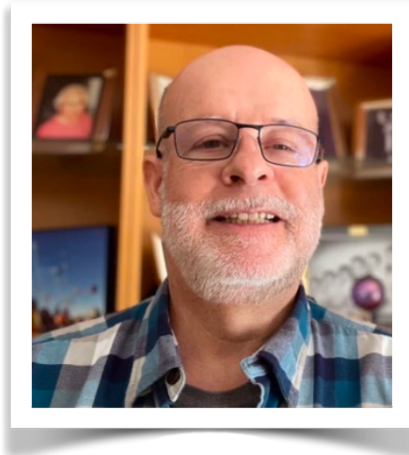


This monthly article highlights one of our branch members. We hope that you enjoy knowing a little more about your fellow members and the interesting life they have had. If you have someone you would like to nominate or if you would like to help author an article, please email the editor, Ron Nakamoto,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

Mark P. (Mark) Sarjeant



Did you know that you do not need to be liable to be sued? You only have to be alleged, to be liable! I learned early in my insurance career to never assume anything because regardless of whether a business was big or small, people are prone to make mistakes. "Trust but verify was my mantra. My memory hook was CPCU CYA, which meant Chartered Property & Casualty Underwriter Covers Your ASSets! Here is my story.

I was born in Boston, Massachusetts, the fourth child of a seven sibling English, French & Irish American family. When I was five years old, our family moved to Wilmington, Delaware after my father graduated from Boston College Law School. I remember moving again, from a row house to a single-family home and even then, with so many siblings, I never had my own bedroom until I graduated from college. I attended Saint John the Baptist's Roman Catholic Elementary School, where I became an altar boy. I also joined a Cub Scout Pack and later the Boy Scouts with a group of my friends. I have fond memories of my scouting experience. I achieved the Star ranking however, I quit scouts when my family moved back to Boston because my father had become a partner in a boutique law firm. Unfortunately my parents made me go to Boston College High School aka "BC High," a prep school leading to Boston College, my father's alma mater. My last two years of high school were not great because I was forced to go to a school not of my choice, but the upside of that time was, I learned to become self-reliant and self-confident.

In my senior year of high school, my father took another job with Kaiser Chemical Company in Oakland, California. My parents gave my older brother and me the option to fly with them or drive the family car, a 1964 Chevrolet Bel Air station wagon, across the country. Of course, we cashed our plane tickets and with our best friend, Tom, took off on our 6,000-mile adventure. Obviously, we didn't take the direct route. From Boston we drove down to Delaware then South Dakota to visit friends from our



Joe, me, Benjamin Big Elk and Tom at Mt Rushmore

Wollaston neighborhood. While there, we visited places like Mount Rushmore and did meet a member of the Sioux Nation which was memorable. We drove to Salt Lake City and our friend, Tom visited the Family History (Genealogy) Library. I never asked him what he found out about his family's history, but that memory stuck with me and much later in life I discovered much about my family history.

After Tom's research, we went out to the Great Salt Lake. This was the only body of water where I had no problem floating! On a whim, we decided to drive to the Grand Canyon, where we hiked to the bottom of the South Kaibab Trail in approximately four hours. We slept on the ground at the bottom of the canyon at Phantom Ranch. It took us approximately twelve hours to hike up the Bright Angel Trail to the South Rim. It was a once in a lifetime experience, because I swore that I would never hike the Grand Canyon again. We drove to Las Vegas and then took our final trek to our new home in Oakland. Needless to say, this was a fantastic road trip which I hope to repeat portions of someday.

I started my collegiate career at Laney Community College. Since my advisor informed me that once I received my AA degree, I would be guaranteed a spot at any UC campus. I chose Berkeley, because it had a Marching Band. I competed and was accepted into the Cal Band and played clarinet. I earned a B.A. in Social Science (or, as I like to say, I got a BA in BS).

While college was enjoyable, my most memorable experience was meeting my future wife, Maureen. I first met her during the Spring of 1971 in a Political Science Course on International Relations. I asked her to go to a club in Hayward called Frenchie, because it allowed people under 21 to dance and play pool. I expected to impress her with my skills but soon found out that Maureen was a better pool player than I as she would often play with her older brother at his home. Maureen and I have been married for over 46 years. Our son, Michael received his B.S. from UC Santa Cruz in Data Information Management as well as an MBA from San Jose State. He is a Channel Marketing Manager for a Cloud based security software company in San Jose.

After I graduated in 1972, there were not any job offers thrown my way, so I got a job with Pacific Finance Company, which was part of the Transamerica Corporation. I was trained as a loan and collection agent for individuals, who could not qualify for credit cards. After several unfulfilling years, I moved on to work for Liberty Mutual Insurance Company and qualified to become a Commercial Property and Casualty Insurance Agent. After three years with Liberty, I decided that I wanted to make insurance my career but needed more flexibility than what a direct writer would insure. I went to work for Johnson & Higgins (J&H) in San Francisco as a Commercial Casualty Insurance Broker. J&H was where my insurance education really began. I was assigned many national/international companies (e.g., American Presidents Line; Bank of America; Foremost- McKesson, Diamond Nuts, etc.) to service. I recall reviewing a contract between Sunsweet Growers and Ocean Spray Cooperatives, wherein both companies had contractually agreed to insure their respective million dollars valued juice presses while they were located at each other's processing plants (e.g., Sunsweet's prune press

at Ocean Spray's Rhode Island plant and Ocean Spray's cranberry press at Sunsweet's Yuba City's plant) on each company's General Liability (GL) Insurance policies. Even with my limited insurance experience at that time, I knew that there was an exclusion in GL Insurance policies, which would not insure property of others. I brought this concern to my immediate supervisor and after a review the consensus of the J&H insurance experts was that there was a potentially serious gap in coverage for our client. I learned from this experience to never assume! Like reading a good detective novel, I was hooked and decided to learn more about insurance, so I started my studies to become a Chartered Property & Casualty Underwriter (CPCU). *(Editor's note: CPCU is a professional designation in property-casualty insurance and risk management administered by The American Institute for Chartered Property Casualty Underwriters).* One of the first things that I learned in my CPCU studies, was that insurance is only one of four proactive risk management strategies. Also, insurance was often the most cost-effective strategy, especially for small businesses.

During the late 1980s, I decided that I wanted to start my own business as a Property and Casualty Insurance Broker for small businesses. *(Editor's note: Mark indicates insurance agents represent the insurance company, while insurance brokers are supposed to represent their clients first. Brokers own the book of business (i.e., the policies applicable to each client). Insurance agencies have contracts with insurance companies which underwrite the various policy offerings.)*

One of my most memorable clients was a non-profit organization called the Monterey Institute for Research in Astronomy that I helped insure the construction and maintenance of their observatory on the top of a 5,500-foot elevation ridge near Monterey. By 2016, my diversified client portfolio totaled approximately 200 clients. When I retired the hardest thing I had to do was to inform my clients (some of which had been my clients for over 35 years) that someone else would be handling their policies. My work ethic was to always look after my client's best interests above my own even when it was to tell them that someone else offered a better insurance program. I was always challenged by matching regulatory requirements (contracts and/or law) and risk to what was adequate mitigation measures that the business could afford. Needless to say, I am very proud of my insurance career and will readily offer advice to anyone interested in the many facets of the insurance industry and the insurance profession.

Since my Cub Scout days, I have been involved in volunteering for various activities (e.g., food drives; debris clean ups; bike rodeos), including a 30-plus-years involvement with Optimist International wherein I became the first Distinguished President of the De Anza Optimist Club of Cupertino. (This club supports the local community youth.) I've had the pleasure of sponsoring the first Pacific Central District's Communication Contest for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Scholarship Winner and witness the first award of a \$500 scholarship from the Optimist International Foundation's Endowment Fund. However, because of a chronic sciatica issue, I have curtailed my physical volunteering, but I continue my fiscal volunteering efforts for various community organizations.

Fortunately, my sciatica issues do not prevent me from biking, kayaking and swimming. I enjoy cycling and am a member of SIR Branch 35 Bike Group and the Bay Area Recumbent Cyclist (BARC). This group has monthly rides on the third Sunday of every month as well as other weekend rides which might be hosted by various BARC members. I am also a member of the Western Sea Kayakers. Paddling outings are scheduled in and around the SF Bay, the Pacific Ocean from Monterey to Mendocino and the various sloughs and rivers around the area.

Finally, I have been a member of the Terrible Adult Chamber Orchestra (TACOSV.org) since 2012. I am the clarinetist wearing the Jester's Santa hat in our Virtual Holiday Performance, which is viewable on the Terrible Adult Chamber Orchestra's You Tube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CE9Oo91iJvo>

I will end with this life observation. I have always been a believer of "Givers Gain" philosophy. Your greatness is not what you have, it's what you give!