

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).

## Bob Fisher



As a child, I remember my "Papa" (grandfather), saying ".Sssh...Don't scare dem fish. Worms fall from dat tree up here. Dey'll love dos worms. Dats fo tru!" And "Sho nuff", on the first drop of my line the fish took the bait! What a thrill! I wouldn't go home empty handed this time!

My colorful Cajun parents moved across the Sabine River from Louisiana to Orange, Texas before I was born. There, dad found better employment as an accountant for American Bridge, the division of US Steel that later built the Bay Bridge. For recreation, my dad and maternal grandfather, "Papa", continued their Cajun fishing and hunting traditions. There were drives to bayous, me at age 5 sitting with Papa in the backseat. He always carried a flask in his pocket and

would sneak me sips along the way. It's a miracle they were able to teach me, a little bit tipsy, how to use a cane pole with a bobber or bait a hook with a worm or a cricket. I remember feeling so grown up when I graduated to a Zebco spinning rod and reel with a bass lure. My biggest haul was a two pounder! I won the prize for the largest catch of the day, a big pat on the back from dad. I also learned that cleaning fish was not nearly as much fun as catching them. "Fo sure!"

Dad designed the boat of his dreams on the living room floor using thick rolls of discarded paper from work. With a carpenter's assistance on the frame, he completed the rest of the project with very little help. Of course, every boat needs a boat house, so Dad built that too. After months of labor the twenty-foot cabin cruiser finally launched into the Gulf of Mexico. Dad slowed the motor and released a fifteen-foot shrimp trolling net into the water. Fifteen minutes later the net half full of shrimp was promptly dumped into a huge cooler full of ice. After the big catch Mom and Dad invited all the neighbors to sit on stools in our garage to peel shrimp and catch up on the latest news. What the neighbors peeled they took home. Drinking a few home brews, courtesy of my folks, completed the evening. Yep, they brewed beer too.

I attended a substandard Catholic elementary school in Orange and paid little attention to my studies. I was thirteen when Dad accepted a promotion to assistant plant accountant in Gary, Indiana, at that time a thriving steel town up north. The move changed my life dramatically.

Beginning the eighth grade in a new environment with students who have been together since kindergarten is a difficult task under the best of circumstances. Making matters worse, I had a southern accent with a twist and found myself a year behind my classmates in education. Fortunately, I made one great friend in Larry, a classmate, neighbor, and paperboy. I soon became the checker champion of the class. Larry taught me a few moves in chess and a friendship was born. He transformed that lonely eighth grade year and became a lifelong friend.

I finally got my academic self-pointed in the right direction by the ninth grade. For extracurricular activities in high school, I enjoyed the theater group, acting in "Our Town" and singing in "The Music Man" and other plays. I enjoyed running track, public speaking, and served as Senior Class Treasurer and Chemistry Club President.

My friend Larry's paper route included Karen's house and they dated for our four years in high school. We three were very close friends and all moved on to Indiana University in Bloomington. Her first day on campus, Karen met Jan becoming friends at first sight and soon Karen had me calling Jan for a date, sparking yet another life-long romance. Jan and I dated for four years before we were married. We now have "suddenly" been married fifty-three years while Karen and Larry have passed fifty-five. Who would have guessed?

Strangely, I have wanted to be a dentist since I was seven years old! I really liked my dentist as a child. I mentioned to my parents that I might want to make that my profession, and they supported the concept from the get-go. In dental school I worked part time as an admitting clerk at a hospital to help pay the bills. Jan worked as a children's librarian and storyteller for young children. I realized my DDS dream by graduating from Indiana University School of Dentistry in 1970 and can happily say I graduated with minimum educational debt.

Our nation was in the midst of the Vietnam War and my draft deferment ended upon graduation. Fortunately, my orders stated, "Letterman Hospital", Presidio of San Francisco! Such a deal! Dentists entered the Army with a rank of Captain with no change in rank after the two-year obligation. I gained pivotal professional skills those two years, learning that I enjoyed treating children and that I had an affinity for training new assistants.

Jan and I relished drinking in the sights, sounds, restaurants and culture of that great city which is still our all-time favorite. We learned that not all wine came in a box! We enjoyed playing tour guide for our midwestern guests showing off the sights from the Golden Gate Bridge, not far from our front porch to Twin Peaks, Chinatown, and the Condor on Broadway. When our first son was born at Letterman Hospital the total bill was \$9. I'm here to say he has been worth every penny!

As grateful as I was to have the unique experience in the army, the call of civilian life and pursuing my second dental dream of working with children exclusively in private practice won the day. Fortune smiled upon me again when I was accepted to the two-year Pediatric Dental Residency program at the Children's Hospital in Dayton Ohio. Our second son reluctantly calls Dayton his birthplace, wishing it were San Francisco like his brother. The five of us, including two babies and a very intelligent Heinz variety dog,

survived on a \$7,000 stipend from the hospital and the GI Bill of \$2,000. Jan, as always, stepped up to care for two babies and all of home life as I was neck deep in studies and taking emergency calls every other night. Strangely, I count those two years as the best learning experience of my entire dental education. The hospital-based program allowed daily access to treating the most compromised patients with significant medical conditions, sometimes requiring general anesthesia in the operating room.

After completing my residency program, we felt we "Left our Hearts in San Francisco ". Scrapping together our meager savings we shipped our few belongings to a Fremont apartment. We bought a home in Palo Alto in 1975 when it was relatively affordable thanks, once again, to the GI Bill, and Jan's dad who loaned us additional funds for the down payment.

Two years later I had to yield to the itch to start my own practice from scratch. San Jose was growing fast so I, with Jan acting as a 50% partner, found a location in San Jose, set up the office and got it running. I treated the gamut from healthy to the most challenging children's cases with significant special needs. I found it particularly rewarding when a very nervous child came in fussing but left thirty minutes later with a smile on their face thanks to a dedicated professional staff, a child-friendly environment, and a special toy from the toy box. I worked long enough to enjoy the honor of servicing the children of my former patients. The practice challenged me to grow in areas I found very difficult, but my drive to serve drove me to accept the challenges learning a great

deal along the way. Balancing patients, parents, staff, and family life was an ongoing ever-changing process.



*Standing on the Seventh Continent. Antarctica*

At the age of fifty-eight I brought on an associate, soon-to-be-a partner. We practiced together in harmony for the next ten years when I knew it was time to transition to retired life. I'm still in communication with several of my exceptional team via Facebook and gathered this month with six of them to laugh over tales of the antics we played on each other. I had great passion for my practice of pediatric dentistry and wouldn't have traded it for anything. I feel very, very lucky indeed.

In my retired life I relished the opportunity to volunteer at Hidden Villa in Los Altos as a guide for elementary school children exploring the wilderness, farm animals and educational garden. This community service perfectly matches my appreciation of children and nature at the same time. I'm also very involved in photography and am a



*SCUBA diving with my two sons in Kauai*

six-year member of the Palo Alto Camera Club. My other interests include backpacking in the high Sierra, SCUBA diving in Hawaii, gardening, travel, running, and working out.

Our son Jeff attended Palo Alto High School and enjoyed soccer, baseball, skiing and golf. He attended UC Santa Barbara and now lives with his girlfriend in San Diego and works in the restaurant industry. He enjoys running along San Diego Bay daily and

completes three half marathons a year with very good times. Our second son, Tim, played soccer and baseball and as an active drummer, hosted many band practices in our garage. He loved skiing at Squaw Valley and attended the University of Colorado at Boulder, with world class skiing nearby. He works in the design industry in San Francisco. Our two grandkids, Riggs, a boy and Vivienne, a girl, are suddenly ten and eight! How did that happen? They call Burlingame home. The family is now the proud owners of a long-awaited puppy. The kids love it!

We have been so fortunate to provide weekly childcare and field trips for our grandchildren for their entire lives. We delight in watching them develop and grow and grow. They delight in measuring themselves next to 'GrandJan' who's getting shorter. They can't wait to pass her by! We never take our ability to see them regularly for granted, knowing it doesn't have to be this way. We feel we are truly blessed.

My good friend, Peter Thurston sparked my interest in SIR and sponsored my membership in January 2016. I congratulate all those who have volunteered so much time and energy to make Branch 35 the vital organization that it is. I have sponsored several new members and very much enjoy the camaraderie around the lunch table. I particularly appreciate the stimulating lectures on wide ranging topics. Our leadership keeps finding a way to tap into the amazing talent the Bay Area has to offer.

The things I have learned and repeat to myself:

- If you want to call a friend or take a trip to repair a relationship, do it soon. The window of opportunity can close very suddenly leaving you with regret.
- Staying fit limits the number of pills in your pill box.
- Practicing kindness benefits the giver and receiver.
- Comparing often leads to unhappiness.
- Be happy, be positive, life is good!