



John and Kathy c. 2003

John Byerly

Biographies are a tough thing to write. I have creatively enhanced the importance of my accomplishments for plenty of speaking engagements, seminars, emcee responsibilities, musical performances... all very focused on my “superior qualifications” relative to an event. I’m going to assume

that my classmates are more interested in my personal life than in my educational and career conquests. Hopefully this chronology will provide insight into some of the events that have shaped me into the person I am today.

At UA, I was a band geek percussionist. I’ve never stopped playing. I was also a choir geek, and I’ve never stopped singing. More about that later. I would define my high school behavior as “academically disinterested.” In our junior year, I had to make a choice between band and choir because my “academic” grades weren’t good enough to support both. I recall Mr. Yenser saying, “You’re a much better drummer than a singer. Choose band!”

Upon barely graduating from UA, I attended THE Ohio State University where I majored in beer. After three quarters of academic underachievement, Uncle Sam offered me an all-expense paid vacation to Southeast Asia. Being uninterested in war (in general) and in being shot (in particular), I enlisted in the Navy for four years. I got some great training in electronic surveillance (This is where I discovered that I wasn’t stupid... just disinterested). It made for a relatively interesting and safe military experience, with tours of duty in Key West, northern California, Antigua, and “above” Vietnam.

My specialized surveillance training did not prepare me for work as a civilian, so I had to make a decision about furthering my education or entering the workforce with a high school degree. When I told my father (who had less than a high school education) that I would not be going back to school because I would

be 28 years old by the time I graduated, he asked, “How old will you be in four years if you don't go back to school?” Convincing argument... I earned a BS in Business, and pursued (but didn't complete) a Ph.D. in Human and Organization Development.

Like just about everyone else in Upper Arlington, I worked at Lazarus Kingsdale to help pay for my college education. That's where I met my future bride, Kathy Link, in 1971. We've been happily married since 1973. We have a terrific son, Shawn; a wonderful daughter-in-law, Nicole; and two beautiful grandchildren, Brody and Scarlett. There is nothing more important to me than my family.



The loves of my life

Following the bad advice of my academic counselor, I accepted a position as a Computer Programmer trainee at the Defense Logistics Agency. Programming was fun, but I hated the isolation from human contact. After a few helpful transfers within the agency to assignments in the Compensation and Training departments, we moved to Cincinnati for best job in the world! The remainder of my career was spent as Director of Organization Development for a multinational software firm. My job was to integrate acquired subsidiaries into the corporate structure while maintaining their local culture, i.e., think globally, act locally. I traveled throughout North and South America, Europe and Australia. We lived in England for a year. It was the best of times. I never felt like I had to “work” for a living because I loved my job. I was “retired” from the best job in the world when the international economy went south after 9/11.

I still love playing drums and singing. I collect and play world percussion instruments (I own about 60!). I enjoy teaching others how to play them, and about the music played with them in their countries of origin. I sing with The Southern Gateway Chorus (an 80-voice male a cappella ensemble) and in a quartet. Playing and singing have been important parts of my life since the age

of ten. Remember how band and choir geeks were made fun of by the jocks? I often wonder how many jocks are still playing their sport and getting paid for it? ;-)



My addiction



My passion

In retirement, I am learning to say, “No” to volunteer leadership roles. I have chaired just about every committee the United Methodist Church has created. I’ve led marketing efforts for the US Tae Kwon Do Association and my Barbershop Harmony Society district. I’m ready to be a “doer” rather than a “leader.”

I’ve attended every past reunion. Visiting with old friends and making new ones has become a habit that I don’t want to kick. I’m looking forward to seeing everyone at our 50th.