

Roger Card

I grew up bouncing between east and west coasts because my father was a career US Marine. I was usually the new kid in the neighborhood and in class, so I learned how to make friends fast and adapt to new situations. I was very competitive in class and established myself as smartest kid through junior year of my San Diego high school and did it all over again in my senior year at my Virginia high school. Boy, was I surprised when I found at Caltech that it was necessary for me to study hard to be a C student. So, I took the relatively easy Caltech path of engineering and got out of the way of the physics, math and chemistry geniuses.

I thoroughly enjoyed student life at Caltech, especially intramural athletics and boxing in the Fleming lounge when an upper classman showed up with two pairs of boxing gloves. Being a scrub on the freshman and varsity football teams was character-building with the amazing Coach LaBrucherie.

What graduating from Caltech did for me most of all was to open doors. The USC School of Engineering gave me and several other '64 Caltech EE grads NASA Doctoral Fellowships for walking in the door. Further doors were opened and generous salaries bestowed over 40 years in the Southern California aerospace industry. I started out as a circuit designer but wound up as chief engineer and director of technology for a billion-dollar division of TRW/Northrop Grumman. I steered far away from program management assignments and thrived on leading technical tiger teams to rescue programs with technical obstacles. This pattern led to weeks of long hours and weekend work, but it also provided slack time with my family in between crises.

My wife and I married in 1970 and have a son, 51, and daughter, 49. I coached my daughter's and son's soccer and baseball teams. I was a leader for my son's Boy Scout troop and went on long-term hikes (7-9 day) with the scouts in the high Sierras.

After our son and daughter went off to college, my wife and I traveled the world frequently. I coasted at work the last few years and retired in 2005. We retired to San Luis Obispo for rural living after tiring of the hustle and bustle of life in Manhattan Beach. We found in SLO a host of retirees with common interests in kayaking, hiking, and card-playing. I joined tennis and biking groups. I biked 4,000 miles/year, but as my balance deteriorated, I had to drop biking and tennis 5 years ago. Now at 83 and 81, we are contemplating what to do in a few years when we probably will need a retirement community with increasing levels of care. None exists in San Luis Obispo. If we must leave our friends here, we are looking at places in San Francisco where our daughter, son-in-law and 9-year-old twin grandsons live. It will be an interesting next chapter in our lives.

Circa 2013

