

Profile

Len Hofmann



I Started life on Feb 1st, 1942 at St Anne's Hospital in Chicago, IL. My father (Len Sr) was a Marine and my mother (Eleanor Ebbole) and my Aunt Ruth-Donahue-Ebbole was working at Motorola for the war effort (Eleanor & Ruth the riveter). We lived with my Grandparents (Paul and Mable Ebbole) on Walton Street until end of WW11. My father and all my uncles were away at war until around 1945. My uncles Paul (Buddy) and Jim Ebbole were in the Navy in the Pacific. My uncle Harold Ebbole was in the Army infantry in Europe. My Uncle Tom Donahue was in the Army tank core in North Africa. My Uncle Frank Hofmann was in the Army infantry in Europe and India. My father was in the Marines Air Force VMF115 "Joe's Jokers" MAG 12 in the Pacific and also China.



I remember listening to my Grandmother's radio (no TV's then). I remember taking the train with my Mother from Chicago to California to see my Dad off to war. Times were much different then. Everyone was 100% behind our war effort and made many sacrifices. Americans were united. Families were united. My father and all my uncles returned from the war safe but with many memories. They never talked much about what they had been through nor seen. Over the years I was able to find out more by doing research and asking many questions.

My Uncle Harold introduced me to fishing at an early age. My Uncle Jim introduced me to sports at an early age and also used to drive me around on dates.

They were all special people to me and I will never forget them nor living in the 40's.

After the war we lived at 3913 West Division Street (near Division and Crawford (Pulaski)). We lived in a three flat. My grandparents (Paul and Mable) had the 1st floor and in front were my grandfathers produce store. Our family (Hofmann's) had the 2nd floor and my Uncle Jim Ebbole and Aunt Jenny had the 3rd floor. My dad worked for CTA on the streetcars and my Uncles were truck drivers. Later my dad also went with my uncles and they worked for Steffke Freight. My sister Diane was born in 1946 and we shared bunk beds. Our apartment was quite small by today's standards but we got by and were a happy family. I went to Resin Orr grade school up thru the 4th grade. I remember some of my friends like Gags Gagliano, Bobby Divincio, Judy Stokes Bill Salpietro. We had lots of fun playing in the alleys and gravel lots where we made a ballpark.

Around 1949-50 when my brother Jim was born my Grandfather decided it was time to get out of the city and move to the burbs. He bought 3 homes on Grace Street in Schiller Park and we all moved to Schiller Park. My Grandparents had the end house by the prairie, my Uncle Jim's family had the 2nd house and we had the 3rd house 4717 Grace Street. I remember my 1st time there I could not believe the open space and farm fields nor how big our house was. My sister Diane got her own bedroom. It was quite easy to adjust to the burbs and we had many kids on our block. Jim Melmer lived across the street, Danny and Merrily Thomas down the street. Nancy Lorek a few streets away and many other kids. We had a blast growing up in Schiller Park. We made our own baseball/football field in the prairie near my grandparent's house. We were always playing baseball or football or playing other games in the corn fields. Never a dull moment.

I started Lincoln School in the 6th grade. Somehow I missed 5th grade? Being a city kid school was quite different and I had a tough time staying out of trouble. Until the Principle called me into his office and introduced me to Coach Belza. They told me they wanted me to try out for the basketball team and that it would keep me out of trouble. I would have agreed to anything just to get out of the office and not have to tell my parents. To me then Basketball was not a sport. I liked baseball and football but school did not have baseball nor football teams. Coach Belza was one of those teachers you never forget. He took the time to teach me the game and I found another sport I loved to play. I remember our team in 8th grade

Fred (Chuck) Geiger, Roger Seitman, Bill Salpietro, Jim Melmer and Myself. I remember riding Nancy Lorek on my handlebars. I remember Merrily Thomas and the awful swimming accident when she died. I also remember spin the bottle at Thomas's house. Ha. Ha.

When I started Leyden HS in 1955 I was totally at awe. It was so big and so many kids. The gym was bigger than anything I had ever seen before. You could even shoot from top of the key. Lincoln Gym had duck work so your ball would hit it so you shoot from corners only. I thought I was a good athlete until my 1st day at Football practice and seen so many kids bigger than I was. My uniform just hung on me. I was maybe 120lbs soaking wet. I did not know anyone and was quite lost. I did not play much and never was on a bench before so I had no fun that year. Basketball tryouts were the same. However, I knew I could make the team. I almost did but was one of the last guy's cut. I was devastated and decided this will not happen again. I worked from the day I was cut until start of tryouts the next year almost every day. I had a hoop on my garage and I was out there rain, snow or shine. Sophomore year I made the team. I remember fighting for the only size 28 basketball shorts with Jake and George. JV Basketball was fun but Varsity Basketball was not much fun for me and I left the team around mid season with a few other seniors. Made many friends in HS and have kept in touch with a few throughout the years. Sports were my main interest in HS. Most fun was senior year and hanging around with the guy's (Tony Portincaso, Rich Costantino, John Erickson, Mike Femali, George Lazzarotto) we had a blast senior year.

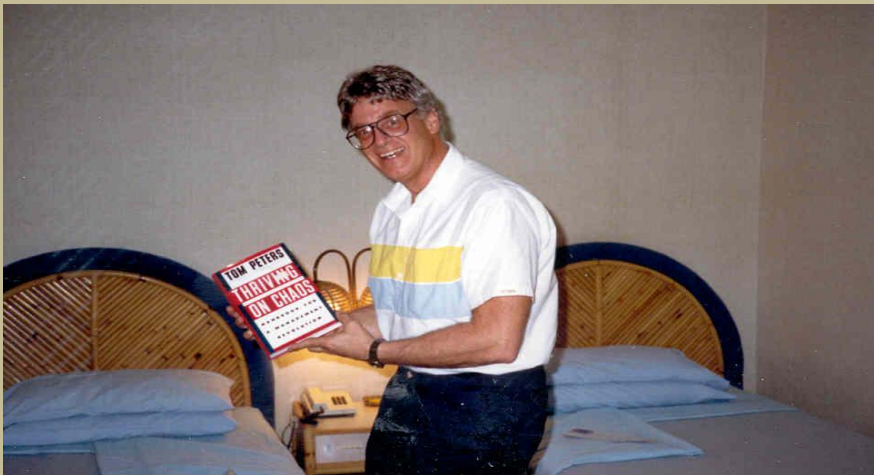
After HS my dad died at age 39 in 1960 and all my plans changed. I was going into the Marines, then the Navy, then to College. However, ended up working construction making big bucks (3.10 per hour) and playing baseball, football, basketball in many leagues. I was finally starting to get bigger. My HS idol was Tony (The Chief Durante). He was an awesome basketball player and an all around nice guy. We got to play on some teams together after HS.

One cold winter morning on my way to my construction job I passed the Motorola Plant in Franklin Park and seen all the nice dressed people heading into a heated building. I thought damn it is too cold to work outside.

In 1960 I also met my wife Barbara Henout (62 grad) and life has never been the same since. (I mean this as a positive Barb so don't whack me)

My Mother remarried in 1961 to Bernard Berube (also an ex Marine) and our family expanded to Barbara Berube and they had two more children Denise and

Brian. They moved to Wekiva Springs, Florida around the time I was moving back from Florida in late 70's. My sister Diane was killed in Florida in 1987 during a robbery at the Florist where she was working. Diane just turned 40. My Mother is still living and will be 86 this year. She is in a nursing home in Fla. My sister Barb Noonan is living in Illinois, my brother Jim Hofmann is living in Wisconsin, my brother Brian Berube is in Florida and my sister Denise Magee-Berube is also in Florida.



Work:

In 1960 I decided to get a job at Motorola and started on the assembly line. After about 2 hours I knew that this work was not for me. Too boring.... I remember a horn would blow for start, breaks, lunch and quitting time. The TV's never stopped rolling down that assembly line. I remember a guy in station next to me yelling when he screwed his finger along with chassis into TV cabinet and I had to stop the line and unscrew him. I remember our line supervisor (Bert Bertolosi) who at quitting time every day took an air hose and blew all the dust from his clothes. One day I filled the air hose with water and our line was in an uproar as the quitting bell rang. Don't think Bert knows it was me till this day? Our line was by cafeteria and one day this guy comes up to me and asked if I still played basketball. I said I did and he told me Motorola had a team and why don't I come out. Well, basketball opened many doors for me at "M". I ended up transferring from the line to Data Processing, took night courses at DePaul. I worked my way up from a computer operator to Corporate Information Technology Director over the next +38 years. I took MBA class's at Lake Forest College night school for 4 years, was selected to attend Motorola Executive Institute in Oracle, AZ and attended more seminars and class's than I can remember. It was great career and I got to live through the growth of the information age and also played a major role in a major company. I had projects in many countries in Europe, Mid East, Far East and most plants in USA. However, when people ask what did you do at Motorola I typically say I put

knobs on TV sets and lost my job when remotes came out and have been looking for a knob job ever since. I do this because most folks (unless they were in Info tech) would never understand what I did. However, today because of PC's and smart phones and internet everyone is an IT expert.

After I took a golden parachute in 1998 and got out of "M" I started to notice how far advanced we were in use of Information Technology. I was doing collaborative technology in 1996 and I was just now seeing new tools for this in mid 2000's. We did Supply/Demand management systems as early as 1964 at "M" and were state of the art into the 90's. In the 80's we did a project called Bandit that actually built pagers from order to shipment all automated using Info Tech and robotics.. I could go on and on but working in IT at "M" was an awesome job and I learned an awful lot, met some smart wonderful people. Most of us ex "M" people seen our company going down in mid 90's and many got out because they could not change it. Some of us hung in until late 90's. All of us find it hard to believe that the "M" of today is the same company we once worked for. At our peak we had over 150,000 people employed world-wide. When I transferred to AZ in 1995 we had over 20,000 people just in AZ. Today there are about 700. Many of us have our opinions as to why. However, "M" is not alone these days. Where has USA manufacturing gone and why?



Life: 1964-2009

By 1964 I was making what I was making in construction in 1960 but was on ground floor of exploding information technology field in a fortune 25 company. Time was right to pop the question and Barb and I got married Feb 8th 1964. Barb was 19 (20 Feb. 9th) and I was 22. We got married at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Franklin Park and had our reception at River Grove VFW hall. Janet Henout (Barb's twin sister), Bernadine Mrozek (Barb's Cousin), Cindy Shemroske (Barb's cousin), Diane Hofmann (Len's sister), Barb Berube (Len's step sister) and Tony Portincaso, Mike Femali, John Erickson, Jim Hofmann (Len's brother) and George Lazzarotto stood up for our wedding. I remember Port as he was walking to pulpit turn to me and hand me the car keys and told me to run... Ha. Ha.

I remember paying the \$600 bar bill which was my total cost for the wedding. This included the VFW hall. My son's wedding in 2005 \$600 would not cover the flowers....

We rented a small apartment in Franklin Park and started life with Barb working at Wilson Sporting goods and me at "M". I had an almost new 1962 Chev Impala Super Sport which was our single car. Life was simple. Our plan was to save money so we could buy a house.

However, Barb got pregnant and only worked 3 months and in Nov of 1964. We had our 1st child Deanna Lee our princess. Now life really changed.. However, it was awesome. Dee was and is the apple of her father's eye. She is so beautiful and had that personality that just told you she knows who she is and where she is going. Our apartment was now too small. Mike (Chico) Cain found a two flat farm house on Diversey near west Leyden and we rented it. Chico and his family had the 2nd floor and we had the 1st floor. Two bedrooms, garage and all for \$100 a month. Between work, Night School and playing football, baseball, basketball and hockey and raising a family I wonder how I fit so much in.

In 1967 we had our 2nd child Scott Blake and found a home on Route 83 in Bensenville. (4N498 RT 83) that needed work but was priced at \$18,000. A 2 bedroom ranch, one car garage on almost an acre wooded. It had a fireplace! We wanted this place but had little money. I needed \$3600 down but only had \$2000. Everyone in my family thought I was nuts to move out in the boonies. However, my father in-law liked our idea and loaned me the \$1600 without even asking. I never forgot that and passed this kindness on to other family members many times since. While living in Bensenville I hooked up with a lifelong friend Bill Wisher whose wife Penny Hansen went to grade school and HS with Barb. It was in the late 60's that Bill and I met Gary Fabbri who introduced us to dirt bike racing. We then lived "On Any Sunday" and raced Moto-X and trail road almost every chance we could from 1969 to 1974. I used to ride my son Scott on the tank. Just what I needed another sport... Fishing also resurfaced and Bill and I did many, many Canada trips. Skiing also became another sport that I did up to 1999 when the knees were gone.

When I moved out of the Chico lodge in 1967 Tony (Port) and Sandy Portincaso moved in. We remodeled the home in Bensenville and when we finally got it where we wanted I accepted a promotion with "M" as MIS manager and we moved to FT Lauderdale, Florida in 1974. We sold our home for \$46,000. I was rich.... Well, I thought I was until I found out the home we wanted in Coral Springs, Florida cost \$65,000. What the hell. You only live once so we bought it and added

on a pool. Your 1st move out of the Midwest can be a real shock. You find out all people are not like us, they even have accents. Living in Ft Lauderdale area in the 70's was quite an experience. The ocean was awesome. The weather was awesome. The fishing was awesome. The kids loved it and were in all the activities. I met another friend for life Rick Rizzo who was also a Chicago guy and a Miami cop. He was my neighbor. Rick and I remained friends until he died in 1998 in AZ at age 50. I could write a book on Da "RIZZ". We sure had some fun times.

The job in Florida was a real pain. Ran into politics for the 1st time and the CEO and I did not see eye to eye. He was a game player and I was a doer. We tolerated each other but could never agree on the role information technology plays in a manufacturing plant. He thought we were like repairmen and I thought we were strategic partners who helped make change happen with use of new tools. After watching this guy set up another staff member I kind of went ballistic and walked off the job and never went back. This was in 1977. I stayed home for 8 weeks and the checks kept coming in. I was thinking of pulling kids out of school; buy an RV and head to Costa Rica for a year or two. Drop out for a while and regroup. Been running at a very fast past for about 10 years and needed some time off.

I got a call from VP of IT and he wanted me to pick him up at the airport. I figured this was it but I would quit before he fired me. Instead he offered me a job to come back to Chicago. I decided to go check out the job and ended up talking to a guy who just got back with his family from Costa Rica after a year sabbatical and told me it was not what he thought it would be. We hit it off and I came back to work for Steve Friede at "M" Display Products. A year later the CEO I had trouble with in Florida was fired..

Steve is also a lifelong friend and the people I worked with at "M" Jimmy Hussey, Denny Napoli, Mike Goles, Rick Paggeot, Norm Gunther, John McDonald, John Paolello, Curt Ramon, Bill Strauch, Doug Winterburn, and Tom O'Connell.

I had some great mentors also in Hank Przewoz, Helmut Goerling, Rod Davis & Gene Stevens.

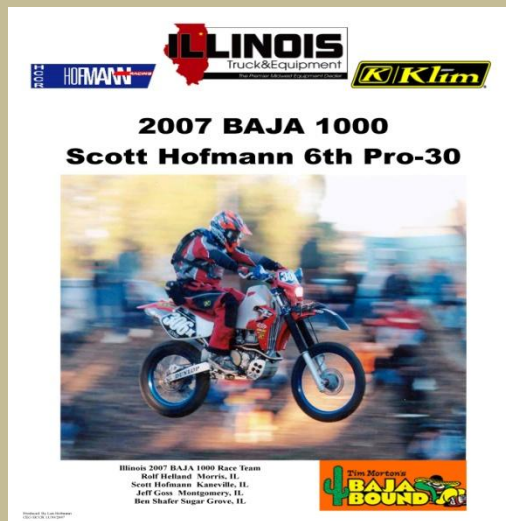
In 1977 we moved back to Illinois and found that I could not afford to buy home I sold in 1974 and could not sell home in Florida. Ended up buying a small house in Lily Lake near St Charles and I bought a lot in the "Windings of Ferson Creek" in St Charles area. I got back into Motorcycles and got my son Scott his 1st real bike a Hodaka Dirt Squirt 100. Eventually "M" bought the home from me in Florida

and I started building our dream house on lot I bought. We rented the other house and moved into the Windings in December of 1979. We finally sold the other house in 1981. We loved the home in “The Windings” and the area and stayed there until 1995.

My daughter Deanna got married at our house in 1994 and Dee and Ed Schuldt now live in Genoa with my two grandkids Cody (10) and Jenna (9).

My son Scott got married in 2005 and lives in Kaneville with my grandson Chase (4) and his wife Kathy.

I kept up dirt bike riding until 1991 when I could not keep up with my son Scott anymore. Scott went on to be AMA National Enduro Champion twice, was member of ISDE (USA International Six Day Enduro Team) in 94, 97 & 2000 and won Silver medals in Tulsa and Spain. He was injured in Italy in 97. He raced “Last Man Standing” in Texas. He raced again in 2007 BAJA 1000 Pro 30 class and took 6th in the 1,348 mile race. Could also write a book on Scott and all his races and medals.



I had a blast helping my son with his racing career from 1994 to 2005 when he got married. We were all over the USA and Europe and he became the rider I always hoped I could be. He was and is an awesome dirt bike rider and also my best friend. Now he has his son Chase and the cycle starts over again.....

My daughter Dee was never a surprise to me. She has been a daughter that I was never worried about. She is beautiful (just like her Mother) and has a personality that kind of reminds me of someone I know quite well (me). I am also glad that I

don't have to ever be a Dad to a teenager again. I remember the boy friends. I gave them all the same 1st name but changed their 2nd name to a number (Asshole #1, 2, etc). However, when she met Ed I knew she picked the right one. They will be married 15 years this year and Dee now has a little Dee (Jenna) and Jenna reminds me so much of Dee when she was little. Cody is going to be a jock like his Papa but better.. My daughter Dee is someone I can bounce ideas off of and she also helps keep me grounded. We seem to think alike and have the same instincts.

We were blessed with two great kids who have made us proud.

We have lived in Fountain Hills, AZ since 1995 and we love it here. I retired from "M" in 1998 and have spent the past 10+ years getting body parts replaced, getting into and out of shape, Golfing, Fishing and Camping. I managed a golf club (FHBGC-Fountain Hills Breakfast & Golf Club) past 10 years and have made many new friends. We try to see family as much as we can and also get them to come to the land of Sun as often as they can.

I wrote much more than planned. I did not want to do a resume and did not want to toot my own horn. Just wanted share life experience thru my eyes. I know I did not mention many friends or many life experiences. That would be a book....

The 50th Reunion is a sync point in my life and it got me back to remembering family and friends that have since passed away that have made an impact on my life. HS years where when life was real simple and we sure did have fun and also learn a lot. Those were the day's old friend..... If I could go back I would have red shirted.. lol....

WOW hard to believe 50 years! Where has the time gone? I am still trying to figure out what I want to do when I grow up..... Ha. Ha.

Have fun and hit emm long, straight and in my case often...

Life is good and we are all blessed to live through the 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, and 90's and now in the 2000's. Just think what we have seen and done..

Now we finally understand what our parents were talking about.....

Len Hofmann
June 2009

This is what makes life grand:

Barb (My wife)



My son and wife:
Scott & Kathy &



My daughter and husband:
Deanna & Ed &



Scott & Chase



Cody & Jenna