

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.

MAX LUN



After many years on this earth, I, along with many others, sometimes ponder whether our lives were guided by destiny or our own determination. I will start this conversation by saying that my life experiences have been a mix of fortunate misses and determined gains.

My misses:

In early June 1989, I was in Beijing, China on a business trip to supervise a medical equipment installation. There was news on TV about the student demonstrations going on in Tiananmen Square. The protests that started on April 15 did not wane and in fact the crowds were getting larger. Our equipment installation and orientation were progressing per plan. I received an overseas phone call from my colleague on June 2 reporting on the situation and asked me to leave the Country ASAP which I did on June 3. The next day on June 4, the Chinese Army deployed troops and tanks to brutally suppress and bring an end to the demonstrations. The brief display of democracy and voice of the people died that day. I and my team were fortunate to be able to leave the country while we still could.

On September 11, 2001, I was at the Robert F. Peckham Federal building in Los Angeles to renew my passport when, I heard about what had happened to the World Trade Center in Manhattan. I heard that there was another airplane that was going to target the federal building in Los Angeles, and everyone was panicked, and everything was locked down. Much later, we were given the "all clear" and the building was reopened. Do you remember the news reporting all aircraft flying were grounded and all airports stayed closed for weeks?

On December 26, 2004, at 7:59am, a 9.1 magnitude earthquake ripped through an undersea fault in the Indian Ocean, propelling a massive column of water, with 100-foot waves to the shores of Sumatra and then onto Thailand. Waves traveling 500mph hit the coastal provinces of Phang Nga and Phuket 1 1/2 hours later. The death toll was nearly 5,400 including 2,000 tourists. I was there in Bangkok playing at the Bangkok Golf Club and was putting on the 3rd hole when there was a large jolt, which is why I missed my putt.

All kidding aside, it was a very tragic event. I soon received an overseas call to ask if I was all right and then the company told me to leave as quickly as I could. The people in

Bangkok were frightened but everyone was safe since Bangkok is further inland from the coastal town of Phuket still, everyone was told to stay in place.

On March 11, 2011, at 2:46 pm, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake hit the Tohoku area of Japan. A tsunami followed with 46-foot waves which swept over the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant's seawalls and then flooded the lower parts of the reactors. The resultant stoppage of reactor coolant led to three nuclear core meltdowns and three hydrogen explosions releasing radioactive contamination. I was in Tokyo on Wednesday and was sleeping when I awoke to a 6.5 earthquake that jolted the building. I was scheduled to visit the Olympus factory in Fukushima on Friday but decided to play golf in Hong Kong, so I cancelled my trip to the nearby plant and left on Thursday. The next day, the tsunami hit, and the nuclear power plant was damaged.

After that last near miss, my colleagues told me that anytime I wanted to leave they would leave together with me. I felt I was lucky in life.

Here is the rest of my story:

My parents lived in mainland China and relocated to Hong Kong after the war ended because there was more opportunity to make a living in the Hong Kong area. My three sisters came before I did, then another sister followed me and the last one was my brother. The education we received in HK was British based, so we wore uniforms to school and learned under a strict set of disciplinary rules. I would say that I was not a good student and often was thinking of other things during class. In my junior year of high school, I thought about my future and since I wasn't interested in manual labor, I decided to pursue a college degree to get a white-collar job. At that time in Hong Kong, there were only two universities, and my grades were not good enough to gain entry for the highly competitive openings. The only way was to pursue taking the entrance exams for admission which I did. The exams were indeed tough, and I would say only the top 2-3% would be admitted to the school. I think I was lucky, and because I did love and excel at math and the sciences which I self-learned, I did well on the exams and did gain entry to the University Polytechnic in Hong Kong. Four years later, I graduated with an Electronics Engineering degree.

I immediately went to work in one of the Hong Kong government hospitals in the Biomedical Engineering department responsible for the selection, testing, training, and maintenance of all the medical equipment in the hospital system. They say Biomedical Engineering was the only engineering discipline that developed post WWII. (*Editor's note: William Kolff, Ph.D. conducted research that led to the advent of kidney dialysis in the late 1940's. Charles Hufnagel, M.D. invented the first artificial heart valve, successfully implanted in 1952. Since that time, a number of medical diagnostic and treatment devices have been developed and approved for use.*) The job was interesting and challenging but one day, in my spare time, I sat and contemplated my life, and how this job would continue for the next 30 years to my retirement. I thought, how predictable and boring that would be, so I quit.

I soon found a new job with Varian Medical. They hired me and sent me to their plant in San Jose for product training. I found San Jose vibrant with nice places to go and visit, good dining, like Hong Kong had and a very comfortable climate. I was promoted to a senior engineer and worked there for the next four years. At that time, I decided to immigrate and secured a Green Card to work in the US.

While at Varian, I met my wife in the breakroom one day. I had seen her before but never got much past the smile and hello acknowledgement. She came up to me on one of those occasions and gave me her Sony Walkman and asked me to "fixit" since she knew I was an engineer. I did and she then invited me to go with her and some fellow workers to happy hour at a bar near our workplace. I did and until then I had never had an alcoholic drink. I didn't know what to order so I just tried what I heard someone else order, a Vodka with lime. Alcohol tasted good. Things worked out and we have been happily married for some 30+ years



*Max with wife at
Old Town San Diego
visiting a historic cigar shop*

After several years at Varian, an opportunity arose to work for Coherent Laser as their Technical Engineering Manager servicing Asia. I moved to Fremont, CA and soon settled into a comfortable engineering lifestyle of travelling, servicing, experiencing some good dining and again travelling to the next location and job. It wasn't too long after, that a sales/marketing position opened so I asked my boss about it and whether I should apply or not. He asked me "Do you know the difference between a pet and a man? Well, you can feed your pet the same food every day and he will be content and satisfied. But, if you feed the man his most favorite meal, every day, ... well he would soon reject that and want something else. You should go do something else." I did and with his recommendation, switched to Sales and Marketing, first, providing technical support, then providing direct servicing, and after a few years was promoted to Regional Manager. I travelled every month to Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Korea. I was always hiring new agents and service people in the various countries. I did that for the next six years and received the company's "Rising Star" award. Unfortunately, this was in the 1990's when the recession hit and Coherent along with many other companies cut back on everything to survive. One week, after receiving the award I got laid off. But, my free time didn't last very long as I found a new job with Olympus Medical to establish a direct Sales and Service operation in Asia. Prior to my assuming the new position, Olympus was selling their products through third-party agents. I believed a direct to customer, sales and service operation would be more beneficial to Olympus's growth in Asia. Olympus Medical products were advanced medical devices such as VISERA (an integrated surgical video endoscope and THUNDERBEAT, the world's first energy device to integrate both advanced bipolar and ultrasonic energy used for surgical dissection and hemostasis (sealing of vessels) that changed the way doctors could diagnose and treat patients. Since I had a good

reputation and many contacts in Asia the operation grew very fast and within two years, we had gained 100% market share with the endoscopic equipment and a robust 70% growth for other medical devices. Olympus maintained this position for the next twenty years until I retired.

As a technical consultant my motto was "If you cannot fix the machine, you need to fix the people." My motto as a Sales/Marketing Manager was "Close the deal and make the money". My motto as a Managing Director was "Own the market" which we did. I decided to retire early after so much travel and success to "go do something else".

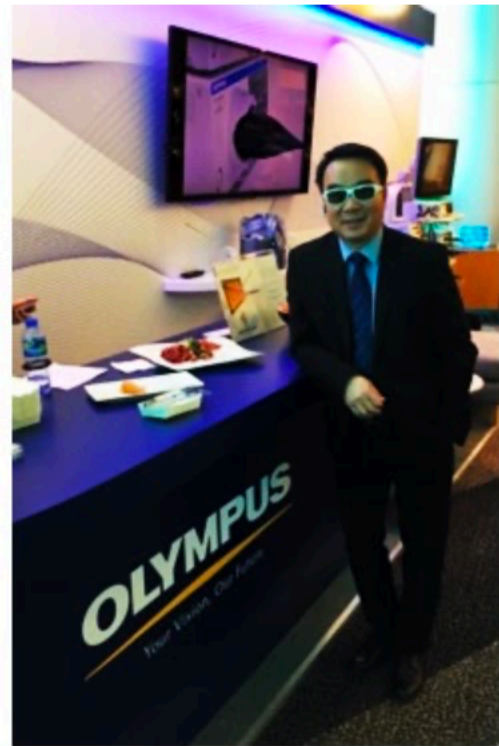
In retirement, I think you should have at least 20 hobbies to master, enjoy, and keep yourself challenged all the time. At 40, I started to think about what I would do when I retired, so I started working on those hobbies from that time. One of my favorite hobbies is cooking, more specifically French cooking. For this hobby, I enrolled in a cooking class in Hong Kong for about 9 months. I've since expanded my style and branched out to Asian fusion type dishes to include Oxtail stew and Sous Vide, cooking caramelized onion soup with both French and Asian flavors. I continue to sharpen my skills and plan to one day enroll in the Michelin Star Culinary Training School in Adge, France.

Some of my other hobbies include, golfing, RV'ing, camping, driving, bicycling, diving, ping pong, and team activities. I've learned about cigars and have to say that the Cuban ones are the best and I've collected and have a stash in a Hong Kong location since the U.S. has restricted imports. I really enjoy a good cigar with all kinds of alcoholic beverages.

I'll conclude by summarizing my life philosophy. I think we have four stages to our lives.

- Stage 1 is between 1 - 20 years old when you grow up and study.
- Stage 2 is between 21 - 40, when you work hard, play hard.
- Stage 3 is between 41 - 60, when you make your mark.
- Stage 4, the final stage, between 61 - whenever, when you slow down and enjoy.

This last stage, so far, is the most satisfying time of my life when everything slows down. You have your life accomplishments and experiences to remember, and when you can, you just pull out a good Cuban cigar and drink some cognac as you watch the sun set and say, "Every day is a good day, and I had a good day today."



Max at a medical expo in the Hong Kong Convention Center

(Editor's Note: Max was a regular participant in our golf activity and would often partner up with Peter Wong, his sponsor and longtime friend, Balbir Kalsi and Man Tran whom he met at SIR. They have made great memories together smoking their cigars and talking it up on the "19th (watering) hole". Max has since purchased and built a home in the Las Vegas area where he can watch the desert sunsets while listening to the occasional cricket's chirp.)



Max as spokesperson for the City of Las Vegas?