

Spotlight on Chuck Hardin

Chuck Trivia

- *Asked **Nita Matthews** to go steady in the 5th grade. She refused.
- *Next time he talked to Nita was in high school when he signed her yearbook. She wasn't impressed.
- *Asked Nita out for a date in 1963 when he returned from duty in the Far East. She accepted and they married a few months later, proving that patience and persistence pay off.
- * When they turned 50 Chuck and Nita cruised the Western U.S.A. on a Honda Gold Wing motorcycle.



Chuck & Nita at "50" Cruisin' the West



Chuck & Nita – Dana Point



Chuck on his Boston Whaler

Education, Military Service and Work

After graduating high school, Chuck served a tour of duty in the Marines and then went to work at Aerojet for four years before moving with Nita to Minnesota for a year, and Indiana for three. Chuck ran the computer center at Indiana State University at night and attended University classes during the day, studying information services and computer science.

When he and Nita moved back to California, Chuck started working for Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) as a supervisor in the Computer Services, Spaceflight Operations Facility, Main Frame Division. While he was there, the Spaceflight Operations Facility tracked the Viking 1 and Viking 2 Mars Landings, which was pretty exciting. Chuck returned to Aerojet in 1977 and worked as Operations Manager for the next 25 years before retiring in 2004.

Leisure

Super athlete Chuck enjoys any activity that involves water (liquid or frozen) including surfing, sailing, scuba diving and snow skiing. In his teens he surfed on a long board with buddies **Cliff Thorpe**, **Mike McClellan** and **Finn Moller** at Doheny, San Onofre and Huntington. Now he surfs with his children and grandchildren on a long board that was given to Nita on her 18th birthday. He started scuba diving at 13 with **Sue Weatherwax-Maxwell** and still scuba dives, thanks to Sue. His favorite diving spot is Tahiti, however he spends a lot of time diving in Catalina because it's close to home. Whistler, British Columbia is his favorite ski resort, though he prefers Brian Head, Utah for family trips. Oh, did I mention that he used to race a Hondo 250cc dirt bike?

Sailing is really Chuck's first love (well, second, after Nita). He served as Commodore and Director of the Alamitos Bay Yacht Club and has competed 18 times in the Newport to Ensenada race, which is the largest international yacht race in the world. Chuck placed 5th in the Transpacific where he raced from Los Angeles to Hawaii and then sailed all the way back. On the return trip he encountered rough seas with strong winds and 30' waves breaking every 17 seconds. He and his crew were harnessed in and tethered to the boat for three days straight. Chuck said, *"It took me five minutes to put on my underwear, so I just kept them on until the seas calmed down."*



Chuck sailing back from Transpacific Race

Chuck still sails, in fact when he retired in 2004 he cruised to Cabo San Lucas on a friend's 42' sloop and ended up staying there for a month. Nita met him later in La Paz. He's traded his own sailboats for a Boston Whaler, taking occasional trips to Catalina for breakfast, or impressing visitors (like me) with cruises around Naples Island and Los Alamitos Bay. Now that he's retired he and Nita have taken up golf and bicycling. They also enjoy Caribbean Cruises, watching the sunset from the deck of their Belmont Shores condo, and spending time with their six grandchildren.