

## **Ward Tomsen**

I was born in Livermore, Ca. in 1940, and the youngest of four brothers. My parents owned and operated the Golden Rule Creamery and Restaurant in downtown Livermore during World War II, and if you wore a military outfit, you ate for free. I had two older brothers, Wayne 12 years and Jerry 10 years older and an almost second family with me and my 1 ½ year older brother Bob. When I was 4, my dad sold the business and moved to Willits Ca. where he bought a large parcel of heavily forested land and built a lumber mill and dry kiln on Outlet Creek north of Willits. He logged some of the land and cut and dried lumber for the market, and did very well. As a child, I can remember the spawning of the Salmon behind the mill, where the stream was solid with Salmon by the thousands. We were never short of fish to eat. I started school in Willits and then my dad sold the business and moved to Santa Rosa where he decided to retire. I started the third grade at South Park Elementary School, then to Burbank Elementary, Santa Rosa Junior High, then the first graduating class of Herbert Slater Junior High and the last graduating class of Santa Rosa High School, when it was the only Public High School in Santa Rosa. There are now 5 public high schools. I then graduated from Santa Rosa Junior College and then attended Sacramento State 1 ½ years.

In the meantime, in 1960, I met my future wife Pat at SRJC where we started dating. She was the head song leader and I was the president of the only fraternity on campus. We made quite a couple. In 1961 myself and several buddies decided to join the US Coast Guard Reserves (or be drafted by the Army) and spent 6 month on active duty and then 5 ½ years on active reserve, which meant 2 weeks a summer on duty and then 1 weekend a month at Reserve meetings. On release from the 6 months active duty, it was too late to enroll at Sac. State to finish graduation. So I decided to get married and did so on Jan. 7th 1962 and planned on completing college that spring. Now I need to go back and set the stage for the rest of my life. My dad's retirement lasted less than a year, and he had to get back involved in something. He built 3 homes in Santa Rosa with his brother at his side, then bought Weeks Hardware Store, in downtown Sebastopol, that was established in 1906 by Hod Weeks. It was a thriving business and soon after he found a great need for people to get work done on their rural pumping systems. He started doing pump work and then, in 1949, he decided that he needed to get a well drilling rig to get water for all these local developing properties. In 1951 he sold the hardware store and then became "Weeks Drilling and Pump Co." At that time the office was behind the hardware store on Weeks Way and the yard was what is now the City of Sebastopol Park. Later, in 1962, we moved to our present location on Hwy. 12 just east of Sebastopol. In the meantime, my older brothers had served 1st in the Navy and 2nd in the Army and then went to work at the business. I worked summers from my sophomore year on as a driller's helper and then back to school in the fall. As I was about to start my last semester at Sac. State, shortly after marriage, I got a call from one of my brothers and he said they needed me to come to work at Weeks as soon as possible. Pat and I discussed it and after a while, we decided I should probably do that. Our only income was from Pat's job and we were living in a very small room over a garage. I needed to go to work!!! In retrospect, as I look back, it was probably the best decision I ever made. I finished my education in the school of hard knocks.

They told me the day I came to work I was going to need to take over one of the drilling rigs. I started my job from the top down. I ran a drill rig for 10 years, and, in those days, we worked 6 days a week and long hours every day to get the jobs done. Saturdays, I got to do all the billing and office paper work that stacked up during the week. It turned out, I got 3 days a month off, as 1 weekend was my CG Reserve meetings. Ah yes, the good old days. Pat and I had 2 sons, Mike and Jeff who brought us 2 beautiful daughter-in-laws, 4 grandchildren and now 2 twin great-grand-children. We are blessed and life is good.

My Dad passed away unexpectedly, following surgery, at the age of 55, when I was at SRJC. It was obviously a very huge loss for my mother, brothers and me. We were all very dedicated to the business and continued its operation, with each of us having diverse personalities and talents, we were able to grow and build the business to the point that it now is managed by the 4th generation of the Thompson family, and one of the largest drilling and pump companies in the state. Our mom continued working at the company until her late 90's and lived to almost 102. She was an amazing woman.

I loved playing basketball, and was the MVP at SRHS in my senior year. I continued to play in City League until my Early 40's. I also played golf and have enjoyed the comradery with the Windsor Senior Men's and the SIR Golf groups. I also loved deer and elk hunting and trout fly fishing over the years with many friends.

In the mid 60's, I got involved with the local Associated Drilling Contractors branch of the state organization, now the California Groundwater Association. I became very active on the branch and state level and was State President in 1977 and 1978. To this day, we still attend branch and state board meetings and annual conventions, now to see the many wonderful friends we have established over the years. In 1977 (another huge drought year) we had over 1200 attendees at our State Convention at the Sahara Tahoe Hotel at Stateline, our largest attendance to that date. Our luncheon speaker was State Attorney General, George Deukmejian, soon to be Governor of California. What a wonderful down to earth man. He was only our luncheon speaker because our Keynote Banquet speaker was the famous Hollywood entertainer and then U.S. Senator from California, George Murphy. He gave such an inspirational talk that nearly everyone in the audience of nearly 800 people stood in a long line to shake his hand.

Meanwhile, during the late 70's drought, I was overseeing and managing 11 drill rigs, 3 of which were working around the clock and 10 pump rigs, with a total of 75 employees. I was a little busy, but I loved the work and the wonderful and energetic employees that worked long hours to get the job done. In the 80's I got involved in environmental drilling, which we did all over the state with 4 rigs and crews for about 20 years. A lot of that work was in Silicon Valley.

In 1988, I was given The Contractor of the Year Award by the CGA and in 2005, Pat and I were given the only ever CGA Humanitarian Award for our work in Thailand

In 1993, I convinced my wife that we needed to see other parts of the world, as our son Jeff had done in his 20's, so I planned a trip where we went to Hong Kong and Singapore, each for a week and then to Bali for 2 weeks. An amazing trip, and we were hooked on traveling. Early the next year, we were invited to a friend's house for dinner and she also invited another couple whom we had met, but never got to know, Phil and Jeanne Anderson. It was a life changing event. They told us about their Santa Trips they had been taking for a few years and asked us to join them in December for a trip to

many parts of Europe to play Santa to orphanages, hospitals and old age homes, etc. We accepted, knowing we would probably not see them very often as they already had established wonderful relationships with people from all over the U.S. As it turned out, we were inseparable for the next 30 years, traveling the world together playing Santa as well as many of our own trips including cruises, renting large boats and sailing the canals and rivers of France on 3 occasions from 1 to 2 weeks. Over those years we cruised or sailed or rafted on the Yangtse, Nile, Amazon, Rio Negro, Shotover, St. Lawrence, Guilin and many other rivers, seas and oceans, bringing cheer and goodwill to the world. In that 30 year span we have visited more than 60 countries around the world. How could you ask for more!!!!

Other than Santa Trips, our most memorable trips were the year I retired, when, in Asia, a horrible Tsunami struck many countries killing over 230,000 people and displacing millions. We decided we needed to go and help where we could. In 2 weeks we received donations from CGA members of over \$7,000 to help those in need. We traveled to Phuket, Thailand, rented a car and drove about 100 km north to the Khao Lak and Takua Pa area where we met some friends that were already there helping. We were there to help in any way, help build homes, cleanup areas, etc. As it turned out, they found out we knew about wells and pumps and trying to de-contaminate many well that were ruined by the flooding. We had planned on working 3-4 days a week and then do some site seeing in a new country for us. It turned out, we were getting many phone calls a day from NGO's that heard we could help with wells. The next 6 weeks, we worked 10-12 hours a day hiring people and doing and overseeing many well projects in the area. We took one day off to go on an elephant ride. We met so many wonderful people there that became our friends. We hated to leave, but decided we would come back the next year to continue our work, which we did and spent another 5 weeks helping so many people. We felt honored and blessed that we could make a difference in so many people's lives.

Phil invited me to join the SIR Branch 176 in 2005, shortly after my retirement at Weeks. I have really enjoyed meeting many new people and the camaraderie of the group. I am especially honored to have recently received the Distinguished Service Award and the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award from Branch 176. Thank You!!!!