



Member's



Profiles

Gordon & Linden Chapman

Gordon I was born in Corby, Northamptonshire before it was ruined by the discovery of iron ore in the surrounding countryside. I was the youngest of eleven children in a bustling household that survived on the wages of my father who had served in India in the Queen's Royal Horse Artillery. He had an allotment for vegetables, raised pigs and grew the biggest chrysanthemums that won prizes at the local church fetes.

My mother's biggest challenge was getting me to school as she would put me on at the front of the bus and once it pulled away, would find me waiting for her across the street having exited at the rear of the bus. History, geography and nature studies interested me most and remain so even today.

Linden I was born in London and at the age of 9 months emigrated with my parents to San Diego, California. After 5 years they were desperately homesick and moved back to the U.K. where I went to school in Bournemouth for 7 years. My family then emigrated a second time to San Diego, but after only 18 months again moved back to the U.K. as my grandparents were ailing. The year was 1962 and employment was hard to find in England – after 8 months the family finally returned to California, this time to San Jose where they live today.

Gordon Shortly after my 16th birthday, my father died. I found myself in trouble with the police within a year and the judge suggested joining the service. Upon reflection, this is probably the best single piece of advice I have taken in my life.

I joined the RN 21 March 1966 at **HMS Raleigh** for basic training. During the rigours of my initiation into the RN, I decided this wasn't such a great idea and went home to Mum. The police arrived at my house almost before me and put me up at the local constabulary where they fed me egg and chips and steaming cups of tea until the MP's came to escort me back. At Raleigh I went through training with Roy (Joe) Johansen and Phil Briggs.

Then on training courses with Roy Johansen at **HMS Dryad** until April 1967 to Fort Purbrook waiting for our first draft.

In April 1967 I joined **HMS Caprice**, my first ship with Roy Johansen and Phil Briggs. I remember the first day on board when I tried to sling my hammock; I didn't know my head from my arse. An "old salt" A/B Flo Nightingale took me under his wing and showed me the ropes and what a hell of a nice fellow he was. Being my first draft, I grew up very quickly on board and learned when to keep my mouth shut for the most part.

It was during the World Cruise of '68 that I met Linden in San Jose, California during a run ashore at a dance sponsored by the British American Club – her father was president of the club. The picture opposite was taken the following day. It must have been love (or lust) as we wrote to each other over the course of the following year.



In February 1969 I was drafted to **HMS Eagle**, my least favourite draft – bloody floating shore base - although I did end up with a cushy number as blacksmith's mate. The highlight of this draft was being picked for the Queen's Honour Guard in Torbay to present the colour to the Western Fleet. I was the right hand marker due to my height.

Then, as fate would have it, the Eagle was due in at Boston in August of 1969 and Linden flew out to spend the weekend. Well, the rest is history – she quit her job, moved to London where she worked as a secretary until we were married in April 1970.

My next draft took me ashore to **HMS Warrior** from Jan until May 1971. My duty was 3 days on 4 days off and another cushy number. I drove backwards and forwards from Corby in my old Singer Vogue – bloody great car that was.

Then to **HMS Soberton** on fishery protection – what a job that was boarding foreign trawlers in force 9 gales especially in a little gemini. This was a great ship for all the ports we frequented and especially remember taking some biologists out to the islands north of the Shetlands where they counted the sea bird population.

Our first daughter, Sonya, was born in Edinburgh in August 1971 and within a few months I learned my next draft would have been unaccompanied to Hong Kong so I decided to put family before my naval career and applied for premature voluntary release in 1972.

We emigrated to San Jose, California with our first daughter in October 1972. We both found work – me as a painter and decorator and Linden as a secretary. We purchased our first home within 3 months, as living with your in-laws isn't easy! Our second daughter, Colleen, was born in 1974 and just three years later our third daughter, Tessa, was born in 1977.

I subsequently joined the Painters Union and turned my hand to specializing in paper-hanging. I installed a variety of materials including paper, vinyl, murals, cork, fabric, wood veneers and foils in offices, schools, hotels, restaurants and theatres.

In 1986 I passed my California State Contractor's License and went into business. This was a successful move and "word of mouth" has proven better than advertising at keeping me busy and earning enough to send our three daughters to university.

We live south of San Jose in the small town of Gilroy where we have had a house built on 2-1/2 acres and in the course of over 30 years (gosh doesn't time fly) have raised pigs, sheep, black angus, chickens, ducks, pheasants and



rabbits. We are now down to just chickens, as far as the livestock goes. The four grandchildren are now the ones picking up the eggs where it used to be our three daughters.

Becoming grandparents, by the way, has been an unexpected joy! Having them spend the odd weekend at our house is always fun and finds me cooking them a full English breakfast on Sunday mornings.

My likes bird watching, fishing, grandchildren

My dislikes. . . . politics, politicians, bad manners

