

60 Year History since JHS

Ron Woolley

My summary of 60 years of history since the JHS-61 experience has 5 themes: education, career, family, recreation, and service. They all blend together nicely. My educational experience started in 1st grade at Lincoln school. That was when my teacher, Mrs Ottley and my mom (with help from classmates) developed in me a passion for learning that has never left me (I've placed the full story under Tiger Tales on the website, should you care to read it, hoping that it will encourage others to contribute more personal stories to that section).

After graduation I enrolled at BYU in the Mechanical Engineering program, eventually graduating with a bachelor of engineering science and a Master's degree in the same. During that time I had the experience of a summer job with General Electric at the Mississippi Test Facility where they were planning testing of the booster rocket for the upcoming moon landing. Got to experience the culture of the deep south; a farm boy in New Orleans was very much an oddity! One roommate commented that even though I claimed that I was from Idaho and not a Yankee, I talked like a Yankee, so I was one!

After the 2nd graduation from BYU I accepted full time employment with the Philco-Ford Corporation in Newport Beach, CA, in their reentry vehicle design and test division. I had the weight and balance job working on design plans for Minuteman Missile Decoy development. After a couple of years I got the bug for more education, applied and to my surprise was granted a research assistant scholarship and headed north to Palo Alto, CA. I enrolled in Stanford's Mechanical Engineering Department, Thermal Sciences Division. It took much longer than I had expected to finish my dissertation, finally graduating in 1974.

Right after graduation I had a one year post-doctoral appointment as a research associate of the National Science Foundation, at the NASA-AMES research center at Moffet Field, CA.

Still single, I elected to join the faculty of the Mechanical Engineering Department at BYU and moved to Provo. In 1977 I met, dated, and married Ann Mellor, and we have now celebrated 44 years of marriage. Both having started our family late, we were blessed with 5 children in 9 years, 3 girls and 2 boys. Our youngest boy's wedding is this August; he was not in a hurry, like his parents. Our other son and family live in Seattle. Our three daughters and families live in Dallas, Sandy, and Provo. We now have 16 grandchildren, with hope for more in the future.

Ann and I designed and built our current home in Provo with the help of a draftsman and a contractor. Ann worked for Provo High as an English teacher when we first met, then worked part time at BYU for the English Department where her assignment was to supervise student teachers as they experienced the real world of the classroom. This in addition to raising 5 kids and performing church service involving significant leadership and service assignments. She amazes me as being one of the few people I know who can multitask.

We all love getting together as an extended family and have spent a week each summer on a houseboat at Lake Powell for the past 35 or so years. For a few years my oldest daughter and family lived in Florida, so we spent some time there and I learned to sail in the gulf. "Learned" is in quotes because few will crew with me any more because of so many harrowing adventures. Now the sailboat is at Utah Lake, so if I promise to not go sailing during a thunderstorm, I may get a few of my family and friends to join me again on the voyage.

My teaching at BYU phased down as outside research work phased up. For a number of years I developed ways to operate vehicles on hydrogen fuel rather than gasoline. This was during

and after the gasoline shortage of the late 70's. We never did solve the problem of on-board storage but were able to make cars operate well and safely on hydrogen, but with a short range. The company later used funds from stock sales to start up a personal computer business. We were right there, competing for sales with Steve Jobs, who had just founded Apple. You know how that competition came out. I wrote some accounting software for the system. It never found a user base. This was before IBM's PC existed and before the windows operating system existed. The hydrogen conversion and personal computer company moved out of state and then went under after business wained but I stayed in Utah. What I have to show for that period of time is 18 publications and 4 patents, none of which I own, plus a better understanding of computer programing.

Then I got interested in working with others doing engineering consulting for automotive manufacturers. It fit right in with my education at Stanford in dynamics and kinematics plus benefited from the automotive design experience with alternative fuels. Automobile accidents happen, injuries occur, and questions arise as to the design of cars and their safety systems. Manufacturers defend their fleet of vehicles in product liability lawsuits that are filled against them. They use in-house design engineers and also outside consultants — one of which was me. I investigated accidents and wrote reports about the accident reconstruction; then testified in deposition and occasionally in court — all over the country. I've worked for just about every car company, foreign and domestic, over the last 40 years, 30 of them under the banner of my own company, Woolley Engineering Research Corporation, WER.com. During that time I had fun developing new methods in the field of accident reconstruction and published the results in 20 technical papers, with the Society of Automotive Engineering, SAE, and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, ASME.

During this last period of time I started another company that created 3D computer objects, starting with cars, that could be used in animations. That work began when I needed to make court exhibits about accidents and found that computer animation was the way to go, but there were no car computer models existing at the time, hence an opportunity. The company then started making many other 3D models, besides cars, for use in commercials. The most famous of which was the head of Shaquille O'Neal for a commercial that he was about to make. He came to our office for a day so that he could be scanned. The company was later sold to a venture capital group for a sizable sum, which I then put into another startup company that had developed a way to make 3D holograms of x-rays. Sadly, that company failed. The end result was a sizable long term tax loss, some of which still exists on the books. The benefit was a lot of valuable experience about risky investments — what not to do in the future.

Besides starting WER, another fun company startup experience that Ann and I had was to go into retailing. Our oldest daughter then lived in Florida and we all noticed that frozen yogurt was selling strong and that there were no stores in the Destin, Florida area. So, since I was an engineer and Ann was an English teacher we decided to open up a Frozen Yogurt Store at Pier Park in Panama City Beach. What could go wrong for two people with no retail experience? Our store started out well at first, then we learned about natural events that hurt sales, like hurricanes and tropical storms over holiday and summer break periods of time when the bulk of the years sales were expected. We opened 3 more stores and were enjoying a condo on the beach before the yogurt craze weakened and we eventually sold them all. A fun adventure, a great experience, no regrets.

The engineering consulting work continues, although I am phasing it out and phasing into retirement. What to do with my extra time is now a big problem. So I've picked up several hobbies trying to design something useful. When I learned that Larry started up the planning meetings for a 60th reunion I knew that I had the time and interest to help out and volunteered. Also, I realized that when it came to maintaining my companies website, wer.com, I did not

have a clue as to how to do that myself, I always had employees or contractors do that. I decided to learn enough about the HTML programming language for websites to at least be able to understand, duplicate, and modify existing sections. So the idea popped into my brain that I could learn to maintain wer.com best by adding to it, wer.com/jhs61 was born, with my son's help. My son set up the skeleton and the rest was added by me with help by googling for answers to questions about programming. This was challenging, but fun to do. It has turned into a real joy. I can now post new materials on the web for our reunion. Many of you have sent in photos of JHS memorabilia, your histories, and other fun things. My two favorites are obtaining many of our grade school class photos and recovering a few reels of Dr. Smail's home movies of some of our football games. They are both posted for your enjoyment and entertainment. The site also contains a sad section memorializing our classmates by including their obituaries. The happy sections are the classmate histories, memorabilia, and stories that have been contributed.

Ann and I missed our 55th reunion because we were in Madagascar, Africa on a church service mission for 2 years. That was a great experience, living in a 3rd world country makes us very appreciative of what we all have living here in America. We enjoyed the time serving others, so much so that we are continuing now as volunteers in a BYU program for on-line education called Pathway Connect. We mentored 25 or so students in Africa for a year to assist them in becoming eligible to enroll in BYU-Idaho, on-line. There was great joy in that because we know well from our time living in Africa that a degree from an American College is a golden ticket out of poverty. We have now been invited to support about a dozen or so other couples who mentor their group of students in Africa. So we will play a small part in helping students in our assigned area of 5 countries in Africa: Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Zambia, and Malawi. Makes us want to go visit Africa again. It's really a great use of our time now that Ann and I are "mostly" or "somewhat" retired.

This has been a long read, but it does cover 60 years of history. I look back on my time growing up in Jerome as a wonderful experience with time well spent in preparation for whatever was to come. I got a great education, leadership experience, was able to participate in school sports, and made many enduring friendships with classmates who seem to feel the same as they continue to gather every 5 years. There is a part of me that still feels an attachment to the farm, "you can take the boy out of the farm but you can never take the farm out of the boy". The cultivator tractor taught me how to turn drudgery into a challenge, driving perfectly straight and perfecting turns at the end of the rows, all while daydreaming. Hoeing beans, feeding cows, and baling hay taught me how to work. My Dad taught me an important lesson that at the time applied to hoeing weeds, but has since served me well in my career, "slow and steady goes a long way in a day". Morning chores, breakfast, school, sports, evening chores, homework, sleep, do it all again next day. This discipline prepared me for operating my own businesses. Looking back now I can hardly believe that my family was able to exist in a world where you lived on last years income all year, drawing down savings for spring planting and purchase of new calves, with the hope and faith that your work would pay off at harvest time and you could do it all again. The Jerome environment taught me the how to save for the future and the unexpected. I was well prepared.

Ann and I are looking forward to seeing and visiting with many of you at our 60th JHS reunion.

RON WOOLLEY
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