



SIR – Social Activities for Men

The Mission of SIR is to enrich the lives of our members through fun activities and events while making friends for life

Branch# 172, Twain Harte

PO Box 1143, Twain Harte, CA 95383

Website: SIRtwain.org

Email: SIRtwainharte@gmail.org

A HISTORY – SIR TWAIN HARTE - BRANCH 172

INTRODUCTION

SIR was founded on July 23, 1958 and incorporated in 1959 as a tax-exempt corporation for retired men. The first Branch started in San Mateo and SIR has over 80 Branches with more about 8000 members (2024) throughout northern California. SIR originally was an acronym for, "Sons in Retirement." The name changed to "SIR" and the logo and banner changed to "Social Activities for Men" in 2019. "Social Activities for Men" reflects that all men, retired or not, are eligible for membership.

SIR's copyrighted insignia is the Rooster. "Of all the creatures on earth, none expresses independence and dignity with more sureness and aplomb than the rooster. The majesty of his presence is felt in the barnyard, and when he crows he can be heard for miles, not in a faint-hearted crow but with a noise that calls attention to his majestic being."

The driving principle was that man has a need to be social and that natural desire does not end in retirement. SIR's mission is to enrich the members lives through fun activities and events while making friends for life. Policies, procedures, bylaws, and supporting practices are built upon the principles of trust, mutual respect, and dignity:

- ✓ Members are expected to be friendly and sociable; participate in SIR activities, luncheons, and events; volunteer when asked (as interests and capabilities will allow); and bring guests to perpetuate and enhance the diversity of our Branch.
- ✓ Does not and shall not discriminate against any member, guest, or prospective member based on race, color, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, age, or disability.
- ✓ Supports no outside causes or interests.
- ✓ Prohibits, during sponsored events, discussions of politics, religion, and soliciting or selling anything to members.

SIR, Branch 172 started in Twain Harte in 1993 and incorporated in 1994. Meetings occurred in and around Twain Harte (e.g., Twain Harte Golf Club, Kelly's Kitchen, Moose Lodge) until 2007. Branch 172 met at the Sonora Elks Lodge from 2007 until April 2023, then moved to the Twain Harte Golf Club in May 2023, and to the Sonora Moose Lodge in December 2023. Branch 172 is known for its activities (e.g., hiking, biking, kayaking), and special events (e.g., Ladies Picnic and Christmas Party).

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 businessman 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.

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.

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.

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.

Big SIRs generally serve for one year. The following table lists the Big SIRs since 1994 to 2026:

Year	Name	Year	Name	Year	Name
1994	Ben Van DeVoord	1995	Hal Lohman	1996	Bill Gillispie
1997	Chuck Raabe	1998	Frank Joyce	1999	Bob Schollaert
2000	Gerry Emerson	2001	Norm Allen	2002	Carl Nunes
2003	Bill Steel	2004	John Kinsfather	2005	Jim Johnson
2006	Dick Feaster	2007	Roy Sweeny	2008	Don Denhard
2009	Ed Nissen	2010	Earl Nelson	2011	Henry Beltran
2012	Jerry Morrow	2013	Larry Bertuccelli	2014	Roland Patton
2015	Rich Brandau	2016	Dave Palmer	2017	Dave Goldemberg
2018	Charles Luke	2019	Dick Chimenti	2020	Clark Beermann
2021	Dave Tibbets	2022	Jerry Morrow	2023	Tom Francis
2024	Dave Duckworth (Jan-Feb)	2024	Mark Knapp (Mar-Dec)	2025	Glenn Arlands
2026	Clark Beermann				

MEETING LOCATIONS

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 attendees at the Luncheons in 1994 only and handwritten note in the margin of one of the Executive Meeting Minutes “93 lunches served”.

For the first three months of 1994 the Luncheons were held in the small clubhouse at 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.

Branch 172 met at the Sonora Elks Lodge from 2007 until April 2023. Negotiations related to rent and lunch prices did not go well and Branch 172 moved to the Twain Harte Golf Club (THGC) in May 2023. THGC notified Branch 172 that they could no longer provide service (lack of staff) and Branch 172 moved to the Sonora Moose Lodge in December 2023.

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 location for the luncheon meeting until 2023.

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), made 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 approached 80%, which was the best of the six Branches in the governing Region.

Attendance since COVID declined and as of 2024 about 60% of the 90-100 members attend luncheons. The BEC updated its bylaws in July 2022 and eliminated the attendance requirement as allowed by State Bylaw 18 and Policy 25.

Branch 172 considers Twain Harte its home and still desires a local meeting facility. Perhaps that is possible at some later date, although the 2023 relocation to the Moose Lodge brings the Branch significantly closer to Twain Harte but with lower elevation and less snow impacts. The camaraderie of the membership can be enjoyed at any location and that camaraderie holds the membership proud of its history and achievements.

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 before 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. All SIR members (e.g., 77, 136, 172), as well as ladies (except luncheons), can participate in each other's activities. Activities as of 2024 include biking, bowling, car club, fishing, golf, hiking, horseshoes, kayak, pinochle, RV travel, tech/computer, theater, and travel.

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 emails (hardcopies to those without an email) 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 Honorary Life Membership is the highest award that can be bestowed on a SIR member. The purpose of the Honorary Life Membership (HLM) is to recognize exceptional and extraordinary service by a SIR member. 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 are still active (10/24), their dates of inception and their listed contributions to SIR, are noted below:

Richard Brandau (9/2017) • Treasurer • Little SIR - 2014 • Big SIR- 2015 • Chairman Theater Group	John Kinsfather (6/8/09) • Bulletin Editor- 2001 • Director- 2002 • Little SIR- 2003 • Big SIR- 2004 • Chairman Theater- 2006, 2007 • Joke Master- 2006, 2007	Jerry Morrow (11/17/06) Senior* HLM • Officer Search Chair – various years • Director, two years • Little SIR- 2011 • Big SIR- 2012 • Area Governor • Regional Director
Edward Nissen • Bulletin Editor- 2006, 2007 • Little SIR-2008 • Big SIR-2009 • Assistant Branch Secretary-2010 • Area Governor-Region 2011-2013 • Christmas Committee- 2015		

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD (DSA)

The Distinguished Service Award (DSA) is the second highest SIR award that recognizes exceptional and/or extraordinary service at the Branch and/or State levels. This award is to provide a level of recognition for their members that have not earned that which an HLM award requires but have contributed highly to the success of the Branch and have:

- been a member for a period of 3 years or more
- clearly earned it through exceptional and extraordinary service
- steps forward whenever the need arises
- would be recognized by his peers to have earned it

The DSA is not to be treated lightly or awarded merely based on good fellowship. A DSA shall remain a member of his Branch until death, transfer, resignation, or permanent relocation, but shall not be subject to attendance requirements.

A Distinguished Service Award:

- member shall be permitted to transfer from one Branch to another. The transferring DSA shall no longer be counted by either Branch in determining the number of DSAs authorized.
- is authorized for a past HLM recipient when justified by exceptional contributions made after the HLM award.
- recipient does not preclude the member from earning an HLM.
- may be recommended for Branch-related or separately for State-related contributions / service and once earned is carried forward as a one- award into new SIR positions

Branch Allowed Exception: A new Big Sir shall be awarded the Branch DSA lapel pin at the completion of his term or 12 months, whichever comes first. In the case of a previous Big Sir in a second or greater term, regardless of the previous period he served in shall receive the DSA award immediately

Our DSA Members are:

2023 Tom Francis, Dave Tibbets, Jerry Morrow (2010-2013 Area Governor; 2013-2016 & 2024-2026 Regional Director; 2012 & 2022 Big SIR)
2024 Paul Halek

SENIOR SIR, SUPER SENIOR SIR AND CENTURY SIR

Senior Sir, Super Senior Sir, and Century Sir Certificates are milestone-related awards for members who have reached the ages of 90, 95, and 100, respectively. A Branch may offer these awards, using instructions found under Forms (Forms 6A, 6B and 6C) to print their own certificates without having to involve State.

The Big SIR 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.

The following are Branch 172 Senior SIR members who reached 90 years of age:

SIR Harry Taylor*
SIR Fritz Maurer*
SIR Gordon Kavanaugh*
SIR Mike Eachus
SIR Ed Nissen
SIR Don Escallier
SIR Jerry Morrow

*Passed or Transferred as of 8/26

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. Our initial "Annual Veteran Recognition Lunch" began in November 2014 and continues to honor our new member veterans. All veterans receive a "U. S Congressional Certificate of Special Recognition" signed by U. S. Congressman Tom McClintock.

In November 2014, we honored our seven World War II veterans who were each presented with the "US Congressional Certificate" and "A Patriot Medal of Honor and Remembrance" by the Non-Commissioned Officers Association.

Our 21 Korean War veterans were honored in July 2015. Congressman Tom McClintock presented all Korean veterans with U.S. Congressional Certificates. Additionally, all those who served "In Country" (either on the Korean Peninsula or aboard vessels offshore) received "Ambassador For Peace" medals authorized by the Republic of South Korea. Both presentations were published by the Tuolumne County newspaper The Union Democrat.

Fifteen Cold War Veterans were honored in March 2016 by the Non-Commissioned Officers Association and received "A Patriot Medal of Honor" and "Remembrance Medal." Presenting the US Congressional Certificates was Rocky Deal (Captain, USN Ret), Chief of Staff for Congressman Tom McClintock. Our branch presented Rocky Deal with a SIR Twain Harte Certificate of Appreciation for his military service as well as Chief of Staff.

In July 2016, our 47 Vietnam Veterans were honored and, again, we were honored that Rocky Deal visited and presented US Congressional Certificates to all.

In November, 2017, we began honoring our new member veterans at each lunch. Branch Bylaws (7-7-22) state, "The Branch will acknowledge branch veterans, especially new members that have served or veterans not previously recognized, during every November luncheon."

CLOSING

The authors of this history thank past Branch 172 Secretaries who have faithfully published BEC meeting minutes. Special thanks to all past Branch officers who served to build a better organization and retirement experience of the members.

In reading the BEC Minutes published over thirty-year history of the Branch, it's clear that our success is due to volunteers, especially Branch Activity Chairmen. All the Activity Chairmen, past and current, deserve our thanks for creating and sustaining the essence of the Branch.