

## The Story About a Premature Baby Which Might Have Led to Hewlett-Packard's Enlightened Medical Plan for Employees

Barry Fowler

### Curator Note

Many interesting HP stories develop from readers to this website. Barry Fowler contacted us to thank us for preserving the memories. He sent along a past recollection that reflected on the humanity of Bill and Flora Hewlett. We had heard internal stories over the years that the Hewlett Packard Medical Benefit plan got established because of certain medical disasters which promised to devastate an employee's life financially. Since this story took place in 1951, it is quite likely that HP employee Joe Navarro's son, John, was the key player as a pre-mature baby.

Sadly, John died last year, Oct 9, 2016, after a long productive life, and after a difficult start as a pre-mature baby. We were able to contact Joe for permission to republish their story. It had originally appeared on an HP website in remembrance of Bill Hewlett, shortly after his passing in 2001. We are pleased to repeat the story, herewith.

The Navarro family had many members who joined HP. Joe started out on the hill/lower site in facilities then was the Cupertino facilities supervisor of landscape and general facilities before retiring. It started with Joe, than came his sons; John, Michael, and Dan, who only worked during the summer when he was going to College. Dan's wife, Barbara Navarro, also worked for HP for many years. Cousins Vickie and her brother, Michael, hired in, there may have been more from that extended family.



Joe and John Navarro, on an ocean cruise.

On 3/12/2017 10:01 PM, Barry Fowler wrote:

My name is Barry Fowler. My history with HP started in 1977. I first worked for Computer Service Division in Sunnyvale then DSD in Cupertino (Production Engineer on the 1000 M and E systems) then transferred to HP Roseville. I also bounced off HP Ft. Collins for a couple of years. I worked in various engineering roles in Roseville, ending with the Failure Analysis lab there.

I really appreciate the HPMemoryProject website. I got to know many of the HP computer and test products working in my various positions at Hewlett-Packard. I haven't had the time to go through the entire website but I very-much like what I have read. HP's founders were very remarkable people at all levels, starting with Bill and Dave. The website brings back those days to me.

I retired from HP in 2012 after a 35 year career with HP. It was a great company.

Here's a story about Bill Hewlett that I saved from quite some time ago. It was published on a HP website in remembrance of Bill Hewlett, shortly after his passing. John Navarro himself posted the story. That HP internal website allowed people to comment about Bill Hewlett. This story will forever be in my mind, an example of the concern Bill & Dave had for their employees and their families.

Barry Fowler  
Newcastle, California

#### THE STORY OF PRE-MATURE BABY JOHN NAVARRO AND BILL HEWLETT by John Navarro

My older brother Dan was born July 8, 1950. Then, two and a half months later my mother found out she was pregnant with me. I was born at the old Stanford Hospital on March 31, 1951. I was three months premature and weighed 1 pound 14 ounces. In 1951, doctors didn't have the technology and knowledge they do today; extremely premature babies didn't have much chance of living. The doctors did not expect me to live—and if by some chance I did—they thought I would probably have many health problems.

Since they did not expect me to live, Dr. Cutter, my pediatrician, approached my parents and asked if they could experiment with me to help understand why premature babies either developed eye problems or crippling leg defects. They had found that previous premature babies, who were in an incubator receiving 100 percent pure oxygen and not exposed to the outside elements, developed problems with either their eyes or legs. They decided to give me less oxygen to see if that made any difference.

At that time, I was the smallest baby born at Stanford Hospital. I had to be fed with an eyedropper and they used handkerchiefs as diapers. The doctors experimented with the oxygen levels and I continued to get stronger and gain weight. They were surprised that the effects of my premature birth were minimal. I did not develop problems with my legs or eyes.

After about six months, I had gained more than five pounds and my parents were finally able to take me home. When my father went to make arrangements to pay the hospital bill, my parents were told that they didn't need to worry because all of the medical bills had been paid for by a person who wished to remain anonymous. This was such a relief for my parents who had worried how they would ever be able to pay for the treatment I had received. My father wanted to know who had been so generous, but the hospital could not disclose this information.

I arrived at home still a small, fragile baby. Back in those days, doctors still made house calls. The doctor would occasionally knock at our front door asking for a cup of coffee while on his way to see other patients. After his cup of coffee, he would tell my mother, "Since I'm here, let me check out the kids," and would give us an examination. One day, when I was 11 years old, he made one of his usual visits to our house. Since he was quitting his practice, he was going to tell my father who had paid the medical bills - It was Bill and Flora Hewlett.

It turns out that Dr. Cutter was also Bill and Flora's pediatrician for their children. It was through him that Bill and Flora had heard about the tiny baby in the nursery fighting for life. This meant a lot to my parents. My father is a very proud man and he always wanted to repay the Hewletts for their kindness and generosity.

In 1968, my father Joe Navarro started working at Hewlett-Packard. While he was working there in 1972, he helped me get an interview at HP and I was hired. My father was a loyal HP employee and always gave it everything he could. He retired in 1985 after 15-plus years of service. After I started working at Hewlett-Packard, I thought maybe I should thank Bill myself. I called Bill Hewlett's office and thanked

him personally for all he had done for my family and me. Bill remembered the tiny baby in the hospital, and was very happy to know that his generosity 21 years prior had made such a difference.

After 28 years of service, I left HP to join Agilent, but I still have very deep roots to HP.

--Gnesa and John Navarro  
Sunnyvale, CA