



Al Oberlander

Though born in Chicago I grew up in Patagonia and in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The city in Patagonia was Punta Arenas, Chile on the Straits of Magellan, at that time the southernmost city in the world, an isolated out of the way place only 880 miles from Antarctica (and 2500 miles from the South Pole). I thought then - and do now - it was a wonderful place to grow up and certainly an exciting one for a boy.

My High School graduating class in Buenos Aires had 30 students, 14 nationalities, speaking from two to four languages. After the University of Illinois I began a Sales career in Chicago for the U.S. division of UK multinational. That led to 40 years in International trade. It also wound up being seven relocations (two of them overseas), before retiring in 1999 as Export Manager of a division of Sara Lee and moving to New Port Richey in 2001.

International was a wonderful field and I had many memorable experiences. Two especially stand out: an hour-long private meeting with Chilean President Pinochet's VP and two other gentlemen in the Presidential Palace; my wife and I spending an impromptu evening with Haitian President "Papa Doc" Duvalier's favorite informer, while on an independent visit to Port Au Prince, a dapper, charming gentleman who was the model for an important character in Graham Greene's *The Comedians*.

In all, I have traveled to 45 countries, mostly business but several for pleasure. I have been to the Northernmost point in Europe and within 100 miles of the Southernmost point in South America.

Sharon, the girl next door, and I have been married 54 years and have three daughters.

I have been volunteering since 2001, currently for the Area Agency on Aging, as a health insurance counselor, and just completed my 13th season as a tax preparer for United Way/AARP. Previously I spent five years with the Pasco Sheriff's Dept.

Interest in photography emerged at age 8 with the gift of a Kodak Baby Brownie. After going through various cameras and stages, I simplified my life by switching to digital point and shoots. In the interim I gave away most of my 17-camera collection. I enjoy photography and shoot what I like – mostly travel, street – do not enhance, other than crop. I admire those who can get such marvelous results with their creative manipulation.

Among several other interests are travel, reading history and travel narrative books, cooking.

I joined CCC in March 2002. The competitions and fine critiquing have been marvelous learning experiences. I like the camaraderie and have made good friends. It has been a pleasure to give back – five years as VP, five years as Chairman of the Scavenger Committee, several years as a member of that Committee, member of several other Committees over the years and, in 2014, one of three members of the Executive Council which, for specific reasons applicable to this year only, replaced the President's position.

It has been a great run and one in which I expect to be a part for many years to come!