

Jack Brownson

Jack was born on June 20, 1935 on a farm near Broken Bow, Nebraska. He was a “middle child” with an older brother and a younger sister. He lived in Nebraska, Winnipeg, Canada for a year, and finally in 1942 Waverly, Iowa where he graduated from High School. From Junior High on, he knew he wanted to be involved in airplanes, so after a year at the local college, he transferred to Iowa State and graduated in Aeronautical Engineering in 1957. He was recruited by NACA (later NASA) to work at Ames Research Center in Mountain View. He loaded all his belongings into his car, and moved to California where he worked at Ames for 37 years until he retired. During his time at Ames, Jack did wind tunnel testing on many commercial transports, Department of Defense projects, and most importantly and excitingly on the Space Shuttle. Work on the Space Shuttle was especially enjoyable because it was not classified and he could talk about it!

Jack and Lois met at a church singles group at Menlo Park Presbyterian church. The group, all young professionals, was called “Kayaks” for we were all young paddling our own canoes! After group ski trips, potlucks, camping and back packing trips, weekly

worship services and other activities, Jack and Lois left the group and were married on December 19, 1959. It seems like the right decision for they’ll celebrate their 64th wedding anniversary this year!

Jack has served on the Social Concerns committee, Administrative Board, Chairman of Board of Trustees, and many hours of ushering at the 8:30 AM service.

Church has always been important.

Jack and Lois were first “bitten” by the travel bug in 1962 when they spent Lois’ entire year’s salary and Jack’s saved vacation on a 7-week trip to Europe! After their girls were born, they traveled domestically to visit grandparents, national parks, camping trips, and Hawaii. They didn’t travel overseas again for another 34 years after they’d retired. They’ve enjoyed adventure travel, with bicycling and hiking trips in Europe, Canada, Asia, and South America, and other individual and group trips.



Los Altos United Methodist Church

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Wisdom Generation *Our Stories*

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Hal Taylor



Hal was born in Palo Alto in 1945. His parents were a United pilot and a United stewardess. He had one brother and two sisters. A future carpenter, his earliest memory is receiving a set of blocks for Christmas.

The family visited relatives in Illinois, Ohio, New York and Boston. Once they rented a cabin in New Hampshire from a pilot friend.

Arrested for speeding while in high school, Hal learned a valuable lesson. “Don’t speak up to a judge.” His silence earned him only a \$10 fine.

Hal’s dad was an alcoholic. That caused the breakup of his parent’s marriage. His dad remarried but that marriage lasted only two years, and his dad could not shake the alcoholism.

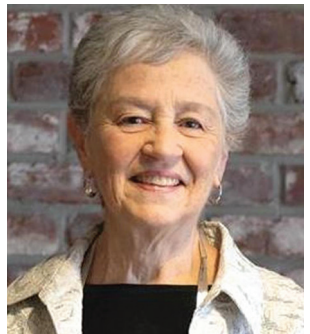
After High School, Hal attended the College of San Mateo, then started at San Jose State, but flunked out due to fondness for the fraternity party life. He joined the Air Force in the Vietnam era and served for four years, including four months in Vietnam and two years in Japan. One of his jobs was as loadmaster for the Starlifter cargo aircraft.

After the Air Force, Hal returned to San Jose State. He got his degree, then went to work at Weyerhaeuser in Denver. He met his future wife, Carol, in 1974 in the Bay Area while taking a Spanish class. They were married after Hal’s return from Denver.

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Myrl Dunker

I have a memory of being a three-year-old with whooping cough and being taken to a neighbor who said, “Look at your new brother.” I didn’t understand and thought perhaps I was being traded for a new kid.



I was born in Long Beach, California. Dad was in the Engineering Corps in WWII. My grandma, from a South Dakota farm, was a deacon in the Methodist church where my dad grew up. We had no devotions at home as my mother wanted no part of church. I was confirmed in the Lutheran church and my folks came to my confirmation. After my parents divorced, my dad remarried a church member.

I went to Cornell as a math major. I went to chapel there, but was more interested in socializing. When I met Chuck, I knew he had a girlfriend back home. We got to know each other gradually, and we were married between our junior and senior years. We had no commitment to a church until our kids were grown and had left home.

As a newly married couple in our first apartment, we had a significant disagreement and the outcome was that Chuck dared me to throw a big spoonful of cottage cheese at him. I took the dare, but I couldn’t throw as much as I wanted to as we were on a very limited budget.

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Hal Taylor, continued

Hal started a 20-year career as a general contractor and carpenter.

Hal and Carol had two sons, Mark and Brett. (Mark lives with Hal now.) The family camped together often. Both sons went to Mountain View High School, were active in Boy Scouts, and with lots of pushing by their parents, achieved the rank of Eagle Scout.

Hal's grandparents were charter members of LAUMC in 1950. At 19, Hal told God to "stuff it". At 43, he and Carol joined LAUMC, and Hal joined Alanon because of his father.

Hal and Carol taught third grade Sunday School, then sixth grade. Brett went on to Starfire. Hal served on the Board of Trustees.

Hal helped Bob Lee with an idea to create the LAUMC Tool Truck. Its original use was the Mexico house-building trips. The Tool Truck has also gone with volunteers to put new siding on a church near Nevada City.

Hal was stricken with Progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) in 2014, a disease of the white matter of the brain, caused by a virus infection. His disease was a reaction to chemotherapy. There have only been 59 cases in the past 20 years and 90 percent were terminal. There were brain effects and his right arm was paralyzed. His twenty-year carpentry career was over, as were his home projects. Hal feels that carpentry/general contracting were not financially rewarding and that it was a very competitive field.

Hal's dog Cody goes on frequent walks with him. Cody examines all the boxes on their walks, looking for stuffed toys. He especially likes ones that squeak

To Hal, Christianity "makes sense" and represents kindness, gratitude and forgiveness. Hal enjoys LAUMC's services and workdays.

Myrl Dunker, continued

Later, we took a class on dreams. In one of my dreams, the ground opened up and I had to pick one side or the other. One side was "new age," the other side was judgmental. Another dream had the groom from the West, and the bride from the East.

After graduation I went to work at IBM. A 17-week training program taught me to help people use computers and write software. I was not allowed to work beyond eight hours per day or even be in the building due to my gender. In IBM, the salary structure was like this: Top: married man; Middle: single man; Bottom: woman.

We came west after Chuck finished at Harvard. Both sets of our parents had by then moved to California. Chuck hadn't met my parents until three months before our wedding. Cross-country travel was almost entirely by train. Flying was very expensive.

I took a job with Kaiser Aluminum where I was the first salaried woman in computer programming. Later I worked at Cutter Labs in Berkeley.

After having our two sons we became foster parents for two-year-old Ruth. With Ruth, our parenting rules appeared not to apply. There were constant troubles. We were living in Pleasant Hill in the East Bay. I worked the midnight shift so I could take Ruth to a therapist. We adopted her seven years later. Today, Ruth's life rules come from us.

I was in a consulting firm where I wrote software for clients. We moved to the Emerald Hills area of Redwood City and made our first foray to LAUMC. I was so moved by Rev. Kristie Olah's "communion for all." We moved into a deepening faith starting with Disciple 1, then leading small study groups, including "Living the Questions."

We have 6 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. I love getting feedback from our grandkids on the "proper" way to phrase things to be socially correct.

Ellie Bernhardt

Ellie was born in Avalon, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh. Her dad worked for Mellon Bank; her mom was a homemaker. Ellie was brought up in Christian denominations. She always dressed up for Easter and Christmas.

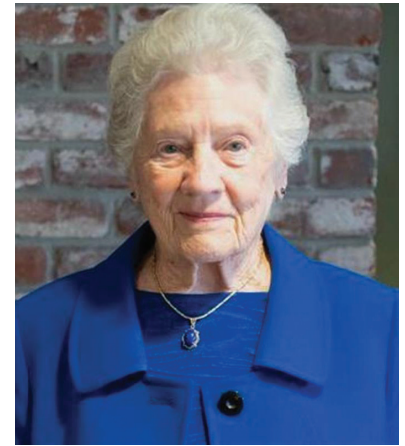
Ellie was the younger sister of two brothers, 15 and 18. She once stole her brother's marble collection. When he discovered the culprit, he tackled her on the stairs.

Ellie went through public school in Avalon. In 1936 there was terrible flooding in the Three Rivers Area following a severe freeze. Her dad filled the bathtub with water so the toilet could be flushed.

Ellie met Bob on a blind date. They were a year apart in college. Ellie was an elementary education major. She taught for one year in her hometown. Bob, a journalism major, joined the Navy to avoid the draft. He went to Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island. He received a three-year public relations assignment in San Francisco, where he and Ellie were married. Ellie taught in San Bruno from 1957 to 1960 at Tanforan Chapel. Their daughter Julie was born in late June after school was out.

When Bob left the Navy he went to work for Ford Aerospace in Palo Alto. He came home on a typical cold windy day in San Bruno and observed that where he worked in Palo Alto it was sunny and warm. So they began the search for a new home in the South Bay. Palo Alto was out of their price range, so their search took them farther south. Driving around house hunting in Sunnyvale they saw signs that read "cotts for sale." Thinking Sunnyvale must be an area to buy small beds, it was only later that they learned "cotts" was short for apricots.

Ellie has lived in their home in Sunnyvale for 63 years. Daughter Julie went to Serra Elementary, Cupertino Junior High and Homestead High School.



A college graduate, Julie now lives in North Carolina.

They began church membership at the Sunnyvale Presbyterian. While at that church, Bob served as a deacon and an elder.

Their neighbors, Jim and Janet Reynolds, were on their way to church at LAUMC one Sunday and invited Ellie and Bob to come hear the minister. The Bernhardts had already visited LAUMC and Sunnyvale United Methodist and hadn't been impressed by the sermons. Fortunately for all, the new minister John Dodson was a winner with the Bernhardts.

Ellie and Bob served in many ways including the Administrative Board, with friends Dorothy and Fred Norman. Other close friends included Ruth and Harold Avery, who had been Bob's boss at Ford. Besides church, Bob became very active in the local chapter of Sons in Retirement (SIRS), as well as umpiring Little League baseball. Ellie and Julie considered putting in a separate phone line just for the umpiring job.

Ellie suffered from multiple occurrences of breast cancer, and was helped by chemotherapy twice. Surgery also took one-half of Ellie's pancreas. After Bob's passing, Ellie has stayed in their Sunnyvale home. This past year she was stricken with listeria (from food) and was in the hospital for 2.5 weeks.

A regular LAUMC churchgoer, she enjoys the online bridge and having Sunday lunch with church friends.

Her advice: You know what to do: put those words into action.