become a common lexicon in America until two years later with the "gulf of Tonkin" incident in 1964 and the subsequent escalation of acts of war. Little did anyone know.

The day after Carl graduated from Kings Point, he flew to San Francisco and was assigned to AT&T's cable laying ship, CS Long Lines, thus beginning his career in the Merchant Marines. The primary mission of the CS Long Lines was to lay new cable to support long distance communications. A second mission was to repair damaged cables. Carl spent the next nine years as a Ship's Engineer, the last three as Chief Engineer on the CS Long Lines laying sections of a Transpacific cable, two Transatlantic cables, and several cables between Florida and the Caribbean islands. (Editor's note: Long line cable design and technology evolved over the years from coax cable in the early 1960s that could carry 128 two-way telephone conversations to the 1970s use of larger cables that could carry 3,600 two-way conversations to today's use of fiber optics which were lighter, thinner and could service 25,000 telephone conversations per fiber with a cable bundle easily consisting of a thousand fibers. Members are encouraged to view the 30-minute historic archive of the CS Longlines in action from the AT&T tech files. Click on: <https://techchannel.att.com/play-video.cfm/2011/3/21/AT&T-Archives-CS-Longlines> )

Between cable laying projects, the *CS Long Lines* was based in Honolulu. During these periods the U.S. Navy would charter the *CS Long Lines* to lay cables for them.

Whenever anyone asks Carl about these Navy cables, he says he cannot talk about it and he refers you to Tom Clancy's book "Hunt for Red October".



*Carl and Penny on the deck  
of CS Long Lines  
docked in Honolulu*

Carl always made good use of his down time as a single guy to earn a Private Pilot license, become a certified SCUBA diver, crew in weekend sailboat races, and play lots of beach volleyball with his buddies. But the best part of his time in Honolulu was when he met and married Penny. They met on a blind date setup by a mutual friend.

"We continued enjoying each other's company and after six months decided to get married with a joyous reception at the Ilikai Hotel ..." (a grand hotel in Waikiki at the time). Penny's and Carl's Honolulu friends along with many relatives travelled from Pennsylvania and California to attend. They honeymooned on the Island of Kauai.

After serving as Chief Engineer, Carl was promoted to Marine Superintendent and "came ashore" at the steamship company's Stamford, Connecticut office. A Marine Superintendent is technically the Captain's boss and oversees manning the ship, scheduling all needed shipyard work, and making all arrangements for other services needed to keep the ship and crew in good order. Management believed that Carl could be more effective managing the needs of the ship by travelling to each long-term port to supervise all activities. The result was a lot of traveling and very little time at home and in the office. So, after two years Carl and Penny decided it was time for a new career. They sold their home and moved to the San Francisco Bay area where Penny's family lived.

Here, Carl began his second career working for Varian Associates in Palo Alto. Varian was searching for someone to manage their facilities and manufacturing services and much of Carl's experience aboard ships matched their needs. During his twenty-five years at Varian, he held a variety of ever-increasing responsibilities, retiring in 2000 as Director of Facilities. Carl believes his most important achievement at Varian was development of an award-winning environmental compliance program. In 1983, Varian was recognized by the California Water Pollution Control Association's Industrial Waste Committee for completion of a successful wastewater treatment plant and selected Varian as the recipient of its Industry of the Year Award. Carl retired in 2000 to enjoy his third career as a full-time retiree.

Carl and Penny have four children, two boys and two girls. As a father, with a permanent home now, Carl loved coaching his kid's soccer and little league teams, volunteered for school and church activities and projects, went to dance recitals, swim

meets and took on leadership positions with the Boy Scouts. He was a very proud father to see both his sons achieve Eagle Scout rank. From his love of travel during his Merchant Marines experience, he and Penny would arrange numerous family trips to Europe, Hawaii, and the East Coast. They would go on cruises, travel on AMTRAK, camp and do some ski trips. His four children all graduated from college. His oldest son is an executive with Verizon Media and his oldest daughter was a VP for Deluxe Films in Los Angeles before she started her own family. Her husband is a sports agent. Carl's other daughter is also a homemaker and her husband is a general contractor specializing in building wineries in California's Central Coast. His youngest son is an executive for Uber Technology in San Francisco. Combined, Carl and Penny are blessed with 11 grandchildren including a set of twins and a set of triplets to babysit or root for on the field.

In retirement, Carl spends most of his time enjoying his grandchildren, traveling and volunteering in a variety of activities including Habitat for Humanity with fellow Sir Ron Grace, Rebuilding Together, Katrina hurricane clean-up and rebuilding with fellow Sirs Milt Wehrman, Don Cameron, and the late Duncan MacVicar, and building homes for poor families in Mexico with fellow Sirs Ron Grace and Harvey Dixon. He has served on the Board of Directors of Saint Francis High School in Mountain View for six years and was very active at Los Altos United Methodist Church where he was a longtime member of the Board of Trustees with fellow Sirs Stan Scardino, Harvey Dixon, and Jim Delong (his SIR sponsor), served on building committees with fellow Sir Bob Simon, and participated in many construction and repair projects for the church. He also participated in many of the church's outreach mission programs, was a chaperone for the youth choir tours, and with Penny, taught Sunday School classes.

This past February 6th, Carl and Penny celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. The pandemic restrictions precluded holding a grand party. However, their children agreed that would not stop them from having a celebration, so they arranged a collaborative video montage of tributes from the immediate family members (their 4 children with their spouses and the 11 grandchildren), extended family from all over the USA, English cousins and many, many friends.

The values that have guided Carl's life include spending quality time with his family and friends, focusing on worthy goals and doing his best to achieve each, giving of his time and abilities to help others in need, and continuing to learn through new experiences. His favorite quote from Winston Churchill is: *"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."*