

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Michael Rant

It was afternoon in the Company bungalow at Sheik Othman outside the South Yemen mud walled village, except for the staff of British Petroleum ringing bells to keep the evil spirits away, while Michael Rant came into this world.

For six months, the baby lived with his Mother and Father in the massive granite office building by the harbor wall until Mother reached the difficult decision to return to the U.K. where Father would find another job.

But the Great Depression struck before that job was ever found. So the family was split from 1926 to 1948 with six-month periods of leave for Father when Mother and the children could learn about each other. During this time, Michael's sister was born in England.

In due course, Michael was enrolled in a classical British boarding (public) school described by a friend as very like a prison. This was life from the age of eight to seventeen when in 1942 W.W. II was at its worst for Britain. At this age, Michael was fascinated by all things aeronautical, and being prepared for college studies, he was impelled by his interest in model aeroplanes to seek out an apprenticeship with Handley Page a manufacturer of four engine bombers. Sir Frederick Handley Page, a bustling engineer, said he would "place him in the way of learning".

So it was in September of 1942 that Michael was introduced to Mr. Perkins the foreman of a team responsible for the assembly of tail plane spars for the Halifax bomber. In addition, he joined five other apprentices for two and half days under the teaching of the aeronautics professor at the Polytechnic College in London, which coincidentally, ran a program for apprentices for Watch and Clock making.

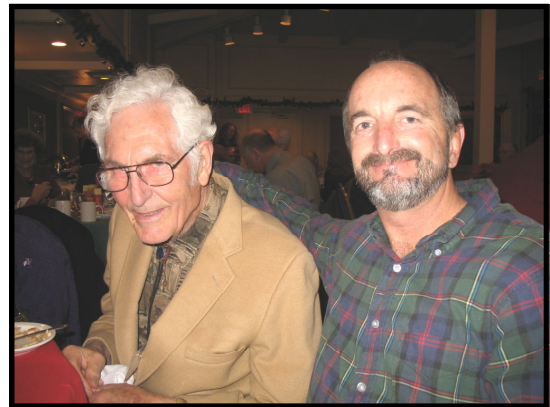
There followed the years of W.W. II including bombs and missiles V1 and V2 which nearly destroyed the tail plane workshop and the Polytechnic College and killed the members of Michael's youth club that had assembled for a birthday party.

Michael tried his hand at production engineering after the war, and other commercial activities in aviation and textiles, eventually joining the aircraft instrument manufacturing wing of S. Smith and Sons the clock and watch makers. This took the young Michael Rant family to Canada in support of instruments for the flourishing British aircraft industry in Canada and the United States.

However, the Rant family and Smith's instruments parted company when Smith's moved to Florida and Michael became a professor at George Brown Community College of Toronto. A curious sequence of events resulted in a licensed plumber President of a new college, appointing Michael Rant to be the Planner for his college facilities. In this position, Michael coordinated the building of a complex of facilities that ultimately enrolled eight thousand technical students in nine hundred thousand square feet spread across the city in various locations. He stayed there until his retirement in 1988.

Concluding a career in learning, Michael finally enrolled in theological studies and more latterly at Bloy House, Episcopal Church at Claremont School of Theology, joining his wife Audrey in La Jolla and Chapter 59 of the NAWCC.

It was Audrey who introduced the Rant family to a modest but selective collection of clocks. An early specimen is the English "Lantern" Clock (c.1660). *(Editor's Note: In next month's Tic~Talk, look for Michael's English lantern clock article.)*



Michael and Robert Clough (son-in-law) at the 2008 Chapter 59 Christmas party.



Michael and his 2008 Southwest California Regional Exhibit.