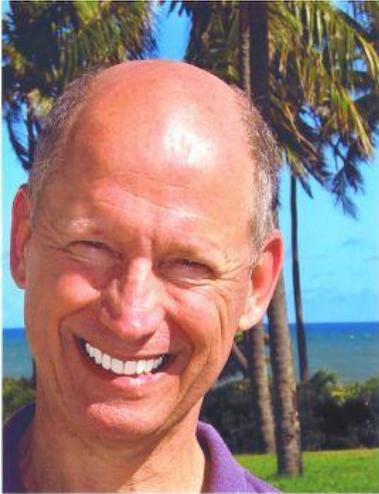


## **Pioneer Hall of Fame: John “Mac” Holzer, class of 1961**



After graduating from U-High, Mac Holzer began a career in technology innovation encompassing computer hardware, software, the Internet, and energy. Mac's assignments spanned Boston; Manhattan; Bogotá and Cartagena, Colombia; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Aruba, Netherlands Antilles; Miami, and Houston.

Mac studied on a 4-year Littman scholarship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge and participated in MIT's cooperative program with RCA's David Sarnoff Research Laboratories in Princeton, NJ. He was elected to the engineering, electrical engineering, and science honoraries and received a BSEE degree in 1965. Mac was a Pillsbury Fellow at the Graduate School of Business at the University of Chicago. He was elected to the business honorary and garnered an MBA in 1967.

Mac met Brazil's Vanessa Pitanguí Lucena, U-High's first AFS foreign exchange student, while in Normal on Christmas break in 1963. Three years of correspondence between the two kindled a long distance romance. Mac mounted a Pan Am Clipper to Brazil in 1966, and the pair became engaged. They wed in Boston the following year. Thus began a 38-year odyssey in 4 countries and Mac's eventual fluency in Spanish and Portuguese.

In 1967, Mac joined the Digital Equipment Corporation (later acquired by Hewlett Packard) that developed the first mini-computer, the predecessor to the personal computer. Predicated on the requirements of General Motors, he and four other engineers invented and patented the world's first Programmable Logic Controller, which has become a staple of industrial automation worldwide with tens of billions of dollars in sales from the likes of GE and Honeywell that licensed the technology. Mac became the PLC's first product line manager, directed the development of software to simulate and control industrial processes, and rolled out the product to the auto industry.

Mac later joined Exxon and, during the 1970's and 1980's, negotiated crude oil offtake agreements with the Colombian and Venezuelan governments, optimized refinery operations in Colombia and Aruba, orchestrated a major refinery investment program with Exxon Research and Engineering, and developed pricing strategies in the international coal market for Colombia's El Cerrejon mine, the world's largest.

In the 1990's, Mac joined Exxon USA to develop a state-of-the-art relational database capable of managing the company's hundreds of millions of dollars of property tax payments to thousands of municipalities nationwide. The strategy was to partner with a software company and create a general-purpose product for sale to other large companies. The approach freed Exxon of millions of dollars of software development

and maintenance costs. In just two years, Mac and a small Houston company, Burr Wolff, developed generic property tax software based on input from tax professionals at Exxon, Sears, and AT&T. Since its 1998 debut, the software has dominated the Fortune 500 market, and BW has grown 25-fold.

After retiring from Exxon in 1998, Mac joined Burr Wolff as Vice President and founded its property tax outsourcing division. He developed cutting edge computer applications to permit BW to file property tax returns and make tax payments for large companies such as Bank of America, Sears, Ryder, and others. Mac created "WebView," providing clients with 24x7 access to property tax records and reports over the Internet. He recruited programmers, clerical staff and supervisors to handle the burgeoning growth of what became the largest property tax outsourcing operation in the USA.

Since retirement in 2001, Mac has researched the current peaking of the world's conventional oil production and future alternative energy resources and has become involved with the MIT Energy Research Council.

Amongst all of these major successes, Mac lists his most satisfying success as his founding of an English language pre-school in Aruba.

Mac resides in Houston. His two sons, Jason and Erich, are graduates of Stanford University and Dartmouth College, respectively; they are both living in Texas. Vanessa passed away in 2006.