



A HISTORY SONS IN RETIREMENT BRANCH 172

INTRODUCTION

On July 23, 1958 the idea of the Sons In Retirement was conceived in San Mateo, California. The driving principle was that man has a need to be social and that natural desire does not end in retirement. When a group of men get together for lunch the interests of a single man may be shared by all. When the same luncheon group extends their interest beyond lunch and engages in common activities, more individual enjoyment and satisfaction is possible, and the members with the help of their new friends may even increase their knowledge of that activity and become better at it. Golf may be the exception.

IN THE BEGINNING

In the early nineteen nineties, just east of downtown Twain Harte, on the corner of Middle Camp Road and Sierra Pine Street was a small nine hole golf course called Sierra Pines. For five bucks a retiree could play golf all day. The course was not long; just a few gentle hills to climb and a golfer could play in the quiet of a rural atmosphere and the course was not far from cabin or home.

Once a month, several of the golfers would travel to Sonora for a luncheon with other retirees all members of Sons In Retirement Branch 136. By all accounts the fellowship was good and for only \$8.00 the food was not bad. But by the time lunch was over and with the time it took to return to Twain Harte (no bypass back then), getting nine holes in at "the Pines" was out.

By the late summer of 1993 the idea of a "New" Twain Harte Sons In Retirement Branch, based in Twain Harte, was being discussed. Sir William "Bill" Kerr, a Twain Harte resident and local retired business man took the lead. Sir Bill and small group of buddies needed seventy five men interested in forming a new Sirs Branch and receive a Charter from Sir Inc. It didn't take long to get signatures. By the late fall

of 1993, Sir Bill had 100 names, forty one from Branch 136 and the balance from Twain Harte residents. Rumor has it that Sir Bill, though he didn't play golf, was at Sierra Pines each morning and your foursome got a tee time only if the group signed on to join the new Branch.

Branch 172 received its Provisional Charter on 1/25/1994 and the Incorporated Charter on 10/21/1994.

Of the 100 potential Sirs who signed the Application To Form A New Branch Of Sons In Retirement, Inc., eleven of these gentlemen, on January 25, 2014, celebrated twenty years as a Sir in Branch 172. Sirs: Dick Anderson, Dick Bazerra, Mike Eachus, Gerry Emerson, Gordon Kavanaugh, Vernon Krell, Carl Nunes, Bob Nylander, Bill Smith, Bill Steel, and Don Wooldridge.

THE ORGANIZATION

On January 6, 1994, the first luncheon was held at Twain Harte Golf Club. Lasagna, salad and a dessert was served to sixty-six new Sirs. Sirs Inc. Area Governor Bill Allen attended to install Officers and Directors elected at the meeting.

Officers:

Big Sir: Ben Vande DeVoord
Little Sir: Hal Lohman
Secretary: Bill Kerr
Asst. Secretary: Dick McDonald
Treasurer: Chuck Cuppett
Asst. Treas.: Charles Shields

Directors:

Pete Peterson
Gene Gartner
Gene Morales
Gordon Kavanaugh
Ross Jones
Jack Stein

Minutes of that first meeting recorded different spelling on last names and one different surname on the elected Officers and Directors than a Bulletin published later. First meetings often go that way. The spelling used here is from the portion of the Bulletin that survived.

Chairmen for activities of Golf, Travel, and Bridge were appointed. Membership, Attendance, Luncheon, Chaplin, Bulletin, chairmen were selected from the "many" volunteers. The Song Leader was Dick Anderson.

Through March 1994, the Luncheon was held at Twain Harte Golf Club (THGC). By April, the membership had grown to 141 and the Luncheon was moved to Kelly's Kitchen on Hwy 108 above Twain Harte. There is no record of the number of attendee at the Luncheons in 1994 only and handwritten note in the margin of one of the Executive Meeting Minutes "93 lunches served".

Elected officers as the Branch Executive Committee (BEC) meet once a month to deal with organizational issues of the Branch. Three issues dominated the Branch Executive Committee (BEC) from the Branch's first meetings in 1994 until 2010: Luncheon location, Branch membership size, and Attendance.

For the first three months of 1994 the Luncheons were held in the small clubhouse at Twain Harte Golf Club (THGC). By April, the membership was at 141 members and the THGC was not able to effectively serve 100 plus customers who ordered individually. The BEC decision was made to move to Kelly's

Kitchen located on Highway 108 just above Twain Harte. Kelly's had been a main restaurant in Tuolumne County since 1958. Though crowded at times, members enjoyed the atmosphere and the personal care given by the owner. By late 1996, ownership had changed and the service suffered. The Branch was informed that the restaurant was closing "for several months" for repairs.

In January 1997, the Branch decided to move to the newly opened facilities at the Moose Lodge on Longeway Road. Comments from Sirs recorded in BEC minutes from that time were most unkind to the service and the food at the Moose Lodge. So in January 1999, the Branch luncheon was again at THGC for that calendar year. In 2000 the luncheon was moved to the Twain Harte Inn, the largest venue in Twain Harte for entertaining. The BEC minutes for the period of 1997 through 2000 have been lost. So the discussions on the decisions that lead to these moves are not documented.

In 2001 the Twain Harte Inn's financial situation and holding kitchen staff became an issue for the Branch. A special BEC meeting was called on June 15th and the minutes recorded the following:

"Big SIR Allen reported about the actions that the owner and management of the Twain Harte Inn took on Thursday, June 7th, at which time Big SIR Allen was informed that the price of the lunch was being raised from \$9 to \$11. There had been neither previous notification nor any discussion. The owner told the Big SIR that there would be no negotiations, take it or leave it. Considering that, in addition to the price increase, the quality of food and service had deteriorated, the Big SIR with the verbal concurrence of the board elected to seek other alternatives for the luncheon meeting."

Even though there was a later consideration by the management of the Twain Harte Inn, the Branch in December 2001 elected to move back to Kelly's Kitchen for the 2002 year luncheons.

In 2002 the Twain Harte Inn burned "to the ground". There was no suggestion in *The Union Democrat* story on the fire that the Branch 172 had any involvement in the fire.

The membership continued to struggle with space for luncheons and continued to be a frequent topic for discussions at the BEC meetings. By November 2003, still struggling with space, the Branch voted that membership be capped at 150.

In March 2004 the average attendance at lunch was only 64% and still luncheon space was a BEC issue. After a particularly long and acrimonious discussion at the March BEC meeting, Big Sir John Kinsfather, "ordered" the luncheon chairman to set tables at Kelly's to accommodate a minimum of 100 Sirs.

Six (6) months later in September 2004, the Branch was notified that Kelly's had been sold and would be again closed for the balance of the year. Big Sir John Kinsfather, Little Sir Jim Johnson and Sir Gordon Molly hastily met with management of THGC and arranged that the October luncheon meeting, which was in two weeks, would be at the Twain Harte Golf Club.

Still, in the October 2004 BEC meeting, the membership cap came under scrutiny.

"Past Big Sir Bill Steel expressed his concern that the 150-member cap was preventing good people from becoming Sirs, and requested that the Executive Committee consider increasing the membership cap. Discussion ensued. Big Sir Kinsfather requested that the Committee let the attendance chairman and the membership chairman work together for 2 or 3 months to determine if any members are habitually not attending before taking any action to raise the membership cap."

Throughout the balance of 2004 and into 2006 the Branch continued attempts to mediate the management of the luncheons. BEC minutes for October, 2006 recorded a dispute as:

“...the Big Sir met with the Golf Club’s caterer immediately after last month’s luncheon, when approximately 25 Sirs did not get a full meal served to them because the new caterer, employed by the Golf Club, did not prepare enough of the main course. The caterer stated that too many Sirs took more food than they should have, even though her staff was serving the main course, and that she would not cook for us again.

In an effort to resolve the many disputes on service and cost in January 2007 the Luncheon Chairman “met with Twain Harte Golf Club’s Chef Team and agreed that either the vegetable or the salad, chef’s choice, would be eliminated from the luncheon menu in an effort to hold the current price of \$12 for the lunch.”

In February, a month after the great salad and vegetable compromise, a winter storm descended on the area and froze the fire sprinkling system at the Golf Club and the club closed for repairs. The BEC immediately moved the February luncheon to the Sonora Elks. In March, the BEC voted to accept a motion to move the luncheon to the Elks until a Twain Harte location could be found. Salads and vegetables were restored to the menu.

By the end of 2008, Sirs Inc. notified the Branch that a membership cap was in violation of the rules of the organization. Several appeals, based on limited luncheon space locally, were made by the Branch. The appeals were denied and by July, 2011 the Branch eliminated the membership cap and made the Elks the permanent location for the luncheon meeting.

These actions in 2011 solved two of the main issues that occupied the BEC since 1994: Luncheon location and membership size. Resolution of the third issue, attendance (Rule 100), has been making steady progress. In 2014, a Branch written rule was created and approved by the BEC on how to notify members of pending violations and the actions the BEC would take to deal with excessive luncheon absentness. As of mid-2015 the attendance at luncheon meetings is approaching 80%, which is the best of the six Branches in the governing Region.

Branch 172 considers Twain Harte its home and still desires a local meeting facility. Perhaps that is possible at some later date. But until then, the camaraderie of the membership can be enjoyed at any location and that camaraderie holds the membership proud of its history and achievements.

THE ACTIVITIES

As was noted in the introduction, social activities sponsored by the Branch offer the Sir membership the opportunity to extend their social network and continue to enjoy the activities they were involved in prior to retirement. New possibilities for becoming involved and adding new adventures that fell into the “if we only had the time” pre-retirement category become easily available and with new friends who enjoy the possibility for new adventures.

Since the first Luncheon, Branch 172 offered Sirs Golf, Travel, Bridge and RV caravans to exotic locations. While the Bulletins from the early years have been lost, BEC minutes capture some of the initial

activities of each group. In 1994, the Golf group, with Sir Jerry Strobridge as chairman, organized a full schedule of tournament at various courses in Tuolumne and adjoining counties. The Travel Chairman Sir Ruben Ball organized a trip to the Rose Bowl for a New Year celebration.

By 1996, the Branch added a Computer group with twenty five charter members. Golf was expanded to include Branch 136 and the RV group has six outings and set up the first Ladies Day picnic at Sand Flat.

In 1997 Fishing was inaugurated with a tournament.

Another activity enjoying a long tenure is the Theater Group. The Sonora-Twain Harte area is blessed by having three professional theatrical venues where top plays, including those that have appeared on the Broadway stage, and are produced for our local stages. Members and spouses, at group rates, enjoy the performances and have dinner after at a top local restaurant.

Activities are being added each year. Recent additions include Pinochle and Horseshoe Tournaments. The Pinochle Tournament is held weekly throughout the year, along with an optional lunch, and winners receive cash prizes. Horseshoe Tournaments are in the spring and summer months and annual best scores are rewarded with names engraved on a permanent trophy.

At each monthly luncheon, Chairmen of each activity update the members on the schedule meeting for each activity and the Chairmen make themselves visible and available to welcome and mentor new members.

The Branch sponsors two annual events for members and spouses or significant other. The Picnic is held each August and the Christmas Dinner in December.

Each month the Branch publishes and emails to all members a Bulletin that promotes the activities by publishing member scores and photo of the activities.

MEMBER RECOGNITION

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIPS (HLM)

The purpose of the Honorary Life Membership (HLM) is to recognize exceptional and extraordinary service by a member to SIR. It is not to be treated lightly or awarded merely on the basis of good fellowship. The award will be meaningful if bestowed only to those who, upon careful review and scrutiny, are found to have clearly earned it through faithful and outstanding service to the organization for five years or more. Failure to meet these strict requirements and high standards will destroy the purpose and meaning of the honor and will cause the request for HLM to be rejected.

A select few members have been recognized for exceptional and extraordinary service for five years or more to the SIR organization. The selection process begins with a recommendation by a 2/3 vote of the Branch Executive Committee. The recommendation supported by a statement of faithful and outstanding service is submitted to the Area Governor, the Regional Director, and the SIR State President's committee in succession for final approvals.

The award is kept confidential until an appropriate presentation ceremony is arranged (such as The Christmas Dinner). The total number of HLMs per Branch cannot exceed 2% of the total active membership. Similar to the membership waiting list that existed for a few years someone must transfer out, become inactive, or “pass on” before another HLM can be selected.

The select few still active, their dates of inception and their listed contributions to SIR are noted below:

Carl Nunes (10/23/98) Senior* HLM

- First HLM for SIR Branch 172)
- Charter member Branch 172 (transfer from Sonora Branch 136)
- Director- 1995,1996; 1998, 1999
- Bulletin Editor- 1995-1997
- Fellowship Chair- 1997, 1998
- Special committee to select new luncheon site- 1997, 1998
- Roster Chair- 1998, 1999
- Certificate Preparation Chair- 1998, 1999
- Little Sir-2001
- Big Sir-2002
- Initial Chairman 2005-Hiking
- After 10 years as an HLM, becomes a Senior HLM and does not count against the 2% Branch allotment.

Dan Mohn (11/17/06)

- Secretary- 13 years, 2001-2013
- Director- 2015

John Kinsfather (6/8/09)

- Bulletin Editor- 2001
- Director- 2002
- Little Sir- 2003
- Big Sir- 2004
- Chairman Theater- 2006, 2007
- Joke Master- 2006, 2007

Edward Nissen

- Bulletin Editor- 2006, 2007
- Little Sir-2008
- Big Sir-2009
- Assistant Branch Secretary-2010
- Area Governor-Region 3-2011, 2012, 2013
- Christmas Committee-1(BC) to 2015

PRESIDENTIAL AWARDS

The Big Sir (President) of the Branch presents Senior, Super Senior, and Century SIR Certificates. SIR active members upon attaining the age of 90 are entitled to be awarded the Senior SIR Certificate; upon attaining the age of 95 are entitled to be awarded the Super Senior SIR Certificate; and upon attaining the age of 100 are entitled to be awarded the Century SIR Certificate. The Big Sir is also at liberty to present a Certificate of Appreciation as he deems suitable. These awards are presented at a suitable SIR function or regular monthly Luncheon.

Branch 172 has three members who have received Presidential Senior Sir Certificates Awards for reaching the age of 90. They are:

Sir J.R. Raymond, Sir Wayne Bolitho and Sir Bill Smith

VETERAN HONORS

The Branch is proud to have members who have served in the United State military and have honored these men with formal recognition. In 2014, Sirs who severed in World War II were each presented with certificates and medals by a United States Honor Guard. Korean War veterans were honored in 2015. Congressman Tom McClintock presented all Korean veterans with U.S. Congressional Certificates, and those that served on the Korean peninsula were awarded "Ambassador For Peace" medals authorized by the Republic of South Korea. Both presentations were published by the Tuolumne County newspaper *The Union Democrat*.

CLOSING

The authors of this history would like to thank past Branch Secretaries who have faithfully published minutes of the BEC meeting which have captured the journey of Branch 172. Special mention must be made to all past officers who volunteer to serve and accept the responsibility to preserve the Branch and to build the organization to better the retirement experience of the members.

In reading the BEC Minutes published over twenty year history of the Branch, it eventually becomes clear that the success of the Branch is due to members that volunteer to act as Chairmen for the activities of the Branch. Like the Luncheon Chairman coordinates the facilities preparation, selects the menu and oversees the collection of luncheon fee or the Theater Chairman works with the Theater staff and arranges the site for the dinner. All the Activity Chairmen, past and current, deserve our thanks for creating and sustaining the essence of the Branch.

.....As of December 2015.

