

Mike Berry

Mike was born in 1937, to an Irish family living in 'The Midlands' in the UK. Actually in a small area known as 'The Black Country' in recognition that here is where the Industrial Revolution began, heavily dependent on the many coal mines in the area. His mother moved from Ireland along with her parents, two sisters, and five brothers, looking for work. The small town that they lived in was Wednesfield, a corruption of Woden's field. Woden was the god of war, there were battles in the area as early as AD 900.

Mike was one of 6 children, all born in the UK, 4 boys and 2 girls, all given Irish first names. His early childhood was in the shadow of World War II. He gave a presentation to SIRS 176 on 'A child's view of WW II' and was surprised in how far back his memory went!

At age 10 he successfully passed an entrance exam to Grammar School. He actually started the school one year sooner than he should, only to discover he had to redo the last year in order to be old enough to leave. From school he signed up to be an articled clerk to a local Chartered Accountant (kind of like a CPA), a step that would take 5-7 years to complete. Today the same step requires a college degree. California equates the mode Mike took as a BA in Economics. The best part is that Mike met his wife Jan, who was an audit clerk at the same firm.

There were two options on qualifying as a chartered accountant – stay in the profession, or join an industrial company as a potential corporate accountant. At that time some of the larger companies were looking for accountants to take them into the new world of computing. Mike joined T.I. – not Texas Instruments, the English T.I.- Tube Investments, specializing in precision tubes. An example would be hypodermic needles, they are in fact a 'tube'. There is a story, maybe apocryphal, that in 1933 a US company sent over to the UK a tube that they claimed was the 'smallest in the world'. TI. Sent it back with theirs's inside it!

The winter of 1978/79 was one of the worst in many years in the UK. Continuous snow for 3 months, below zero temperatures for weeks. Mike received a phone call in February from his former American boss, now back in the US and a VP with Amdahl in Silicon Valley, a maker of IBM look-alike computer systems. He noted that it was 72 degrees in California total blue skies, was Mike interested in moving to California? "You bet!" After weeks, many nights of heart searching, Mike, Jan, and their two children, Andrea (16) and Nick (13), made the decision to move. Their families were quite supportive albeit anxious. Mike moved first, in June 1979, found a house in San Jose which Jan flew out to confirm, and Jan and the kids moved in July. The whole experience proved breathtaking and full of new images and people, and weird spelling! Their Old English sheepdog made the trip too, and his ticket cost more than the family members!

Jan moved into Banking, a decision which would lead to a VP Branch Manager position at Washington Mutual and would provide a rich set of friends. Andrea submerged herself in the 'scene' immediately, including the accent, Nick took a while longer. Mike suggested he and Nick join a guitar/folk singing group which provided years of fun, musical growth, and lots of friends. Nick became a very accomplished guitar player and songwriter. Mike just tagged along.

In 1983 Mike was appointed the manager of a world-wide consulting service that

Amdahl provided to hardware clients. This appointment led to many travels abroad for Mike, and for Jan, many frequent flier miles. The experience also included speaking opportunities for Mike and many, many friends for Mike and Jan; numerous who still exist in retirement.

Jan retired in 1998, tired of the pressure of mergers on mergers which had become a feature of the banking business.

In 1999 Mike and Jan moved to Windsor to the house in which they still live.

Mike worked a while longer, Joining Sybase in Emeryville (later Dublin) and helped Sybase launch consulting services. He retired in 2003. It was in late 1979 Mike tried the Windsor Gold Course, met Phil Andersen. Mike soon joined SIRS.

In due course was Little Sir and then Big Sir. He immersed himself in golf (not to any great accomplishment but lots of new friends). He also jumped into a number of volunteer opportunities including Traffic School Teaching, Free tax services for older people, and Membership Chair at SIRS 176 golf.

Jan hit major balancing problems and falls, a number of surgeries, some of which worked, some did not, and recently was diagnosed with heart problems. In 2022 Mike and Jan lost Andrea who passed away after many years of fighting medical issues. Nick lives nearby, in Santa Rosa.

Jan's family in the UK are all gone while Mike has one older sister still hanging on.

There are still friends in the UK, now only by email, phone and sometimes video.

So for now, Mike is feeling like it's time to pull up the drawbridge. A balancing problem he developed has impacted his golf, and Jan continues to need a good deal of care and support.