

STEVEN ROLAND BERKEBILE

“JOIN THE NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD!!!” was the cry of the Navy recruiters when I was young. If the Navy ever needed to defend their claim, they could use the career of Steve Berkebile to demonstrate that they absolutely deliver on their promise. Steve had an illustrious career with the Navy and enjoyed every minute of it. He brings one more submariner to the Chordsmen ranks---I suspect we now have sufficient numbers of them to man a mini-sub.

Steve was born and raised in Dearborn, Michigan. He was the oldest son of Roland and Rose Berkebile and he has three older sisters and four younger brothers. His father was an insurance agent in Dearborn who had moved to the Detroit area from Pennsylvania during WW II. Steve was a rabble-rouser at Dearborn High School (this is fairly common in Michigan). He was a bit small for football, but he was just right for wrestling and was captain of the Dearborn High School wrestling team. Music was also of great interest to him during his high school years. He played a variety of brass instruments and participated in the marching band and was a proud member of the concert orchestra. He also played in some “garage bands” during his high school years.

He went from high school right into the Navy. A recruiter had sold him on a career in the nuclear Navy and he was launched in that direction. After getting into the Navy he became aware of the Navy Seals and tried to jump ship from the nuclear program but the Navy wasn't buying it. After basic training he attended schools to become a pipe fitter and a machinist then spent some time aboard ship. He was assigned to the Nuclear Power School at Vallejo, CA. 780 young men and women were in his class and 345 of them graduated. They proceeded to Prototype School in Idaho where 275 of them graduated. Steve finished first in his class. He then worked as an Engineering Lab Technician at the Atomic Energy site in Idaho Falls.

Steve spent the next five years on “Boomers”. He served on the USS Stonewall Jackson, the USS Andrew Johnson, and the USS George C. Marshall. He became qualified in everything and absolutely loved it.

He made Chief and was assigned to the Nuclear Power School in Orlando, FL where he taught Nuclear Physics. He admits to a reputation as a “hard-nosed” Chief. While in Orlando he earned a B.S. in Business from Columbia College.

His next tour was aboard the USS Tautag, a fast attack submarine based at Pearl Harbor. About this time the Navy elected to confer a commission on Steve taking him from the most esteemed rating of Chief Petty Officer to the lowly and dubious rank of Ensign, USN. He struggled through all of that and before long was Lt. Berkebile, a very respectable rank indeed.

His subsequent duties took him to postings Norfolk, San Diego, and Japan. His final assignment was meeting nuclear subs as they returned to port from their missions. This assignment took him to ports all over the world. His task was to inspect the ship stem to stern and determine repair and maintenance requirements. He retired after 23 years of active duty.

Leaving the Navy, he became a process engineer with the Quaker Oats Company. He was always interested in the martial arts and had progressed to become the holder of a 4th degree black belt. He followed a dream and opened a martial arts school in St. Joseph, MO. This proved to be fun but not very profitable and soon Steve was back

doing engineering work in the food industry. He worked in Indiana and Georgia before taking his current position as Director of Engineering and Maintenance at Coty Cosmetics in Rocky Point, NC.

While working in Indiana Steve met a young lady named Eve who was working in the real estate business in Indianapolis. The attraction was mutual and they were married in Georgia and moved to Wilmington when Steve accepted his position with Coty. Both Steve and Eve enjoy the outdoors and are taking advantage of our beaches and enjoying kayaking, jogging and golf. They love our area but think our drivers are a bit crazy.

Steve learned of SPEBSQSA when he was stationed in Idaho Falls and sang with the chapter there for nine months before being transferred. He has also sung with church choirs and a contemporary Christian music group. It was his enthusiastic singing of hymns at Wrightsville United Methodist Church that brought him to the attention of some Chordsmen and thence to the chapter ASAP. Steve brings a lot of talent and enthusiasm to the Cape Fear Chordsmen and has the potential for great things. Get to know Steve and invite him to bust a chord or two with you. It will be fun!