

## Johnny and Ann Burger

Johnny L. Burger was born on May 28, 1943, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to Hannah L Burger and Charles Burger. He was the seventh child. Later, his mother married William “Bill” Jasper Ward, and he was joined by two half brothers.

To say that his childhood was interesting and varied is an understatement. A great deal of his youth was spent the way many young people dream of. Johnny has often spoken of his mother’s wanderlust. She encouraged the family to travel about the United States, never staying too long in one place. The family pursued various ways to make a living. From time to time, they operated booths at carnivals, and at other times, they made and sold crafts such as willow chairs, wooden decorations, etc.

Johnny’s uncle owned a farm in Jasper, Missouri, where Johnny got his love for all things farm related. He was operating tractors by the age of fourteen. He also worked the fields for his uncle’s neighbor for three dollars a day.

Because of the frequent moves, Johnny attended many schools. By the time he was ready to leave school and seek his fortune, he had attended twenty different schools in five states. It was probably good that he was a stapling boy since he often had to “prove” himself to school bullies at the new schools. He won most, if not all, confrontations.

When he finished the eighth grade and was ready to start the ninth grade, he left school and left home to make his own way in the world. After a short time, and when he was old enough, he joined the United States navy. He served as a boiler operator aboard the USS Bonne Homme Richard for four years and achieved the enlisted man’s rank of Boilermaker Second Class. He traveled to Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, Okinawa, Midway Island, the Philippines, and Singapore. Frequently, during his tours of duty from 1959 to 1964, the Richard was stationed off Vietnam in support of the war effort. While in the Navy, Johnny earned his G.E.D., an accomplishment that set the stage for further education later.

While on leave in the States, and while wearing his Navy uniform, he met Annis “Ann” Buffington. It was a classic example of love at first sight. She’s been heard to say, “He was a handsome cuss.” They married on September 12, 1963, and recently celebrated their 44th anniversary. They have three daughters, five granddaughters, and one grandson.

After leaving the Navy and with a wife to support, Johnny went to work (by the way, he has worked hard every since). His first job was at Burns Chevrolet in Boise, Idaho, detailing new cars. In Idaho, he tried chicken farming for a while, and then worked at B& B Equipment Company repairing and painting farm equipment. The family then moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where Johnny worked at Bells Mattress making box springs until he was upgraded to driving a trash truck. All this was in less than two years from leaving the Navy.

The next move was to Tulsa, Oklahoma. There he asked relatives where the best place to work would be, and they said at National Tank Company, but always added that the company was not hiring. Johnny showed his determination and went to the entrance of the plant twice daily for three days until the impressed guard at the gate gave him an application for work. He started at National Tank on July 5, 1966, as a welder’s helper but soon became a welder in his own right. A while later when he got the opportunity to become an apprentice electrician, he jumped at the chance. He earned a full license as an electrician. Four years into this job in Tulsa, he saw that National Tank was taking new directions; so he took Horace Greeley’s 1800s advice and moved west to Phoenix, Arizona.

In Phoenix, to support a growing family, three children by then, he took whatever jobs were available. In 1970, he started employment at Motorola as an electrician. Not long into his career, his work ethic and his willingness to continue his education caused him to start on the path to advancement. While working full time, he entered community college for basic courses and then entered the University of Phoenix where he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Industrial Management. His regular work required expertise in computers and computer programs. He is skilled with computers from inside and out and in such programs as AutoCAD. Before he left the company in 2000, he had risen to the position of Project Manager on all the huge building projects for Motorola. Ann also worked at Motorola in the Iridium satellite project. As a team member on the project, her name is on two of the satellites orbiting the earth.

Before retiring after thirty years at Motorola, Johnny and Ann were already determined to move out of the Phoenix area. In 1999, they had purchased a home and five acres from Johnny's brother on Taylor Orchard Road between Gentry and Siloam Springs and then in 2000 they moved to Arkansas. This is where fate and Tired Iron entered the picture in a big way. When the Tired Iron land purchase committee found land on Taylor Orchard Road, it was noted that the fellow who lived on the northeast corner of the property had a big shop, a Mahindra tractor, and a little, sort of old, walk-behind tiller parked at his shop. That is all it took for Tired Iron to go ahead and purchase the land.

Not long after Tired Iron started improving the newly purchased land, Johnny showed up and started helping. He and Ann soon joined the club, and both of them have been working ever since. By the time the first year had passed, the tireless efforts of Johnny and Ann were noted and appreciated by all the Tired Iron members. At the October meeting in 2003, they were given lifetime memberships to Tired Iron. In October 2005, Johnny was elected president of the club and, as of this publication, remains in the office. Johnny and Ann continue to be great supporters of Tired Iron with their Mahindra, time, and financial support. Thanks.

In keeping with his status as president, Johnny now has tractors which include a 1940 John Deere B, a 1942 John Deere A, a 1940 Allis Chalmers, a 1951 Ford 8N, a 1963 Massey Ferguson 35, a Ferguson 20, and a Ferguson 30. He also has a 1931 Ford AA truck; three hit and miss engines, and a Mayrath garden tractor. Perhaps his greatest continuing contribution for the club is his willingness to help members with their projects. It really seems he is most pleased when he is helping others, and he often puts his own projects on the back burner. Again, thanks to Johnny and Ann.

