

OTP History

The founders of our group were Bob Bernard, Ginger Brown, Jerry Drinkard, Mike Gessner, Merle Olsen, Dick Rauhut, Bill Sharpe, Dick Utter and Vic Weber.

In November 1989 Hughes Aircraft Company released a number of long term employees with an early retirement plan called the Organizational Transition Program (OTP). The payoff was considered to be quite generous by the recipients. At the farewell party, a group of friends who had worked together for years shared a table. It was decided that we should find some activity that we could share and thus maintain old friendships. After some discussion Bob Bernard suggested that hiking would be the answer. Dick Rauhut insisted that we should hike every week and that we should start immediately.

Bob Bernard led the first hike in Sycamore Canyon. At the end of the hike Dick Rauhut had a case of Lucky Light beer in his car, which he shared with us. This is the origin of the after-hike refreshment tradition. Over the years the refreshments have become more varied and elaborate.

Mike Gessner volunteered to lead the second hike in Placerita Canyon. At that hike he started the Leader Roster and Hike Schedule. In the early days no one had e-mail so the next hike notices were sent via snail mail. This necessitated an address list which he compiled. On our first hike we had nine hikers. Mike is the only one of that group still hiking. We expected the group to last about six months. It has done somewhat better than that.

On one of our early hikes Dave Lillback's wife, Dorothy, sent a batch of cookies, which he distributed to the hikers at a break after about an hour's hiking. This started the cookie break tradition. Although, later it became the custom to distribute the cookies at the start of the hike. Since then, most people no longer wait for the cookie break to consume their cookies.

On the first anniversary of the group, Merle and Alice Olsen invited us all to their home for a party to celebrate completing a year of hiking. We have since celebrated our anniversary each December. At first, the party was rotated among the hiker's homes but as our group grew it became necessary to find a larger venue for our gatherings. I believe that Jim and Jan Gardner hosted our last in-home party.

Over the years there have been a number of amusing, outstanding or more serious incidents. Mike started issuing awards for these happenings. It became too time

consuming for him so Ron Forbess took over that effort. He has done an excellent job of it.

As our group title, OTP and Others, indicates, our membership is not exclusively former Hughesites. Indeed, now our group consists mainly of “Others.” We welcome new members to our group.

Early in our history Mike originated the web site, and also obtained the web domain. This has been very useful and effective in disseminating group information

In August of 2014, Mike decided that after more than 24 years of keeping the records of the OTP, he had enough of that fun. He has been succeeded by;

Ron Forbess, who manages the Leader Roster and Awards;

Phil Rutherford, who manages the web site;

Pat Forbess, who manages the address list and provides occasional cake to celebrate birthdays;

Bob Dewolf, who manages the group e-mail notifications.

The OTP continues to trek along. It has changed a lot over the years and we expect it to continue to change more as time goes by.