

SIR Secrets Revealed

Branch 35 is not mysterious—just melodious. Members also enjoy good fellowship, great luncheon programs, and special golfing opportunities.

Where do professional managers, high-tech engineers, and former educators go when they retire? Many local retirees have chosen to spend a healthy part of their new-found free time as active members of SIR (Sons in Retirement). Branch 35 of SIR, with close to 350 members, is among the largest Branches in the state and meets monthly at the Elks Lodge on El Camino Real.

Long-standing members of Branch 35 are sometimes surprised to learn that the organization's benefits are not well known outside of SIR. Their monthly luncheons are a happy blend of good conversation, exceptional speakers, and musical interludes featuring the Trail Birds (strong voices recruited from within the Mission Trail Branch, as Branch 35 is also known).

The membership consists of retired and semi-retired men who want to stay involved and who enjoy getting together with others interested in keeping active in both mind and body. Along with the monthly luncheon meetings, there are opportunities to participate in biking, hiking, bowling, tennis, travel, computer club gatherings, and golf. The latter two are especially popular, with golf leading the list of members' interests by a wide margin—just over 30% of Branch 35 members play regularly.

SIR luncheon gatherings at the Elks Lodge revolve around joyful singing and the entertaining and informative programs that follow every catered repast. The Trail Birds, in fact, create a unique blending of program and song by providing a musical introduction of the monthly speaker with a parody suggestive of the speaker's background and subject. And, on one occasion, they really surprised the speaker. He was Dave McElhatton, KPIX news anchor at the time. As he spoke, McElhatton happened to mention an old tune, "If I Had My Life to Live Over, I'd Live Over the Corner Saloon." By coincidence, the song had been written many years previously by the founder of the Trail Birds, Emmett Fitzpatrick, who had written over 200 songs in his lifetime; the Trail Birds promptly sang the melody, to the speaker's amazement.

The Los Altos Town Crier's publisher, Paul Nyberg, spoke before Branch 35 a few years back, and the Trail Birds introduced him with a parody to the tune of "My Heart CRIES for You":

Paul came from Minnesota, as farm boy grew,
Earned journalistic BA and Masters, too.

He's now in California to tell what's new,
Los Altos Town Crier's purview.

Recent speakers have included sports reporters, a Benedictine monk, non-profit CEOs, and a bestselling author. Lively Q&As follow each guest's presentation. The price of the luncheon, currently \$17 (no tipping!), may be the best entertainment value in town. Members are asked for an annual contribution of \$25 to defray operating expenses; however, there are never any solicitations or volunteering requests on behalf of outside organizations. SIR exists solely to provide a host of social and activity opportunities for retired men.

The golfers in Branch 35 are a very happy crowd. One of them was recently heard to say that the Branch is "the best golf club I've ever been in!" The members play on a variety of courses, from municipal to upscale, at venues that range from delightful Bay Area locations to Carmel Valley. Another member describes the scheduling as "the ultimate in convenience" when it comes to signing up to play.

Members' spouses are also enthusiastic about SIR. They not only recognize the value of the benefits their husbands enjoy, but they also participate in two Branch social events each year, the July Bar-B-Q and the December Holiday Party. As a result, the members of SIR are a relaxed and happy bunch, eager to share their good fortune with other men whose interests match their own. New members are always welcomed warmly, and always toasted in song by—you guessed it—the Trail Birds.

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To learn more about how to visit a meeting of Branch 35 of Sons in Retirement, readers should contact Membership Director Damon Simpson at 650-941-4464 or simpsondj@sbcglobal.net.