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# MODESTO ENGINEERS CLUB FIELD NOTES

Volume 2009, Issue 6

[www.modestoengineersclub.com](http://www.modestoengineersclub.com)

June 2, 2009

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## Join us on June 2<sup>nd</sup> for our very own Matt Machado of Stanislaus County's Public Works

This month's speaker is Stanislaus County's Public Works Director, Matt Machado. Matt has been with Stanislaus County since 2007 and oversees all functions of Public Works which includes Engineering Operations, Transit, and GIS Services. Please join us to hear how Matt has led his department to meet the goal of providing a well-planned infrastructure system for our county.



### Save the Date:

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**Formal Lunch Meetings:** First Tuesday of each month. Upcoming meetings: June 2, July 7, August 4. 11:30am – 1pm at SOS Club, Mellis Room, 819 Sunset Avenue

Lunch features a buffet style meal. The main courses will vary each week. Please sign in and pay **\$10.50** to the treasurer, (half off for students). The beverage, tax and tip are included.

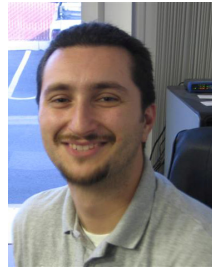
### Informal Meetings:

Members regularly meet on Tuesdays, 11:30 am to 1pm at the Old Mill Café corner of 9<sup>th</sup> & F St. in Modesto for camaraderie. No formal program is presented.

**Attendance at Last Month's Meeting:** 25 members, 5 guests  
**Freeloader for June: Evangelina Paoluccio!**

### Presidents Message:

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Last month's issue of the Field Notes included the amazing story of the MEC bell. Great work Dan on getting that story down in writing, thank you. I am looking forward to our President's Steak Fry event in August. We have a tentative date of Friday August 28 from 6pm to sometime after 6pm. If you would like to attend, please email our secretary or let him know during one of our monthly meetings. After giving our tree a few good shakes we have learned that our next secretary/treasurer is indeed from California. Please stay tuned as the fruit is grasping onto the tree branches with all its might. Not to worry, I think after bringing in a tree shaker and a cherry picker we will surely have our new officer picked, cleaned, inspected and sitting next to Dan when the time is right.

### Quote to Ponder:

*Mistakes are the portals of discovery.*  
James Joyce

### Secretary's Editorial: Our Freedom

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As I write this piece Memorial Day is a couple days behind me and I am already back in the groove of working and living. The ceremonies and speeches are done. The President, following tradition since Warren Harding, laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns and sent a wreath over to the Confederate veterans. And for the first time this President sent a wreath over to the African Americans who died during the Civil War. I see Purple Heart license plates, stretches of highway dedicated to various groups that served at various times. To quote Jimmy Durante: "Everybody wants to get into the act." I personally long for the day when we can just be called veterans.

While thinking about Memorial Day I became curious about who in the Club is a veteran. I asked our Modesto Engineer Club members to let me know who served so I can write a little piece in remembrance to the service. It was an interesting response.

I heard from Dan Cockrum, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant US Army Corps of Engineers who served in Viet Nam, and John Amstutz who worked stateside in virology labs. I spoke with Bud Turpen regarding his time fighting seasickness as gunner in amphibious tanks bobbing off the shores of Iwo Jima. Tanks that swim....I have a hard time grasping that. Earl Kleinfelder was the consummate surveyor during the Korean War traveling the county mapping UN compounds.

(Continued on next page)

And then there is Al Kaufman. I always thought there was something special about Al. Yes, he was a soldier, or more accurately an Airman. OK, even more accurately he is a retired Air Force colonel with roots in the old US Army Air Corps. Let me add here that my request to the members about veteran status was answered by Al with only about two lines of text. A career officer sums it all up in two lines. I knew there was more. First of all how many 90 year olds do you know that are checking email every day? Please bear with me as I flesh out those two lines.

You don't become Colonel by being a lightweight. Al maintains a den at his home in north Modesto that still bears the resemblance of a no nonsense career officer. Sitting in front of his desk reminded me of being in front of my CO. Al was born in 1919 and the years are catching up with him but the wit and memory are very clear. He gave me a cold drink then settled into a chair and started talking.

There is an adventurous side to Colonel Kaufman. He was hooked on flying when he took a flight with a Barnstormer in the early 1930's. After attending UCLA and UC Berkeley with the ROTC he was given his Army officers commission. He convinced someone that he knew some Spanish and found himself as an Intelligence Officer on a slow boat to Peru to help defend the coast with its oil ports. During patrols the fresh Second Lieutenant would wire ahead of landing to arrange a fiesta and insisted that the best way to interpret technical conversations from Spanish to English was over a cold beer on the beach. I did not dispute that.

His air career really began though in the Burma-China-India theater alongside Claire Chanault and the Flying Tigers. We chatted about the different flights he had: an airborne parachute drop over Rangoon; towing heavily laden twin gliders that barely made it off the runway; being welcomed upon landing by the Japanese with a mortar attack. He turned more serious when talking about the hardest task of all: writing to his lost soldiers' next-of-kin.

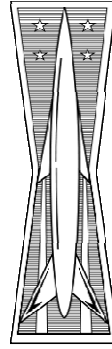
After the war he surveyed air bases in England, Africa, Middle East and Australia for expansion abilities while assigned to the Royal Air Force in England. (The only American officer in the Group.)

Meteorology became a specialty while stationed near New York City. Al became adept at spotting weather patterns days in advance and arranged a flights south for himself only to be told by his superiors to 'stay in Florida, we are snowed in here'.

During the Korean War Al taught aeronautical engineering and other courses at UCLA. For three years he was the Inspector General at USAF HQ traveling the world inspecting construction projects and determining policies for maintenance.

If four years of World War II was not enough there was Viet Nam. Or for Al it was really Southeast Asia, with some real responsibilities. His resume says he was 'Chief of Engineering Operation and Maintenance of Pacific Air Forces' responsible for civil engineering operations of all US air bases in Hawaii, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan, Philippines and Pacific Islands. He briefed and discussed his operations with the Assistant Secretary of Defense and members of congress. He had responsibilities over 5,000 engineering and construction personnel over a vast area.

If running the entire USAF civil engineering efforts over a quarter of the globe were not enough Al next found himself as 'Chief, Facilities Engineering, Ballistic Systems Division' with a nearly \$2B construction budget and \$50M for design. Al, working with in-service engineers and A/E firms, supervised the design of Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Facilities such as the plans and



specifications for hardened missile silo's for the ICBM's. The people writing the checks were Congress and Al prepared the requests for funding what he was doing. Among Al's medal display is a 'Missile Badge'. I've never really met anyone that qualified for this one but there it was along with Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with Oak Leaf Clusters.


More work experience included the year in Saudi Arabia as the Base Engineer of Dhaharan Airfield.

By this time those wearing a uniform were scorned. I remember hostile stares in airports during the early 1970's and now the troops get standing ovations. Al has seen the pendulum of public sentiment swing different ways in life.

Al went on to work for an aluminum manufacturer that provided material and equipment for military uses and ultimately held posts such as Chief Building Official, Assistant Director of Public Works and finally Director of Engineering for City of Modesto.

All in all a pretty full life and yet this story does not give the detail of what Al Kaufman has accomplished and experienced. Although Memorial Day is done it is still worthwhile to thank the folks like Dan, John, Earl and Al for their service. I personally salute you!

**'HOW TO' of the Month**  
**Entertaining with Electricity**



Last month we covered electrical safety while working. This month we look at pool safety while entertaining.

1. For goodness sake make sure your electrical connections are not underwater. Keep them floating safely above the waterline with your flip flops. Tape a wood float to connections at the pool edge to keep them visible in the event of a water landing.
3. Post an observer to assure flip flops don't sink.
4. Keep your radio at least 12" above the water line on a stable platform.
5. For extra protection surround your radio with beer bottles to prevent accidental inundation.
6. And please get some more sun before the photo session.

## **Purpose of the Modesto Engineers Club**

The preamble of the club by-laws is quoted: "The object of this club, primarily, is to provide an organization in which Engineers of all branches of the profession may come together, and through which they may cooperate and foster fellowship and the development of the engineering profession in public affairs and community welfare". The club, having been founded in 1932, currently has 66 members and enjoys a wealth of former members.

**Who May Join:** The by-laws are further quoted: "The membership shall consist of those who are or have been engaged in the direction or prosecution of engineering or architecture, or teachers of students of engineering or other allied sciences". To join simply obtain an application from any Officer, complete and present to the Secretary at the next regular meeting.

A \$25.00 initiation fee and first years dues of \$25.00 (\$50.00 total) is payable with the submission of application. Thereafter the dues are \$25.00 per year to renew. New members will receive a certificate of membership and a nametag. Members pay for their own lunches, and for meals at other events.

**Club Activities:** The Club meets once a month on the first Tuesday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the SOS club. The program usually consists of a speaker on technical subjects and local affairs of interest to engineers. There are several social

affairs during the year, which include the annual President's Steak Fry, A Valentines Day luncheon, the annual Officers Installation Dinner. Spouses and guests are welcome at all functions.

To maintain club discipline the President has the authority to levy fines completely at his/her whim. Do not 'tick off' the President with offenses such as failure to wear a name tag during meetings, not showing evidence of voting, conducting business during meetings, talking during presentations, failure to mention the Modesto Engineers Club to the media, etc. As a warning to members an appropriate receptacle for fines is maintained and prominently displayed at every regular meeting.

**Best Attendance for 2008-09:** We are coming round the turn into the final stretch and there were no drop-outs this month for Perfect Attendance. Your esteemed Secretary will almost certainly be knocked out of the running in June. You must sign in to be counted as present. Congratulations again to the following:

- **John Amstutz**
- **Sergio Fuentes**
- **Earl Kleinfelder**
- **Daniel Machado**
- **Evangelina Paoluccio**