



## Jim Schoonmaker

If Jim Schoonmaker were a tiny bit older, he might be mistaken as the inspiration for Commander McBragg, a very British cartoon character who appeared on the Bullwinkle show for a while. During the episodes the mustached Commander would point on a map and say: "There! Zanzibar! Did I ever tell you about the time I ...?"

Give Jim Schoonmaker a map of the world and he'd probably be a dead ringer for Commander McBragg. Why not? This world traveler has been to more countries than states in the USA. Name a country and he's probably been there done that. New Zealand, Japan, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Middle East, Central Europe just to name a few.

By Jim's estimates his travels have included some 30 odd countries. And if this active 82-year-old has anything to say about it, that list is going to get longer.

"I still would like to do some traveling," he said. Jim is intrigued about traveling to South America, particularly to Uruguay and Paraguay, whose male populations were decimated after countless conflicts.

"So many men were killed that women outnumbered their male counterparts 5 to 1," he points out. Good info, I'm sure!

As with most stories, Jim's has humble beginnings. He was born in Lubbock, Texas to a father who sold and repaired IBM cash registers. Sadly, his dad died in a single car accident on Christmas Eve when Jim was 3. In the ensuing years Jim and his mother, a secretary, moved around. They lived on a ranch in Bakersfield with his grandmother, in Carson City, Nev., Culver City and Ontario,

"We never had lots of money but we were never short of anything," remembers Jim, who started working when he was 10.

He clearly recalls his first job delivering the Santa Monica Evening Outlook newspaper to the 30 customers on his route.

By age 15 he had saved up enough working odd jobs to put a down payment on a home his mom bought in Culver City. The following year he bought a car.

He went to junior college after graduating from high school in Ontario and eventually completed his engineering degree at UCLA.

After interviewing with Southern California Edison Jim took a job that would last him well into several retirements. But not before some men in dark suits from Washington asked him to work for a unit of the infamous Air America, the CIA run airline that covertly furthered U.S. interests in Indochina.

"I didn't take the job, but I listened," Jim said. The position would have paid him a year's salary for six months of work.

Instead of becoming a spook, Jim went to work managing power plants for SCE and its power plant development arm, Mission Energy. Working with the latter sent Jim and his wife all over Europe.

Jim discovered that the rules of business in some countries were totally different from what he experienced in the U.S.

"Laws in Italy turned out to be suggestions," he recalled. "They were whatever the judge thinks they are."

Along the way Jim stayed active and fit. "I've been fairly active most of my life," he explained. "I was always into one sport or another."

That included racquetball, karate, dirt biking and golf, a game he picked up in his early 20s. He got a set of irons from a co-worker who had ALS. As it turned out they were part of a set used by a pro golfer in the 1930s.

Jim lives just off the fairway of the 11<sup>th</sup> hole at Redhawk, where he spends a lot of his free time. He has three holes in one to his name and once shot his age - 77.

His golf course home is just a 3 wood and pitching wedge from his son John, a local doctor with four kids.