

Chapter 6: Two Decades Retired

In 1999 at age 62 I chose to retire from Hughes. This decision was made in late 98 as I was swimming from the Redondo Beach pier to the jetty a quarter mile south, a regular exercise of mine after learning finally to swim in middle age. I would like to claim in that short stretch of 15 min, going through the thoughts that I now had the wherewithal to retire, was past middle age, and might regret never having a retired life if I didn't do so. Hughes had a great retirement plan with a rule of 75, 55 years of age plus years of service totaling 75 would earn a full benefit. I chose a lifetime annuity and have never looked back or regretted that decision.

I did however soon regret retiring as then I had too much free time and not a lot of good ways to fill it. By now I was an avid windsurfer though not terribly skilled. A friend and prior colleague, John McIntyre, cajoled me into improving this skill by going to Aruba and taking some lessons, first in 1996. Soon I learned of a better windsurf destination, the Island of Margarita off Venezuela and we started adding a week on Margarita to the Aruba trips. Twelve years in succession I went to Margarita and nearly every year accompanied by John. With the rise of Hugo Chávez and socialism during the oughts' travel to Venezuela became problematic, these annual visits ended in 2010. Interspersed were several trip to Cabarete on the island Dominican Republic, and motorhome windsurfing trips the Columbia River Gorge.

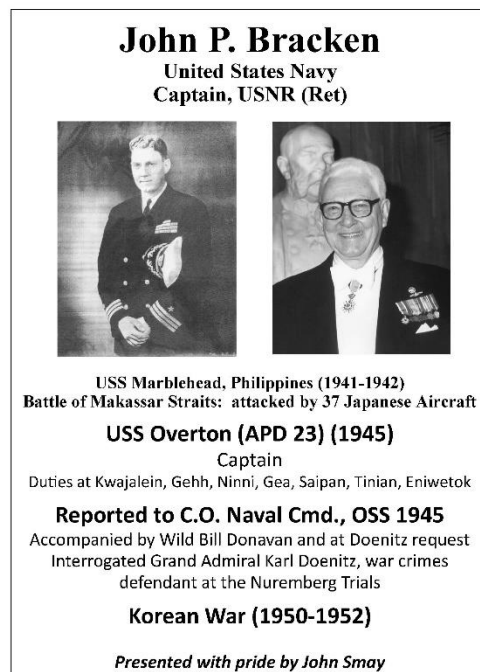
For several years I pondered and shopped for a travel trailer. In 2006 this led to the purchase of a class-c Winnebago motorhome. Overnight this changed my earlier tent camping, sometimes backpacking, often Volkswagen bus camping life to a life of relative luxury. This facilitated travel for long periods with TV, computers, solar power and all. Part of this became annual two-month trips from California to Padre Island national seashore in Texas. Here windsurfing on the shallow and warm water of the Laguna Madre was relatively easy and conducive to improving skills. A typical spring trip included the month of April camping on the seashore and a 10 day trip each way visiting friends, touring national parks and such. On the Island there was a regular group of windsurfers from all over the US gathering on overlapping times every year. In addition my sister Barbara lived on the developed part of Padre Island so there were great regular visits there too.

The motor home introduced a lot of new luxury camping, not just windsurfing trips but exploring many corners of the US and Canada. My first long trip, was up the western coast to Vancouver, then diagonally northeast across BC to Jasper. My friend Ron O accompanied me on the trip as far as Washington. From Jasper, south to Calgary where another friend Sheryl joined me traveling south to Glacier National Park and return through northwest states to southern California. Typically each year for the next 10 I would make 2 to 4 month excursions to new destinations and sites of the US and Canada. One along the south coast visiting New Orleans and Avery Island, home and museum of famous Tabasco hot sauce, later following both west and east Florida coasts, Key West, up the outer banks to Kitty Hawk, then west to home. Another, the Natchez Trace, Vicksburg and Kentucky horse country Gettysburg, Niagara Falls, Quebec and down the east coast pausing in New York City, Philadelphia and south to Jefferson country, then turning west. Always stopping a day or two at every major museum, park or tourist attraction along the way. This included Apostle and Makinac Islands, Oshkosh Air Show, Blue Ridge Parkway

and at least one visit to all the lower 48 states. From 2006 to 2021, saw many adventures in the Winnebago.

One year, 2013, when Ron was traveling the return leg from Padre Island we stopped for a couple days in Fredericksburg, Texas. This is a quaint “hill country” Texas town with lots of German food restaurants and a few miles southeast Lukenbach, Texas made famous by country western music. Not really a town, Lukenbach is just a bunch of shade trees, several beer stands and halls, and typically some recognizable country westerns names strumming guitars here and about and often warm weather weekends country western stage shows. Also Fredericksburg is home of the Museum of the Pacific War, this because it is also home town of Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander of the Pacific Fleet, and all Pacific forces, during WWII. This is a very good war museum where Ron and I spent a significant portion of two days. Outside in the museum courtyard on the masonry wall are many plaques honoring naval war heroes. Earlier I have mention at some length my mentor and friend John Bracken’s naval career. It occurred that there should be a plaque on this wall honoring him, but when I inquired there was not. At the same time they told me that if he had a significant role in the pacific I could sponsor a plaque in his honor. I was immediately moved to do so and one year later, on my next windsurfing expedition to Padre Island, we had a brief dedication at the museum for the plaque shown on the accompanying figure. As Ron and I continued west on the 2013 visit we toured Country Music Capital, Nashville, visited the famous Ryman Theater, the Grand Ole Opry, seeing Charley Daniels and others. Later on the journey we visited Mud Island, and Beale St., Home of the Blues, in Memphis. Also numerous other sights and experience including an overnight stop in Albuquerque to visit my ex-wife Pat and spouse Tom.

I kept a hand in the satellite technical community and discipline with frequent consulting engagements. I consulted with many companies including past employer Hughes, but also many others such as Bristol Aerospace in Canada, XM Satellite Radio, Société Européenne des Satellites (SES) of Luxembourg, Comsat, JPL and others. The main objectives were to stay involved technically and when possible incorporate travel to interesting places. Mostly I could do the main of the work at home. I has a couple multi-week stints to SES in Europe. On one I visited every castle in Luxembourg on weekend drives, but most turned out to be crumbling piles of rocks. Also got in a weekend visit to London. On one trip on route home I visited Grand Canarias in the Canary Islands for a few days windsurfing. It was an adventure but the windsurfing conditions were disastrous for my skill level. The Canaries host frequent windsurf competitions. On my best consulting assignment, with another consultant, we went to Rome, Italy to strategize the recovery of a satellite, called Artemis, that was stranded part way to its intended orbit by a failed launch vehicle. We stayed at the hotel d’Inghilterra in central city near the Spanish



Steps. We had lots of time afternoons to visit most notable sights in [Rome](#) and enjoy the piazzas and food evenings. The consulting assignments also afforded opportunities to learn more about non GEO satellites and to expand from attitude control into orbit design and control, eventually to low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite constellations.

Sometime in 2007 I got a call from Harold Rosen, my mentor and colleague from Hughes past. Harold had been retired for more than 10 years before and in the meantime started a car company Rosen Motors. The car company was developing a hybrid electric car with a turbine engine for electric generation and a spinning flywheel for energy storage and power source for the electric drive. This venture had since failed, much due to the rapid advance of lithium ion batteries being introduced in early electric cars. This call though was in regard to the recently announced Google Lunar X-Prize. This X-Prize, one of several such prizes incentivizing technological advances by the X-Prize Foundation, was \$20 million for a nongovernment, civilian, organization to land a craft on the moon. Harold was forming a team to design a lunar lander and compete for the prize, and asked me to join, which I readily did. The team gradually grew to about ten members, adopted the name Southern California Selene Group (SCSG) and put a significant effort into a paper design of a lander over the ensuing few months¹. About a year into the competition SCSG bowed out for lack of any progress in identifying a Lunar launch vehicle, and perhaps some technical philosophy differences. Harold at one point had lunch with Elon Musk hoping for commitment of a Falcon 9 rocket, but with no success.

World [travel](#) became a big part of my retirement activity. This was no doubt spawned by extensive travel during my satellite design years as I have mentioned the necessity (opportunity) to travel for launch and checkout operations of satellites for foreign customers. A few years into retirement I began to make one or two trips per year adding new world-wide visits to the itinerary. By this writing I have visited nearly 80 countries and with many repeat trips approaching 140 foreign trips including 10 each to Brazil and Australia. Some for windsurfing but most simply for the adventure and the new experiences of culture. Four trips to various parts of Africa, and some to Southeast Asia, India and Japan. One ‘round-the-world’ trip in 2006 of about 6 weeks included the Trans-Siberian Railroad, China, Mongolia and Poland Czech Republic and Hungary in Eastern Europe. Always traveling with a laptop computer, during the long idle hours on the Trans-Siberian I began writing my thoughts, observations and some history of the places visited. This became somewhat of a routine leading to an extensive, though somewhat personal, web page detailing all my subsequent travels. The emphasis was on personal observations and thoughts rather than photographs which I limited to a small number on Google Photos and linked to the text. (At this particular writing the web page is inactive). With my early life farmer background I was often interested in the agriculture around the world, much of it more primitive than the Pa. farm even 40 years later, but some as in UK and Australia quite modern.

About 1978 I had purchased a condominium in north Redondo on Meyer Lane to use as rental for investment. I wasn’t well suited to being landlord being annoyed by frequent changes of tenants and lots of maintenance between. Twenty five years later, being now deeply committed to windsurfing it occurred to me that this rental should be turned into a vacation home in some location where windsurfing conditions were good over a long season. First, I investigated Tampa, Florida, then Corpus Christi, Texas but was

¹ Spinning for the Prize, <https://www.thespacereview.com/article/2307/2>

dissuaded by miscellaneous disadvantages at each. Then I recalled my mid 80s resolve to have a condominium on Australia's Gold Coast. As a practical matter Australia was too far and involved the complications of foreign travel, but I had been to Maui Hawaii windsurfing a couple times. This was only one third the distance and premium windsurfing venue. So I began making combined windsurfing and home hunting visits to Maui. In the spring of 2003 I purchased a 2 bedroom condominium on the border of Wailea on the south edge of Kihei. For the first few years it was operated as a vacation rental with my visits confined to a couple weeks each and longer in the off season. In 2010 I stopped renting this and converted to a true vacation home. In 2022 this became my primary residence with the California house becoming the vacation home. Best of all, from this I enjoyed and continue to get very frequent windsurfing on Maui's north shore, the greatest venue on Earth.