

Chapter Three

It had been a rocky road that had led me to this Mobile area United States Air Force recruiting center. I had just stood at attention, placed my left hand on the Bible, raised my right hand and repeated my oath of allegiance to the United States. This was 30 June 1948. There was no doubt now that I had made a commitment, at least for three years and had concluded it with this solemn pledge. I felt a part of the newly formed US Air Force.



There were five other young men who had enlisted. We were to travel together via train to San Antonio for basic training. I suppose it was because of my previous National Guard experience that I was placed in charge. I was provided tickets for all of us, which included sleeper berths and meal tickets. It was a pleasant trip, to New Orleans, change trains and then on to San Antonio. We were met at the train station, loaded onto a large canvass covered truck and taken to Lackland Air Force Base. This was to be my home for the next thirteen weeks of basic training. I had no concept of what was to transpire here.

When we reached the processing center for new recruits, we were literally pulled from the truck amid yells of “You Jeeps Fall in”. I quickly learned that new recruits were derisively called jeeps. We were roughly pushed into a line to go into the processing center. We went one way; our luggage went another way as they were yelling at us that we did not need the luggage any more. After the 13 weeks of training, I learned that our luggage had been stored and was now being returned to us. Everything was done by pushing and shoving us and everything said to us was said in screams and yells.

Once inside the processing center, among about 20 naked young men, we were stripped of all clothing which was put into garbage cans, and we were pushed into a barber chair for a 30 second hair cut. I emphasize haircut because it was all gone. We were then pulled from the barber chair and pushed into the showers with a bar of soap. After a quick shower and dry-off, we were pushed into a line and pulled one by one before a man seated on a stool dressed in a white uniform who checked genitals. The next station was a bend over and spread cheeks for a visual check of the rear end. We were then pushed into forming a line and walking between the two rows of seven men dressed in their white uniforms. I learned these were medical technicians. They had carts of vaccines and syringes with needles. The first two men vaccinated us in each arm and left the needles in each arm for the next medical technician in line to use that same needle already in place. I got seven shots in my arms in this manner. Some of the jeeps were known to pass-out with their first shots, and had to be dragged through the gauntlet line with needles hanging in their arms, to finish getting all seven of their shots. The last man in the white uniforms removed the needle from each arm. We were given paper towels to wipe fluids that ran from the punctures. I wondered how much serum I had actually retained from this mass vaccination. process. They did it so fast it really hurt and was feverish for days.

We were then pushed into a line leading to a Dutch door, a half door with a shelf, to be issued a laundry drawstring bag and a traditional army duffle bag with a carrying strap. It was only two steps to the next issue door, but we were push there. We were still naked with no hair. At this window, we were issued underclothes with shouted instructions “put these on and cover up your sorry looking body”. I quickly and gladly complied. These strange looking cotton shorts were about two sizes too big and were adjusted by tie strings at the sides. I got six of the button up, olive drab, cotton under-shorts and six tops. We put these things in our duffle bag and laundry bag. We were pushed or shoved to several of these issue windows, getting everything we needed, toothbrush, toothpaste, a Gillette razor with a packet of Gillette Blue Ribbon razor blades, soap, a comb, boots, socks, coveralls, a cap and ten kaki handkerchiefs. We each got a footlocker delivered later to our tents. That’s right, we lived out first nine weeks in ten man canvass tents with army folding cots, in the heat of a Texas July, August and September. We finally got into a typical wooden barracks with a shower and toilet, to spend our last four weeks of this most miserable experience. The tents smelled like treated Tarpaulin, and so did we. Someone gave me this picture of my friends and me. Reese, the tall one, couldn’t find a cap size to fit him. He was on his way to professional tennis and became injured. He was sent to Officer Candidate School there at Lackland AFB. I am in the center, Edwards is to my right shoulder. Chief is squatting to the right. The Strickland brothers are standing to my left.



We were assigned to Flight 3238 and a drill instructor named Adams. He told us in his always loud, scream like voice, that his name was “PFC Acting Corporal Adams”. He was ruthless and sadistic in his treatment of the sixty of us. He forced us into lengthy marches and runs during the full heat of the day, every day. He had a large mop handle that he had driven a nail into, leaving about an eighth of an inch of the sharp point protruding. He used this to rap us on the calves of our legs if we got out of step while marching. I still have two scars from his raps that became infected and caused problems. He would not let anyone go to sick call for the treatment of any wounds he had inflicted.

During our eighth week of training we were marched to the tailor shop where dozens of women worked at issuing us uniforms and making alterations as necessary to provide us with a complete kaki uniforms, complete with a shoulder patch. We had been issued a sewing kit complete with thread, needles and buttons. We got to wear our kaki uniform for the first time after our ninth week of this most grueling and physically demanding training program. We had a group picture made just before getting on the bus that Saturday morning. On this designated Saturday, it was a tradition to bus the trainees into San Antonio to Brackenridge Park and Zoo. We were given twenty dollars as a draw on our pay, which was \$52 per month. I still had that five-dollar bill I had brought from Foley. We never got paid in Basic training, but were paid in full at the end of training.

Three dollars and twenty cents was deducted for income tax, two dollars for laundry and always the ten cents for the 'Old Soldiers Home', leaving forty-seven, seventy per month.

As we got off the bus we were told to be back at that spot at 1700 hours sharp, or we would be considered AWOL. I had been to the Atlanta Zoo as a child, but this was awesome. I spent my day among the animals of the zoo. It was a wonderful day to be on my own for the first time in two months. I was so proud of my uniform. For a week before we went to the park, we were shown Army produced sex education films every day. Some of them were nauseatingly graphic, especially those in color about sexually transmitted diseases. I had never seen such graphic pictures of these diseases. When I was in the eleventh grade in Foley, the boys and girls were segregated and taken to the downtown Foley Theater where a uniformed nurse showed us a sex education film which included diseases, but it was nothing like these films we were forced to attend and view. I became leery of anyone touching me, even in a handshake. I wanted to take a scrubbing shower after viewing films for four hours or more for three days. Too graphic for me.

Charles Edwards, whose father had a Caterpillar Equipment dealership in Dalton, Georgia, came back from that Saturday visit to the park infected with one of those diseases. He became an instant outcast with all of us. Everyone seemed to enjoy their daylong trip back into civilization, sharing their day's activities of all they had done. The next day, Sunday, was tranquil as some of us went to the chapel in our new uniforms.

Monday was a horrific day I will always remember. PFC Acting Corporal Adams became a wild man. Shortly after breakfast, we were forced to run up and down Kelly Hill for about three hours with a short rest after each lap at the top of this rather steep inclined paved highway that connected Lackland AFB and Kelly AFB. It was about a quarter mile run each way as we jogged uphill and downhill. That afternoon, he marched us to a clearing in the mesquite. The somewhat circular clearing was about two acres. The ground was bare except for the small limestone rocks that littered the area. He had us fill our backpacks with these stones. He hefted each one, telling almost everyone to put in more stones and be inspected again. This was an unusually hot morning and afternoon as we were already exhausted from the dozens of runs up Kelly Hill earlier that morning.

We were forced to jog in single file around the perimeter of this clearing. After probably an hour of this torture, some of the men stopped running and sat or lay on the ground. He kept yelling for us to continue our jogging or trot, but more and more of the men simply quit and lay down. There was one young man in this flight that was from Prescott, Arizona. I think he was North American Native Indian. I could never pronounce his name. Everyone simply called him chief. He had no body hair except on the top of his head, eyebrows and eyelashes. Chief never sweated, even during that morning run and that fatal afternoon jogging session. He was the only one of the sixty of us who was left standing. He even walked around checking on the others. We ate salt tablets like popcorn, and it came out into our coveralls as white sweat stains. Chief would laugh at us, as he never took the salt tablets. Every body liked Chief. He had little to say but he was funny.

Chief broke away and ran the half-mile or so to get help. An ambulance came, and quickly loaded and sped away with two of the men who were unconscious. Then there were many ambulances, we called them "meat wagons," that came and carried away about 30 men who were suffering from dehydration and heat exhaustion. I was hurting but I just sat down and got that cursed pack off my back. Adams was gone and could not be found. He had simply vanished. First Lt. Dobson, the commander, came down and told us to go to our tents, take a shower and relax. We limped to our tents and collapsed.

During that night we heard sporadic rifle shots down in the area of the firing range. We were told the next morning that Adams had gone berserk and was firing at the Air Policemen and Medical personnel who were trying to both sedate him, and arrest him. We were told that he was either killed or had committed suicide. I remember very well, the mixed emotions I had learning of his death. I was glad I would never again suffer atrocities and brutalities from him. I felt compassion for these last weeks of his life that he had finished his basic training only weeks before we arrived and were assigned as his first flight to take through basic training. I felt that he had not been adequately prepared for the leadership and responsibilities of his assignment. He was a big person for his age but he was not mature enough for the responsibilities entrusted to him to care for 60 men, all about his age. It was too much for him. I really believe that he had been wronged and had never received adequate supervision and counseling during his work with us. Sad

Anyway, we got a new drill instructor, Sgt. Thomas, to guide us in the remaining four weeks of training. We all liked him very much as he taught us Air Force history, customs and traditions. I don't think we ever marched or ran again. He took a personal interest in every one of us and quickly learned our names. Adams had never learned any of our names in his nine weeks of working with us. Sgt Thomas got us moved into a barracks his first day with us. It had showers, beds, and an open bay for sleeping. We liked him.

We had a big fellow, James Strickland and his slim younger brother Jerry who had enlisted together from Tampa, Florida. They were very likeable young men. One afternoon James fell to the floor in the barracks, having an epileptic seizure. I had never seen this before and I was scared for him. Jerry calmed us and told us to help hold him down. Jerry had a spoon quickly available in his footlocker. He pried his mouth open to insert the spoon and depress his tongue. James soon stopped his uncontrollable shaking and recovered. He had a strong acrid offensive odor about his body during the seizure. I had never detected it before or after the seizure. James explained that he had run out of his medication and was afraid to get a prescription, as epilepsy was grounds for discharge. Sgt. Thomas arranged to get him medication and he finished his training. In fact, he and I were selected to go to weather school at Chanute AFB, Illinois. He had a seizure there and was medically discharged from the USAF. He was a good person.

Our final four weeks of the thirteen-week basic training was pleasant and rather uneventful. During that final month each of us went through days of personalized testing in every manner, aptitude, intelligence, physical, and psychological. I was told that I had made a score of 164 on the overall Intelligence Quotient testing. Sgt. Thomas set an appointment for me to go to the Commanding Colonel's office and discuss the

opportunity to be appointed by the Air Force to attend The US Army Military Academy at West Point, New York. There was no Air Force Academy at that time. I felt much honored for this once in a lifetime realistic offer. The fresh recollections



of my academic failures at Auburn flooded my mind in humility as well as the horrendously inane physical treatment of the past nine weeks were a definite discouragement for me to have an objective attitude about a military career. Yes Indeed.

I told the Colonel of my failures, but he reassured me that my record at Auburn was not a factor. He told me that he had full authority to “cut” orders and I would be on my way to West Point. He gave me a dollar, as we never had any money, and told me to go to the snack bar and come back in an hour. Instead, I went to the chapel, which was always open, and prayed. I really prayed hard about what I should do. I don’t know whether it was the Lord talking to me or was it just a mental discussion that led me to the decision that an Army Officer career was not for me. I remember being weak from that prayer time and went to the snack bar and got a cola. I used my full hour before going back.

When I went back to the Colonel’s office, I placed the change on his desk and thanked him. I think he was shocked that I did that. I told him of my gratitude and pride to be a part of the new Air Force and that one-day when I would be twenty-one, I wanted to be a fighter pilot. He was a wise man. He listened to me without interruption. When I had finished, we both stood and he extended his hand, we shook hands, I saluted him and he returned the salute with a smile and a “God Bless You.” I saw him again as a coincidence about two years later. Randolph AFB hosted an annual air show, which was very well attended by so many of the retired Generals We aviation cadets served as escorts and guides for senior officers and dignitaries. I was truly honored to be appointed as escort for the famed Battan Death March hero, Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright and his delightful wife Mrs. Adele Holley Wainwright. He told me that his friends called him “Skinny”, but I just couldn’t do that. I remembered how much I admired him from the Weekly Reader reports of him when I was at Corner School. I swelled with pride just to be in his presence. Cadet escort duties mostly meant to get drinks and food for him, his wife and their two guests. I saw the Colonel who had been the Commanding Officer of Lackland AFB who was now wearing a bright silver star. I went over to him and introduced myself. He spoke cordially. I’m not sure he recognized me until I reminded him that I was that recruit he had offered an appointment to the US Army Military Academy at West Point. He remembered me then as the recruit that gave him back change from a dollar. He made a comment that I should have accepted his offer two years



Gen. Wainwright

earlier. He extended his hand as he had that same warm smile. We shook hands and he said "God Bless You." I saluted him and returned to Gen. Wainwright and guests. It was a beautiful day. Mrs. Wainwright invited me to bring a cadet and visit their home. They were a wonderful couple to me.

I was given a choice of technical schools to attend, either Air Traffic controller (Tower Operator) or Weather Observer. I felt that weather would help me more as a pilot, so I chose to go to Chanute AFB, Rantoul, Illinois as a weather student. This was the most fascinating course of study that I had ever experienced. I studied everything they had on the courses and equipment and within three weeks I was given a written and oral exam on the ten-week course. I was immediately assigned to the weather forecasting school for courses leading to become an Air Force weather forecaster. This was a six months course intended for college graduates who had a working knowledge of preliminary or basic mathematic skills. My father had taught me how to read the clouds, as he had been taught, and forecast tomorrows' weather. Plain common sense prevailed with me and it competed with those using the mathematical formulas to formulate a forecast. The big boys in Washington made forecasts every four hours and sent them over the Teletype. These were the forecasts to be used in briefing pilots, in addition to the local weather and forecast developed by the local forecaster. This was exciting. I really enjoyed everything.

The barracks for weather school students were the two story typical army wooden barracks located just off the end of the runway and to the side. Aircraft departing and arriving were always very noisy for a few seconds. Heating was by a coal-fired furnace behind the building, which required firing or stoking every six hours. Whoever was appointed to do this was considered to be the barracks chief and got to sleep in one of the two rooms at the entrance to the building. Yep, that's right, I was appointed by the commander to be the barracks chief with additional duties to post details for cleaning the latrine and moping the floor each morning before marching to the chow hall and then to class. I got to know the men assigned to "my" barracks. They were an interesting lot. I was so frugal, "stingy" in those days, but I finally bought an Elgin wristwatch so I could know when to go back there to shovel coal and stoke the fire. The wind was so cold.

One night about midnight as I was finishing dressing to go out in the cold to do my stoking chores, I heard aircraft engines getting louder and louder overhead and then a terrible sound as it crashed into the top of the vacant barracks next door and into the base of the one next to that. Impulsively, I grabbed my two wool, olive drab blankets and a pillow, racing to where I thought the crashed aircraft was. I had never been close to such a giant airplane, a C-47, and I had no idea how to get into it. I saw a door opening on the side of the airplane. A man jumped out and ran away. I went into the airplane through that door and took an unconscious man out and covered him with my remaining blanket. I went back in and took two more men to safety. An unconscious man is hard to lift/carry.

By this time a few men arrived and began to help carry out the men. I was tired from carrying those three men out of the airplane anyway, so I went to the front of the airplane. I saw blood was making long red slobber like streams from what I thought was the nose, which had been crushed far back into the airplane. Fire trucks and ambulances arrived

along with Air Police telling all of us to clear the scene and leave. I went to retrieve my blankets and pillow. My blankets were gone but I did get back my pillow, which was covered with blood. The crash was the talk of the day. The newspaper story was that the airplane was carrying Colonels home from a conference at Scott AFB, St. Louis, Missouri and was stopping to discharge one of the passengers. The weather was a solid fog condition and the aircraft was on a Ground Controlled Approach, GCA. Its' flight path missed the runway by about 200 feet and crashed with instant death to three crewmembers in the cockpit. I went down to the flight line after classes that day and they were pressure steaming the blood and flesh from the gnarled nose of the aircraft.

The Chanute AFB weekly newspaper had an article concerning the crash. The article declared that the person who was first on the scene and rescued three of the victims, was not yet identified and that he was to be recommended to receive the Soldiers Medal for his rescues. The Soldiers Medal is the highest award given in peacetime as equivalent to the Medal of Honor in wartime. It also carried an award of two dollars a month. The men of the barracks teasingly talked me out of going forward to be verified that I was the rescuer. They convinced me that the better part of macho-valor was to let it be a question. I don't know if that esteemed honor of receiving that medal is still available or not. Several years ago Mary got forms to complete for an application for recognition, but we never completed it. Maybe I should make that application for that honored and coveted Soldiers Medal. She obtained newspaper reports as evidential support. We looked back on old special orders and barracks rosters but were unable to find any persons alive.

After completing the accelerated and personalized Weather Forecaster schooling, I was sent to Westover AFB. Mass. enroute to Station 15 for assignment as a weather forecaster. I worked in the Westover weather office for a few days until a weekly scheduled aircraft came to take me to Greenland where I then transferred to an aircraft that had snow skis and JATO bottles. I knew very little or nothing about where I was to be going. My orders read Narsarsuaq, Greenland, station 15 and I thought I was there, but now I was going somewhere else. After we landed, I learned a lot about where I was going to be for a four-month's assignment. Station 15 was a massive iceberg that never melted or enlarged. It made a slow drifting orbit in the North Arctic Ocean. The Americans occupied the berg when it was in Icelandic waters and the Russians manned it when it drifted into their territorial waters. Some of the equipment we used was Russian. I don't know and doubt whether this is still an active manned weather reporting station.

Living quarters were carved into the ice, well below the surface. The walls and ceiling were of glistening ice and the floors were wooden slats. Kitchen, bath, bedroom and all fixtures were of wood attached to the ice walls. On the surface was a shack for a generator and heating equipment. It was crude but habitable. Anyway it was to be home for me and the other eight personnel for the next several months. Our mission was simply to record our position, the weather conditions, and radio this back to headquarters each four hours. Supplies and mails were delivered each two weeks, weather conditions permitting. I had been there getting adjusted for only two weeks when the supply aircraft came and took me back. They had a Tech Sergeant replacement for me. He was unhappy.

I was told to get my gear and get aboard. That took about three minutes. I did not know what all of this was about until I got to Westover AFB two days later. I was provided orders directing that I was being transferred to Brookley AFB at Mobile, Ala. I was overjoyed. I found out later that Congressman George Grant of Mobile had been petitioned by a group from Foley to have me transferred because of my father's rapidly failing health. I was being transferred by congressional request as my orders read. "Political Influence." My personnel folder was stamped in big red letters "PI", political influence. Mr. Billy Thieme who collected letters and signatures for my transfer, spearheaded the group. I learned that Dr. Holmes, Docs Stacey, Crosby and Dumas, Professor McGowan, Mr. Childress and many others had written or signed letters on my behalf. I shall always remember them with utmost gratitude. Mr. Thieme visited my father every afternoon in his last days of confinement to his bed. He was a caring friend.

I wasn't finished moving yet. Since leaving Lackland AFB, I had traveled and seen a lot of exciting new worlds for me. Brookley AFB had no space for another weather forecaster so I was told to go home to Foley, free vacation, and come back in a week. Perhaps by that time they would have something figured out for me. When I came back, I was told that an experimental situation was being developed at the municipal airport in Birmingham. The National Guard and Reserve forces of all branches of the Armed Forces were combining for a joint shared venture to provide aircraft for flight crew proficiency for all branches of the military. The organization was called the 2587 Armed Forces Reserve Training Center. The weather office for flight clearances was to be a joint operation manned by Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Marine personnel.

I was given orders and money to get there. When I arrived at the designated building, it was empty. After about three days of lounging about the building that was being set up for a barracks, I met Capt. John Lentz, who was to be the commander of the weather station. He had been off on an extended personal flight. My, My, How that man loved to fly. During the war, he had been a P-38 pilot. He was shot up and bailed out. The horizontal elevator connecting the twin boom vertical rudders struck him in the middle of his face. That horizontal elevator was commonly called "The Widow Maker." He didn't remember pulling the ripcord of his parachute. When he woke up he was in a POW hospital. They did a very poor job of repairing the gash from the center of his forehead to his chin. He was terribly disfigured, but he had a heart as big as he was. I learned to have the greatest respect and admiration for this WW II combat veteran. He became a friend.

New equipment such as teletypes, automated weather observations recorders and a fascinating machine called a Telewriter, along with other equipment was to arrive in about a month and I was to help in the installation. The telewriter was the forerunner of the currently used credit card signature writer on a blank screen. We used it to communicate with the tower. That gave us a month to fly, as he asked me to go on these cross-country flights with him. He was in his pilot's glory and I was excited with awe at every flight. The B-26 was his favorite to fly because he pretended to be back in combat with his "wringing it out." I liked flying with him most when he would take the twin engine C-45 because he liked to play instructor and let me at the controls. We flew several times to the Canal Field just north of Gulf Shores and would go fishing. He

loaded up the entire weather station staff one day and flew us to Canal Field, Gulf Shores. My father had made arrangements for Mr. Frederick to take all of us fishing in the Gulf aboard the "Donna Frederick". Oh, what a trip. We caught loads of fish and no one got seasick on the trip into the Gulf. These flights with him cemented a passionate desire now to become a fighter pilot. As soon as I could, I made application for pilot training.



I tried to go to Foley as often as I could. It cost \$5.45 for a round trip ticket. My pay as a PFC was \$80.00 each month with \$2.00 taken out for laundry, \$4.00 for income tax and 10 cents for the Old Soldiers Home, leaving me \$73.90 as spendable money. I always, and I mean always, every month, had to hock my Elgin wrist watch on the 20th for \$10.00 and repay \$12.00 to redeem it on payday. The hockshop guy learned me and teased me.

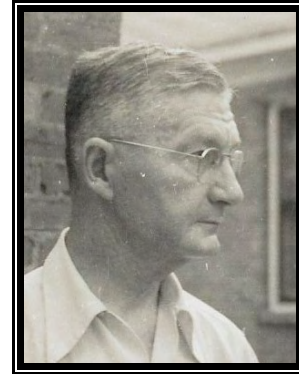
On these trips to Foley, I would catch a trolley to the bus station and board the bus there. The bus would stop at five-points to on-load waiting passengers. A lot of people boarded the bus there rather than go downtown. There is a little park there in the five points intersection that has a white marble statue of a kneeling and praying Brother Bryan. It was on 1 April 1949, April Fools Day, that I was on the bus for Mobile and to Foley. I was in my uniform, sitting next to the window. No one had taken the aisle seat next to me and this was the only remaining seat. I saw a very attractive and well-dressed lady talking to the bus driver. As she made her way to the rear of the bus, searching for a seat, she saw the one next to me. She asked if she might sit there. I was overcome by her warm friendly smile and radiant southern gentile speech and manner. I think I acted like an uninhibited juvenile and blurted out something to the effect, "Gosh you are pretty." She came right back with, "No, I am not pretty, but I am clean." That did it. I liked her candor and humor and wanted this lady's friendship and to learn more about her.



We chatted like magpies as I wanted to know about her and she wanted to know about me. When we got to Thorsby, the mid point to Montgomery, the bus stopped for a passenger rest and refreshments. She had told me her name was Mary Earle Eidson and was going home to Montgomery. After we had gotten our coffee, she said that she had given the bus driver a five-dollar bill and he was to give her back the change, but he had not done so yet. She asked to borrow a nickel for her coffee. We chatted more than sipped our coffee. I told her that my brother Sonny was captain of the Auburn wrestling team. We made plans to go see Gorgeous George at the civic center on Monday night. She got off the bus in Montgomery to call her parents and sisters and realized she had left her new overcoat, umbrella and library book on the bus. In just that fleeting moment, they were

gone. The long coat was a part of her very attractive three-piece business suit she had just bought that week. We asked everybody around but never recovered any of it.

Her father, who liked to tease her, told that she lost her clothes, book and umbrella along with her heart on that Greyhound Bus on April Fool's Day to a soldier who made \$73 a month. He would really chuckle over that one. He had the most humorous laugh, especially when he told stories of Satchel "Satch Mo" Paige, and Hank William whom he had known both of them for years. Professor Eidson was indeed a very remarkable man and had been very successful in his career of Education Administration and teaching. The first time I met Mary's parents, I felt an instant bonding of friendship, respect and admiration for them. My esteem for them increased at our every encounter. They were family to me



Professor Eidson

Mary and I had agreed to go to the wrestling matches at the civic auditorium Monday night. I left the barracks two hours early to be sure I would be on time at her boarding house in a residential area where I had never been. I was lost early on in my first search and found no help in asking the bus driver for directions. I called Mary and she gave me instructions, which didn't work. I called the second time and finally found her boarding house being more than an hour late. It was dark and I took her hand to aid in getting down some steps. She jerked back quickly and I thought, Uh Oh, what am I in for tonight. She showed me a huge hatpin she had pushed into the side of her little handbag. She told me why she carried that defensive weapon. I assured her she didn't need it.

We arrived at the civic auditorium just as the flamboyant showman Gorgeous George, hailed as the World's Greatest Wrestler, was finishing his victorious bout. We had seen enough so we went to Wilson Park in front of the Auditorium and took a bench seat. Wilson Park is a heavily shaded park with giant Magnolias. We soon left the park to get coffee at a downtown coffee shop. When we took seats, she burst into laughter pointing to my head. Looking at her, I saw where the pigeons had taken careful aim at her head and bombed several times. We both went laughing to washrooms to clean up. We had many more outings, always walking or riding the bus. We could ride the bus all the way to Bessemer, get an ice cream cone, and two twenty five cent tickets to ride back to Birmingham, spending less than two dollars for the evening of chatter and fun. We enjoyed it.



Gorgeous George

One of us bought a little red battery operated radio, which entertained us with a football game on the Saturday afternoons we were in Birmingham. She visited her family in Montgomery on weekends as much as possible. I did the same, visiting my family in Foley, so we did not have a lot of times we spent together. All of our times together were walking dates or riding the city bus to a distant end of the line and return. It was on our



seventh date that we had walked up to Red Mountain and as we admired the beauty of Birmingham, The Magic City, I kissed her for the first time. She had to work late one evening at Southern Research Institute on a cancer research project. She invited me to come to her laboratory and see her project. She was collecting smoke from the six cigarettes the machine was smoking simultaneously, and processing the elements of the smoke. I teased her as being the only person who could smoke six cigarettes.

The Foley Red Cross Chapter requested an emergency leave for me in September 1949 to come to Foley. Dr. Holmes told the family, and him, that he had only a few days to live. My father wanted me to go to the “Green Front Drug Store”, which was a state operated liquor store, and get him some whiskey. I asked him what kind and he didn’t know any brand names of any whiskey. I never saw him consume any alcoholic beverage. The men at the counter asked me for my ID and I was told I was too young to buy spirits but, when I told them who it was for, he told me to wait a minute. He went into the racks and came back to the counter with a gift-wrapped bottle and all of the clerks, telling me that this was their gift to my father. They would accept no money. They had a prayer right there at the counter. When I got home, he asked me to pour him some whiskey in a glass. I did. He never touched it. He died three days later. I have already told you how well he had planned his final service. He was truly a remarkable man as he left big footprints in the applied science of progressive farming there at York Mountain.

I can’t remember why I did what I did one night, which was a real disappointment to Capt. Lentz and to me. It was sometime after midnight one night that I simply walked away from the weather station in total frustration about my life, leaving the teletypes going full blast. I walked to the Greyhound bus station, about three miles, had a grilled cheese sandwich and cola. I then walked back to the weather station at the municipal airport. When I entered, there was Capt. Lentz pulling and posting the teletype reports. He was in his pajamas and slippers. I started tearing and posting as fast as I could. He soon left without a word being spoken between us. I finally got all of the work accomplished. I thought this would be the end of my Air Force career. I was angry with myself for such a foolish thing I had done. I was remorseful, I had wronged Capt. Lentz.

When he came to work that morning he closed his office door. He had never closed his office door. I knew I was in serious trouble as I could hear him in there typing, probably my courts martial papers. He opened his door and nodded for me to come in. Without speaking to me, he pushed a typed paper in front of me and held a pen for me to sign. I looked at it and saw that it was the completed form for disciplinary action, called an Article 15. I didn’t even read it. I just signed it, saluted him and walked out. He did not speak to me for about two weeks. I was scheduled to go to Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, Ala. for a flight physical for admission to the Aviation Cadet Program. He came to me and said that he would fly me down and wait for me. I had admitted to myself that I was no longer eligible with this disciplinary record. Now I had a full-scale war of emotions inside me. He took a C-45 and let me handle the controls for most of the flight.

The physical examination revealed that I had a severely deviated nasal septum needing correction. The physicians decided to send me the next day to the big military hospital, Oliver General Hospital at Augusta, Georgia. I thanked Capt. Lentz with emotion in my heart that he apparently was not holding that Article 15 against me and had brought me to Maxwell Hospital. He went back to Birmingham. I was sent to Georgia the next day. The repair surgery was done while I was sitting awake in a dental chair. They replaced the septum with an unborn calf cartilage. The surgeon teased me that I could now ‘moo’ with authenticity. A military plane flew me back to Birmingham after a three-day recovery.

I soon afterwards received orders to report to Randolph AFB, San Antonio, Texas for flight training. I went into his office to shake hands and say goodbye. He handed me a folded paper from his desk. It was that Article 15 paper, he had never forwarded it. I ran around his desk and hugged his neck as I cried. He closed the door and I soon regained my composure. He bade me “Good Flying”. I saluted him and left. I rode the train to



Randolph AFB Chapel

Randolph AFB, San Antonio, Texas, which stopped at the main entrance to base. I was taken by staff car to the Aviation Cadet area. It was mid December 1949. I was told that I was early because the class 51A was to begin the first week in January.1950. The base was more or less closed for the holidays and I had no assignments of duty. I was placed in one of those temporary wooden two story barracks until rooms in the beautiful old Cadet dormitories could be made ready for 126 incoming cadets. When I was moved to the dormitory after Christmas, I had a choice of a room.

These were the nicest quarters I had ever had in the Air Force. I was on the second floor of a three-story dormitory, housing about 100 cadets. There were three of these dormitories built around the dining hall and classrooms. Everything was so beautiful. I soon learned that being an Aviation Cadet had its rewards in many ways but there were lessons of humiliation, courage, comradeship, sharing and discipline entwined into every aspect of cadet life. The honor code was enforced and had a great influence on cadet life.

The evening meal for Aviation Cadets was a somewhat formal affair in that everyone was dressed appropriately with tie. Cadets stood at their places until Thanksgiving was said by the Chaplain. Cadets were then seated when the senior cadet was seated and ordered, “Gentlemen, please be seated.” The senior cadet, seated at the head of the table, made announcements. When birthday and solo announcements were made, a toast of wine was offered for that table only. The family style meals were served first to the senior cadet at that table. Everyone was assigned a table for the duration of their training. The “Plebes”, those in the newest entry-level class of the four levels of ongoing classes of training were taught to eat “square meals.” This is a very difficult procedure to describe except that every movement had to be straight and right angles as the diner sat in a very erect position moving his head neither right, left or up or down, with eye movement only to their plate or to pass bowls or platters of food. This was for their duration as a lower classman, about six weeks, and they had to walk in a “brace” about the compound. This

meant walking at quick-time while at an exaggerated attention posture. This was a hazing procedure adopted from West Point. Randolph liked to be known as “West Point of the Air”. We were served a pint of beer during the evening meal on Fridays and holidays.

I soon had three roommates; Kenneth Baker from California was a transfer from the Navy. John, “Johnny” H. Cochran, from Houston, Texas was a Rice University graduate. He was a comic and always made us laugh. He arrived in his yellow convertible Jeepster, singing “Rag Mop” at the top of his lungs. Howard Bowden from Dothan, Ala just wanted to learn to fly. He was obsessed with reading detective magazines and listening to mystery programs on the radio. Nothing could interfere with his inner sanctum radio program and other detective radio programs. He was obsessed with detective magazines.

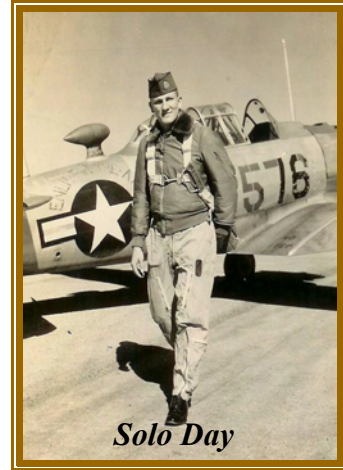
We helped each other in our difficult academic program studies. Ken knew Morse code and helped in tutoring me, but I was hopeless. I went through the code lab course of six weeks, three times. I got to seven words per minute, failing to reach the required twenty. The instructor, Mr. DeLay, finally told me after 18 weeks of code lab, to go away, he was tired of looking at me. He passed me. I tutored others in weather, which was a very difficult course for most everyone. Several cadets were washed out because they just couldn’t put it all together. The yellow T-6 used for check rides was known as the washing machine. Lt. Homer Staggs from Starkville, Miss. was my flight instructor. He was a fighter pilot of about 5’ 1” and had the vocabulary of a true redneck truck driver and talked so fast I could not understand him at times. He was a really good pilot, a former crop duster, and he taught me well. He had tiny little hands and short fingers that made it hard to shake hands with him. I told him one day that his hands looked like they were there to fit a plow handle. “Boy, do you want to pass?” Then he burst out laughing and said that his family were true Mississippi sharecroppers and that is exactly what he did, plow a field with a mule, until he was old enough to get into the wartime Air Corps.

One Friday for the afternoon flight, he really got on my case and called me everything that was remotely similar to being a stupid and dangerous pilot. He almost had me in tears. We landed at a remote airstrip near Randolph. He had me make several landings and take offs. He was quiet for the last two take offs and landings. He had me taxi up to where there was a parked aircraft. He talked into his interplane microphone, telling me he was scared to fly with me anymore and that he was going to get out. He told me go and make a take off and landing and see if I could survive. I knew I was a good pilot and was ahead of my classmates in scored points of flying. He slid his canopy back, got out onto the wing, hopped to the ground and saluted me. I felt confident. I made the take off and turned into the traffic pattern. I was on the final approach when I realized it was so quiet without his yappy, yappity voice. I looked back over my shoulder and the rear seat was empty. Oh My.... I was alone and there was the runway ahead coming up fast. I smiled at the joke of the flight instructor, “When trees get bigger, pull back on stick. When trees get smaller, push forward on stick.” A twinge of panic hit me but I had more important things to do. After a



good landing and taxi back to him, he called me on the radio of the plane on the ground and told me to do it again, that it was a fine landing. I was still alive. It was a common practice for the cadet to land three times on the solo flight if all was well. I did this three times and felt a huge surge of pride. When I taxied back to him, I wanted to hug him..

He got in and we went home silently. On the flight back home, I thought about and dreaded the thoughts of my classmates throwing me in the huge Olympic swimming pool as was the tradition on solo day. He shook my hand when we landed back at Randolph. He had not done that since our introduction a month earlier. We became good friends even after he told me I was not aggressive enough to become a good fighter pilot and he was recommending that I go to Bombers or Transport Aircraft. I pleaded for Bombers to no avail. Oh Well, I was very proud to have completed the Air Force Basic Pilot Training program. After I soloed, I went into San Antonio one Saturday afternoon and bought him a silver cigarette case with a lighter. Every time when we got airborne, he would light up and chain-smoked until we landed.



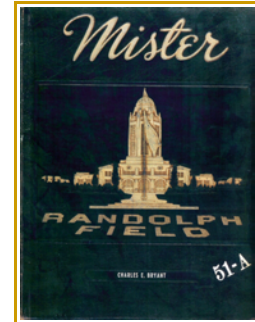
It was interesting that none in my class of 51-A were eliminated from training after July 1950. South Korea was over-run and every pilot was needed, so none were washed out. We had started with 126 and had 35 cadets to complete Basic Flight Training and go forward to Advanced Flying at Vance AFB (Bombers) and Williams AFB (Fighters).

Howard had washed out after becoming violently sick in the bag immediately after take off on each of his four short flights. He became a Texas Ranger. Some years later I was flying KB-29 s out of Austin, Texas and we rekindled friendships. He insisted that I ride patrol with him one night. I think he was showing-off or just having fun that night. We went to a clearing in Round Rock that had a gambling house amid the tumbleweeds and brush. The shack had burlap bags hanging in the open windows. Howard eased up to the house and shouted; "Texas Ranger, Texas Ranger" Probably more than twenty men jumped out of the burlap windows and ran through the two doors. Howard fired his big long pistol into the air and shouted, "Halt." This served to speed their departure like Olympic runners. Howard came back to his car, laughing almost uncontrollable. I asked him to take me home. I was shaking all over. I was so glad that would never be my work.

I was standing on the flight line watching the T-6 trainers take off. It seems that when an accident is in progress, everything becomes quiet on the flight line. I looked up, hearing a planes' engine quit and saw that it made a sharp bank to turn back to the runway. Oh No....were my thoughts. Land straight ahead, NEVER turn back, is the uncompromising rule of flight. The plane stalled and made a straight down vertical dive into the ground and thorny mesquite. We learned almost instantly that it was my roommate, Johnny H. Cochran, and his instructor Lt. John McMullin in the plane. It was never determined who was at the controls. It was indeed a fatal error, trying to turn back to the runway, rather than go in straight ahead. This is a lesson drilled into every pilot and we never understood

why or which one violated this absolute rule. Ken and I packed his personal effects and I drove the yellow Jeepster to his family in Houston while Ken served as escort for the body. It was a very sad time for me. I did not know death nor consider the finality of it

I had learned a lot about putting together an annual book from experiences of working with the Foley class annuals. With classmate support I edited the 51-A class book "Mister", which was the title for a cadet. It had a padded cover with name embossed and was a fun thing to do and I learned a lot about photography. The costs were divided among those wanting the book and it amounted to three dollars each. This was the last Aviation Cadet book to be published at Randolph AFB or anywhere else. The Air Force began training only commissioned officers on active duty to be rated aircrew members. We also trained with French and Dutch cadets



After flying the T-6 in a massive formation over a reviewing parade, which was the tradition of the graduating class from basic flight training, we were given orders to report to Vance AFB, Enid, Oklahoma, for advanced flight training to begin in mid-September 1950. During my stay at Randolph AFB, I had become friends with the Lauterstein family. They were makers of perhaps 75% of military Officers uniforms of all branches. They invited me on several occasions to spend the weekend at their ranch near San Antonio. He was sending a truck load of uniforms to Enid for the graduating class there and asked if I would like to ride up there in their well packed delivery truck. I readily accepted. Everything I owned in this world was in my footlocker and my duffle bag. I well remember that we stopped to eat at a remote Bar-B-Q eatery along the route. He said it was his favorite eating-place. We sat on logs that had been sawed as a sitting stool and the tables were massive split logs with huge wooden peg legs. They immediately brought a huge platter rounded with ribs, and a loaf of bread. He hit the loaf of standing bread with his open hand and the wrapper burst into two equal parts. The bread served as our edible napkins. I wish I could remember where it was that we ate. It was the best ever.

When we arrived at Vance AFB, he drove directly to the cadet reporting office. He waited until I got my barracks and room assignment and then took me there. He helped me carry in the footlocker and duffle bag. I thanked him and he went about to deliver the uniforms. I went back to the cadet office. Incoming processing took about two hours. When I got back to the barracks, I saw that I had a demerit list posted on the bulletin board: dusty top of footlocker, dirty top of footlocker, filthy top of foot locker, dusty, dirty and filthy duffle bag. Now a footlocker box has six sides, which meant that before I ever got to my room I had 18 demerits on the footlocker and three on the duffle bag. That meant I would be walking 21 hours of "tours". A tour was two hours of walking a lane of about 100 yards with boots; flight suit, cap and a seat parachute attached that bumped with every step. It was grueling. A ten-minute break was given every half hour.

For some reason Lt. Totten, we called him "Rotten Totten", stayed on my case giving me demerits every day so that I never got off that demerit list. I walked two hours of tours every day, except Sundays, while I was at Enid AFB. Weather was not considered a

factor. I walked in rain, shine or snow. Cadets walking tours were prohibited from attending the theater, bowling alley, cadet club, leaving the base or participating in sports and other activities. I had a miserable existence for the five months I was there, except for the excitement of flying different aircraft. My thoughts were that soon he would go away.

Flying at Vance AFB was a most exciting time for me. When I arrived, they had no planes for us to fly. Eight of us cadets were selected to fly as passengers in two B-25s to the North American factory in California. We were to each fly back a T-28 aircraft fresh from the assembly line. They gave us a cockpit check, two hours of class time and turned us loose early the next day to fly a loose formation back to Vance AFB. That was a bold thing for the Air Force authority to do, but we did it without a hitch. We were the first to get the new T-28 as the replacement for the aging T-6 trainer. We flew the T-28 for about 100 hours each, over the next two months. For my first few flights, I had more pilot time in the T-28 than the instructor had because I had flown one back solo from California.

One night I was a part of a two-ship night formation training mission to go from Vance to Offutt AFB, Nebraska, land and let the instructor get in the other aircraft and return home. As cadets, we relished going to an Officers Club, having a meal and pretending we were like officers. I had flown up with him so it was my turn to fly solo in formation back home. As we neared St. Joseph, Missouri, the aircraft engine began to run rough. I reported this to the instructor in the lead aircraft and he had no suggestions. I continued to make adjustments. The engine quit and the propeller was frozen in a horizontal position.


The instructor had been calling Mayday and had not gotten a response. He told me to bail out. There was a Col. flying in the area and heard the proceedings. He chimed in with, "Cadet, I am ordering you to bail out now". I prepared to bail out, sliding back the canopy, tightened my parachute straps, unfastened my lap belt and shoulder harness, unplugged my communications cord, and set the trim to pitch me forward as I crouched in the seat. We wore the hard helmet 'Brain Bucket' in the T-28. I looked out the side to see where I was to land, the windshield was covered in oil and I could not see straight ahead. As I was looking and about to release the stick, I saw runway lights come on probably five miles away. I had lost a lot of altitude and it was a question for me, as to whether I could make it or not. I quickly got strapped back in but did not plug in the microphone or headset. I knew I was now all alone and I had the confidence to make it.

I had spent a lot of my confinement to the base, because of all those demerits, in reading and memorizing the pilot's manual for the T-28. I remembered the best glide speed was 72 knots. I set this up and prayed I could make it to those beautiful red lights indicating the end of the runway. The end of the runway was at the banks of the River. I was losing altitude fast as I approached, looking out the side in the slipstream. I was only feet above the river and the red lights were ahead and above me. I pulled the stick back hard, moved the gear down lever and it plopped onto the runway. As I was unbuckling, I heard a loud noise and felt the heat of the airliner that was departing which cleared the aircraft and me by only feet above me. I didn't have any idea




T-28 Cockpit

where I was. Then I got the 'after the incident shakes.' I got back on the radio and reported to the instructor that I was on the ground somewhere. They landed and arranged for a B-25 to come and get me and bring some mechanics to determine what had caused this unusual situation of a stopped propeller in-flight. The hot engine oil had deteriorated neoprene seals, plugged return oil and caused a liquid lock. The Air Force Safety Commission published the incident in their monthly magazine as a "Well Done" feature



Well Done

TO
AVIATION CADET
Charles E.
BRYANT
CLASS 51-A VANCE AFB



Flying Safety

RESTRICTED

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
THE INSPECTOR GENERAL, USAF

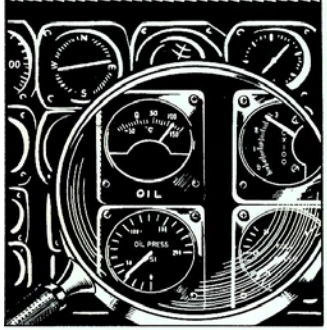
Major General Victor E. Bertrandias
Deputy Inspector General
For Technical Inspection and
Flight Safety Research

DIRECTORATE OF
FLIGHT SAFETY RESEARCH


Norton Air Force Base, California
Brigadier General O. F. Carlson, Director

Vol 7, No. 1 JANUARY 1951

1 BRYANT WAS ON A NIGHT X-C...15 MILES NORTH OF ST. JOSEPH, MO. THE ENGINE BEGAN RUNNING ROUGH. OIL PRESSURE BELOW 50 PSI, OIL AND CYLINDER TEMP IN THE RED....

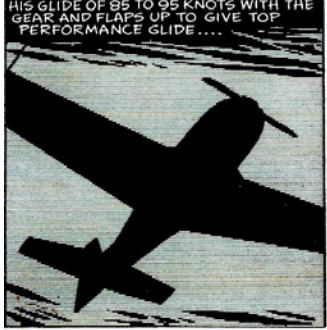


2 CORRECTIVE MEASURES WERE APPLIED AT ONCE—MIXTURE TO AUTO RICH, RPM INCREASED, POWER REDUCED, CARBURETOR CHECKED FOR ICING... BUT THE ENGINE QUIT COLD AT 7500 FT. AN AIR START WAS TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY... HE HEADED TOWARD ST. JOSEPH AIRPORT.....

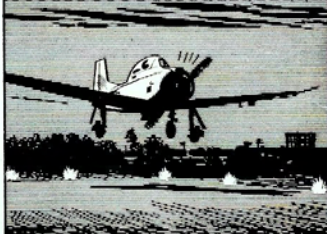


...THE TOWER WAS ALERTED AND THE HIGH INTENSITY LIGHTS TURNED ON...

3 HE PLANNED THAT IF HE DID NOT HAVE A RUNWAY WITHIN GLIDING RANGE BY THE TIME HE REACHED 4000 FEET HE WOULD BAIL OUT... AT 4000 FT. HE HAD THE RUNWAY LINED UP FOR A STRAIGHT-IN APPROACH... HE SET UP HIS GLIDE OF 85 TO 95 KNOTS WITH THE GEAR AND FLAPS UP TO GIVE TOP PERFORMANCE GLIDE....



4 WAITING UNTIL HE HAD IT MADE AND WAS READY TO ROUND OUT, HE LOWERED THE GEAR, CUT ALL SWITCHES, INCLUDING FUEL AND LANDED WITHIN THE FIRST THIRD OF THE RUNWAY!



THIS IS AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF PLANNING BY A YOUNG PILOT—AFTER ENGINE FAILURE... HE HAD FLOWN THE T-28 TEN HOURS PRIOR TO THIS FLIGHT... HIS CALM JUDGEMENT SAVED A VALUABLE AIRPLANE TO FLY AGAIN!

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Editor Art Editor
Maj. Homer P. Andersen Capt. William M. Mettler
Research Editor Associate Editor
Capt. Ben H. Newby 1st Lt. Art E. Brewster
Circulation Manager
M/Sgt. Wm. C. Hautz
Contributing Editor, Major L. G. Taylor

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RESTRICTED

We were never told why we flew the T-28 except that it was hinted that we were being tested to see if we could handle the aircraft and would it be suitable as a trainer aircraft to

eliminate the T-6 from the inventory. The US Navy was very anxious to use the T-28. After we had completed about 100 hours in the T-28, we were transferred to fly the B-25. For night flying navigational flights, we would fly from beacon to coded beacon, eight miles apart, with each beacon being a letter of the alphabet in Morse code. How well I remember the torch fires of natural gas that burned across the Oklahoma plains, day and night. The fires would be so concentrated in some areas that we could read the checklist from their light at 8,000 feet. It was a thrill every minute I flew this renowned aircraft of history. Col. Scott told us that after our training there, we should be proud that we would be more prepared to fly the "Billy Mitchell Bomber" than the Doolittle Raiders were.

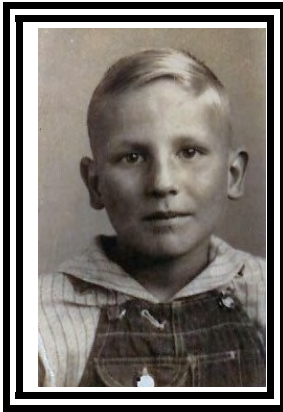
Rotten Totten was transferred to Craig AFB, Selma, Alabama where he lost his life showing off in a T-33. I had no remorse or comfort because I believed this evil man would spend his eternity in Hell. I was not excused from the massive number of demerits he had given me, so I walked tours until the last day before graduation, receiving my wings and commission as a second Lieutenant. Col. Scott, Commandant of Aviation Cadets and author of the book, "God is my Copilot," called me into his office and in a manner, apologized by complimenting me for having the tenacity for endurance. He excused the remaining demerits and restored cadet privileges for my last day of duty.

Mary flew out for the graduation ceremonies to pin on my wings and bars of gold. We had that one-day together so we went into Enid and bought rings at Zale's Jewelers. A group of friends had been shopping for a car for me. They had found a little 1948 Chevrolet Business Coupe in the nearby town of Hennessy, Oklahoma. They had collectively put their bargaining powers together and got the dealer to drop from, \$1,200 down to \$810, telling them that was it, buy or leave him alone. They drove Mary and me down there that last day and we bought the little gray car. One of the men wanted to ride with us as far as Birmingham, as his home was Atlanta. After graduation, we all received orders to go to Randolph AFB to become B-29 copilots with a two weeks leave before reporting to Randolph AFB for two months training. I was now the world's happiest man.

It was three days before Valentines Day and our scheduled wedding. Mary's family had prepared their home with beautiful greenery and flowers, complete with a lattice of greenery to serve as a backdrop for the vows. Mary had made good arrangements, including a Presbyterian Minister to officiate. Professor Eidson had needed six months of a salaried time to be eligible for Social Security. He was the afternoon and evening manager for the YMCA. He made arrangements for me to stay there. He also took me to register for voting. I had to pass a reading test and oral examination before paying the



Republican Party. I have voted Jimmy Carter, his first time.

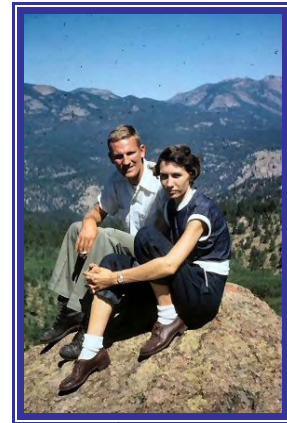


It was a beautiful home wedding, lovely family to have received me. Most of my family was present except Barbara who was recovering from the death of her son, Danny. Mary and I went to the apartment she and Sister Sarah shared in Birmingham. When Mary opened her suitcase, she found a pound or more of rice laced among her

clothes. We cleaned it all out and left little piles all over their living room carpet after we discovered that she had impishly short-sheeted the bed. We could hear her laughing....

We saved some to make a nice little pile between Sarah's bed sheets. We spent our night there and early the next day we headed for Gatlinburg via Chattanooga to spend a week. As we approached Chattanooga we encountered the evidences of a very violent ice storm that had come upon the area the day before. We slipped and slid going up Lookout Mountain and decided to go to New Orleans instead. We were driving on icy roads across Tennessee and night overtook us. We stopped at a Mom and Pop gas and grocery store. We asked about a "tourist cabin," as they were called. The old man told us he had a cabin out back for two dollars. Neither of us knew anything about motels, hotels or tourist cabins. He took us to see the cabin and I gave him the two dollars, as it was late and the highway was more slippery as we progressed. He lit a kerosene stove, drew a bed sheet that had been strung on a wire separating the two beds in the room. He told us if we used the other bed, it would be another dollar. This got our attention as we lay there all night giggling and wondering if he was going to rent that other bed. Mary turned off the foul smelling kerosene heater and it was a cold restless night. Mary got up at daylight to take a shower. She found that the two little needlelike streams coming from the showerhead was cold water only, and they sprayed out over the commode and lavatory. We left at daylight and went on very carefully to New Orleans. It took all day, we were so sleepy.

New Orleans seemed like one big bar and brothel to us so we left. It was cold there too. We went to McAllen, Texas where her Uncle Tom and family lived and worked in the oil industry. We enjoyed a short stay and decided to proceed to Monterrey, Mexico. Because of the heavy industry and steel mills, it was referred to as the Birmingham of Mexico. We learned that Saltillo, Mexico was a resort village in the mountains a short distance away. We went there and spent a few very pleasant days. I was introduced to anchovies in my tossed salad. I thought it was thin little strips of pickled salty pigskin with the hairs left on. These were extremely salty and not tasty at all. Mary had two years of Spanish in college at Montevallo, and she remembered enough words to keep us out of trouble. Montevallo was a female college, referred to as 'The Angel Farm.'

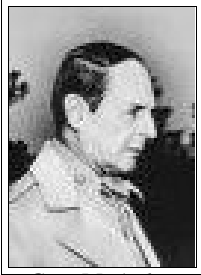


Mexico Honeymoon

We bought matching shirts of beautiful colors. Those shirts later ruined a load of clothes, they ran, like an Olympic sprinter, and the machine took another rinse load to get rid of the residual color dyes. It had been a wonderful time together, but parting was to be a part of our schedule. I was to report to Randolph AFB again, for a two months course in learning to be a copilot in the B-29 and then on to the Korean Conflict. Mary was deeply involved in a research project at Southern Research Institute, SRI, dealing with cancer research. Dr. Skipper, the director, had confidence that Mary would satisfactorily complete the project, which was integral to an overall cancer research project they had been working on for a considerable length of time. It was not even debatable, Mary must do the honorable thing and stay in Birmingham and complete her research assignment.

When I reported at Randolph, I was told that it might be as much as six months before I would be assigned to an aircrew and begin training. I volunteered to fly and hung around the base operations flight center waiting for someone to be taken to a destination quickly.

I flew several emergency leave persons back to their home. This gave me a lot of time to fly both the B-25 and the T-6. I was gone all of the time flying almost anywhere I wanted to go. I wanted to go to Birmingham as often as possible. I flew a B-25 with three West Point graduates, then Majors, to Washington DC to hear the MacArthur final speech to the nation. This was his "Old soldiers never die...they just fade away" speech before congress. It was the only time I was ever in the Congress area. It was a very moving speech. I think every person there, had a tear in their eye at the conclusion of that stirring speech. I know I did. President Truman was not there. In 1962, I took three West Point graduate Lieutenant Colonels from Eglin AFB to West Point in a B-25, to hear his farewell speech to the cadets at West Point. Being there and hearing that speech, was a very emotional experience for everyone there in the chapel. I was never able to meet him.



Gen. McArthur

I was asked to fly a B-25 to Eglin AFB to be placed in Doolittle Memorial Park. Six of us were sent to Barksdale AFB, Shreveport, Louisiana for a month to fly about 100 hours as a copilot in the B-17. It was a tremendous transition from the twin engine B-25 to the four engine B-17. It was a time well spent for me. I felt like I had been flying a piece of history in both of these famous combat aircraft. When I got back to Randolph, I won a \$500 grand jackpot in Bingo, but I had to split it with another winner. I took my \$250 and bought a set of golf clubs and membership dues to play unlimited on the course at Ft. Sam Houston. I answered roll call at 7:00am and went immediately to play three rounds of golf. I was obsessed to play one par game. I even made a hole-in-one but I didn't have a partner to brag about it with. The grounds keeper had been working that green and saw it. I was looking for the ball and he pointed to the cup, with the flagstaff still in it. I could hardly believe it when I looked and there in the cup was that little white ball that so many have come to worship. Not me. I lost interest after I accomplished all I wanted from that game. It seemed more routine than challenging, so I sold the clubs sent Mary the money and concentrated on reading the manuals on the B-29. I had liked golf but I simply lost interest, it wasn't my game.



I had a wonderful life there at Randolph AFB, waiting for a crew assignment to begin training, playing golf all day and flying the B-25 and T-6 as much and as often as I wanted to. My only disappointment was that I did not have Mary there with me. I decided one weekend to fly to Mobile in a T-6 and get Sonny to meet me at one of the long ago abandoned Navy training strips outside of Foley, west of Summerdale. When I got to Mobile I called him again and we set a time to rendezvous there. I told him not to eat anything, as I did not want to clean up the airplane. He was there before I was. He got



into the back seat where the instructor pilot sits during instructional flights. He made the take-off with a little help and we climbed up to about seven thousand feet. He said he had never been that high. I showed him some maneuvers, with him on the stick and throttle also and told him the plane was his for the next two hours. He was an outstanding pilot. He had never before nor since, flown an aircraft with that much horsepower and would do acrobatics. I think my brother had the time of his life in that two-hour flight. He rolled, split "S", looped, stalled, flew upside down and even some wild maneuvers that had not yet been named. I had him fly across a bean field at 180 mph at about 20 feet. He did not like that at all. He handled that plane like a seasoned airman. I was proud of him. He told me that he really enjoyed the experience but he preferred flying his little Piper, P2 (Patch) at 30 mph. He flew me to Stockton and "slipped" it into Mr. Mason's field.

Mary completed her assignments, resigned and came to San Antonio. I knew nothing of house rentals so I agreed to rent a bedroom, share bath, kitchen, living room and mow the yard for or with a Mrs. Mahaffey. When Mary arrived, it was a totally unacceptable arrangement as 'Mother Mahaffey' was all over us, all the time fussing; something about we did not keep the kitchen and bath to her satisfaction. One month and we were out of there as Mary found a nice apartment. Mary got a job in the Bexar County health department. The director, Dr. Rich, made her feel welcomed, inviting us to his Quarter Horse Ranch in what was called 'The High Country' north of San Antonio. One of her work mates, Patty and Elbert Young had a baby girl and named her Molly after the pet name I called Mary. They were dear friends. We lost communications when they moved to Austin. Mary worked on a case whereby a slaughterhouse worker kept testing positive for syphilis. Mary interviewed him and found that he drank a cup of the warm blood from a slaughtered animal each day. She and Dr. Rich determined this was the cause of the positive test thus saving his job. Mary and I crammed our time together with picnics, tours to the park and zoo, walking about the neighborhood, movies, visits to the Alamo, boat rides and walks along the San Antonio River which meandered through the city. Our lives together were blissful as we made our happiness together meaningful everyday.

We knew that very soon I would begin the B-29 accelerated training course and it would be a one-year tour of combat flying over North Korea. I was to be copilot for Capt. Albert B. Connelly, a former pilot of a B-29 with the 509th Bomb Group that dropped the "A" bomb. He was scheduled to be the alternate crew for the second drop and primary crew if a third bomb was to be dropped. He still really hated the Japanese and refused to go to Japan for scheduled R&R. He was a very successful vice president for marketing with Allied Chemical and Dye of Houston, Texas. He made more than \$100,000 a year, but he was not resentful that he had been recalled at a lowly salary. He interviewed every copilot in the pool and selected me. He and I then interviewed men for every position and he made wise choices. We went to the guardhouse and selected little private Wasson for the tail gunner position. He was in the guardhouse because he had been homesick AWOL to go to Harlan County, Kentucky to see his family who were moonshiners. He was funny. We began flying together to make an aircrew team. Capt. Al took us over to the golf pro shop and we all bought matching wool plaid tams or caps. After about five weeks and about 200 hours of flying, we were a united crew and combat ready. To celebrate after our final flight, Capt. Al hosted a party at one of the many parks of the area. It was a beer

party with a keg of beer and catered foods. He asked me to man the pump on the keg and keep everybody's mug filled. I don't know how I got home that night, but sick, oh so sick. Never again. I did not drink beer and a little bit did me in. Mary poured me into bed however; I spent most of the night in the bathroom. I was so sore across my diaphragm. It is strange that the senses tell you there is more to come up, but there is no more. Oh My.



Around the table...

Wasson, Tail Gunner	Depietrio, Radar Operator
Eaton, Radio Operator	Capt. Connelly, Aircraft Commander
Davis, Gunner	Thurman, Chief Gunner
Dalton, Gunner	Anderson, Bombadier
Williams, Navigator	Bryant, Pilot
	Glisson, Engineer

We received orders to report to Lake Charles to reactivate the base and get some practice bombing. We were told not to bring our wives or girl friends with us because there was absolutely no housing available. We were told that we would have to rake out the barracks and set up our own living quarters as the base had been abandoned for several years. I had the detail task to take six civilian workers and rehabilitate the officers club. That was high priority. The bar was stocked and a bartender was hired before I could even get the cobwebs swept out of the ceiling. I had lots of encouragement to hurry up. We would now fly in the combat configured B-29s for our bombing practice rather than the stripped down configured training aircraft at Randolph AFB. We liked that better.

We now had two cars, our little gray Chevrolet coupe and a 1934 Plymouth sedan that Al had been given by his landlady. It was a good car. He gave it to me. I gave him \$30 which

covered his costs for that beer party. We were happy that Mary's sister Sarah was with us, as we all three decided to go to Lake Charles, determined that we would find a place for all of us. Mary and Sarah learned of a small lake front cottage at "Ebair's" landing. They went searching and found several cottages about five miles away across the Intercoastal canal, accessible only by a cable ferry. They traveled up and down that road looking for that name. Finally they stopped at a Herbert's general store. After those folks had a good laugh, they told Mary and Sarah that Ebair was Cajun for pronouncing the English Herbert. We instantly took the cottage. Sarah was a great comfort and companionship to Mary, as I had to go to Colorado for two weeks of "Evasion, Escape and Survival Training." Sarah returned to her work at Maxwell AFB in a few weeks.

There was a strange older couple that lived on a floating barge adjacent to our dock extending into Calcasieu Bay. They had been circus people. He had terrible scars about his face. He said this was from a lion that went wild on him. He was almost blind, but he could see those shrimp in his cast net. Mary exercised the greatest of diplomacy when the lady would occasionally bring her a bowl of seafood gumbo. Mary was finally able to convince her that we were unable to eat Gumbo. Mary would buy them a bag of groceries, orange juice and milk about every week, as this older couple was destitute and terribly malnourished. We have often wondered how this somewhat senile couple fared.

Early one morning about 2:00, I was in the Plymouth going to the base for a flight on a very foggy dark night. We call it pea-soup fog. I was in my lane in a steeply banked sharp curve and met a pickup in my lane, head-on. Neither of us was going very fast but it destroyed the Plymouth as well as the truck. I was taken to the base clinic and a staff car took me home. When I arrived, Mary was up and had a cup of hot coffee and a donut for me. She said she was awakened at precisely the moment of the accident and she even knew how it had happened in her vision. This is an inordinately strange, but true event.

Late one night we were returning from New Ibera, after visiting the Tabasco Sauce plant, the rain slick highway was working alive with Crayfish in migrating across the highway. Hundreds of thousands of them made the highway seem to shiver with their motion. We slowed and could hear the crunching as we ran over them. We learned that they would migrate like that once a year and the natives would beat on pans and alarms to get their neighbor folks to literally come and scoop them up and into burlap bags. They canned the critters for eating later. They called it a "Crawdad Jubilee." We read about it the next day.

In early October, a big C-124 aircraft came to Lake Charles to pick up nine crews of us to take us to Camp Carson, Colorado for Survival and Interrogation schooling. There are eleven persons to a B-29 combat crew. The XC-99 was the worlds largest transport aircraft, made from the B-36 with pusher propellers. The C 124 was the second largest and with its little skinny wings and a tremendously huge body, it was dubbed "The Bumble Bee". There were 99 of us B-29 aircrew men aboard. I felt so small in that thing.

We had heard of the rigors of that escape and survival exercise and we dreaded it. We bought bottles of hot sauce, candy bars and other goodies as we had heard it whispered, to take and smuggle things into the camp with us. The flight was uneventful, except the

pilot gave me a thrill to let me come up and sit in the pilot's seat as well as the flight engineers seat. It was a maze of instruments that the flight engineer had to monitor all the time. For the first time I saw a Sperry Engine Analyzer and the flight engineer did a good job of explaining it, so I think I understood how it worked. It gave him a comprehensive evaluation of the engines performance of all 36 cylinders of each engine at all times. This was amazing to me that an engine could have 36 cylinders and each one was monitored.

Camp Carson was the home of the last US Army Mounted Cavalry. They still had stables of horses, mules and donkeys that were used in mountain rescues and Army exercises. It was also the home of the dreaded 3904 Composite Wing, the survival and POW instructors and trainers. It was grueling, physically and emotionally, but I listened very carefully because these men had a message that could save my life if I would be thrust into a situation of POW status. We were all checked for having proper clothing for the ten days of being in the wilderness and they confiscated all our smuggled goodies they could find. I had hidden a bottle of Tabasco well. Boots were a big item in the checklist. I had bought a nice pair of boots that came up to the calf of my legs. They were expensive but comfortable as I planned to have these as my flying boots over Korea. I was about to learn never to wear new boots on a 70-mile hike through 10,000-foot mountains of rugged terrain, I learned "De Agony of De Feet." I had huge blisters and aches. Ouch

We were taken in trucks about 60 miles up into the Pikes National Forest. There was a very primitive camp and few structures. Each crew staked out a claim for camp, built a campfire, gathered wood and set up our little two man tents. I went on the wood chopping detail and got a good case of hypoxia at the 10,000 ft. altitude the first night. I was sick and didn't eat for two days. A yearling of about 600 pounds was brought to the camp on the second day. The animal was shot with the "Hornet" rifle that was a part of our combat survival kit. A demonstration was made as to how to clean the animal and it was divided among the nine crews. Willie the navigator and Thurman the chief gunner made a crew stew that night, using the meat and vegetables that were provided. I was sick and told them it looked and smelled like "swill." Glisson the flight engineer fixed me a small bowl of it insisting I try it. In fact, I instantly revived and ate two more bowls of that "swill."

One exercise was to stealthily go from point A to point B evading capture by men dressed in Russian uniforms. No one made it without capture. The interrogation was very strenuous to hold a small can of soup in outstretched hands, knees bent, while being grilled. They crammed us into individual metal boxes for about an hour. That was the "Cramp Castle". I wore blisters on my heels. I sewed the straps of a parachute together and made mukluks. The objective was to walk the ridges of the South Fork of the Platte River for a distance of about 70 miles in three days without being caught. I made about 40 miles of the trek in five days before I found the enemy and turned myself in. They were sent as a search party looking for me, as I was overdue. I was taken back to Ft. Carson so, so very hungry. I told them I wanted a rib eye steak with all the trimmings that I had been dreaming and drooling about for the last ten days. They brought me two slices of bread, and one was all I could eat. I was filled. All I wanted to do then was sleep.

Our training was cut short as a result of the loss of twelve B-29s on an October 19th raid over North Korea. We received orders to report to Camp Stoneman, California within five days. Mary and I quickly packed our little Chevrolet, determined to enjoy these last few days as much as possible, and headed for California. We swapped driving and napping until we got to Flagstaff, Arizona, where we got a much needed night's sleep. The next morning we slightly deviated our route to go by the Grand Canyon. When we looked over the rim of the canyon, all we saw was clouds. Oh Well. That happened to us three times over the years, before we finally got to see the bottom of the Grand Canyon. It was spectacular, perhaps I should say indescribable or even breathtaking in splendor.

It had been a cold night and the freeze plugs in the engine were pushed out just enough to make a small water leak. We kept adding water every couple of hundred miles as we continued. The processing at Camp Stoneman took only a few hours, as Mary waited in the car. It was now early evening as we were loaded onto a bus to go to McClelland AFB, near Sacramento. We were scheduled to fly a B-29 from there to Okinawa. We were told that to get off the bus and not report in would be considered as desertion while under orders for combat duty. That Army major really put some fear into us. I went out and had a talk with Mary and arranged that she should follow the bus and when we got out into the country, I would have the bus stop and get into the car with her to continue behind the bus until it would stop before reaching McClelland and I would get back onto the bus.

This scheme sounds as wild today as it did then, but I was determined. Capt. Al thought it was funny and gave a slight approval by not disapproving my scheme. She followed the bus closely as I sat in the rear seat, waving to her and blowing kisses. I went up and told the driver to pull over at a convenient clearing place. He did, and I hopped off and ran back to get into the car with Mary. OH NO. She was not there. I looked to see if she had passed the bus. No Mary. The bus was picking up speed by now and I was running after it screaming, "Wait, Wait". Then it was me, alone, standing on the side of the road, a wartime military deserter. A car approached and slowed, as I was frantically waving to stop. He didn't stop but I jerked open his right front door and hopped in, excitedly telling him to please follow the bus. By this time it was out of sight. That poor fellow looked at me like I was drunk or crazy, and I was a bit radical. He said that he was on his way home and lived a block down the side street where I had been standing. He went home. I waited in his car and when he came back, he told me that his tires were may-pops and he would try to catch the bus, but I had to be patient and don't get him excited. He told me he had mental problems and was not to get excited about things. After about 30 miles we caught up to the bus, which was stopped for a coffee break. I emptied my pockets of all the money I had and gave it to him, maybe \$20. He declined and I insisted, hopping out of his car and onto the bus and staying seated. I wasn't about to go in there for coffee.

My little escapade gave the crew a good laugh, and I had to laugh with them. Now my concern was, what had happened to Mary? Where was she? When we arrived and got room assignments in the BOQ, I really prayed hard that I could find her in one of the many hotels in Sacramento. I selected one by meditation prayer and....."Yes we have a Mrs. Mary Bryant registered, would you like to be connected"? I told Capt. Al of my plans, got a nod, got a taxi and we were so happy to be reunited after that ordeal of the

experience of getting off the bus. She explained that the engine indicated 'hot' and she had pulled into a service station for water less than 100 feet from where I had gotten off. Shrubbery had blocked the view and I couldn't see her. Another mystery, Mary arrived in Sacramento about thirty minutes before the bus arrived. She followed the same highway as the bus took but she never saw or passed the bus along her way. The final mystery of that escapade was, how did it work that my first call to try and find her in the large city of Sacramento with hundreds of hotels and motels, was exactly where she had registered.

The B-29 we were to fly, would not be ready for about ten days and we were free to do as we pleased, just coordinating travel with Capt. Al. We relocated from that very expensive hotel to a more economical motel. We met a couple about our ages and they seemed to be nice. I don't remember their names any longer. They convinced us that we should go to San Francisco one night. We did. They only wanted to barhop to the raunchiest, most ribald and filthy honky-tonks that had a live show. Mary and I got sick of this within the hour. We told them that we leaving, if they wanted to go back with us, come on now. They relocated to another motel the next day and we never saw them again.

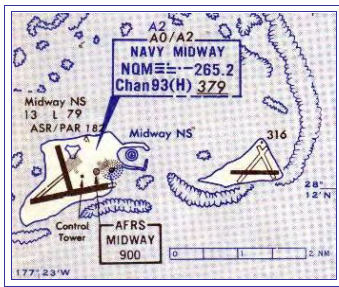
We took our little Chevrolet with the hurt engine, down to the Chevrolet dealer and traded it for a new 1951 Chevrolet, two-door sedan. They allowed the same as we had paid for the little car almost a year earlier. Mary drove the car back to Montgomery alone.

The aircraft was declared to be ready for ferry to Okinawa. Capt. Al insisted that our crew fly the aircraft in the local area for a four-hour shakedown flight. After the flight, several discrepancies were noted for corrective actions. The departure date was pushed back another two days for corrections. Capt. Willy busied himself with charting our course to Hickam AFB, Hawaii. He used his almanac selecting the appropriate stars and plotted the probable positions. He was very thorough and accurate. I felt comfortable that we would always know our position out over that miles and miles of dark sharkey waters.

Our radio operator, Lewis Eaton, had notified the Naval Air Operations at Hickam, attention of John Bryant, that we were enroute with an estimated time of our arrival. I had a welcome party waiting when we arrived. My brother John and his Foley classmate, Daniel Bauer were waiting for me. They had bought a car to travel the island for their three-year tour of duty there, John was an airborne radio operator and Daniel was a flight attendant. John sometimes teased Daniel to do his duty and bring him a cup of coffee. For two days John took as many of us as could get into his car to tour the island, pineapple fields and packing houses, the water falls and the famed mountain, Diamond Head. I was impressed that the bullet holes in the hangar buildings were still there. We visited the Arizona, the Waikiki Beach as he showed us a great time for our three days there. It was Dec. 1951, only six years after that day that will live in "infamy". Some of the aircraft were still in their position, completely burned and damaged. It was eerie. Capt. Al despised the Japanese and seeing these ruins disturbed him visibly. One of the engines was changed and we were ready to proceed on the next long leg of our Pacific crossing.

Our destination this time was Midway Island. We flew at night so Capt. Willy could use the stars to navigate. We flew on his predicted course very well until winds blew us north

of the westerly course when we were about 600 miles out. Willy was calm about it. Rather than make a correction, he knew we were north of the course, so we flew on without correcting. He flew out the time we were estimated to be over the tiny little island and then simply turned south. The homing beacon radio on Midway was not functioning and we could not raise the tower. Sgt. Eaton, the radio operator, had a 200 foot trailing antenna which he could communicate world wide, but that was no help to us, for we were alone, not exactly sure as to where we were and looking for a tiny island only about two square miles in size, and it was dark. Capt. Oley, sitting in the bombardiers seat in the glass nose, spotted a light in the distance. Hallelujah. As we approached, it turned out to be a ship down there 28,000 feet below. I began to have doubts and checked my dingy and parachute several times. This was new stuff to me.



Capt. Al and Willy had confidence; at least they put up a good front. We started a slow descent to conserve fuel. We flew on for about an hour. At last Oley spotted lights that proved to be Midway. Capt. Al turned the aircraft controls over to me in the descent, instructing me to make the landing. I gulped and responded with, Yes Sir. It was now twilight and I could see that speck of land. The runway used every foot of the length of the island from beach to beach. We spent two days there, watching the silly “Gooney Birds”

as they ran to get speed to fly and would forget to use their feet when they landed. Every landing was a tumbling and rolling thing for them. They were hilarious to watch. I don’t know why it was that the graceful C-47 was dubbed ‘Gooney Bird’ and the real Gooney Bird was anything but graceful in its’ takeoffs and controlled crashes for its’ landings. They are a big bird, almost the size of our coastal Pelicans and I know it must have hurt them to land. My pride was sky high about that landing.



Gooney Bird

Our take-off was a new experience for me. Capt. Al demonstrated the technique he used when flying with a load of 40,000 pounds of bombs. He had me to lower the flaps to 15 degrees, as he set the engines at full power. When they were all stabilized, Glisson said, “Go.” He released the brakes and we accelerated down the runway. With about a thousand feet of runway left, he pulled back on the wheel; it was not yet at flying speed. He then bounced the nose wheel hard onto the runway, and immediately pulled the nose off the runway again. This time the B-29 lifted off and began a graceful climb toward our next destination Wake Island, where we stayed for a one-day refueling. The mapmakers almost forgot to put the dot on the map for Wake Island. They did have a homing beacon. Truman and McArthur had met here and made history the year before. Our crew wanted only food, bath, potty, and to service the aircraft. Capt. Al was in no rush so we stayed the day and night leaving the next morning for Guam. Willy had planned the course well. We stayed there for three days. Capt. Al seemed to delay our arrival to Okinawa as much as he could. I visited the Capitol, Agana, and got to see those friendly little Ginkgos. The little lizard looking creatures at first terrified the Americans living there. When they realized they ate mosquitoes and bugs, they cultivated them as pets. We were told that

some Japanese soldiers who did not know the war was over, lived in the jungles of the northern part of the island and that we should not be out alone after dark. Sweet Dreams.

Capt. Al Connelly had flown B-29 combat missions against Japan from Guam, Saipan and Tinian. One day we were walking along the flight line and he led me over to a revetment and said that on this particular night back in 1945, he was Officer of the Day, OD, and was accompanying the Chinese officer who was inspecting the Chinese soldiers charged with security of the B-29s. He said it was late at night as they approached one aircraft and nobody seemed to be on guard. They walked around and found the guard asleep sitting with his back to one of the main gear tires. The Chinese officer pulled his pistol. He was going to shoot the sleeping guard. Capt. Al thought he was kidding so he told him not to shoot in that direction, it would shoot the tire. He said he told him to shoot him at an angle from over here, walking to the side. The Chinese officer walked to the side and Capt. Al said he almost fainted as he pulled the trigger and the mans' head literally exploded. Capt. Al swore as he cursed the Orientals for having no sanctity or respect for life. The war was still a fresh memory. He was the pilot, with his crew, that flew the lone B-29 over the cities of Nagasaki, Hiroshima and others for three days dropping leaflets telling the Japanese to flee the cities and seek refuge in the mountains because the Americans were going to rain fire upon them with a new bomb. His flights were unescorted by fighters and he was a lone solo B-29 flying over once a day for three days. It has been written that his flights caused the Japanese to become complacent because the flights were harmless and this raised the death toll as the people paid little attention when the Enola Gay flew that single B-29 flight that went into history forever. Capt. Al had enough Scotch one night so as to tell me of those flights. He said he had visions of the devastation that was about to be wrought upon these people and that his leaflets were probably not heeded. He hated the Japanese because of Pearl Harbor and their policy of "take no prisoners." He had sad reservations about his role in leaflet drops.

The foods served at all of the clubs and the Enlisted Dining hall was excellent. The day I went to Agana, I ate foods I couldn't recognize but everything was good. I always seemed to be hungry. The Officers of the crew were all Captains and they teased me that they didn't like to be seen with a shave-tail Second Lieutenant with gold bars, so they were going to have to do something about that. One night we went to the open-air amphitheatre movies. Before the main feature, they showed about half an hour of XXX rated movies. I had never seen or heard of such. It was dark but I know I turned flushing, red as a beet. I was surprised that the Air Force would condone such and particularly show to men who were separated from their mates. Maybe I was a prude, I was disgusted.

We had landed at Anderson AFB, Guam. There were two airfields. Anderson AFB was where Capt Al had flown from back in 1945. The runway went directly to the cliff overhang to the Beautiful Blue Pacific. The runway was only 10,000 feet long and when the B-29s took off fully loaded, they would often sink most of that 100-foot cliff drop to gather enough speed to keep flying. After our take-off, I looked down to see the wrecks of several B-29s below the surface of the Pacific, a few hundred feet from the cliff.

When we landed at Kadena AFB, Okinawa, the plane we brought over was assigned to another crew and we took another aircraft. My brother John, the Navy Airborne Radio Operator, remembering the tail number when we came through Hawaii, tried to establish contact with me one night when he heard that number being called in. He was told that I was not aboard and he should monitor radio silence. The China Sea was generally considered to be a “radio silence” area. He thought he was in trouble for some time.

We were a wee bit miffed that the aircraft we had nursed and brought over was taken from us but Capt Al snapped us out of that with a stern lecture that “War and a Combat Zone Aint no Comfort Zone”. That first night on Okinawa, I found out the chief cook was from Alabaster, Ala. He told me to go to the grog shop and get two bottles of Kentucky Tavern whiskey to give to the hosts at an Okinawa wedding of one of his cooks. He had been invited to attend and he was inviting me. I thought this would be interesting, so after I finished unpacking in the tarpaulin ten man tent I shared with five other copilots, I went to the grog shop and on to the mess hall, military dining facilities are always ‘mess halls.’ He and I rode in a big truck that carried cooks, workers and two drums of garbage food home to their village of Ish Kawa. The wedding was very colorful and festive. It was more of an entertainment activity than vows or anything. All of the girls in their very colorful and flowing robes and sashes wore heavily made-up white faces from rice powder and bright red lipstick and dark eyebrows and long eyelashes. Oh it was festive. Some of the faces were almost grotesque, none were pretty. I had never seen such as this.

Sometime past midnight I asked Sgt. Jack, that is all I knew of him, when and how do we get back to Kadena. He told me “in the morning just after sunrise.” He told me the truck that brought us would pick us up at sunrise. The hosts made a quilted pallet for me in a corner of the social hall and I spent a fretful night, concerned that I might miss that truck, like I had missed that bus in California. I was up before daylight and went outside to look for Sgt. Jack. He came from a little house and we stood there waiting for the truck. I felt that he had done this before. That gave me little comfort as we had been told that rural areas and villages of Okinawa were still dangerous places, but I did not know they were off-limits after dark. At about that time a Military Police jeep came into view. Sgt. Jack told me to run. I followed him as he ran down a dirt path and cut into some tall weeds. I heard a commotion and loud cursing. Sgt. Jack had run into a “Honey Pit.” These were open sewage septic tanks where the natives dumped their family waste pots each morning. They used this as their common supply of fertilizer, called “night soil.” The Military police caught up to us but he was so soaked in excrement and smelled so awful, the policemen, laughed and laughed and finally walked away saying get back the best way we could. The truck soon came and even the native workers put Sgt Jack at the tailgate and avoided him. I have often wondered if he threw away those clothes or asked some poor Mamason to wash them several times for him. I got to ride in the cab.

I was appointed to share the Chaplain’s jeep and serve as Special Services, or recreation and morale officer. I used the jeep to plan many activities for our organization, the 307th Bomb Wing from McDill AFB, Tampa, Florida. I didn’t fully realize the way things work in the Air Force and particularly in the Strategic Air Command (SAC), which was the tail that wagged the dog in those days with Gen. Curtis E. Lemay as Commander of SAC. I

did not realize that when I was assigned to be in Heavy Bombardment aircraft, SAC, back in the training days at Randolph AFB, that I was to be there forever. I liked to plan deep-sea fishing trips. I organized the entire American forces of the Island to have a carnival festival. We had talent shows and performers galore. It was to raise money for the children of the island who were orphaned as a result of the fierce battle of their homeland. We decided to have the carnival at Ish Kawa Beach. The beach, and for some distance into the beautiful Pacific Ocean, war debris such as vehicles, ships, LSTs and motorized guns littered the scenery. Our squadron hosted "The Wheel of Fortune" booth and raised over \$1,500. I got so tired of listening to Kay Starr sing that song for ten hours solid. Altogether with the booths and food sales, the carnival netted more than \$20,000, which we were proud to turn over to the Governor in Naha. It was the first time war orphans were recognized and we received a lot of very favorable native publicity.

He and I became friends and he invited me on two occasions to dine in his home. I accepted and enjoyed foods I did not know what it was except I recognized the dog with stuffed rice. He invited me to the marriage of his daughter. I accepted, knowing it was not going to end like the former wedding fiasco I had attended. It was even more elegant with costumes and dances. This I enjoyed immensely because I had the Jeep and could leave after about two hours. They served a lot of Sake, the oriental wine from rice. He invited



me to a funeral and burial service of an aged relative. We gathered at one of the huge concrete slabs that I always thought were bomb shelters but they were burial chambers. The rounded slab, sloping with the hillside, was in the form of the mothers belly with seating areas in front to symbolize thighs. The remains of the deceased were brought before us

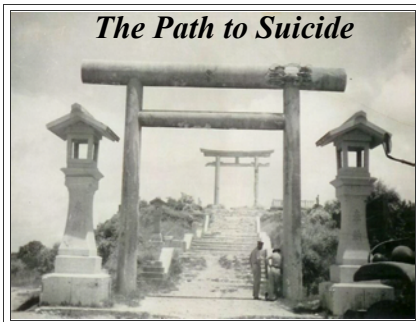
seated on the concrete thigh bench type seating. A woman very ornately dressed in the white powdered face, came to the remains and began to strip the bones of its putrid flesh. He told me that only a virgin could touch the body remains. As she completed each bone, she placed it in a large urn. When the urn was full, the remains were removed and the sealed urn was taken through the very small opening into the burial chamber. All this time, the family was eating festival foods and drinking Sake. I could not eat. I was mesmerized and horrified at what I was seeing and realized that this man ruled the Island of Okinawa. Was it barbarism, savagery or just the ancient tradition of a people as ancient as the hillside encasing this tomb? I went back and told my tent-mates of what I had experienced that day and they wanted to see the tomb. They dotted almost every hillside. During the invasion of Okinawa in 1945, the Americans found that Japanese soldiers used these tombs as hiding places and flamethrowers were used to torch them. Dark black smoke stains were still to be found on many of them. I took them back there the next day. We all went in and took pictures of the many clay urns inside the dank, and smelly underground tomb. I was anxious to get away from that place and back to my tent. The Chaplain wanted me to take him out to the hillside tombs. I did.



I took a boat trip to the island of Ie Shima on 7th of April to see the place where Ernie Pyle, the famed by WW II cartoonist and correspondent, had died. There was to be a 7th year ceremony of his death. I had two hours to rush up to that mountainside site where a rather crude marker had been placed, make pictures and rush back to catch the boat back to Naha. An appropriate marker has since been placed on the site. The ferry made a round trip each day. Just as I arrived back at the dock I



saw the ferry belching black smoke, heading back to Naha. Yep, I missed the boat. There were no sleeping or eating facilities on the island. I was prepared to go find some turnips, tomatoes or cabbage and find a corner to sleep. An old woman came up to me and told me of a Shinto Monastery on the mountainside about a mile away. I told the monk of my situation and they let me in and gave me food. I ate heartily and was grateful to their benevolent hospitality. I spoke enough Okinawan, which is a corruption of the Japanese and Island languages to converse with the several monks who lived there. I wanted to know about them and they wanted to know about me. We ate, drank hot tea and laughed well into the night. Before each of them retired for the evening, they had private time. They meditated, prayed and used a short whip to strike their backs. I was up at dawn, and so were they. We had breakfast of hot tea, rice with olive oil, melon and a loaf of hard crusted bread. I walked back to the port village, had some strong tea, several oysters and a very sweet pastry at the market. Believe me... I was standing on the dock when I saw that ferryboat billowing smoke on the horizon. When it docked, I got a ticket and a seat and I didn't dare leave it until we were safely docked back at Naha.



There was a place called Surai Castle, which was in total ruins with huge holes in the few standing walls of the ruin. There were several ruins of former castles, all made

Buy a Skull & Bones for \$10



from hewn coral reef that stood in mute memory of their once elegant oriental roofs and beautiful gardens. This former magnificent castle stood at the edge of an almost vertical sheer cliff of perhaps 800 feet. There was a huge Pagoda still standing, but damaged, that stood very close to the cliff. Before the Americans invaded Guam, the Japanese soldiers told the people that Americans were coming and that they ate people. It is said that more than 10,000 Japanese and Okinawan Islanders marched under the Pagoda and leaped to their death rather than be eaten by the Americans, as they were told. One day, some of us went down there and found great masses of piled bones but no skulls in whole pieces. There was a native woman there who sold bones and skulls. John Wright bought a skull and two thighbones for ten dollars to make a skull and crossbones mount. I thought it was gory. Many of the Japanese took refuge in the hundreds of caves about the hillsides.

Dark soot stains were a testimony of how the US Marines dug the enemy out from their hiding places foot by foot, with flame-throwers and grenades. Even six years was not enough time to erase the blackened stones and the pungent stench of death that lingered about the places of their hiding and incinerating deaths. It was bad.

We had two significant Willy-Willies as Typhoons are called on the Island. We had to strike our tents, seal our clothes and belongings into the homemade clothes hanging closets we made from wooden crates of the 500-pound bombs and 50 cal. Ammunition crates. We then wrapped the crates with waterproofed canvass. Clothes mildewed terribly and instantly, especially gabardine and wool. I lost a new uniform from Lauterstein's due to mildew and mold. We put clothes in our closets and hung an electric light bulb in there to keep clothes dry and mildew proofed. Since we had no tents or other place to sleep, aircrews and ground crews all slept in the aircraft, releasing one brake to let the strong winds striking the tail section, turn or weathervane the aircraft to keep it headed into the wind. On one of those Willy-Willies, we spent about three days holed up in that B-29 eating "C" rations and in-flight meals. I am sure the North Koreans were relieved.

For my first Combat mission, our crew was split up and assigned to various crews for an orientation flight. It was exciting to think that this 'Alabama Cotton Patch Boy' was in this part of the Oriental World, flying a B-29 for God and Country. This was an airplane exactly like the famed B-29, Enola Gay that had dropped the Atomic Bomb on Nagasaki only six years earlier. The first combat flight was an uneventful sort of ho-hum flight as we were each assigned to different crews for an orientation flight. We flew three nights later as a crew and everyone functioned as we had been doing in our training flights. The third flight, three days later, our crew was made lead aircraft and crew and it remained that way for the next sixty-four combat missions we flew. Capt. Al was recognized and highly respected for his knowledge, experience and ability to command aircrews in combat situations to perform in an excellent manner. I was known for those good looking boots I wore after beating them soft with a wooden mallet and applying neat's-foot oil.

Sgt. Jack fixed our crew, and only our crew, twelve special sandwiches for every flight; six sandwiches for the forward pressurized compartment, five for the aft-pressurized compartment and one sandwich for Wasson in the tail-pressurized compartment. They were always delicious. He took loaves of his fresh oven baked bread and sliced it lengthwise to get about three long slices per loaf. He then piled on slices of ham, roast beef, bacon and eggs, pickles, salami, and everything else he had to make this huge Dagwood sandwich meal. He would slice each sandwich to make two huge deli sandwiches. Every flight was a delicious mealtime. Milk and eggs were powdered and needed to be reconstituted. I liked the milk and I liked the eggs too. Many did not eat eggs or drink milk the entire time we were there for nine months. I think Sgt. Jack liked the Kentucky Tavern and Canadian Club I sometimes brought him. He was funny and kept me entertained with his Alabama humor and expressions. We would go to the outdoor movies and he would bring a picnic basket filled with goodies and big bags of popcorn. Beer and colas were sold at the movies for ten cents a can for Pepsi Colas or premium beers such as Blue Ribbon and Budweiser. He was like a member of our crew,

as we all sat together and enjoyed the movies, rain or shine. I missed him and those huge sandwiches for my last month on Okinawa, as he had been there a year and rotated back.

In January 1952, Capt. Al had submitted me for promotion to 1st Lt. I was very honored as this was a promotion seven months ahead of the minimum time. I was grateful and the Captains on the crew said that they were glad they did not have to associate with a lowly Second Lt. anymore. I had to agree with them now that there was a rank below me.

On 19 October 1951, 15 aircraft, B-29s of the 307th went up on their daytime bombing mission. A B-29 gunner shot at a MIG 17 and missed. The B-29s flying formation were instantly swarmed by a flight of the new MIG 17 Russian fighters. Only three aircraft returned. This is when our training at Lake Charles was abruptly cut to only four training flights instead of the scheduled twelve. The Far Eastern Air Command was desperate for replacements and our crew was one of them. The air tactical strategy was switched from day to night bombing missions and a policy of “don’t shoot unless being shot at.” In order for night bombing to be reasonably assured of a target, the crew was to fly a version of Long Range Navigation (LORAN) with a more refined and precise navigation called Short Range Navigation, (SHORAN). Flying by this method could assure a precise track and an 85% accuracy of bombs on the target from 32,000 feet. Weather had no effect on SHORAN. Our only regret about weather and clouds was not getting a damage picture.

Once the crew Radar Operator locked onto the correct arc frequency of the SHORAN, it was simple to follow that arc which was electronically coupled to the autopilot. When the other station arc intersected the flight path arc, it was “Bombs Away”. It was also a let’s get out of here situation. All 15 of the B-29s would lock onto the same arc and be spaced approximately one mile apart so it was a saturation bombing. It was standard that a MIG 17 pilot would pull alongside the lead B-29 and fly close formation until bombs away. They would often wave and wave, to us. Since our crew was always the lead aircraft I got to see these Russian pilots and their MIG 17s on almost every flight. Now that wave was not a friendship wave because when I looked up and overhead about 10,000 feet above I could see a whole formation of sometimes five and sometimes more than nine slow flying MIG 17s in formation, off to the side maybe a mile. That MIG 17 pilot flying alongside was busy calling in to the ground crews of 105 mm anti aircraft batteries of guns, our course heading, airspeed and altitude. When it was bombs away time, it took 40 seconds to drop all 40 bombs; the MIG 17 would peel away and be gone. All crews were ordered not to fire unless fired upon. We had many tense moments because of their antics.

Three groups of B-29s flew missions over North Korea, the 307th and 19th Bomb Wings at Okinawa and the 97th BW, 5th Air Force out of Japan. Each organization took turns and flew every third night, with an occasional stand down. I have always been bothered with the strategy of time delay fused bombs that killed the women and children clearing the unexploded bombs from the strategic bomb drop site. This was a very bad situation.

It was a heroic act to install the SHORAN transmitters behind enemy lines. These units transmitted, measurable strengths of an electronic impulse arc that was received by the airborne radar operator, creating a pattern connected from the radar screen to the

autopilot. This meant that with the flip of a switch, the aircraft would automatically keep correcting heading to keep on the arc beam being transmitted and encoded. Two of these transmitters needed to be placed strategically behind enemy lines. The second Shoran Transmitter would send a similar signal that would intersect the first transmitter. Intelligence would determine at what strength the signals would intersect directly at the point for desired bomb release. The trajectory of the bombs, winds, density, airspeed were all factors to provide the information for setting the radar so as to when the bombs would automatically be released. This was a revolutionary method of high altitude bombing in 1951. Now, bombing is so accurate as to drop a bomb down a smoke stack.

Perhaps the most brave and daring men of that war were the Forward Air Controllers who were often airlifted behind enemy lines, set the radios with their battery power, escaped and evaded until they could be rescued. They did this frequently at various sites all over North Korea. I trust that someday these heroes will receive a measure of the credit of success of the air bombing raids over North Korea. We were among the first crews to reinstitute the high altitude bombing of North Korea by the innovative SHORAN and nightly bomb missions. This changed the concept of the war dramatically as only night raids were in practice until the end of the conflict, with very few losses.

The aircraft behind us and each succeeding aircraft would really get the flack because we were all following that arc like little ducks one behind the other. The reason it took 40 seconds to drop a load of forty 500-pound bombs is that if the bombs were salvoed, dumped all at once, the rapid loss of that 20 tons of bombs would render the aircraft almost out of control with a rapid rise in altitude. The last bomb out was always a flash bomb set to explode at 1,000 feet, to trigger the internal camera for a picture of the bomb damage to be analyzed by intelligence when we landed and the film was developed.

We got into very serious trouble once as our crew was sent up to the Yalu River dam (truly up the river) to determine how we could bomb it and not invade Chinese territory. The Dam was in the bottom of a "U" shape of the Yalu River with the entire outside of the 'U' being Chinese territory. Someone in Far East Air Force at Yokahama, Japan suggested to approach the dam in Korean territory at 12,000 feet and before reaching the dam, put the aircraft in a very steep, 60 degree bank and salvo the bombs. This was like slinging 40,000 pounds of bombs at the dam, hoping to just make a crack in the concrete structure. Capt. Al told them it would not work He was mildly ordered to try it anyway. We were both working the controls with all of our strength and we almost lost it in that attitude and the rapid loss of that weight. This poorly conceived plan put excessive stress on the aircraft as it tightened the turn radius beyond its' limits. Someone in FEAF was determined because the big block buster B-50 aircraft and its' 10,000 pound bomb was called in from the states to try to break the dam. The aircraft was a special outfitted B-50 with special Bombay doors and a bomb rack to hold the 10,000-pound bomb it carried. They couldn't do it after three tries. It was said then, the dam was impregnable.

I kept a New Testament and a silk map of North Korea in my flight suit chest pocket to assist in escape and evasion if needed. For every mile of that flight, the one thing on every aircrew members mind was, how to evade and escape if shot down. Each person sat

on a large survival kit strapped to the parachute and was a part of the seat for every position. These kits contained about everything one could imagine to assist in escape and evasion. This kit included the awesome hornet rifle with the collapsible wire stock. The kits were checked periodically to ensure that they still had two shots of morphine.

One night our aircraft malfunctioned as Glisson was starting the engines. We had to make a mad dash to the standby aircraft. And quickly make a taxi maneuver down the runway and turned around ahead of the line of B-29s so as to get in the lead position. This aircraft was new from the states as a replacement for the aircraft that crashed wheels up. It had a strange arrangement for the location of several of the switches and equipment. The switch that arms the bomb shackles so the bombardier, or the radar operator, or the automatic SHORAN signals could release bombs from any of these stations seemed to be missing. It was to be turned on prior to the beginning of the bomb run. Oley Anderson, the Swede Bombardier, could not find the switch after take-off. Everyone was desperately looking for it at all of the likely places. We made the bomb run but nothing happened. Capt. Al then fell in behind the last aircraft to try it all over again with the Radar Operator DePietro releasing the bombs. It did not work and we were getting a lot of anti aircraft rounds that were much too close. I thought there was going to be mutiny on the interplane radio when Capt. Al told the crew to prepare for another run at it. We all wore those old early WW II model throat mikes. They were clear but very uncomfortable and got sweaty. The wide elastic band would soon end up as a string around the neck. The third time we went across the target, those Chinese communist gunners had our path down accurately. It was flash, flash and flash. And they reloaded three more rounds. It was obvious these next three rounds were going to get us, Capt. Al called for salvo but nothing happened. As he called for me to help him put the aircraft into a steep bank, I felt the side of my neck was wet with sweat running down my neck. It was a strange feeling. I felt again, it was blood, my blood. I felt no pain or discomfort at that time as it was tense.

We all wore flack helmets, jackets and sat on the flack pants. We were told to do this for all those who wanted to have a family when this mess was over. I was pulling and helping to turn with all my strength. I felt that my mouth was full and I needed to spit. I then began to have a discomfort feeling in my right jaw and realized that a piece of shrapnel from one of those shell bursts had gone through my right jaw and broken a molar loose. I spit into a paper towel and there was half a tooth and a sliver of metal. One of the bursts put many holes in the right side of the fuselage and wing, another burst punctured the aft-pressurized compartment and a third one got the tail section. We also lost an engine, which Capt Al and Glisson feathered and shut down. Copilot flies the acft.

We turned south and began a descent as we were losing compartment pressure and couldn't maintain altitude with three engines. As we reached about 18,000 feet, Oley saw lights of a convoy flickering on the mountainous ground below. They were obviously heading south and therefore must be Communist North Korean vehicles. We had been briefed that the Communist North Korean forces had amassed an attack force and supply convoy to lead a major offensive on the South of Korea but intelligence did not know where they were. Surely, from the size and length of this convoy, we had found it. Oley wanted to manually toggle release the bombs, one at a time with hopes to disrupt the convoy so the fighter bombers could attack them in the daylight early that morning. We

talked it over and although Capt. Al thought it was much too dangerous and would be far above and beyond the call of anyone's duty to try it. Oley wanted to give it a try. He went into the bombay without a parachute, only a screwdriver, flashlight and his connection with a headset and a throat mike. Capt Al lined up with the convoy lights and continued the descent. Everyone was on oxygen except Oley, that "Crazy Swede." He would call out right, left or steady as he toggled the bomb shackles with the screwdriver, one at a time. Back and forth we went, leveling off at 8,000 feet. Oley got all the bombs and flash out on that convoy in about an hour and a half. Our job was done, now lets all go home.

Sgt. Eaton, the radio operator, had Oley a hot cup of Cocoa when he was pulled out of that Bombay, half frozen and so weak from holding on with one arm wrapped around a bomb stanchion, and the other hand triggering the bomb shackles to release amid the frigid winds of the open bombay. He warmed up and ate the rest of his big fat sandwich.

I was beginning to feel considerable pain, now that Oley was safely back in the aircraft and the cabin was now reading our altitude, about 8,000 feet. Willy charted a course and Capt. Al set course for Yokota Air Base, which had been a Japanese fighter strip during the war. It was little more than a strip of asphalt about the size of a two-lane highway. I didn't think he could keep the tires on the ribbon of asphalt, but he did. The tower was alerted and had a Dentist waiting for me. He dug out the roots of the broken molar, gave me paperwork, two APCs and it was all aboard for the home tents of Kadena, Okinawa.

The next day we were called into the commander's office and told that the photo evidence indicated that we had knocked out a convoy that had eluded intelligence for two weeks. This was a convoy of a massive push for the summer of 1952 for the North Koreans. The 5th Air Force fighter-bombers had a field day finishing off the convoy after daylight. He told the crew that it was probably one of the most severe setbacks for the enemy since the war had begun. He told us he was going to recommend the Bronze Star for Oley and the Commendation Medal for the crewmembers. That was the last we ever heard from him about that. We were having a change of Commanders about every six weeks. Those Pentagon boys have to get a ribbon or two for their chest collection.

General Nathan Twining, Chief of staff of the US Air Force, came to Kadena; Okinawa to commend our crew and award medals. We met him with handshakes and introductions in an informal setting in our tent city. I almost laughed, as he was a large man and was dearly holding onto the tent ropes as he was telling us something about the honor of serving our country, trying to be so serious and general like. The wind was blowing strong and he was holding on tight. His scrambled egg hat blew off and he revealed that he knew a large vocabulary of expletives. His Colonel aide de camp chased it down and that broke up the little meeting. He forgot about the medals. Oley never did get recognition for that mission and I always felt that he probably saved thousand of lives by his daring deed. I asked about a Purple Heart for the shrapnel wound



Gen. Twining to confer Medal

in my jaw and the loss of my molar. The Commander told me that Officers don't get purple hearts. That ended that little embarrassing chat. I never applied again

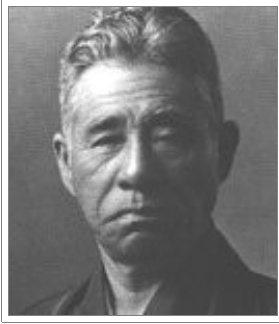


As we approached the Korean territory, we would always have an interphone check in to ensure everyone was alert. Wasson the tail gunner, all alone back there in the tail did not check in this one night. We knew he had been sick. He carried a gallon can he used to vomit in and also have diarrhea in. He had gone to sleep. He could not be awakened. Capt. Al told everyone to tighten their straps. He put the aircraft in a violent yawing and up and down motion. Poor Wasson woke up and got a severe verbal chastisement. When we landed back at Kadena, the poor little fellow was covered with the contents of his gallon toilet can. It was standard

procedure that each gunner was to clear his four guns of the belts of ammunition after elevating the quad-50 cal. guns to full up. Poor Wasson did not elevate the guns, but left them in trail, which is the flight position. He put the clearing tool in the wrong slot and shot the landing gear strut of the B-29 parked in the revetment directly behind us. Hydraulic fluid spewed everywhere for a fifty foot radius. This was a major accident. The



The strut was replaced from one of the crashed B-29s. We were not permitted to put nose-art, painted pictures and names, on our aircraft because we were SAC. UGH The next day the nose art crew of the 19th, came over and painted a B-29 kill on the side of our airplane and one under the window of Wasson's tail position. We certainly had unique paintings with that.



Mr. Mikimoto

I was fascinated with the week spent in Japan for Rest and Recreation (R&R). I was determined to cram into that week all the adventure I could, as I knew I would never return. Capt. Al refused to go. The war was still too fresh for him. My first objective on that trip was to visit the Mikimoto Pearl Headquarters. I was very honored as I got to meet Mr. Mikimoto. He was such a pleasant man and spoke flawless English. I think he liked me, or at least he was so pleasant and casual. He took me through his distribution center, explaining the grading process and procedures. He would dig his open hands deep into the various bins of pearls and smile a huge smile of excitement that he was being permitted to touch a bit of heaven. He was jolly indeed. He told me that “Blue Pearls” would be the value and rage of the future. He selected a handful of pearls for a necklace, a hatpin, earrings and a finger ring. He had one of the ladies drill and mount them while I sipped tea with him, talking about his cloistered life during the war, and about my life in Alabama. He told me how he had pearl gatherers all over the South Pacific to gather the assorted colored pearls of each area. He said “The bad war” was not good for the pearls. We had a very pleasant visit. As I was paying for the pearls, I told him my second priority was to visit the Noritake Factory. He called for a rickshaw and told me the fare was paid. We bowed and I climbed aboard. The driver told me that the rickshaw was the personal carriage for Mr. Mikimoto and that I should feel honored. I was indeed.

The Noritake factory was an interesting place. Hundreds of little Japanese women coming and going in every direction, some sitting and painting or fixing exotic pieces of ceramics but everyone had something in their hands and everyone knew where they were going. I told them what I wanted and was taken into an art room. The lady began to pull rolled patterns from tubes. Finally she said, “let us make you a one of a kind pattern at no extra cost”. She doodled awhile, put the colors to it and I thought it was like Mary’s Damask Rose silver pattern. I paid her for a twelve place setting plus gravy boat, platter, serving bowls and bowls with covers. It was very reasonable. She said they would ship the two cartons at no cost to me. None of the dinnerware was broken in shipment and I don’t remember any ever being broken through the years, with three growing children.

Oley, Willy and Al DePietro insisted I must go with them to a Geisha House for a Japanese bath. I was very skeptical about undressing before those Japanese girls but that was their daily work sooo... off went the clothes. They provided us with a brief underwear. We all stood there laughing like teenagers. We all four got into a huge tile pool of very warm water and it seemed to get hotter as we sat in that swirling water. When I was like a lobster it was time to get out and get soapy and wash with a washcloth. Oh No... one of the girls poured cold water on me from head to toe. The girls did the same to the others. It was a shock. We thought Oley was going to faint. Willy almost froze and Al laughed at all of us in our predicaments. We went through this one more time but we were prepared the second time. After the third hot bath, we dried off and got on a padded table and those little girls hopped up on our backs and started walking heel to toe and making a lot of action with their feet. It tickled. Then she hopped down and

started beating real fast with the sides of her hands. That was a little unpleasant. Then it was a leg massage, a foot massage and lastly a neck massage and “Please Sir, pay two Ah Merican Dollahas”. We could now tell friends we had the treatment of a Japanese bath, yes, complete with the two times of hot and cold pouring water surprises.

I was determined to try to see one of the Ainu people and hopefully visit one of their few villages of Northern Japan. I knew they were almost extinct. These are people who have full body hair all over their bodies much like a primate. They are a very private people and do not venture past their villages in the Honshu area of Northern Japan. There is very little written of these people. I wanted to see them and make friends if I could. I took a fast train to the northern area of Japan. I found a three-wheeled scooter type vehicle for hire to take me the 50 miles and bring me back. I was far into Northern Japan. The driver and I bargained for a price and he seemed to enjoy bantering the price. The ride into the village became more



Ainu People

and more primitive until it was little more than two ruts for the last mile or so. The only life I saw among the 50 houses or so was the chickens scratching the hard soil for bugs I suppose. There were indications that perhaps this building or that building could be a market offering foods and staple goods for sale or barter, but no life. I



walked among the clay street for about an hour and was about to walk the half mile or so back to the taxi. He had refused to go to the village and it was almost impassable for the little taxi anyway. An elderly man came out and spoke a language I had never heard. I desperately tried to communicate with him. There was a story that an Englishman thought the louder he shouted, surely he could be understood by the native who knew no English. I indicated that I wanted a drink of water, thinking I might be able to see children or anyone else. A woman brought me a tin cup of water. Her face was covered. I saw in this man’s aging eyes a sadness like unto the eyes of a hungry child. Yes, there are Ainu people doomed to the inevitable path of extinct in the predictable future. We of the Western Civilization seem to care more for snail darter minnows than we do for these poor humans who are in dire trouble with incest, social ostracism, prejudice, economics, declining population and other serious problems. I was now ready to leave. I was sad.

I took the somber trip back to Yokahoma, not any wiser but I had a lot of things to ponder for a lifetime. My R & R had been a worthwhile experience. I bought Mary some Japanese clothes and for the men in the family I bought bamboo fly fishing box kits with a rod and reel and dozens of flies. For the girls I bought little porcelain tea sets. Those last days at Kadena, AFB, Okinawa had been of mixed emotions. I wanted to be with Mary, yet I reveled in being made an Aircraft Commander and flying the B-29 as an alternate pilot. All of my crewmembers had departed during that last month. They had been sent to Biggs AFB, El Paso, Texas to an Air Refueling Squadron. I had never heard

of an Air Refueling Squadron and was feeling sorry for them that they had to run over the flight line refueling aircraft all day and night. I felt it was a great honor and tribute to Capt. Al that he had pushed and led me to be acceptable to the Wing Commander to command this position of responsibility and authority. It was good on my record that I was coming home to be a pilot with a crew and not as a copilot. I had five combat missions as a Combat Aircraft Commander when I received orders to report to Biggs AFB, El Paso, Texas to the 97th Air Refueling Squadron. The Commander told me my time was up and it never worked out for persons to extend their duty in a war zone. I agreed and eagerly looked forward to being with Mary and our families again. My baggage was less now than when I had arrived. I lost all of my dress uniforms to mildew.



A C-54 of the Military Air Transport Service, MATS, was to be the aircraft to carry me, and about 40 others home. We were happy passengers, landing at Saipan for about an hour for refueling, meals and a stretch. Then it was on to Wake Island for the same kind of stop. It was a desolate Island with war debris everywhere, in the ocean and on land. We had landed here enroute

to Okinawa. It seemed to be larger now than when we came in to land there almost a year earlier. Capt. Al had given me a copilots' thrill by letting me make the landing there on the way to Okinawa. He was a generous Pilot as he shared every other take-off and landing with me, regardless of whatever VIP had hopped aboard at the last minute. Again, the stop was uneventful and we soon set a course for probably the longest leg of the trip, to Johnston Island or atoll. This place was pure desolation. Nothing was native or inhabited the island except those poor souls forced to man the place. Some have said the island was not fit for the birds and we saw none flying. Another brief stop and we were airborne again, for Hickam AFB, Honolulu, HI. This was a stop of several hours with a change of planes. I was anxious now as this was the last stop before arriving in Calif.

John had given me a super good tour of the island and now I was anxious only to close those 2,091 miles of Pacific Ocean to Travis AFB, Calif. This was like being back at the starting point where the Korean Conflict began for me. I think I was running on adrenalin and nervous energy. I slept most of that leg and was now more anxious than ever to close those miles to Birmingham, the fastest way possible. I was given airline tickets to Birmingham and paid 12 cents per mile from Birmingham to Montgomery, and then to Biggs AFB, El Paso, with a reminder that I had three weeks before reporting in for duty.



Mary met me at the Airport and we enjoyed the biggest and best steak and wine supper of our lives. It was so good to be home at last, indescribable. We went to Montgomery for a few days and to Foley. We swam in the Gulf and fished some. Sonny caught a baby

alligator and Donald wanted to keep it. The family at Foley decided that we should have a beach picnic and invited and notified all the brothers and sisters with their families to come for the occasion. I was very honored that this was done for me. This has been considered the first of the annual Bryant Family Reunions we have had through the years. Gulf Shores, September 1952. The Family Reunions are a weekend together at a lodge or similar accommodations and is hosted on a rotational basis. You wouldn't believe some of the fun we have had through these fifty plus years of food, fellowship, games, entertainment, skits, auctions, bragging times, and of course the always, "Do you remember" stories. The days all seemed to fly by so quickly and it was soon time to report to Biggs AFB. Mary had hardly used her new car we bought in California. She often tells me some humorous event she had in driving that thing home alone, from Calif. We loaded it again and headed for El Paso. Everything we owned fit freely into that car with room to spare. We traveled in security, comfort and awe of it all. We had such a beautiful life every day.

I did not realize before then as to how much expanse, void of scenery or vegetation there was between Ft. Worth and El Paso This was now late September 1952. It was good to meet up with the Gunners of the old crew that were now aircrew members on a KB- 29. The "K" designation meant tanker aircraft for air-to-air-refueling. Glisson had been assigned to the 97th Bomb Wing of B-50 aircraft there. There was no immediate housing available for us until about three weeks. Again, it was Mary to the rescue as she found a furnished adobe house in the adobe village of Tigua, a suburb of El Paso, Texas. The adobe walls of our little home were about two feet thick, small, deeply recessed windows and doors with a tin roof. It was oh so cool and comfortable. We could see the Rio Grande River from our kitchen window. A Big, and I mean Big Yellow Tomcat took up with Mary because she fed it and then wondered why it stayed around. It was a very affectionate cat. A house on base at Biggs AFB became available to us in about three weeks. When we moved, the old crew all drove out to help us move on base. There was nothing really to move because we had nothing, I mean nothing but luggage. Everything we owned was in that car.



Tigua, The big yellow cat

We had a steel luggage rack that fit atop the Chevrolet with a secure canvass top and straps. All the way to the base, about three miles, we kept hearing a faint "meow, meow". When we got to the main gate, the security police guard peered into the steel rack, laughed and waved us onto the base. Those playful guys had put that big yellow cat into the rack and strapped down the cover. I didn't know whether we were blessed or cursed with this cat on our hands now. He stayed and responded to the name Tigua, so we laid claim to him. The base housing loaned us two folding cots and that was it. Our very first furniture purchase was a Samsonite folding card table and four folding chairs. We kept that until 2005 and finally gave all to a newly wed couple, still in good service condition.

We had a nice sized watermelon that was growing under the eaves of our house. I watered that thing twice every day and fertilized it too, with some horse manure. I had gone down town to the ‘horse and carriage’ taxi area and played the role of a “super dooper pooper scooper”, in a plastic trash bag. One morning I went out to water it before breakfast as usual, and it was gone. The vines had been trounced upon. The ground around it was muddy and a fresh huge shoeprint, maybe a size 15, was clearly visible. I steamed all day, as I knew who had stolen my beautiful watermelon. How was I going to handle this situation with the highest-ranking officer on base, telling him that his son stole my watermelon. I remembered what Mr. Fikes taught me that day at Cook Springs. “God made us all alike.” Armed with that thought, I got courage as to what I was to do.

That evening about mealtime, when I knew he would be home, I went over to Colonel “Three Fingered” Jack Ryan’s home and told him who I was and that I lived across the street from him. I said, “Your son stole my watermelon.” He laughed and said something to the effect that stolen watermelons taste the best. He saw I was serious. He called his son to the door, asked him if he had stolen the melon and his son nodded yes. He hit his son with the back of his hand and sent him reeling back into the house. He closed the door and I never talked to him again, although I saw him many times. That next evening there was a huge delicious watermelon at our front door. I sent him a thank you card and wrote only “ Thank you Sir, Delicious, Your stolen watermelon was grown with good rich horse manure” and signed it. He was known more formally in his long career as General John D. Ryan, Chief of Staff, US Air Force. I met him again, years later.

When I arrived at Biggs AFB, the 97th Air Refueling Squadron was all abuzz about air refueling a squadron of 35 F-84 aircraft across the Pacific Ocean non-stop. SAC was trying an experiment of utilizing fighter aircraft into its global fleet of bombers. I think that someone in places of SAC power was playing with the ego record books. I was assigned to a crew commanded by Major Walter Callahan, the squadron commander, to fly this mission from Wake Island as a copilot on the new KB29P. Wake Island I couldn’t believe that mission planners would stage out of Wake Island with seven fully loaded KB-29s. The runway was only 10,000 feet and parking almost wasn’t, probably because Truman and MacArthur met there only months previously. We had briefing after briefing on every little phase of the flight, even to the best way to eat in-flight meals. It was really boring after about two weeks every day, all day, listening to information that was so mundane or elementary that everyone seemed to be skipping or coming and going as they pleased, even though attendance was mandatory. The room was stuffy and too drab to be called a briefing room. Smoking was permitted and it stank just like that ‘Smoking Compartment’ of the Humming Bird train so many years ago.



This story has been told of other places and at other times but I think it probably originated during one of those all day briefings. I was there when a young Lt. was going over and over the use of the Mae West floatation vest in a session after lunch. One of the

men fell asleep and was actually snoring to the extent that we were all laughing. The Lt. slammed the vest onto the table and told a Capt. in the briefing to go wake that man up. The Capt, quickly shot back “Go wake him yourself, you put him to sleep.” The whole class got up and walked out laughing. We had very few briefings after that incident.

The mission was uneventful and went well despite the tension of the runway length and temperatures. We all had reduced fuel loads because two additional KB-29s were assigned to share the number of F-84 aircraft per tanker. We were gone four days. That was my first experience with real air-to-air refueling except a few orientation flights I had, as a copilot. I felt that I was in a looser organization and had no chance of becoming an Aircraft Commander to get my own crew for at least more than a year. Major Glickman, the squadron Operations Officer was always friendly to me. One day he asked me to go Dutch Lunch with him. That meant, I pay, you pay. I liked that. I thought he wanted to tell me something as I had heard this was his method of telling someone something of importance. He told me he was sending me to the Squadron Officer School. It was Air Force policy that all Company Grade officers should go to the Squadron Officers School at Maxwell AFB, Montgomery for a six weeks course in Military Science Management. I applied to go and was accepted. Mary found us a quaint little one-bedroom house about three blocks from the Eidson home on 13 East South Street.

We were going to visit our family in Foley our first weekend there. We got to Monroeville, Ala when Mary couldn’t decide if she had unplugged or turned off the electric iron on the ironing board. We turned around and returned to check. She had done both. Back on the road again to Foley. We were in the Tensaw area of North Baldwin County when the headlights glared back the big bright eyes of a deer in the tall ragweeds on the roadside. It happened so quickly. The deer leaped into our path and flew over the car. Mary insisted we stop and look for the deer to see if it was injured or dead. Two gruffy looking men in a logging truck stopped and found the deer in the opposite ditch, dead. They demanded we go to their house to help clean the deer for half the meat. We didn’t want any part of it, but we were dealing with two men drinking heavily and were too frightened to leave. They took their time, about two hours. We finally demanded that we were leaving; they wrapped the broken ribs in a newspaper and insisted we take that as our fair share. We left and threw it out about a mile down the road. We were scared.

I really enjoyed the school there at Montgomery and our little house. A member of the faculty was a civilian college professor who wrote a book “Conflicts in Governments”. He taught the course. I still have that book. I found this to be one of the most interesting presentations ever offered, comparing and contrasting governments of the world. It was structured on the order of applying the Yen and the Yang concepts of opposites. The obstacle course was fun times every day. The best of these was a hole dug exactly 8 X 8 X 8 feet and the four man team was given two six foot boards to cross the obstacle. Our team won the time on that one. Everyone was pledged to not reveal the secret to any of the obstacles. Many of the obstacles took team effort and clever solutions.



I met M/Sgt. Robert Skelton again. He was a cousin of Betty Skelton, the world renowned Powder Puff Racing champion. He had kept our logbooks when I was a cadet at Randolph back in 1950. He was a Flying Sergeant during WW II as a glider pilot on “D” Day. He was now in charge of the C-45 and T-11 aircraft to be used for pilot proficiency by students of the Academic Programs at Maxwell AFB. He always had an aircraft for me to fly on weekends. He and I flew to Winter Haven, Florida one weekend to see Betty perform at an air show. I met Betty and she was a very graceful hostess. He did all of the flying, which thrilled him. He prompted me and I wrote an aircraft parking plan for Maxwell AFB. It was adopted. Every weekend he had a C-45 saved for me to go anywhere I wished, as usual. For some reason I decided to go to Jackson, Miss. for a Saturday lunch. I seldom fly alone as someone was always on emergency leave or wanted to go home.

I planned to have lunch and come back the same day. At Jackson, I glanced over at the weather counter. I simply couldn’t believe it. There was Capt. Lentz, now retired and director of the Jackson, Miss. weather station. I ran around the counter, shaking his hand and hugging his neck, bubbling over with emotions at seeing him again. I told him “Let’s go for a flight.” It was not exactly legal but the two of us went out to the C-45. I insisted he get into the left seat, pilots seat, and make this a flight to remember. He did, and we flew for about two hours. He got his touch back and flew the aircraft as he had flown me so many years earlier. When we got back, he was the one who had tears in his eyes.

We had hardly gotten back to Biggs when Major Glickman wanted to have another Dutch sandwich lunch with me. I thought, Oh Dear Gussie, where is he going to send me now. He went straight to the core and told me that I had a golden opportunity to “fly with the big boys” in the B-36. There was an opening for a pilot at Carswell AFB, Ft. Worth, Texas. He needed an answer from me that afternoon, like right now. This was the newest and biggest aircraft in the world. I eagerly accepted his offer to send me without first discussing it with Mary. We had four days to clear the base and report for duty at Carswell AFB. Glisson was the only member of the Combat Crew that elected to stay in the Air Force and he was flying the B-50, a bigger, beefed-up version of the B-29.

The only furniture we had to move was that card table and folding chairs. I reported for duty on that fourth day and they told me to come back in a week, after I got settled. We laughed it off as “that’s the Air Force way, hurry up and wait.” Again, Mary found an unfurnished apartment and set about to furnish it. She bought a mattress and box springs first. We slept on that, on the floor for a few days until she found a furniture store that sold only solid oak furniture, primarily furniture made by Lenoir of North Carolina. She loaded up, bed room, dining room, all in oak and a six piece living room suite, which was pine but blended well. The night before the furniture was to be delivered, Mary had put a full bottle of some kind of hormone in the window ledge by the mattress on the floor. Prissy, our sheltie, got into the bottle, chewed the cap off and ate every one of those pills.

We had put newspapers about the apartment to help in training her, but those papers were useless. I didn’t think that little dog could hold that much. She had an industrial case of diarrhea all over the wooden floors of that apartment all through the night. Oh what a

mess. We scrubbed for days and finally decided to tell the landlord, pay a cleanup fee and move. I considered moving without doggie but Mary instantly changed my mind on that.

Again, Mary found a new, never been lived in, stone home that a Mr. Jackson had built for himself if he and his wife could no longer tolerate each other, or least that is what he said with a grin. Mary paid and arranged for moving the furniture over there. It was a really nice place except we found that scorpions and black widow spiders with the red dots on their bottoms, loved to nest among those rocks and would somehow get into the house. They also got into our shoes at night. It took only one incidence for us to learn to always shake shoes when we first got up. We captured and killed many baaad scorpions.

We always liked to go exploring wherever we were, to see the places of interest, scenery and the quaint little towns. We found some pretty grapes along a country road. They were tart and we thought that would be good for grape jelly. We gathered probably a bushel or more and took them home to squeeze in an old antique lard press we had bought at a junk shop. Mary got more than a gallon of juice. It was bitter. She put it in the refrigerator for about a month. Clear crystals formed in the bottom of the glass jug, about one inch deep. She poured the beautiful pink liquid off and made the best grape jelly I have ever eaten. The clear crystals were very bitter. Mr. Jackson told us the name of the grapes, and we have forgotten. He said they were poison, but they sure made nice reddish clear jelly.

Mr. Jackson had a wood shop in the back yard of the house and he let me play with making splinters in there. I made birdhouses, magazine racks and other things. A friend and I built a nine-foot racing boat with twin sponsons in the shop. He won several races on Lake Worth with it in the seven and a half horsepower class with a Mercury Quick Silver engine. It was too “squirrely” for me. It dumped him many times and me once.

I must commend the Ft. Worth Utility Department and the telephone company for their extremely prompt service. All I had to say to them was that I was being assigned to the Strategic Air Command, SAC, at Carswell to be a B-36 pilot. We had gas, water and lights that afternoon and telephone service the next morning. We have never had such prompt service before, nor since. After my week of grace was over and I needed to report for duty, I asked Mary to take me to the base and I would call her that afternoon to come and get me. We were a one-car family. I really learned about B-36 flying that first day.

I had been assigned to the Select Crew of Major Wesley L. Pendergraft of Kansas City, Missouri. as his first pilot. There was no degrading copilot status in the B-36 program. Meeting him was an instant friendship. I had some quick learning to do. Select Crew is a status rank of the highest order. All members of that aircrew were eligible to be ‘spot promoted’ to one grade above their congressionally appointed commissioned grade. Major Pendergraft was actually a Captain but was enjoying the pay and benefits of a Major, as were other members of his select crew, based on the crew performance to be awarded that esteemed status of “Select Crew.” Any poor performance or any other little unfavorable situation could result in one being reverted to ones original grade. It was a well-known reality that the spot promotion could be removed very easily. This was Gen.

LeMay's idea of keeping "his" flight crews on their sharpest edge of capability at all times. Everyone was rank conscious but spot promotion rank status was fickle in SAC.

It was this concept that I had received promotion to 1st Lt. seven months ahead of schedule back in Okinawa. My other quick learning was that the B-36 had three pilots, An Aircraft Commander, Pilot and 1st Pilot. There were no designated copilots in the B-36 program. A pilot could log copilot time as it was done throughout the Air Force, but SAC, in its fever of prestige avoided designating a pilot as copilot. The flight position seat was designated as RFB, meaning Right Forward Blister. At first thought, I felt good about that concept of not designating copilot to the third pilot of the crew, but I wasn't thinking this thing all the way through to a logical conclusion. There were only two seats up there and three assigned pilots. Oh Well. RFB here I come to sit out this flight.

The major sent his pilot to take me to clothing and equipment supply. SAC made a great effort to fully outfit the B-36 crews with the finest of all flight clothing, socks, boots, helmet (called a brain bucket), voice activated built in microphone with sensitive adjustment ear pieces built into the helmet and every kind of flight accessories such as flashlights, pocket knife and hunting knife, compass and other items that were unheard of to other SAC crews, other than the B-36 crews. I was issued three flight suits with a tailor there to adjust them if needed, a summer and a winter flight jacket, parka, a genuine leather flight carrying case, and other items, along with a mobility bag to stuff the heavy stuff into and a canvas flight bag. He took me to the locker area and I was assigned a locker in the crew area. It was hard not to feel important after such a supply issue as that.

Then came the shocker, the crew was scheduled to fly that afternoon for a 22-hour flight, returning the next day. I had no chance to call Mary. These B-36 crews bored holes in the sky to release their boredom. They had no real training mission for this flight or most



B-36 Cockpit Panel

flights, just go and go. We flew over Alaska, the North Pole, Greenland, Newfoundland and back to Carswell on that 22-hour mission. When I got up to the flight deck, I was told that the 1st pilot sits in the right forward blister or bubble and is in command of the gunners. Oh, Dear Gussie, What have I done to be a gunner? Gunners are honorable, that just wasn't my job, at least I didn't think so until I was told that it was my job now. I was told to sit and look for smoke if it came from an engine and to report it to the pilot. Where had I gone wrong? I was a pilot, not an engine scanner.

The Major called me up a few times to sit in the right seat while 'the pilot' slept. I was agog at it all and got no rest on that flight. I never understood how a pilot could sleep while on duty as a pilot. Years later, I flew 54 hours sitting in the B-52 seat with a very short nap or two but not to sleep. When we landed with my first day of duty and first flight in the B-36, I showered, got a massage rub down which was standard procedure for B-36 air crew men, and called Mary. I told her to please come and get me at the place she had let me off the day before. She dropped everything saying she would be right there. It

should have taken about 20 minutes at the most. I waited about two hours and called her again. She was crying, saying for me to take a taxi, she was never going on that base again. I finally got her to come to the main gate and meet me there. I walked to the gate and asked what had happened when the lady in the green Chevrolet came to pick me up. There was a lot of shuffling and 'excuse me, I have to go' talk. I called the Air Police office and got the Captain to come down. They huddled and told me the story that they had been having a lot of trouble with 'hookers' coming onto the base and soliciting in the BOQs, and the guard thought Mary was one of these. Now that really got me upset.

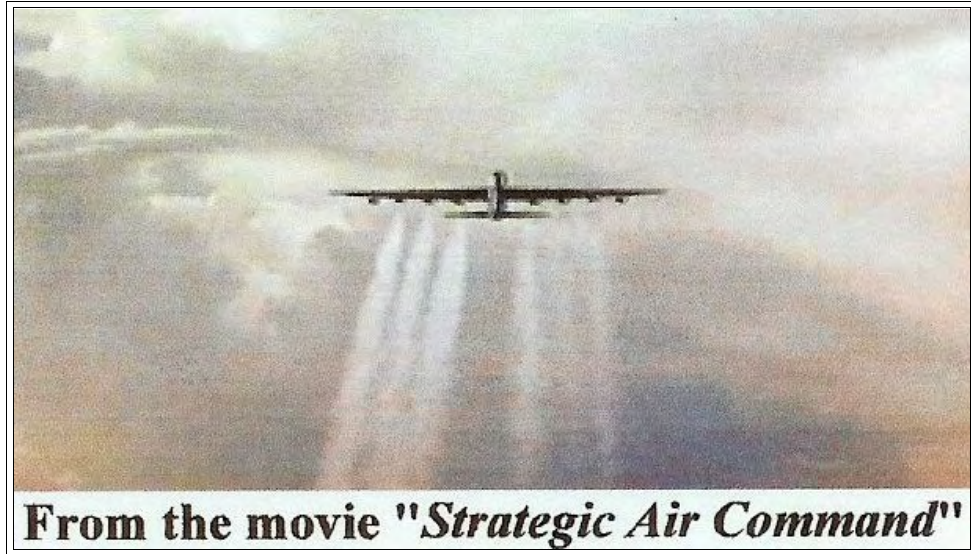
His attitude took some real self-control for me not to 'cloud up and rain all over him.' Mary always had a most uncomfortable feeling on base at Carswell but she liked Ft. Worth. Even Prissy the Sheltie dog, sort of snarled at the guard on duty when we would go through the main gate. I wanted to be acceptable by my peers and do well in this aircraft program. This had been a tumultuous two days and I had a lot of sorting to do emotionally and mentally. I pondered the notion that if this was to be my lot to be gone flying in an instant decision for 22 hours, and if Mary had emotions about this base, I would somehow, someday, have to get a release from this assignment and into an aircraft with an optimistic and pleasant future at a comfortable place for us to begin our family.

I was at the threshold of a pilot's childhood like dream to be flying a B-36, even if it was in the right front gunners blister. The B-36 was dubbed "The Peacemaker" credited with keeping the peace for 10 years. The ten engines, 4 GE J47 turbo jets and 6 Pratt and Whitney 4360 cubic inch displacement, reciprocating engines with 3 bladed pusher type propellers, developed 44,000 horsepower, equivalent to nine locomotives or about 400 automobiles. The wing tanks held more than 30,000 gallons of high-octane gasoline. It lifted off, climbed to altitude, cruised, descended, and approached landings at 160 knots airspeed. Everything was 160k. (The gunners said this was so that pilots would not be confused.) It was not fast but it could fly more than 6,500 miles without stopping and 24-hour flights were common practice. It had no air refueling capability. Thirty miles of wiring was used in each aircraft. Convair built 385 of the aircraft at a cost of \$4.1 million each. It carried 84,000 pounds of bombs. This was the world's largest aircraft. It was put into service in 1947, the year I finished high school and here I was flying the thing six years later. News of the B-52 was now the popular international talk and pilots were clamoring for an assignment to this aircraft, anywhere. Acceptance into the B-36 program of operations was very limited. My heart wanted to go backwards to the B-29, but all of the B-29s were being scrapped or converted to KB-29s. Alas, poor Charlie.

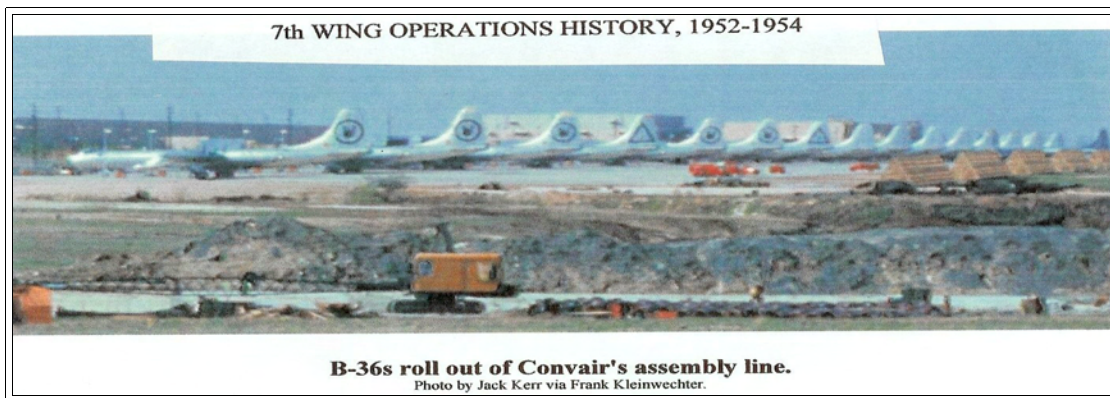
Military strategists are still wondering why we spent so much money on so many of those behemoth monster aircraft. 385 aircraft built, 1946 to 1952, and there were not enough crews to accommodate that number of aircraft. This was a well-guarded secret. The runways, hangars, support equipment and facilities were limited to accommodate this monster. We had not manufactured enough atomic and hydrogen bombs yet to supply the crews and aircraft available. Could the B-36 have been this nation's biggest bluff? And it worked. Maybe it did keep the peace in those early days of the Cold War for ten critical years. It never fired a shot or dropped a bomb in hostile action. The world trembled at the

thought of these flying behemoths that could rain down the biblical fire and brimstone upon anyplace upon the face of this earth, at any time. Awesome.

The six pusher reciprocating or piston engines with 36 cylinders each, made a very unique sound on the ground as well as in the air. The four jet engines, taken from the B-47 and mounted outboard on the wings, were silent in the aircraft. . Stealth was definitely not a consideration in the design of the aircraft. It could be heard distinctly from six miles high and ten miles distance. It literally shook windows all over the world.



Low level publicity flights



SAC had more aircraft than aircrews to fly them

Almost immediately after being assigned to Carswell AFB, I was sent with four gunners to Matagorda Island AFB, off the Texas Gulf coast. This was to be our gunnery training required of all B-36 gunners, and I was now considered one of them. I checked out a staff car and we left early one morning in hopes to make it in one day. I had gone by the enlisted Mess hall early and asked the cooks to make us two bag lunches each. North of Victoria, Texas were signs touting absolutely Texas' finest B-B-Q. Then the signs began to count down the miles ahead and finally a sign read, "Here 'Tis." It was remote and looked like a shack, but smelled oh so good. There were lots of cars filling the parking lot, so it must be a good. This seemed to always be a good sign when in strange areas

We all hopped out except one Sgt. He was of African heritage. He said he was not hungry. A Tech. Sgt motioned me aside and told me he was too scared to go in there because he was black and this was bad country for him. I told the men to wait. I went in and had a serious chat with the owner who could have passed as the Grand Wizard of the Klan with his attitude. I never threatened anything but I told him these men out there in the official Air Force vehicle were aircrew gunners, flying the B-36 so he could have his business in freedom. He quickly mellowed and personally went outside and invited everyone to his private dining room. Maybe that was so no one would see whites eating with a young black, and he was black. It was a small dining room; the entry was from the rear of the building. We relaxed and ate our fill of the finest in B-B-Q, ribs and loin.

He declined to let us pay, but we insisted and he took our money, which was well spent because he fixed us "Go Boxes" of that delicious B-B-Q. He told us there was no food available on the Island at night. He was right and we enjoyed a midnight meal of BBQ. We spent three days trying to shoot down the little unmanned, radio-controlled Mooney Midget aircraft. It had been a pleasant time as I had taken a cast net and caught a tub of Mullet fish. When we were cleaning them we saw that the backbones had worms going about the bones. Back to the gulf with the whole tub load. I haven't eaten Mullet since.

The training program I most thoroughly enjoyed was conducted at Wichita, Kansas. This was called "Bomb Commanders Seminar". Only B-36 pilots and bombardiers were permitted to attend because the B-36 was the only aircraft that carried thermonuclear bombs. We were thoroughly screened, beyond the Top Secret clearance I held, before

being admitted. The seminar began with everyone standing with raised right hand and pledging never to reveal the information that was to be disseminated during that seminar. No paperwork was ever passed out and no notes were permitted to be taken. Whatever was taken from the lecture room was in the form of memory. We had a lot of ‘hands on’ training about loading and arming the bombs, both nuclear and thermonuclear. It was two weeks of a series of highly classified lectures including the history, manufacturing, early bombs and the current hydrogen bomb. The movies of the early test bombs were terrifying. The lectures and information were very professionally presented. I liked it.

The lecturers talked casually of the secrets that cost Julius and Ethel Rosenberg their lives for revealing that classified technology to Russian agents. It was a fascinatingly informative two weeks crammed with dynamic information that I wished every American could be aware of certain aspects of the lectures. I left the lectures with a greater admiration and respect for our American Scientists who pioneered the field of Nuclear Physics and those Engineers who applied this knowledge to thermonuclear warfare for the peace and security of humankind on a global scale. Mary never asked me about the seminars and I never discussed it. I am sure that everyone now knows of their material.



Roadside Dining

I asked for and got permission to take a two weeks vacation at the end of the course. Mary and I planned this time with Sonny and Jo to take a Western States Tour. We bolted the little one wheeled trailer to the rear bumper, loaded it with camping equipment, with luggage in the trunk and left for Colorado. Their daughter Cynthia was about six months old and stayed in Foley with Mother. One night we all crowded under that trailer with sleeping bags and called it a night. Of all nights, it rained torrents, I don't

know how we stayed dry, but we did. The mountains were spectacular and we wanted to stop at every tourist trap along the way. This was now August 1953, ideal weather too.

I had been to the Pike National Forest for survival before going to the Korean Conflict and wanted them to enjoy the scenery I had. We went to Leadville and on to a remote ghost town and abandoned silver mine with an old, old cemetery at the top of the mountain. We were about to unpack and spread our sleeping bags on top of one of the warm granite slabs when we heard this emphatic voice telling us not on her life would she stay the night up there in that cemetery, especially to think of sleeping on a slab. We had a quick huddle and decided the camping trip was over and we would play tourist the rest of our vacation. We went to El Paso, Juarez. San Antonio and back to Foley. Jo was one happy mother to be back home and hold Cynthia like she would never leave her again. And she meant it too.



Scouting the Scenery

I continued to fly with the crew of Major Pendergraft on all of his flights, as well as loading on with other crews, hoping that I would like this aircraft and my seat in the

RFB. It never happened. Oh, I was given many opportunities to fly the aircraft, make take-offs and landings and I enjoyed handling that big aircraft that was so easy on the controls, but then I would have to reconcile myself that I belonged in that right forward blister, gunners position for more than a year or maybe two. I flew every time I could get a seat and log time. I logged 1062 hours of pilot time in the B-36 in the few months I was there. It was easy to do, just get on a flight and there was 20 plus hours of pilot time. To me, that was not really flying. It was a mechanical manipulation of a machine that just happened to be an airplane. The aircraft was so easy to fly and responded very slowly.

I was rapidly becoming as these men were, they had no home life. They had a crew life that fully satisfied them. I was definitely out of place. Their life pleasure was flying the most prestigious aircraft ever built and letting everyone know it. They flew over towns at low altitudes to get recognition as this was encouraged at all levels of SAC. They flew many times without a flight plan, just get it off the ground and go fly someplace so people could see that aluminum overcast and hear the rumbling drone of those six powerful reciprocal and four jet engines. With my attitude, I needed to be leaving soon.

The B36 Aircraft Commanders were admired and respected much as today's Astronauts are depicted as the hero's of American Culture. Pilot error accidents were called material or mechanical failures. Two B-36 aircraft were lost, burned on the Carswell AFB ramp, when one aircraft taxied into the other on a clear day. Brake failure. Convair built 345 of the aircraft, which was far more than the Air Force had crews to fly them. The aircraft had so many grounding problems that it probably took that many to keep up the "front" that we had aircraft all over the world all the time, keeping the peace. Air Force wide, pilots were required to fly four hours each month with a maximum of 100 hours. B-36 pilots were waived from this limitation, with pilots often logging more than 250 hours a month. I know, because I did it with encouragement during my tenure with the aircraft.

The air crewmembers as well as the ground maintenance crewmembers reveled with great pride in their prestigious social positions, but there was a dark cloud as far as prestige was concerned. The B-52 was being manufactured as fast as Boeing could produce them, but they had no crews yet to man the aircraft. The ten-year chapter of "Keeping the Peace" was rapidly drawing to a close and the B-36 was to be phased out. I saw no future for me by remaining in the B-36 program. I would always be an outsider, behind the good 'ole boys who had grown-up with the B-36, and would be the B-52 aircraft commanders. It was very obvious that this was a very tight clique and I didn't fit.

I usually went to the Personnel office about twice a week to see if any openings for a transfer were available in which I would be qualified. Alas, Eureka, and Hallelujah. Randolph AFB was opening a flight training operations for KB29 crews to train in air refueling. That was where I came from, a KB29 squadron, but one in which I had no hopes of advancement. Perhaps if I started with a new organization of Air Refueling, I would be able to develop with the organization, "do my thing" and be fulfilled in flying and home life. Mary and I agreed. I applied and was accepted as an Aircraft Commander. I explained all of my actions and personal feelings to Major Pendergraft. We communicated very easily. He concurred with me, wrote an outstanding effectiveness

report on me, marking loyalty as ‘most outstanding.’ He wished me well as I left Carswell AFB in good spirits. Mary and I were on the move again, determined to excel in this promising duty position. We had no idea where we would end up as an assignment.

When we checked into Randolph AFB for duty, we were told that I would begin training the next week. That pleased me. I prayed for inheriting men of good character and pleasing personalities, that we may form ourselves into being a close knit crew with a strong commitment to our personal families, and to the duties before us. I instantly liked every crewmember that came to me that day of crew assignments. My copilot was a captain who had just finished flight school. During the course of training, my assigned Instructor pilot said I was ready to be qualified but that I must complete x number of landings and take-offs. I asked that he give the copilot as many landings and take-offs as possible. He did. When the instruction was completed, the captain copilot said he refused to fly for a 1st. Lt., which was my rank then. No reasoning would work for his arrogance. He was adamant and was placed on the RIF list, that is Reduction In Force roster of undesirable officers. They have no violating offense, just a reduction in force, but it is still a sure out. I gave up on him and I was glad because 2nd Lt. John Cunningham took his place. John was a prince of a gentleman and I pushed him hard as he made Aircraft Commander in less than a year with me, with only 400 hours flying time. 750 hours as a pilot was the required amount of pilot time, but John was a superb pilot and commander.

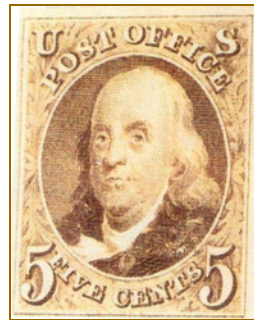


Backyard Dining

The flight orientation course at Randolph was only four weeks in duration. Furnished rentals were almost non-existent. However; Mary found us a tiny little house, almost a playhouse, 14’ x 16’ with no interior walls, except for the bathroom. A radio operator awaiting assignment, Bill Vandiver and his charming, petite wife June, lived in the other little house in the back yard of a retired Air Force couple in the community of Schertz, about three miles from Randolph. We had some really

nice joint suppers, hot dogs and hamburgers on the lawn between our little furnished one room houses. We learned to keep everything in its place and cabinet doors closed. It was a procedure or ritual to do so and it was fun.

I stopped in the little community of Schertz, settled by German Immigrants, to get a haircut. The barber, Mr. Otto, was a stamp and coin collector, claiming he wanted to divest himself of all his stamps and concentrate on coins. Mary and I had been somewhat serious stamp collectors a few years earlier. This shrewd old fellow rekindled my gullible interests and I tried to buy everything he had for the next three weeks I was at Randolph. He had collected many, many collectors



Copies of the First US Stamps

collections of hundred of thousands of US and foreign stamps. Every day on the way to our tiny little home, I would stop into the Barbershop and carry a box or so of stamps

home. We would go through those stamps until the wee hours of the morning. We found many valuable stamps among the collections we bought from him. The day before we were to leave, he had brought a huge box of stamps saying that these were the last of his stamps. I gave him our haggled price of money and told him that he had cleaned me out, and I needed to borrow from him to get out of town. Mr. Otto laughed in that deep guttural German laugh and handed me a folder of Indian head coins, a complete series of all Indian head cents, gave me a big bear hug and wished me well. He gave Mary an antique platter. I sent him a Christmas card, with a response that he had died. Through the years we have realized the treasure trove of stamps we had bought.

I was very pleased with every crewmember. We got our orders to report to the 506th Air Refueling Squadron, Dow AFB, Bangor, Maine, on or before 2 January 1954. I wanted the crewmembers to meet the wives involved before we left Randolph AFB. I made arrangements with the NCO club for Mary and me to host a dinner party for our crew. No one partook of anything any stronger than wine and we had a very nice Christmas meal and fellowship. We did not see each other again until we met in Bangor, Dow AFB.

The moving company was holding our furniture pending a destination from Randolph AFB. We had nothing to move except our linens and luggage and of course Prissy and Tigua. That Tigua really “cut a shine” as we came through Biloxi, Miss. well after dark. The streetlights made shadows from the front seat to the back seat. Tigua had a leaping good time chasing those shadows. We laughed so hard we had to stop. We got to Montgomery late that evening and they were waiting for us. It is so refreshing to have a family of love as we spent time in Montgomery and Foley, knowing we would be gone a long time before we could see them again. Mary never got to see her father again.

We left Randolph AFB with orders to report to Dow AFB, Bangor, Maine sometime before 2 January 1954. The Allied Moving and Storage Co. had been storing our furniture since it was picked up at Ft. Worth, two months earlier. All of our clothing, linens and some household wares, we carried in our two cars. We spent the Christmas holidays in Montgomery with a few days in Foley. We also had dog in one car and cat in the other. Professor Eidson and I had fun mapping out a route to Bangor after we found where it was. We planned that trip for five days. Our holiday was too soon ended when we realized we must leave. All of that planning was for naught because before we got out of Montgomery, we decided to draw a straight line from Montgomery to Bangor and follow that line as closely as we could, even on secondary highways. That was a very bad decision as we got into heavy snowstorms in Pennsylvania, got lost a few times and got separated once. Now that was a panic for the both of us. Mary had our cash money, but did not know where she was. I knew where we were but did not have any money. We both returned to the spot we had last seen each other, and we found ourselves. We didn't have a plan for being separated or lost, but that became our plan and we were careful.

It was a happy day when we finally arrived in Bangor and found a Miss Nickerson who rented us a small cabin along the Penobscot River. She laughed and laughed when she saw Mary wearing some thin clear rain goulashes. She immediately took her downtown and she



got boots. Mrs. Nickerson was our local Mom for the two years we were there. Mary was always the house seeker and she did a good job. She found two, one-bedroom apartments upstairs over an Osteopath's office and a Dentist's office. She put a deposit on both of them, one for us and one for John and Sally Cunningham. John was to be my copilot. Housing was extremely limited. We all jumped for joy that Mary had found these apartments in walking distance to downtown shopping and grocery stores. Bangor was not a large town so everything was very convenient.

There were fifteen aircrews and fifteen KB-29s to form the 506th Air Refueling Squadron. The "K" meant that the aircraft was modified to accommodate internal fuel tanks in the bombays and a telescoping flying boom for refueling bombers and fighters. It was an interesting flying experience. Our mission was to refuel B-47 aircraft returning from Europe and had missed their refueling over Greenland, and to provide training for the wing of 45 new F-84F aircraft assigned to Dow AFB in the skills of air-to-air refueling. When we were called to refuel an incoming B-47, it was always an emergency as we were their last resort for fuel. We never missed, sometimes close but we always got to them before they would get the cold icy North Atlantic "out of fuel splash."

It was without debate that Sgt. Charles Cade, our crew Boom Operator, was recognized to be the best air refueling boom operator in the Air Force. Our crew was T 05 and pilots of the F-84F and RF-84F would often call for our crew to give them the practice they needed. It was my job to hold the KB-29 very stable and at a constant speed during the refueling. I took this very serious and Cade took his job even more serious to often "lock" the receiving aircraft to his boom until adequately refueled. Capt. Hank DeGuc, navigator, was a B-24 navigator during WW II, flying rough missions over Rumania, Italy and Germany. Sgt. Gerald Seitz, radio operator from Cape Gerardo, Missouri, was able to reach B-47 crews, often more than 500 miles out who were sometimes at the stage of despair because of their low fuel and were unable to reach Newfoundland.

He gave them comfort that Crew TO-5 was on the way with a load of fuel for them that we couldn't use. We used 115-130 octane aviation fuel and pumped JP-4 to jet aircraft. Now, the Flight Engineer was T/Sgt. Harvey W. Smith, known as "Hog Wild." His flight engineer experience had been mostly in B-50 aircraft. He had heard about me from my friend Marshall Glisson of our Korean days of flying together. He arranged for a transfer and presented himself to me when we first got to Dow AFB that he was going to be my flight engineer. He was brazen, but he was good. I accepted him on a trial basis. He knew the aircraft and engines thoroughly and nursed those engines like they were his personal property. I liked that. He brought us home with all engines churning many times because he knew just how to care for those 2, 200 horsepower radial, Wright 3350 cubic inch engines. We had "our own" aircraft, meaning we were the only ones to fly our assigned aircraft 826. He kept those engines in perfect tune, spending much of his free time in fine-tuning, checking the deicing boots, all systems and reading the aircraft manuals.

Lt. John Cunningham, from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was a recent graduate from flight school and had less than 200 hours of flying. He learned fast and I pushed him, to give him experience in making every other take off and landing. I put him up to be an Aircraft

Commander with only 500 hours and he passed his evaluations with superior ratings. Many other copilots wanted on my crew to get the training and fun of flying the KB-29, because so many of the other aircraft commanders did not want to lose their copilots after they had trained them. Some hogged all of the take-offs and landings and their poor copilots never got any flying experience. They just warmed the seat. I felt sorry for them.

Tigua, the big yellow cat, went meandering one day and we could not find him for about a week. It snowed one night while he was gone and we were able to track him with the fresh tracks he left in the light fresh snow. Oh he was a traveling cat for sure. He visited several houses in the neighborhood and we followed his tracks to a particular house about two blocks away. When we asked about the cat, they denied seeing the cat, but about twenty minutes after we left, we watched as they threw Tigua out the front door. We retrieved him. He had gained about five pounds during his adventuresome treks about the neighborhood for a week. He would indicate that he wanted to go outside because he refused to use a litter box in the house. If it was snowing or snow on the ground, he would dig around in the snow and get into his position but the moment he felt the snow on his bottom, he would leap right up with a mournful “meow, meow.” I am sure he was constipated but he refused to go in the snow or frozen ground. We went to one of those sand and salt piles along the streets where they used the mixture to put on icy streets, and got a box of the mixture. I used it for Tigua’s toilet soil and he was satisfied. I felt a sense of humiliation when I had to publicly shovel snow to clear a space for a cat relief station.

The 45 fighter pilots at Dow AFB, flying the new model F-84F with the ‘slab tail’ needed to become Combat Ready and they had not been able to fly locally because of bad weather. The entire organization was moved to McCoy AFB, Orlando and they asked that TO-5 be sent down there to give them the refueling experience and proficiency they needed to complete the requirements. We went down there with pride, flying day and night with only a few hours a day for sleep, for five days. They catered our meals to the flight line and gave us a big party when it was over. George McQueen was exiting the aft-pressurized compartment to hop down on the ramp and help with refueling. He forgot to remove his wedding band. As he swung himself out, his band caught on the aluminum doorframe and his finger hung by the tendon. He was rushed to the small military hospital and then to the civilian hospital. They did a wonderful job to restore the use of that finger. George flew with me for another two years and went on to become a full bird Colonel and Base Commander of



My Crew in Air Refueling F-84F

Blytheville AFB, Arkansas. We received honors, three cases of champagne and a commendation for a job well done in providing them with the needed training. About a month later, the Officers Club and NCO club there at Dow AFB needed to restock their

liquor storages. Our crew was selected to fly down to Puerto Rico to make a whiskey run. The bomb bays were cleared of the refueling tanks and loading platforms were installed. The Capt. representing the clubs bought literally hundreds of cases of rum and whiskey. Hog Wild Smith, the flight engineer and I kept a record of the weight and we had about 36,000 pounds of spirits in those bomb bays. It was a fun three days to be down there. I went to the Bacardi distillery and had a tour. I had a tour of the Old Spanish Fort there on the coast. We flew over the “Bermuda Triangle” just for fun. I was given a bottle that had four compartments, with different liquors and a glass stopper for each compartment.

A contingency of the F-84F aircraft and pilots were selected to perform a feat not yet tried. They were to fly en masse, non-stop from Dow AFB, Maine to Seville, Spain with two air refuelings. This was dubbed FA II after the similar record set in 1952 by the fighter pilots at Biggs AFB in crossing the Pacific non-stop, called FP I. I was honored to have been the only pilot to have flown in both of these historic ocean-crossing events by a mass formation of single engine jets. We flew from Bermuda, refueling six aircraft.

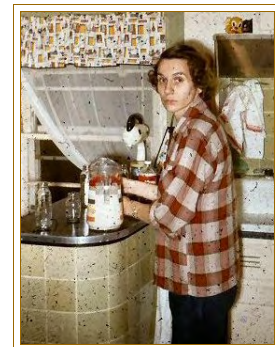
Our crew was selected to fly maintenance test flights at Oklahoma City for a two months duty. We were flown down via a C-54, but coming back was another story. The American Airlines were on strike and we were given tickets and meal passes for a train ride to Bangor. We not only had our luggage but also parachutes, survival kits, dinghies and other flight equipment. This quickly added up to be a first class chore in the making. The train stopped for a 15-minute liquor-buying spree as we entered Illinois from dry Missouri. Some of the crewmen and the two crew chiefs settled down, drunk and asleep after that stop. We had to change trains in Boston to the Aroostook and New England. Taxis would not haul our gear so I called on the Navy Recruiting office to help us. That they did. They sent a Shore Patrol paddy wagon. Oh No we groaned, but we gladly accepted their transportation, even as they closed and latched the back doors with bars.

One day our friend M/Sgt. Marshall Glisson showed up as a surprise. He had managed a transfer out of the B-50 organization at Biggs AFB, after the pilots went to sleep and the aircraft simply made an “unscheduled landing”; landing gear up and engines set at cruise, on a New Mexico mesa. Everyone survived. He was offered a transfer to the SAC base of his choice, and here he was. I wanted him as our flight engineer but I couldn’t just push Hog Wild away. I was in a pickle. I talked to the Commander and convinced him that Glisson would make an outstanding NCOIC, supervising or coordinating with all of the Flight Engineers. In short order, he recognized the merits of leadership by M/Sgt. Glisson and made him coordinator and advisor of all the enlisted men of our 506th squadron. He was immediately promoted to the highest grade an enlisted man could achieve, Senior Master Sergeant. This grade was new and we had to write the Pentagon to get stripes for this new rank. The job position was not an authorized position then, but it soon was.



Eddy-3 Days Old

On 18 October 1954, God sent us a blessed gift in the form of our firstborn, a son that Mary named Charles and I named Eidsen. Oh My, how that baby had ‘cradle cap’ and we didn’t know what to do about it except that Mary used



Three Days Later

boxes of corn starch and frequent scalp baths. While he was being born at the base hospital with a black surgeon attending, a raging hurricane was headed up the Atlantic coast with forecasts to do damage inland in Maine. I called Professor Eidson and talked to the family that Mary and Baby were doing fine. He was so

pleased to have the Eidson name to live on in his memory. There was only one male with Eidson to carry on the name. He was an unmarried nephew named Thomas Eidson, Jr. living in McAllen, Texas. We busied ourselves that day and night preparing the aircraft to be evacuated to Wright/Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio. I went by to see Mary and Eddy and to call Dad Eidson that they were doing well. His speech was elation.



When we landed in Ohio, the Operations Officer, Major Ketron, we called him Pa Kettle to his back, met me at the airplane and told me that my father had died. I laughed, thinking it was a joke

Eddy, 3 months old

because he was always doing some of his Tennessee hillbilly pranks. When I realized it was Dad Eidson he was talking about, I requested that our crew be granted permission to fly to Maxwell AFB, Montgomery for a short visit and we would return to Dow AFB when the others returned. He and the Commander, deliberated about two hours, I think they were watching me for emotions and making a lot of phone calls. After much deliberation, they finally told me that I could not take the crew and aircraft. I was hurt in their decision and it took some time to eventually realize that perhaps they were not the ones that made the decision. About a year later, the Commander told me that he had wanted to let me take the flight to Maxwell at Montgomery, but he was overruled by SAC Hq. at Offutt AFB, Omaha, Nebraska.

Our crew was constantly being called on to fly to places all over the Eastern US to put our shiny aircraft on static display and conduct tours through the aircraft. We would periodically buff the surface of the aircraft and kept it immaculately clean. Seitz had scrounged some carpet remnants from a downtown carpet dealer and we floored the flight deck and aft-pressurized deck with it. We were proud and honored to be called on to do this, representing ourselves, our squadron and our Air Force.



Strategic Air Commands Finest Refueling Crew

In all of my years of flying, I never had an accident or dented an aircraft. I got a call at home about 2:00 AM that a B-47 was in trouble with a missed refueling. They were at a point of no return to get to Reykjavik, Iceland and were unable to reach the coast of Newfoundland. This was not routine but it happened too often. Without our refueling it was to be a splash. We had to scramble within 20 minutes. When I got to the aircraft, my crew was intact except John Cunningham, copilot. He was really sick. They had a copilot

for me who was admittedly drunk. The Commander told me to take him and let him sleep it off on the flight deck, that I didn't need a copilot anyway, but I had to have one aboard for the record. I put Lt Larry Gates, our new navigator in the right seat and departed. Seitz contacted the B-47 Pilot, assuring him that we would make our rendezvous and refueling. It was a matter of refuel or an icy cold splash, and all took our work seriously.

McQueen's radar locates the aircraft and directs the rendezvous. We fly as high as we can, 34,000 feet, and direct a rendezvous using the radar as the locator. We fly a head-on path to closure and when we get within 100 miles we turn 180o and fly his flight direction, in a slight descent, picking up speed to 280 mph. The B-29 is redlined at a maximum speed of 320mph. The receiver soon flies into position as Cade probes the receptacle with that flying boom and fuel is transferred at a very high rate under high pressure. I had no copilot during the flight. After landing, I taxied very carefully into the parking area with no copilot to clear the right wing. I got Gates back into the seat and he was not used to knowing about wing tip clearances. We parked the aircraft about three feet apart at the wingtips. We used the reverse propellers to carefully back the aircraft out of the parking spots. The ground crew was signaling for me to proceed. I set the brakes, unstrapped myself, and got out of the seat to visually clear the right wingtip. It appeared close but clear. I taxied forward to park the aircraft. The aircraft was light now that we were empty and the parked aircraft was loaded and sat about three inches lower than our wingtip. Our under side tip slightly grazed the top of the wingtip of the other aircraft. It was a small repair to straighten the dent, but I felt that my safety record had been tarnished forever. It was grateful that it wasn't recorded or reported outside the squadron.

Larry Gates, our Navigator, had become uneasy that their neighborhood might not be the safest for his wife Marie and their newborn son, so he bought her a big magnum pistol and took her to the firing range for practice in using it. She kept it on her bedside nightstand. One night we had flown late and got home about 2:00am. Larry didn't have his house key but he knew of a window he could get into the house through. When he got through the window and straightened up.....he was looking down the business end of the barrel of that big pistol shaking uncontrollably in Marie's hands. He was so petrified scared that he couldn't say a word. They said they just stood there shaking and speechless for several moments. He took the gun back to the hockshop, told the dealer the story and after a big long laugh, he gave Larry a full refund. She enrolled in self defense classes.

I belonged to the Flying Club and had an Air Force nurse as a student on her first flight. In the descent of the Aeronica Champion, the carburetor ice control did not work and the engine quit from a case of carburetor icing, starving the engine of airflow through the carburetor. I set it down in a cow pasture, let the ice melt and we took off again back to Dow AFB. She wanted me to continue as her instructor pilot. She soloed in 8 hours time.

Mary and I enjoyed fishing in Maine. We both liked the cane pole and cork type fishing. We found an out of the way boat rental place and rented a boat, loaded it with our goodies, snacks and fishing gear. We didn't have to go very far to find a little stream of the darkest water I had ever seen flowing. We baited and threw in. No sooner than it hit the water, a nice sized fish was hooked. They looked like Bream to us. We fished until we

were tired, throwing back everything except the big ones we would keep for about three meals. This became our favorite fishing place. I liked to fly fish too. The little streams hardly wide enough for a fish to turn around in would often have a big Brook Trout, hungry for the lure that I would snag him on. They had no scales, only a kind of slime. Really nice eating, sometimes on a fire we had already built, just waiting for lunch. A friend showed us how to fish for Lemming. Now that was interesting. The little streams would be teeming with the things so that it was possible to just dip them up. With the fire going hot with coals, and a fry pan with hot oil, just cut their heads off and one slice to clean the insides and into the hot oil for three minutes or so. They were the size of sardines and were so delicious and crispy. The only problem was that when it was lemming season, it was also no-see-em season too. Oh how they could bite and you never saw them, they were so tiny to leave such a welt and sting. They also had those biting, blood sucking Black Flies. But for the true fisher person, the thrill of fishing in Maine was an experience to remember. It took heavy equipment to fish for Pike and Mackerel.

The winter months in Bangor were happy times for evening home entertainment. We had a group of friends of native Bangorite, Mainiacs that we would have a meal with, rotating among the couple's homes. After a delicious meal we would play parlor games. Some of these were so silly and yet so much fun. These were hard working couples that had lived their lives in the harsh winters of Maine and thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship with friends. We were a rather close-knit group who enjoyed playing these sometimes rather animated parlor games and tricks like cutting out folded paper dolls and snowflakes, limbo, charades, mimes, gossip, animal - vegetable or mineral, and those kinds of things, acting like juveniles perhaps. They told us that they did not like to make friends with Air Force persons because just when they got to be good friends, they would be transferred far away and never come back. I think they liked us because we talked "Southerese" and they would encourage Mary to talk some more, especially to say the word Alabama, as they would say "Alarbamer" and 'Ersters' for oysters. Evenings with them was fun.

There was a next house neighbor who often sat at his window, pulling back the lace curtain to see what I was doing. One day I was having difficulty getting traction to back out of the slight incline of the parking space, due to the snow and ice. I went into the apartment to get a cup of coffee. When I came out there were two sets of folding traction mats behind the car. I looked over in his direction and saw the lace curtain close. It did the trick. I easily got the car out and onto the street. When I returned the gripper mats, I could not get a response so I left them at his doorway. The following week, I forced my way upon him to keep knocking on his door. We exchanged pleasantries and my gratitude and we became good friends. When I shoveled snow, he would bring two glasses of warm Cognac out on a silver tray and we drank it together laughing and joking. We had taken groceries and food to the church for thanksgiving gifts to the needy. The Pastor scorned us saying that there were no needy persons in his church; take our silly Southern Customs and food some other place.



Snow on the Roof

He had said one thing I remembered, “That Northern people liked blacks in general and mistrusted them personally, while Southern people mistrusted the blacks in general and loved them personally.” The American Baptist church attendees were ‘cold’ and indifferent’ and we found no love or Spiritual Nourishment there, even as we tried so hard to do so. We loved to ride the rural trails and country roads basking in the splendor of the autumn leaves and the grandeur of the mountains in the fall. Winters were adventures in a wonderland. Mary’s sister Martha visited us and we toured Arcadia Natl. Park. She became really, really ill after she ate a bowl of New England Clam Chowder.

We spent time visiting the old city of Quebec, Bar Harbor and stood in awe at the cold Atlantic pounding a surf against the rocky coastline. Our favorite lobster restaurant was Lucerne Inn, east of Bangor. We finally found a fishing stream that we could catch a boatload of bream with cane pole and line. I learned fly-fishing and how to tie the flies. It was a great sport to catch those brook trout that had no scales. The old man behind the lace curtain taught me how to make fishing flies. We caught lemming when they were running and cooked them whole, right there by the small streams they flooded. We caught Pickerel and Pike and enjoyed the native foods. Chickens were slaughtered, picked of their feathers except the wing tips and hung out in the open air for sale, complete with their insides. That chicken was definitely not a good flavor nor odor to us.



Our crew went on a three-day survival camping lark back in the boonies at Pickerel Lake. Sgt. Martin was a native “Maniac” and an official guide. He took us out to the remote lake. He taught us how to cook porcupine three feet under the ground. It tasted like it had been seasoned with pine resin. He had taken an Air Force truck to supply and gotten old parachutes and outdated survival kits. He then went by the mess hall and loaded it with steaks, eggs, bacon, bread and all kinds of goodies. We ate well for our three-day lark. Seitz borrowed the base 16 mm movie camera with a box filled with reels of color film. Arrangements were made for a C-47 to fly-by low and slow and drop us a ‘care package’. It was a big box of candy bars. We really enjoyed Sgt Martin, sitting around the campfire until late at night listening to him tell of his adventures in the North Woods. When the film was returned developed, Seitz knew how to splice it, put sound to it and make a reel of movie film for viewing. The local TV station ran it twice. I received a letter of commendation from the Base Commander for the activities of setting a pilot program for teaching survival in the North Woods and for the film, which was well received by the residents of Bangor.

We were all excited to be going to Montgomery and Foley for Christmas 1954, to see our families and show-off our always smiling and handsome baby. We had just bought a new Chrysler Windsor in Old Town, a few miles north of Bangor. We found on that trip that it took one quart of oil every 100 miles. We felt like we were broke from buying oil on that 2,800-mile trip. We packed the car full and packed our little one-wheel bumper hitched Sears trailer with baby things. That one-wheeled thing had stranded us once in Louisiana.

We didn't really trust it but it did haul that cursed playpen and baby bed along with piles of other things. As we were crossing the George Washington Bridge in New York, in the left lane of eight fast moving lanes of cars and trucks, wouldn't you know it. The trailer broke. We were ever so careful to eased to the right lane and against the railing. We dragged that thing to the end of the bridge and all of a sudden, there was a wrecker waiting for us. They unbolted it; picked it up and said follow them. We did. We were taken to a garage and they had it welded and back together in about two hours. It would have been a shorter time but they took a pizza and beer break. I had never eaten pizza. They shared with us. It was good. We even ordered more and shared with them. They were a happy group of workers and charged us a very reasonable fee for their services.

A tropical disturbance had brought torrential rains to the Atlantic Coast, flooding New York. The New Jersey Turnpike was closed. The men told us where there was a motel nearby. We went there and paid the double price for the room. With the rain coming horizontal and wind blowing about 60mph, I unpacked the playpen from under the canvass. Oh how I hated that playpen. We set it up and put Eddy, 3 months old, into it. We were exhausted and collapsed onto the lumpy bed, amid the howling winds and rain beating on the door and window. Sometime during the night, we were awakened by a patty, patty that sounded like playing in water. Eddy was grinning, lying on his tummy, arms through the vertical rails of the playpen and was playing with both hands in about two inches of water. After a good bath for him, we all three piled into the bed for a fretful night, anxious to leave that place. We spent Christmas 1954 in Montgomery, 13 E.South St., and were saddened that Dad Eidson never got to see the grandson he had longed to have for so long. Mother Eidson was always such a joyful person; I cherished the moments we could sit, while she told of her childhood days in Clarke Co. Alabama. She was an unequalled lady of charming dignity.



Mother Eidson

We had a wee bit of a hassle, but Chrysler Corp. sent us a new 1955 Chrysler New Yorker Deluxe Sedan with the newly designed Hemi-Head 300 horsepower engine. This was to replace "The Lemon" 1954 Chrysler Windsor oil drinking automobile. That 1955 designed car won the National Championship racing that year. They overcompensated us by more than two thousand dollars in cash value in giving us this fine automobile.

We received orders that our organization and all of those F-84F and RF-84F aircraft would be transferred to Bergstrom AFB, Austin, and Texas. 1955 The Commander, Major Gerhardt Rubinoff Abendhoff, who had relatives that flew in the German Luftwaffe, assigned me to go in advance and secure housing for all who wished to rent or buy. I found two young enterprising men, Nash Phillips and Jim Copus, who were trying to get a housing development started. They gave me floor plans and prices with artist sketches. I sent this back to Maine and immediately got a response with \$100 deposits for 28 houses. Mary and I bought their best house, a four bedroom with about 1,600 square feet for \$14,200. They had those houses ready in four weeks. Phenomenally, I also got

bachelor housing for those wishing to live on base and apartment and house listings for those wishing to rent. It was pleasant to make friends both on and off base.

I had driven down in our new Chrysler New Yorker. I stayed in the Bachelor Officers Quarters for two weeks before returning to Maine. There was a Brigadier General Davies who lived in a special room of the BOQ. I parked the Chrysler in the covered garage next to his Cadillac convertible with air conditioning and everything else that could be put on one of those cars. One night in the club, he boastfully challenged me to a race. I didn't want that but he insisted, all the while trying to get up bet money on the outcome of the race. It was set for 9:00 AM the next morning. Some of the Officers pulled me to the aside and told me that he pulls this stunt with every new incoming officer that has a sports car. They said that no one ever beats him because months earlier, a young Lt. with a Jaguar beat him and he was gone the next day. They warned me to be careful of him. Major James H. (Jim) Doolittle, Jr., the eldest son of the famed General James H. Doolittle, lived in the room next to me and was one of the ones telling me not to do it.

B/Gen. Davies, Base Commander, was married to Gen. Curtis LeMay's sister, but was separated. It was said that Gen. Curtiss LeMay protected him. Gen. Davies had recently violated a restricted flight area on a flight he was taking in a B-26, that only he was to fly. He had his secretary on board to Las Vegas. Scrambled fighters forced him to land and the General LeMay bailed him out of that very serious situation. The next morning, I tried to weasel out of the race, but he was having fun goading me, that I was chicken. That did it. I was determined to beat him. His car was so loaded with oversized dual alternators, dual batteries, an oversized alternator and junk to power all of his radios; it must have robbed torque to the automatic transmission. Anyway, I followed him out to the end of the runway, assuming he was under tower control. I checked anyway and the runways were clear. We lined up side by side and I kept an eye on him for the signal. He had that cigar in his face with a smirk. When he dropped his hand, we were off and running. He took a short early lead for about two hundred feet. The Chrysler's 300-horse power hemi-head engine came to power and the last I saw of him in the rear view mirror was that he had turned off the runway at the 3,000-foot exit. I continued accelerating until it indicated 143mph. I slowed and turned off at the 6,000-foot runway exit. I returned to the BOQ garage and parked. I saw him two days later and he ignored me.

Jim Doolittle and I enjoyed several evenings at the club over dinner and two beers. He told me many things about his family and how he despised the name Doolittle because it seemed to him that everyone teased him of riding his father's coattails, and that he was a 'Do-nothing'. Three days before I was to leave to return to Maine, we had our usual dinner with two beers and were about to go to the BOQ when he was verbally accosted by a group of officers being very rude in their comments to him and about him. I got him out of there and we went to our rooms. That night he committed suicide with his service 45 cal. pistol. The next day, I was asked to pack his personal belongings in boxes that were provided. I had packed Johnny's belongings at Randolph as a cadet and three person's personal effects in Kadena AFB, Okinawa. I knew to discard items that may be offensive to the family. I found nothing to discard. I packed and sealed his personal

effects. The day I left, I briefly met his younger brother John, who came for the boxes and to escort his brother's body home which took a lot of courage and I admired him.

I returned to Bangor. We paid our respects and goodbyes to friends there. The days passed too quickly and it was time for us to be on the move again to our new home in Austin. We packed our cars and the movers collected our furniture at our upstairs apartment at 142 N. Pine St. We had a lot of wonderful memories to take with us and cherish forever. Perhaps our fondest thoughts were that this is where Eddy was born.

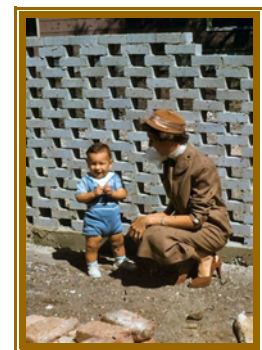
The house on 5203 Knight Circle, Austin Texas was ready when we arrived. The ceramic tile, paints and wooden floors were as we had requested. Mary soon turned the house into our home and we had very nice neighbors. Our neighbor, Mr. Turner and his delightfully



charming southern hospitality type wife Myree, were so wonderfully nice to us. He had been Head Warden at the State Prison at Huntsville, Texas for many years of his 42-year career. They invited us to be their guests at the annual Texas State Prison Rodeo in Huntsville. It was without a doubt, the wildest and most reckless disregard for personal safety event I have ever seen. I'm telling you it was wild from the get-go as about ten inmates came bucking into the arena astraddle wild Brahma bulls and the crowd went wild. It was that way for two hours. We stayed a few days with them at their beautiful and secluded log cabin home retreat in the tall Southern Pine forest a few miles from the prison. Eddy was with us and really got into the cheering section. They were perfect hosts. We were honored to be their friends. The rodeo was really entertaining. Mr. Turner was called upon to address the crowd of more than 75,000 and offer a prayer for the safety of the inmates and non-injury to the animals. He had such a warm and caring spirit and a voice to convey his message. Many, many of the prisoners came to the reviewing stand where we were, and shook Mr. Turner's hand. Security was very tight as three armed guards stood by the Turners, the governor and us. We felt we were very safe.

Another memorable neighbor was Nancy Brady. She came over every morning to have coffee with Mary. She was an animal lover. She once caught several baby skunks down by the stream and nursed them until the animal shelter could come and get them a few days later. We did not care for her husband, as he seemed to ignore his lovely, talented and gracious new bride. He was seldom home.

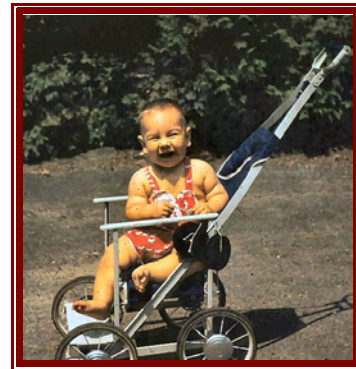
I found out what a good gardener Mary was, as she and Mr. Turner swapped their garden vegetables. She grew okra, eight feet tall, until



past Thanksgiving. A creek ran through the back of our property. I made a pool area and installed a water pump to water her garden and the lawn. She worked her garden every day in that rich black soil. One day she came in from the garden, she wore boots for working in the damp garden soil, declaring, “that black stuff will certainly stick with you when it’s wet, if you will stick with it when it’s dry”. We built a unique cinder brick wall, fencing in the back yard for Eddy but the wall was for Prissy mostly. The big bad wolf came as a strong wind came one afternoon, sending Prissy into yapping fits. The wall had blown down. She was a good watchdog and yet so playful. She was a Miniature Sheltie and loved to round up the cows in a pasture behind our back yard. The owner never complained about Prissy daily rounding up the herd.

I bought a Cushman motor scooter and mounted a box on the back to haul my flight helmet and stuff. All of the crew had scooters. We used these as transportation around the flight ramp and to and from work. They were very handy. We sometimes played “Scooter Soccer” on the grassy area because there were a lot of spills. Our crew, T 05, was known as the undefeatable winner over the other soccer crew teams. Just a little bragging pride.

We enjoyed visiting some of the notorious gangster towns, like Round Rock, Old Dime Box, Ft. Parker and other sites and places of note. We went on a lot of picnics and outings. We packed our picnic basket, fishing equipment and Eddy with his stroller and went to the little town of Bastrop for fishing at an isolated place on the Colorado River I had spotted from the air. We unpacked and strolled the short distance to the banks of the river. I was about to make my first cast when I noticed an Elderberry bush that was overhanging into the river had an unusual movement to it. I walked nearer and saw that the bush was loaded with entwined snakes, as well as the other bushes. Probably water moccasins, but I didn’t hesitate to check. Mary noticed the Elderberry bushes next to her were loaded with snakes also. Without exaggeration, I do believe those bushes and the ground beneath them had hundreds of writhing and entangled snakes. We both started yelling snakes at about the same time. She left everything, dragging that stroller with Eddy uphill to the car as fast as she could. I grabbed the tackle box, blanket and picnic basket, leaving the fishing poles and was trudging right behind her. We made a gangster like getaway. We were told that it was their breeding season and they gathered like that by the hundreds. The love of science in Mary often likes to examine creatures and nature’s oddities, but not this time.



The Glissons were with us in Austin and we enjoyed many outings with them and their red haired daughter Allie, as we had in Maine. On one of our wilderness picnics in Texas, Glis had made a neat little pile of damp sticks atop a handful of dry sage grass to start our campfire. The grass burned out but the sticks wouldn’t catch afire. I unscrewed the cap to the can and started pouring gasoline onto the sticks. OOoops. There must have been a spark down in there somewhere because I saw the flame coming up the stream of pouring gasoline. I flung the can hard as I could and before it hit the ground, KaBoom. No more gasoline can but we had little fires to put out all over the place. As for the campfire, there

was now a stick or two burning and we nursed it along with dry grass until we had a roaring campfire to cook steaks and potatoes. Theirs was a good friendship we treasured.

The summer of 1955 was pleasant as we adjusted to Austin. Mother Eidson came via the train from Montgomery to Austin to spend some time with us. She was such a delight. Everything was always just right for her. She never complained about anything. Eddy loved her so much. She spoke in soft tones and in immaculate speech. She was truly a Southern Genteel Lady with cultural refinements and was of a brilliant mind in matters of discussion ranging from politics, religion to domestic and household every day life. She faithfully wrote her congressman and others as she so wisely expressed herself to them.

Glisson and I went to an isolated area near Austin where an event of hounds chased a rabbit about 50 yards before the speedy and shifting courses rabbit was able to race and dart under a net to safety. The rabbit always won except once. Gory Viscious That was my signal to leave. The rabbit chase was a big sport for some there in Austin. A man had built a special series of nets in a field about five acres in size and this was where their Saturday afternoon cruelties and wagering took place. I have never understood the sport in such events, including Cock Fighting, and Pit Bulldog fighting nor even Boxing.

In December of 1955, we were sent to Anchorage, Alaska for 89 days on what the Air Force calls Temporary Duty. Any duty more than 90 days is considered permanent duty and costs a lot of money for the AF to ship personal belongings, so we had two tours up there on this 89 day tour of duty thing. It was an easy assignment, arriving there uneventfully with our 15 KB-29s and allied equipment. It had been an eye-opener flight as I looked down into those rugged mountains with no vegetation along the flight course from Regina, Canada to Anchorage. Those mountains were bare of vegetation and looked like mammoth needles. There was no way seemingly, to get in or out of there in the event of a bailout. It was a lifeless, desolate place. I think God was angry when he created that part of His world. It is absolute desolation with no practical access if it had ores etc. I have flown over deserts, oceans, jungles and wildernesses of snow and ice, but this by far seemed to be the most treacherous area I had ever seen. I don't think any form of a rescue could be made from a downed aircraft there. I have never read of an accident there either.

Mary took Eddy, Prissy and Tigua to Montgomery to spend the holidays with family. The day we landed, the headlines of the daily newspaper read "Moose Invade Anchorage." They had come down from the Mountains in search of grassy lawns as the first snow of the season struck with a fury in the mountains. Moose are friendly, but not domesticated.

Crews collapsed the fuel tank in the aft Bombay and installed an equipment platform. This is where we carried our scooters and all of that heavy clothing we were issued, Parkas, Pants, mittens, caps and equipment. Our mission was to provide air refueling for aircraft conducting surveillance missions about the Russian and Alaskan borders. Sometimes it got the Americans quite testy as Russian pilots often baited the Americans. We sat around the club a lot and listened to those fighter pilots tell their tall tales of how they would make a pass at an encroaching Russian MIG, and it would leave. It seemed that all of the fighter pilots had the experience of the Russian MIGs to pull alongside with

them, wave, fly formation awhile, give a thumbs up signal, turn on their afterburners and pull away. Maybe it was a way to say, "Hey You American, Watch me go."

One night shortly after arriving at Anchorage, we were on a night navigational training mission. We flew 600 miles southeasterly along the Alaskan Chain with Gates, the navigator, using celestial navigation to reach his target. He was good. On the return trip, it was McQueen's turn to do radar navigation back to Eielson AFB, Anchorage. We knew of an active volcano and we saw it at a distance on the way outbound south. We wanted to get a closer look at it on the way back. George McQueen could close his radar log for the few minutes, as we would circle the volcano. He would then continue his log and radar navigation on to Anchorage. It erupted every eleven minutes spewing very spectacular molten lava perhaps 500 feet into the air. The sky would really light up when it erupted. It reminded me of the nights back in York Mt. when the steel mills of Bessemer would light up the sky when they poured the steel. I had planned as to how we could do the circle about the volcano with everyone out of their seats and get to the windows on the right side. Precisely on time we were in position at two thousand feet above the volcano as it began its eruption. It was ever so spectacular. I was the only one strapped into a seat and I couldn't see the entire shower of red lava. I had computed everything but the wind and heat factor. As the KB-29 flew directly into the blown heat of the eruption, the aircraft became uncontrollable. I think we actually rolled the aircraft as everything went upside down and into the ceiling and back onto the decks. So did the crewmembers. It was dark and I had no reference and the instruments had all tumbled. I next saw the nose full of red-hot lava and pulled on the wheel as hard as I could. I will never know the path of the aircraft to have gotten into that position, but we were headed into the cone of the erupting volcano. I know this is crazy, but my thoughts were "How can I explain to the widows and mothers of these crewmen that I was the only survivor."

The aircraft was in a stressed attitude and position. The aircraft responded and we swooped into and out of a part of the erupting molten lava. I then had a concern as to whether the fabric control surfaces were damaged and to what extent. In the recovery and climb out from that volcano predicament, number one and number three engines failed. We were still in a mess of trouble. Radio operator, Jerry Seitz was calling Eielson AFB to send out the Dumbo. This is a search and rescue SA-16, a Grumman twin engine, high wing seaplane used to pick up rescue in the water. They launched immediately. A crew check-in was made and no one was injured but everyone was bruised. Cade wanted to check his air refueling flying boom but I told him that our survival was my only interest now and to leave it stowed. Hog Wild was trying to stabilize the two remaining engines. The crew was straightening up the loose and fallen debris. Gates maps were all over the cockpit. Peurifoy, the copilot was cowered in his seat, terrified. The aircraft could not maintain altitude. We were descending at about 100 feet per minute at full power and it would be about thirty-two minutes before we splashed in the frigid Cooks inlet waters. The crew was prepared to ditch and take our chances on getting into the two life rafts aboard rather than bail out as two crewmen wanted to do. The Dumbo was about 45 minutes out on a collision course. We were destined to get wet that dark and cold night. I gave the ditching signal as we got to 200 feet and again at 100 feet. Everyone was

prepared. At about 30 feet above the water, I felt the aircraft getting lift and increasing speed. I learned later that we were experiencing a phenomenon called “ground effect.”

Hog Wild eased back on the two remaining overheating engines and we were flying again, holding our altitude at what the altimeter and I agreed was about 30 feet. If only we could hold this situation for another hour and a half or so. The Dumbo caught us and flew close formation with us back to base. The landing was uneventful. The parking ramp was full of brass bigwigs. I really didn't care then, as I was so grateful to get these men back to safety and myself too. They shined their flashlights and saw that all rubber deicer boots on propellers, wings, and tail were burned off, volcanic lava was stuck into and onto the engines and nose, and things did not look good. I told the crew to tell the truth and stay with the truth. We did. The Wing Commander called me into his office two days later. For more than an hour he told me of some of his foolish mistakes as a fighter pilot in WW II. I apologized to him and I was remorseful that I had damaged an aircraft. When he stood, I stood, saluted him. Shook hands and walked out. I never heard any more about the incident. The aircraft was towed to the salvage area and cannibalized. The maintenance personnel were glad to have an aircraft to cannibalize parts from to keep the others flying. It was not my regular aircraft. There was something strange about that aircraft. It seemed that no organization claimed it and no one knew a history on it and no record was made of the incident except Search And Rescue made a report of their response. The crew got a lot of teasing about being the volcano hot crew boys.



Runway Snow Removal

One day it got down to -65 degrees. We couldn't get the engines to turn because the oil was like heavy molasses. It was decided our aircraft would be the only one to be on call for a week until the weather warmed. Heaters blew hot air onto the engines



24 hours a day. We were alerted and called out only once during this thawing time. Our poor aircraft groaned during that flight, I am sure, because the hydraulic fluid was almost frozen and the landing gear operated ever so slowly, as well as all other hydraulic operated things. I was always concerned that because the landing gear was so slow to come up, would it go down after flying several hours in that extremely cold atmosphere.

Alaska was a territory and not yet a state. Mail was slow and telephone calls often took hours to reach families back in the states. It was Christmas time and I was so homesick to talk to Mary and Eddy. I went to the telephone office early on Christmas morning and filled out a form to place a call to Montgomery and placed a fifteen-dollar deposit. Calls were three dollars per minute with a five-minute cut-off limit. It was about 6:00pm when the operator finally called me to the little booth, saying Mary was on the line. I had been waiting about 12 hours. I raced to the booth, picked up the receiver and heard her voice, “Merry Christmas.” I was overcome and couldn't say a word. I began to cry. Mary recognized the situation and she talked very calmly about their Christmas in Montgomery. The operator gave the three-minute advisory and Mary kept talking so

soothingly and comforting until the operator cut us off at the five-minute limit. I was never able to say a word, only cry. She said later that she cried for an hour afterward.

We got permission to make fly-overs to some of the remote Eskimo villages of Eastern Alaska around the isolated area of Nome. The crewmembers went begging to the Base Exchange, commissary, and downtown Anchorage merchants, soliciting funds to buy toys, groceries, candies and clothing. It was overwhelming what was collected and donated and the amount of money for us to buy things. We loaded the cargo platform back into the aft bay and loaded it with bags and boxes with all the stuff that had been collected and bought. Cade and Seitz were the one to toss it out. It was a little dangerous in the frigid swirling blizzard winds of the open Bombay. Oley Anderson had done it in more severe weather conditions over North Korea. We had the parachute shop make straps for them to secure themselves to the stanchions in the Bombay. Larry Gates charted us a course to fly over nine villages, playing airborne Santa from a KB-29 on Christmas Eve 1955. John and I flew the aircraft very slow and about 100 feet over the snow-covered ground below. They pushed the goodies out and it was off to the next village. We “bombed” eleven villages and were the subject of a full report in the Anchorage paper. The Alaskan Commanding General commended us.

One night the Squadron Commander, Major Abendhoff sent for me to come to his room. The room was filled with officers of the squadron. He tore into me for not exercising command to make the crewmen wear their mittens at all times in the cold weather. After about two minutes of this serious tirade, they all burst into laughter as he opened a box of captain’s bars and pinned them on my collar. I almost bubbled over again with a leaky eye, but I was given a toast, and WOW, that 180 proof Ron Rico Purple Label Rum instantly put me back into reality. I had been promoted to 1st Lt. Seven months ahead of schedule. Now I was being promoted to Captain more than a year ahead of schedule. I felt I had been blessed with an outstanding crew of men who had performed in such a commendable manner that had made this promotion possible. I had pushed every enlisted man to achieve extra stripes and had written outstanding efficiency reports for all of the officers. John Cunningham and George McQueen went on to earn their eagles as full Colonels. I was proud of them and their distinguished careers after leaving aircrew duties.

In the late spring of 1956, we were sent back to Alaska, but this time it was to Eielson AFB, near Fairbanks, Alaska. The weather was cool but pleasant. Our crew checked out recreational equipment, like sleeping bags, fishing tackle and nets, loading this and all the goodies and provisions we could beg from the club and mess hall. We loaded these on a pickup I had checked out for a recreational weekend at the headwaters of the Teklanike River. The river gushes water from under the massive, active Cantwell Glacier, having finely ground gray granite flakes, to form the tributary to the Nenania River. The Salmon were abundant in the wide, sometimes shallow gravel bottomed clear river. We quickly realized this was the season when the female laid her eggs. When the eggs hatched, the mother died and her body would drift into one of the calm recess. A terrible looking fungus of red, black, pink and yellow grew from her body. The newly hatched fingerlings ate these fungi, sometimes by the hundreds, covering her body. We never unhooked our fishing equipment. We all had a great time and everyone



ate very well. On the way back, our little caravan of scooters and a pickup truck stopped at North Pole, Alaska. It really was the name of the little village, complete with a huge Santa store. We mailed post cards home, stamped with North Pole, Alaska and bought trinkets marked North Pole, Alaska. It was a jolly shop as everyone was so pleasantly laughing.

Gold Dredging at Chicken, AK

Our crew checked out a four wheeled drive vehicle and went far north across the Yukon River up to a place called Wiseman, located adjacent to the “Gates of the Arctic National Park,” in the Endicott Mountains. A company had a real gold mining operation in progress. They welcomed us with a tour of their operation. They had first drilled holes 90 feet deep and thawed the ground at that level with a huge steam generator. They had a dredge that ground the thawed soil and brought it to the surface. The ground rock and soil was then passed over a huge pan filled with mercury. The gold ore and nuggets dropped to the bottom. After the rocks and dirt were thoroughly washed of the mercury, the debris was carried via a conveyor belt to a distance away. They showed us a small sampling of their ‘find.’ saying they would rent the operation for \$50,000 a day. They told us they lived very well back in the States on their earnings for three months on the dredge. We also went down to Chicken, Alaska and saw a much larger operation. Although they let us come aboard, they were very secretive and would not let us see very much of their similar placer mining operation. The dredges floated on small ponds they build for them.



There was a B-29 submerged in a small clear pond just off the North approach to the runway. It was said that the aircraft was parked on the frozen pond and overnight, the ice gave way and it was just left there. It was a strange sight for every approach over it as the water was so crystalline clear to see it. It certainly made every Aircraft Commander recheck where his aircraft was parked.

The three-month tour was uneventful flying except our crew got permission to try to set an endurance record for a B-29. The record was something like 21 hours. I had learned from my B-36 experiences that SAC was always attuned to some publicity activity that demonstrated the SAC message that it was a global peace keeping force of strength. Hog Wild and Glisson were to be the flight engineers controlling this record effort. The bombay fuel tanks were purged of JP 4 and filled with 115-130 octane aviation fuel. We fueled to the brim late in the night so the tanks would hold a little more of the cold fuel. My friends at the Enlisted Mess Hall had prepared each of us six delicious meals. The meals were as complete as could be for our flight. We had two huge thermos cans full of hot coffee. I had a copilot that had been pushed upon me to get his attitude adjusted, but it was an impossible task. He had gotten into the Air Force to learn flying and build flying time. His goal was to fly with United Airlines and wanted out now, but



he had two more years to fulfill his commitment. He was miserable and made everyone else near to him miserable also.

I decided not to take John Peurifoy, the sour attitude copilot on this trip. I asked my former copilot John Cunningham, now an Aircraft Commander, if he would come with us on this flight that may be a historic event. He jumped at the opportunity. We departed early one morning. The Northern Lights were most spectacular shortly before sunrise. St. Elmo's fire was also a fun thing to play with, drawing pictures and tic-tac-toe on the glass panels. This entertained us as we flew at the optimum altitude and airspeed for time vs. distance. Our plans were to fly from Fairbanks to the north Pole, as best we could determine the pole, circling the pole and returning to Fairbanks for twelve times. St. Elmo's fire was entertaining to put a finger on the glass windows and move it along, as the glowing fire would follow. Fascinating It was suggested by the Commander, for weight control, that we didn't really need Cade the boom operator or Seitz, the radio operator, but I was not going to let them feel like we could function without them. We were aloft for forty-eight hours and twenty minutes without refueling, setting the record by more than 27 hours. It was ruled that the B-29 record stood and our flight was classified as a KB29P aircraft record. The Eielson Officers Club hosted a dinner for our entire crew. They wanted it just for the officers but I told them it must include the enlisted men or it was a thanks, but no thanks. The enlisted crewmen enjoyed the invite but thought their Enlisted Club was a friendlier place with better food. And that was true.

Shortly after we returned to Bergstrom AFB, a terrible hailstorm fell upon the KB-29s, destroying the fabric control surfaces, leaving them in tattered, hanging shreds and huge dents in the metal surfaces. My assigned aircraft, 826, looked so demolished. A crew of men from Oklahoma City Air Material Depot came down and using a form of duct tape, repaired or rebuilt the ruined fabric control surfaces and repaired the deep dents, some large enough to fit an egg into. Each crew was scheduled on a one a day schedule to deliver their assigned KB-29 aircraft to Oklahoma City Air Material Command to be smelted down into aluminum blocks. Some crews were reluctant to fly these patched-up aircraft. Our crew volunteered to be the first to go, as we were hit the worst. As soon as we landed and got our equipment off the aircraft, the demolition crews stripped the aircraft of instrument panels, tires, radar, engines, prop, and fuel within three hours. We watched in sadness as the headache-ball swung into action, breaking the wings off, breaking the fuselage into three sections while a crane lifted our broken airplane into a huge hopper of melting and molten aluminum. I saw the beautiful bright silver aluminum come out at the bottom to form giant 300 pound tubs of aluminum. We were told that when the aluminum was all melted, they raised the temperature and melted the miles of copper wires and fittings of the aircraft. I felt ill and we all left. A part of us was smelted.

The Air Force wasted no time in assigning our organization, the 506th Air Refueling Squadron to Fairchild AFB, Spokane, Washington. The crews were to be trained and become one of the first organizations to fly the new KC-135 Boeing Jet Aircraft. It was a golden opportunity to train and build pilot time in the Air Force with this new aircraft and later transition into airline flying which was a certainty to buy the aircraft when they

would become available to the airline industry. The military had the first option on the aircraft being called the Boeing 707. The airline industry called it 'The Stratoliner.'

The commander called me in to chat about an option for me. The Air Force was searching for forty pilots with more than 7,500 hours of pilot time to undergo a year of training at James B. Connally AFB, Waco, Texas, to become crew members of the B-1 bomber about to begin production. Upon completion of the one-year schooling, we were to be awarded a new aeronautical rating of Pilot, Navigator, Radar Operator and Bombardier, referred to as "Four Headed Monsters" with a special wing to be designed and worn to replace the Senior Pilot wings, which all of us wore. Major Abendhoff recommended that I seize this opportunity to apply. Mary and I talked about this very seriously and agreed, yes I would apply, and if rejected, we would go to Spokane for a new life in the as KC-135 or Boeing 707. I was accepted to begin in one month, June 1957. Mary was expecting in July but she was so big with Tom that we expected him any day. We immediately sold the house, did preliminary packing and were ready to move.

Fortunately, everything fell into place and we were soon assigned to a duplex house at James B. Connally AFB, Waco, Texas with Mary bigger than ever, six months pregnant with Tom. Our furniture was to be picked up one day and delivered the next day. All three of our close neighbor family friends insisted we spend that night with them. They jokingly drew straws; Jack and Dottie were stuck with us. They had two little girls who loved being older sisters to Eddy, spoiling him when they could. Dottie had fixed us a bed with new sheets and had sprinkled sachet powder between the sheets and on the pillowcases. Mary was allergic to the odors and spent a very restless night compounded with her pregnancy. The next morning they sent us off with a big Texas style breakfast that Mary couldn't eat. She did well to keep the coffee down. We had dear friends there.

When we arrived at our new home, the movers were waiting. It was a cool morning and Mary offered coffee to our duplex neighbors, James and Marge Holt, who had come over with their five children to help. They declined coffee, hot tea, postum and warm apple cider that Mary offered. They finally burst out laughing telling us they were strict Mormons. During the nine-month course of our neighborly friendship, they explained that Heaven was filled with families of their faith. The only way a female was permitted into the second or third ring of heaven was to be married to a Mormon and they could have any numbers of wives in heaven. They came back from a visit to her home in Salt Lake City, overjoyed to tell us that James had married Mary in the cathedral with Marge standing in for Mary. DUH She said that her Great, Great Grandfather was one of the five men permitted to see the golden tablets of Joseph Smith. Her father was the chief Librarian for the Cathedral and was the official historian for the church. She had received special dispensation for this marriage. We were always respectful but careful in our chats.

Our neighbors to the other side yard were Jerry and Lanell Hancock. They had a son about two years older than Eddy. He adopted Eddy as his personal charge to look after him. We were having a spaghetti supper on the lawn and invited them to be our guests. She made delicious tossed salad with a touch of Feta cheese, which was new to me. I

brought out a cooler of iced beer. When I motioned for him to help himself, things got very quiet for a seemingly long time. Jerry broke the silence and they both told this story.

He had been assigned to Keflavik, Iceland for a year of isolated duty at a forward radar unit, high atop one of those snow capped, frozen mountains. The loneliness had gotten to him and he became a sneaky alcoholic. He knew all the tricks of hiding his booze and the use of breath controllers. When his tour was over, he was sent of all places for an alcoholic to not be assigned, to Puerto Rico for a three- year assignment. Now, this is the Rum Capitol of the world. Two dollars a gallon for the finest of rums.

Jerry was in a sot's heaven. Lanell and their son came down to make a home during his three-year assignment. She got a job as a teacher in the American Military School. He was a desperate drunk about to be put out of the Air Force. He was also about to lose his marriage. He would go to the NCO club on payday and gamble away his last dollar in poker games. One night she decided she had had enough. She put on her housecoat, got into their new Hudson Hornet and went to the club. She charged past the doorkeeper, going straight to his massive card table and overturned it. She said cards, chips and money flew everywhere, but she didn't care, she was ragingly angry. She said she was angry that their friends would sit there and take his money, knowing he was drunk. She said her violent anger was mostly directed at Jerry and his insatiable thirst for alcohol.

She took a chair and beat him about his shoulders, all the way to the door. She directed him to the car, got in and with lights on and the horn blasting, she shouted for him to run or be run over. She chased him running in the front of the car yelling, "Don't run over me Lanell". When they got to their home, she left him on the lawn where he had fallen, exhausted. He finally made it into the house and got ready for bed. She said he was a gambling drunk and a lover drunk. He wanted to passionately love her. She said she was uncontrollable angry with him. She said she went crazy as she pulled the sheet over his head and beat him with her high-heeled shoe until he passed out and she was exhausted. She began to cry when she saw that the sheet was so soaked in blood. She called for an ambulance that took him to the hospital for extensive facial surgery. He still had deep scars. He said he had never had a drink of anything since that awful night four years earlier. They didn't laugh as they told us this story; because it was the most serious and sobering experience of their six-year married life. I quietly took away the beer and we enjoyed our spaghetti dinner and other meals and talk times with them. They were funny.

Mary was so huge carrying Tom that we thought she may be overdue. We would go riding in the country roads every day after classes, the rougher the road the better. That was no help. One afternoon we were on a very remote dirt road and came to a place that water was running across the road. I did not think it was very deep but when I slipped into the submerged ruts, I found that the water was deep and in a few moments it was noticeably rising even into the floor of the Chrysler. I ran about a mile to a house where several garbage trucks were parked. I could smell garbage half a mile before I reached the house and large pigpens. I knocked on the door and was told to come in. Men and boys were sprawled in chairs, sofas and several day beds in the huge entry room. The stench was almost unbearable. I told them of my problem, telling the older man I would pay.

I told him I would pay well if he would come pull me out. Not a word of response as he motioned toward a telephone. I looked up a wrecker service and asked the old man where was I. He laughed and finally told me. The wrecker was to arrive in about thirty minutes. I thanked them and raced back to the car. The water had gotten up into the seats with Mary and Eddy up on the backs of the seats. They towed us to Waco and kept the car two days to thoroughly flush the engine, transmission and rear end as well as getting a company to steam and clean the seats and floor mats and the underside of the car. That short afternoon trip proved to be a rather expensive little jaunt into the Waco countryside.

Another of our neighbors, Major Dick Barwin and his wife Marie, from Winter Haven, Florida, took a strong liking for Eddy and would often baby sit him when I was in class, or on a flight and Mary had to go to the clinic or commissary. I was on a training flight when Mary called to tell him it was her time to go. He took her to the hospital and they kept Eddy, even after I returned. The attending Doctor declared that this healthy baby boy was premature by six weeks. We did not think so. He was a very healthy six pounds plus and a lively blonde boy, always hungry. Mary had an uncle she greatly admired and respected, Thomas Eidson of McAllen Texas. She named our second son Thomas. I thought the Maiden name of Mother Eidson should be remembered so I named him Allen So this fine looking healthy and happy baby boy was named Thomas Allen Bryant. We called him Tommy for about four years until one day he told us very seriously that Tommy was for babies. He was old enough now to be called Tom. We agreed with him. It's been Tom ever since.



Tom- 3 Weeks Old



The Barwins' were great friends indeed. He helped me convert a pedal tractor Eddy had, into a mechanized tractor. We put a Briggs and Stratton engine with a centrifugal clutch onto the tractor, and coupled it to an axle sprocket with a chain. That little thing would fly up and down the sidewalk, giving him hours of entertainment as well as the entire neighborhood watching him.

My class work was not difficult except that we had to memorize thirty stars used in celestial navigation. The base had a fantastic celestial laboratory. I spent many pleasant days and evenings there. I made a poor passenger in the T-29 Navigator and Radar Operator Trainer. I was always a wee bit tense at take-offs and landings. All twenty of us that started, finished the Navigator training phase. We were considered to be Air Force Navigators as well as senior pilots. It was a unique aeronautical rating without a wing yet.

The radar navigation phase was rapidly accelerated with long days of class work, longer and more frequent training flights. We soon learned that President Johnston had plans to scrap the B-1 bomber and the training program we were engaged in. We twenty Senior Pilots were the only ones to have had that training, as the class ended abruptly after nine months of the scheduled year of training. The entire Base was phased and closed. We

were given the Aeronautical Ratings we had been promised and had earned. The new problem was what to do with the twenty of us now. I asked for and received orders to report to either the B-52 wing headquarters or the B-47 wing headquarters at Walker AFB, Roswell, New Mexico. Others of the class scrambled for assignments. It was bad.

These were very unusual orders but it gave me a choice of aircraft to fly. The B-47 group was the original historical Bomb Group that dropped the atomic bomb, ending the war with Japan. They had a rich history. I liked the B-47 but the entire organization was being sent to Dover, Delaware within two months. That was enough to persuade us to stay at Roswell and be with the B-52. The organization was new to Roswell as they had been at Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico for years with the B-36 and had only recently received training in the B-52. They were a tight clannish group and I never really seemed to fit in. At full dress parade occasions, I noticed that none of the pilots had any combat experience. Maybe this accounted for some of their aloofness or snobbishness to me by the aircraft commanders, plus the most unusual aeronautical ratings I had. I worked hard at being a part of them. I even bought an English Norton Motorcycle from Col. Swanson, the Commander. I always felt like a “red-headed-step-child” at a family reunion. I didn’t fit.

When we arrived at Roswell, there was absolutely no housing for us. We bought a huge mobile home called a house trailer. One of the largest ones made at that time, 8 X 35 feet. We made application for on base housing to be available in about six months. While I was in the housing office, less than five minutes, Eddy had pushed the cigarette lighter and put it, red hot to his lips. When I got back to the car, I cried as his poor lips were burned with bright red circles. I vowed never to leave a child in the car alone. Never, never again. We planned to sell the trailer when housing was available to us. We were in the trailer about a month when I received orders to go to B-52 training and familiarization school for three months at Castle AFB, Merced, California. This was standard for all new B-52 pilots. We decided to drag the trailer out there and have a place for all four of us.

I took the Chrysler to a “Carriage Smith” which was an old-fashioned blacksmith shop turned somewhat modern with electric welding available. He worked all day to install a trailer hitch under the car, and charged \$45. I noticed that he would occasionally take a nip. When he finished, I went out to the base “Grog Shop” and got him a half-gallon of Jim Beam whiskey. I think I made a friend for life with this old timer of blacksmith days. I often went to his shop to listen to him tell me how to build a wagon wheel with a steel rim or how he built iron hinges, square nails and iron latches. He was a very interesting old timer who had a foot in the yesteryears of the frontier days of the Pecos and looked it.

Mary did not want to drive so I drove about 20 mph for the first fifty miles. Feeling brazen and confident, I slowly eased the speed up to about 50mph over the next few hundred miles toward Calif. After three days of driving, I felt very confident. As we drove across the flat Mojave Desert from Barstow to Mojave, I felt very comfortable at the

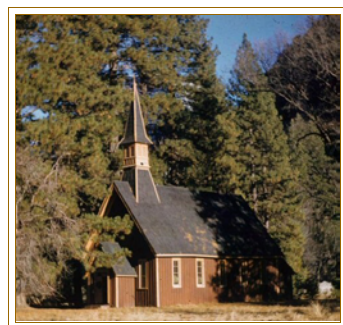


higher speeds. We started a descent at Tehachapi pass from about 4,000 feet into Bakersfield, almost sea level. The two-lane road was very curvy with switchbacks and the grade was very steep and dangerous with signs everywhere to drop into a lower gear. I didn't do that to start the descent and we were soon going too fast to drop into a lower gear. I was using the footbrake and pulling hard on the trailer brakes. Mary said she looked back and the trailer almost hit the cliff guardrails as it was fishtailing. I had let the car and trailer get out of control. Another switch back would surely send us off the steep cliff to more than 1,000 feet into the ravine. Mary had already said very calmly that she loved all of us and God would take care. I think she was humming "It is well with my Soul" as she tightly held the children. I had gotten us into serious trouble, deadly serious.

I saw a runaway vehicle deceleration escape up the side of the mountain just before the switchback ahead. It was a bed of sand spread up the mountainside. We went flying up that bed of sand at about 70 mph. I set the parking brakes and hopped out to see smoke billowing from all four tires of the car and the four tires of the mobile home. Mary took the children away from the car. A huge two-trailer PIE truck pulled behind us and quickly extinguished the two small fires in the brakes with his extinguisher. I practically fell at his feet to thank him, he smiled and said simply, drive carefully. He accepted no money. He backed his big rig back down the incline onto the highway and was gone. We stayed in that sand pile a long time while we prayed, refreshed ourselves, tested the brakes and backed ever so gently down from the sand pile onto the highway. I drove the rest of the decline in the lowest gear, slowly and humbly eased into Bakersfield and on to Merced.

We found a quaint little trailer park that held two mobile homes, a washhouse with a washing machine and a clothesline. We liked it there, about a mile from Castle AFB. We had a bedroom, Eddy had his bedroom and Tom slept over a built in chest of drawers with a sturdy guardrail that held him and his little mattress securely. He tickled us with patty cakes through the bars of his bed, always smiling and laughing. Eddy got sick with viral pneumonia and was hospitalized for about a week. One day a nurse was spooning spinach puree down his little sore throat. He did not like it and was resisting. We pleaded for her to let us feed him but she kept force-feeding him. When the geyser broke, it came up with a terrific force. She was wearing a nurses uniform with a green front. She left his care to Mary, staying with him as much as she could. I took care of Tom when I was not in classes or flying long missions in the B-52. We enjoyed our stay in Atwater, Calif.

We spent most of our weekends visiting the Yosemite National Park and the giant Redwood forests. Yosemite was our favorite place and we must have taken more than a thousand pictures of every part of the splendor of that beautiful and restful place. Charles E. Cade, the noted flying boom, refueling operator, had an uncle who was the pastor of the Little Brown Church of Yosemite Park. He was very pleasant and got us a free six-month pass to Yosemite Park. We certainly used the printing off that pass. This is truly a valley of enchantment and splendor of God's handiwork to carve the mountains of stone into beauty to be seen everywhere. Every look in every direction was enchantment.



Mary asked that we go see the Pacific Ocean, as we may never get the chance again. We left early one morning for the little village of Big Sur and Point Sur on Highway 1. Our landlord told us this site would give us a spectacular view of the ocean from atop a high cliff and then go to the little town of Oceanside to collect shells and tumbled polished stones on the beach. We were not disappointed as we took a picnic lunch and thoroughly enjoyed the day. Eddy wanted to charge the incoming waves and always got knocked down. The beach was shallow and safe. We found oodles of beautiful shells and very pretty round stones. After they dried they were not as shiny, but were still very pretty.

My duty there was to attend classes of how the aircraft was designed and built, how things worked and how to manage the complex fuel system to keep it in balance with the swept wings. Learning of this majestic aircraft was so different in technology from anything I had ever flown. I flew about ten times and logged about 150 hours pilot time. In that I was a qualified Navigator and Radar Operator, I learned of their crew duties also.

When my training was completed, and I had all the car's brakes rebuilt, we once again hooked the mobile home to the Chrysler and carefully drove the southern route home to Walker AFB. It was a casual trip home, stopping to see as many attractions and sights as we could along the way. We had been notified that we had a three-bedroom house waiting for us. That made the return trip even more pleasant and less stressful.

When we got back to Walker AFB, we went to our assigned house and parked the car and mobile home on the street in front of the house for overnight unloading. A big Air Policeman visited me early the next day to say that was a no-no and I must remove it right away. We found a Mobile Home Park to park it and try to sell it. We settled into our cul-de-sac neighborhood with friendly neighbors. We always had good neighbors.

After we had been there about three months, we decided to take a vacation to Montgomery. Yep, we hitched up the trailer and away we went. We took Mother Eidson and Sarah and toured much of North Alabama for two weeks. We even took that thing up Cheaha Mt. When we got back to Montgomery, a black man walked up the next day and offered us more money than we had paid for it. Sold, Sold We cleaned it of personal items. I delivered it and helped him to set it up. It had been a wonderful time for all, especially for Mother Eidson holding Tom for two weeks. She loved them both so much.

I had been assigned to a Captain Gingrich as his copilot at Walker AFB. Everyone called him Pappy, except me. He was a crotchety old man with terrible halitosis and overbearing demands, such that no one who knew him, could tolerate him, but he was in the clique.

Crews had to go to Ellsworth AFB, Rapid City, South Dakota every six months for B-52 simulator training. When it was our crew time we went up, as he insisted that I take our Chrysler. That was ok but somewhere enroute he told me that he was to claim the mileage as his personal expenses, saying that was what his copilots were supposed to do. I told him the Commander, Col. Swanson, could settle the issue. He dropped it, insisting that I not tell anyone he had suggested such an arrangement. He was a crook. This further

soured our very fragile relationship. I didn't want to fly with him and he didn't want to fly with me. During that trip I stopped at a western style restaurant that advertised 'Buffalo Burgers'. I relished eating two, perhaps to anger him as he sat sullenly ridiculing me for eating such trash meat. I told him that while I was in Okinawa, I had eaten roasted dog meat, boiled octopus and squid. He got physically sick and left the restaurant. We had three days of training in the simulator with a lot of free time every day. I took the car one day to go see the Black Hills monument. Another day I went to Deadwood City. He was furious that I had gone and may have had an accident, leaving him stranded. I invited him and he had declined. He was truly a people controller and manipulator. Not with me.

The Air Force had a policy that ones supervisor must submit an annual performance report, but none was required for duty of less than six months. That was to be my out. I had to get out from under him before the six months. My friend Major Al Zealy told me of a hushed secret, that Walker AFB was scheduled to receive two B-52 Flight Simulators within the month. I immediately pleaded with the Commander, Col. Swanson, to assign me to the simulators, that I had done my penance with Gingrich. He had a hearty laugh and agreed, probably because there was a poor copilot just assigned and he was it. The next week I received orders to report back to Castle AFB for simulator training. I was right, Gingrich insisted on turning in a report on my performance but the Commander refused to accept it and tore it up in his presence. Those reports often served as a club over the heads of subordinates, giving Aircraft Commanders ultimate authority.

I was anxious to get underway before anything could happen to disrupt these plans. I took the little green Morris Minor Convertible and it took me two full days driving as hard as I could at 50 mph to get to Castle AFB. That was about max speed on that little car.

I settled in, determined to be the very best I could be at being a B-52 Flight Instructor, teaching emergency procedures and actions in the flight simulator. I thoroughly enjoyed learning the simulator and teaching the pilots coming through Castle AFB for training. I went to Yosemite only twice during the two months I was there. One Saturday I visited the Christian Brothers Winery. It was a massive operation. Wine was a big business in the Napa Valley. They explained wine in the various process stages and gave me small samples at the various stages of fermenting and finally bottling for wholesale. It was fun.



A most memorable event was when Mary and Henry, John and Martha came to Merced, California to visit with me while I was in B-52 Instructor Pilot training there. We went to Yosemite and the Redwood Forest to drive through the tree. I was so happy to see them. I had just come down from a sixteen-hour flight and was groggy from lack of sleep but thrilled to see and visit with them on their



Western Tour. We all went to see Yosemite Valley and the Big Redwood forests. Along the way, John stopped at a roadside lemonade stand. We each got a modest sized glass and it was refreshing, as well as a waker-upper for me. I insisted on paying and the bill came to \$25 for five glasses. I asked them to go ahead to the car and I would be on in a minute. I placed a ten-dollar bill on their counter and walked out. They yelled that they would call the law, and I told them, "Please Do" and continued on out. I think I may have spoiled a part of their daylong trip. I hope not. I know I was a dull and groggy host for their visit, but I have always been grateful that they cared enough to come by. We enjoyed seeing most of the park and the drive though the big redwood tree. Mary later told the story that the four had gone by Roswell earlier on their Western trip. During the evening meal, 18-month-old Tom went back to his bedroom, got his chamber potty and came back asking my sister Mary to hold it for him. Bless her, she took it as routine.

While I was at Castle AFB, I went to the dental clinic with a problem. The young dentist was very professional and friendly. He was just out of a Dental University and said that he would like to experiment with a front tooth that was in need of a crown. I met with him four evenings after the Dental Office closed, for him to install a new technique being taught in his dental training. It was called a "Hollenbeck" crown. That crown is still in-place since 1958 and stands as a silent testimony as to how white my teeth had been forty something years ago, before coffee, tea and tobacco. I should fix that ugly situation..

When I got back to Roswell, the simulators had arrived and were almost ready for use. One of the installation technicians told Major Ramon Flores, my boss, that we could help them best if we would leave and come back in about a week. He was a full Mescalero Apache Native North American Indian from the reservation, about 90 miles to the west of Roswell. He said thanks and that he was going to the reservation and would see me in a week. He was a man of few words and I enjoyed every day in the flight simulators under his command. He was a good friend of Glisson, who had retired next to the reservation.

An acquaintance from Bergstrom AFB, Austin, was having marital and on the job problems. He had taken a flight to Walker AFB to tell me about it and ask advice. He was trying to solve his problems at the bottom of the bottle at the officers club all afternoon. It was a good saying whoever said, 'don't argue with fools and drunks, you may not be able to tell the difference.' I had been at the club with him that afternoon when I got a call from Dottie, our neighbor, to come quickly to take Mary to the hospital. I raced home; she was ready at the curb, big with Cammy. We raced the five miles through the city of Roswell to the hospital north of the city. Dottie had called them and they were waiting at the door as I pulled up. They lifted her to a wheel chair and that is where Cammy was partly born. By the time I parked the car and got to the delivery room, I saw the most beautiful little baby daughter a proud father could ever pray for. Mary had a broken coccyx from being forced to sit on her head until delivery, or something like that. That injury still affects her sitting.



Shortly after Cammy was born, Mary and I reached the same conclusion at about the same time without either discussing it, that our beautiful family was now complete. We had wanted two boys and then two girls, but now we knew this was exactly the gifts the Lord had prepared for us in every way, that our family was now complete. We would no longer pray for a larger family but that we would pray that these lovely precious children would be a blessing to all who may ever know them and we would do our best to help each of them to find their own pathway to the joys and successes of the life they create..

We always enjoyed exploring the areas wherever we were. There were so many things to see and do in and around or near Roswell. We visited the site where the aliens were supposed to have landed, plundered in the fossilized bone and shell banks near Fort Sumner for dinosaur bones and shark teeth, cut a dead apple tree in Lincoln to get a log to make picture frames, picnicked in the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation high up in the forested mountains, visited Carlsbad and really enjoyed our opportunities to be together. My friend, Richard Eastburn from Foley, with his wife Barbara and family, came to spend a few days with us and visit some areas of interest. Their son was about the age of Eddy. I gave him one of my old outdated flight helmets with an oxygen mask attached. That child wore it for the three days they were with us. He slept with it.

I built the boys a racer car from a go-cart. I shaped screen wire to form something like a racecar and put piles of soaked newspapers to form a paper-machete. Then I used about two yards of fiberglass cloth cut into strips, with about two gallons of fiberglass resin to harden the body shell. It looked something like a midget racecar. I gave it a good paint job of green with yellow stripes. Eddy could fly in that little thing all over the neighbor's back yards, as there was no fencing. Tom was a good mimicker and he knew about the steering wheel, gas pedal and the brakes. He did a good job going slowly which pleased all of us except Eddy. He wanted him to hurry, hurry and he could get another turn. Our



next-door neighbor family, The Hurffs, had a son the age of Eddy. He really wanted to drive the Green Hornet. His mother approved. Eddy told him about the controls and gave him a good checkout. Away he went, flying through the back yards at top speed. I knew he was in trouble because he couldn't slow down enough to turn around and head back in our direction. His mother was screaming but he was too far away. Somewhere and somehow he did get it turned around and here he came, at full speed, screaming at the top of his lungs. His Mother was having one of those screaming, crying fits. The disturbance got everybody out to see the commotion. The racer tried to climb a clothesline pole and came to an abrupt stop. He jumped out holding his crotch and ran into his house with the back of his pants obviously wet. Another neighbor wanted the wreckage for his son when he would be old enough to ride it. I gladly gave it to him. We left a few months after this hilarious incident. Edith Hurff and Mary still communicate and laugh about the little Green Hornet. At least Eddy had one day of fun with the thing before it was wrecked.

Eddy had been missing for about half an hour one day as Mary was frantically searching the neighborhood for him. She saw an Air Police truck turn into our Cul de Sac, and there sitting up front with a huge smile was Eddy, the escapee. An Airman saw him walking on the highway towards Roswell, picked him up and brought him back to the gate entrance to Walker AFB. He had slipped past the guards somehow. Tom also tried this trick later, but the guards caught him, two years old, toddling out the gate on his way to somewhere. The Air Policeman brought him home laughingly telling us to tie those boys on a tether.

I had a “Black Shadow” motorcycle I was restoring with great difficulty. A man learned of my interest and practically gave me his matching Vincent to cannibalize for parts. I got that engine running as well as my engine. Somewhere along the way, I became interested in dragsters and decided to build a dragster with the two engines coupled together. As a motorcycle, the Black Shadow was guaranteed to go 180 mph in stock configuration. I computed, with both engines in peak performance, I could easily exceed 200 mph in a quarter of a mile. It just had to be a winner. A friend turned an axle of two-inch cold rolled steel, which meant the wheels would turn together. The frame was solid chromium molybdenum steel tubing with no shock absorbers or suspension. I was really getting that thing put together with expert welding by friends, doing a good and fast assembly. Almost everything about it was Air Force surplus or had been given to me by Air Force personnel in the various shops of the base. The tires and wheels were from an F-89 scorpion with 20 ply tires. I finally got the carburetors synchronized and was eager to put it on the track, which was an abandoned strip of runway given to the dragsters and racers. This was a big time hobby at Roswell. “Big Daddy Garlits” from Florida was a regular. I made one run at probably 140+ mph. The vehicle was almost uncontrollable above about 125mph and needed a better rack and pinion steering and suspension system, as there was certainly more power available, if the vehicle could be controlled. I realized that almost everything about that dragster was of an unverifiable origin or was of questionable Air Force property. I gave it to one of my dragster friends with the stipulation that my name would never be associated with it again. He and his friends worked it over with modifications and was clocked at 7.2 seconds in a quarter mile. I think this converts to about 215 mph. He totally demolished the thing, fortunately without injury to himself.

I rented an old WW II Jeep for a day, to go jackrabbit and coyote hunting with the family. We bounced in that thing over our friend’s spacious cattle ranch for about two hours and had our fill of a jeep ride. We did our hunting with a camera, not guns. We stopped amid a clutch of wild Jackrabbits. They all hopped away except for one. Eddy slowly walked up to the jackrabbit that was just sitting watching us for a while. He rubbed the jackrabbit on it’s back and gently pulled it’s ears for several minutes. Mary called him away for fear the Jackrabbit may be diseased. As Eddy walked away, the jackrabbit hopped along behind him and tried to get into the Jeep. The jackrabbit tried to follow us. He was always attracted to animals,



particularly young animals. He often went into a pasture behind our home in Austin to pet the cows and calves in the pasture. He and Prissy would round up the herd.

Maj. Flores told me one day that Eglin AFB, Ft. Walton Beach Florida was scheduled to receive one flight simulator about the first of the year. He knew I was from the Gulf Coast and said he would recommend me if I wanted to be there. I ran home and told Mary about it. She was thrilled at the prospects. I liked working for him, but told him that Mary and I would really appreciate a boost in that direction. He expressed regrets that I was leaving, gave me an outstanding effectiveness report, took me to a nice luncheon at the club and gave me a beautiful flint arrow head mounted in a very attractive frame and red velvet background. About a week later I got orders to report to the 4135th Strategic Bombardment Wing at Eglin, AFB to operate and supervise the flight simulator. It took very little time for us to clear the base and be on our way to Ft. Walton Beach, Florida.

The day before we left Roswell, Mary came down with mumps. I went back to the "Carriage Smith" and asked the old smithy to fix us a towing hitch. We hitched the other car so as to be towed and we all got into the Chrysler. She was so, so sick, and miserable. We were so overjoyed to get to Montgomery and get her some home treatment and rest. Along the way, I had to stop at an Auto parts store and get fuses for the lights to the rear vehicle. Mary had an urgent need to go to the toilet. She hopped out of the car and dashed towards the door of the store. A couple had been standing there. She blurted out for them to please look after the children in the car and that all of our money was under the front seat of the car. She told them she would be right back. It took longer than she had expected. When she got back, the couple was there, laughing like crazy, and all was well.

It was a cold and dreary day when we arrived at Eglin. Dec 1959 I had sent a message six weeks previously to the housing office advising them of our arrival date. Since I had not heard from them I expected a short delay before we could get on base housing. I was not expecting the arrangements that were made for us. We were put into temporary housing of a three-bedroom cinder block non-insulated house that was cold even with the heat on full high. We were told that this would be only temporary for two months and then we must be out because there would be no housing for two years. House hunt time.

The kindergarten and nursery were in buildings adjacent to our temporary house. Eddy was enrolled the next day. Tom and Cammy played like they were enrolled as they were out there with the best of them. Mary went out to get them at lunchtime and there was Cammy and Tom, marching in a circle with Eddy and all the others with everyone wearing a cardboard Uncle Sam hat and waving a flag on a stick. They were now accepted, but just not registered. Cammy would tire and come in for her afternoon nap.

When I reported in for duty, I was told that the B-52 Flight Simulator which was scheduled for me to operate at Eglin AFB, had been diverted to Blytheville AFB, Ark. I was assigned to the Command Center to assist in radio communicating with advisories for solutions to airborne problems. These new B-52G crews experienced many airborne problems, which I was able to offer ready solutions because that is what we did in the simulators. We had sophisticated single-sideband radios and could talk worldwide

directly to our crews on air borne alert flying over the Mediterranean Sea. With new crews and new aircraft, we definitely had many problems, but never an accident. The Command Center was a maze of communication systems, recorders, radios and telephones. The Commander could talk on the telephone from his home, directly to an Aircraft Commander flying over the Mediterranean Sea or anywhere in the world.

Mary found a nice house for us, which was located on a canal that led to the bay and on out to the Gulf of Mexico. I thought it was neat, so we made the down payment and signed all the papers but had not moved in. Mary began to think of the children and that canal in the back yard. About a week after we had signed the papers, we went to the realtor and he gave us back all the money and destroyed the paperwork. Mary found another much larger and nicer three-bedroom house that had just been completed on Buckingham Road, which was about two miles from Eglin, in the community of Longwood, near Shalimar. The house had parquet wooden floors, about 2,400 square feet and a full acre for a yard. It cost seventeen thousand, to be financed for thirteen years. It was a struggle sometimes for Mary to juggle the meager salary of our Captain's pay. We always tithed and Mary also deposited twenty dollars into each of the joint accounts of Eddy, Tom and Cammy at the Eglin Federal Credit Union. She had started this college savings account when each child was born. We felt that it was safer than mutual funds. Mother Eidson agreed. She was a smart, frugal woman who managed her funds well.

Our furniture from Roswell AFB was being held in storage by Allied Van Lines in Ft. Walton until we could find a house. When it was delivered, we asked the movers to place the heavy furniture, beds, piano, and we would open the barrels of dishes, carton of clothes and other boxes later. The house was so full of boxes we made little walkways to get about. We had gone to the Shalimar Presbyterian Church our first weekend. Dr. Carroll Stegall, who was born in the Congo of Presbyterian missionary parents, was the pastor. About mid morning the next day, Monday, he came to visit, unannounced, as we did not yet have a telephone. The children had left the front door open, so he just walked in and found Mary in the kitchen. We had poured ourselves a cocktail the night before, either we were exhausted or we were celebrating to have this house. The house was full of boxes, a bed for everyone and a good roof. We had left the bottle of whiskey on the kitchen counter in full view. He picked it up and asked it was a good whiskey. Mary was humiliated but managed to steer him to the living room and have a short conversation with promises to attend the following Sunday. After good discussions, we decided to have the three children baptized there. As Eddy was being baptized by Dr. Stegall, he made a big motion to duck as he dipped his hand into the Baptismal Bowl and made a motion to place his hand on Eddy's head. He baptized him on the second try after he showed Eddy his open hand. Tom and Cammy were baptized also. On the way home, Eddy said he thought he was trying to put a turtle on his head. We never figured that one out. Our family and the Stegall family bonded in a friendship we have all cherished.

We all joined the Shalimar Presbyterian Church and thoroughly enjoyed the spiritual nourishment and Christian fellowship that prevailed. There was a man on the Session of that church that had a strong dislike for Dr. Stegall and his conservative views. He was determined to have him dismissed but couldn't gain support for his endeavor. The

Presbytery came into the picture and had a meeting, a sort of court, there in Shalimar to hear the case. Dr. Stegall's followers filled the church. The Presbytery moderator, Richard Scoggins of Panama City, recessed the court until the next day and secretly met in Crestview. They dismissed Dr. Stegall for some reason that was never disclosed. The man behind the deed was the manager of Gulf Power Utilities for Okaloosa County and was reputed to be a very significant contributor to the church. On his deathbed, he called Dr. Stegall and told him that the evil thing he had done to him and the congregation had preyed on his mind every day since it happened and he wanted forgiveness. They had a telephone prayer. The next week the man died. What he meant for evil was God's plan for good. Westminster Presbyterian Church of Shalimar was the resultant outgrowth.

Three families of us banded together and promised him if he would stay with us we would stay with him and try to meet his financial needs. We agreed and we met on the lawn of Jim and Irene Sharp and children, for about a month. It was a beautiful setting of the grassy lawn down to the waters edge of a large Bayou. The Shalimar School invited us to use their cafeteria, as we were now more than a hundred in attendance. We needed a building of our own. The three original families of us, Jim Sharp, Bill Trimm and I, with Dr. Stegall, all went to Mobile in our old Buick station wagon to plead with the Corps of Engineers to let us buy a small tract of isolated waterfront property belonging to Eglin AFB. They explained that they would have to put it up for bid and we could never compete with developers. This was a devastating blow, as we had not considered this.

We hung our proud heads and were about to leave when Dr. Stegall called us all together in the corner of that waiting room and we had a little prayer session. I remembered everyone prayed. Then as we were leaving, I was holding the door for everyone to exit. The manager waved for me to come back. I did. He told me that he had something we may be interested in. I went out into the hall and called everyone back in. He told us that he had an Army surplus chapel located at Ft. Rucker, Alabama that we could buy and dismantle. Back to the corner for another prayer session. Buy it was the answer. He hemmed and hawed for some time and then said, normally the building would bid out at \$2,000, but for us, could we afford \$250? It seemed that I was the only one that had brought a checkbook, so I quickly wrote the check, telling him it was a hot check. I told him that it would be good in two days when I could borrow the money to cover it. I collected the sale papers and we left. We wanted to have a steak and celebrate but nobody had that kind of money, so we went to a McDonalds, which was a new fad, and had some 19-cent hamburgers, fries and a cola. We laughed all the way home. We had a building.

A group of us went up to inspect the building and see what we had bought. Dr. Stegall had us all to kneel at the pulpit as everyone prayed. It was impressive in that vacant and terrible looking building. When the building was complete in Shalimar, and ready for dedication, those same men were called forward and we all prayed at the pulpit area. I took a two-weeks leave and with Mr. Arthur Bryant, no relationship, and Cordele his carpenter helper, we went to Ft. Rucker to dismantle the Chapel. Mr. Bryant took the stationwagon out into the country and found nine black men who were pulling corn in a field. I don't know how he did it but he hired them to help dismantle that chapel after I took chalk and marked each board so it would all fit back the same. And it did.

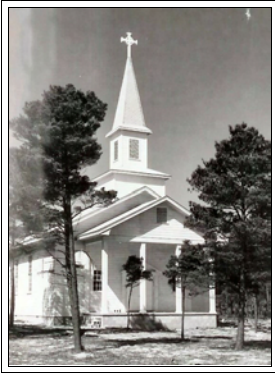
I went to the unemployment office and asked for every able-bodied person, male or female, to come pull nails so the boards would lie flat for shipping. They were to bring their own hammers or nail pullers and were to be paid by the board foot they cleaned. Oh how they hated me as they soon found they could make more money on welfare than pulling nails. They could not collect welfare as long as the job was open. It took ten days of dismantling and hauling it down to Shalimar in four semi-flatbed loads. I rode with the driver on one of his trips and he constantly mumbled in prayers the entire distance. The Army men were very gracious to help load and clean up the mess we had made in leaving debris. I treated them to a hamburger lunch the day we all left. They were a big, big help.

A friend of Jack Manning, sold us four "Government Lots" at a very low price, financed by Jack, an oil dealer in Valparaiso. Now we had land and piles of boards to become a church building. We organized the church and elected Officers. I was elected and ordained as an Elder. After three months, Dr Stegall talked to me about a man who had been hurt that he was not elected to be an Elder and since I had been elected to be chairman of the building committee which consumed all of my free time, I resigned and he was elected to the Session. Mr. Bryant and his helper Cordele were the only employees on the project. They had to build a perimeter foundation and build upon this with cinder blocks for the wooden wall foundation. The cinder block foundation was about five blocks high at the front of the building to be level with the rear of the building.

The chairman of the board of Deacons, Herb Peterson, was an engineer of some sorts at Eglin. He was angry that he had not been elected to be the chairman of the building. He would come by every afternoon after work and rant about some fault in the way we were doing the building. One day he kicked the freshly laid cinder block wall foundation down and drove away. Really I was livid, but I controlled that raging anger inside me. I went immediately to Dr. Stegall's home to tell him thatI quit. I saw he was in his study whittling on a solid balsa model airplane. He was a master builder of his hundreds of 'made to scale' airplanes hanging everywhere. He motioned me to sit down as he kept whittling without any greeting or even looking up at me. In my state then, it made me even angrier to think I was being snubbed. I blurted out my story of Herb. He never even looked up but kept whittling and occasionally blowing away his shavings. I was angry.

I sat there silently seething. After several minutes of this silence, I began to be calmer. Finally he began to speak, still whittling and not looking at me. He started telling a story about a tourist at a fish hatchery. That did it...I blurted out, "Dr. Stegall, I did not come here to hear about a fish story." I was really angry now. I was talking loud and angry, but he ignored me. He continued telling his story that the fish hatchery man would fill the barrel with little fingerlings and just before he sealed the lid he would put a bass into the barrel. I was beginning to draw mental images of his story. He continued in a soft monotone as he continued his whittling and examining his work. I was beginning to listen somewhat. He droned on saying that the tourist asked if the bass wouldn't eat the little fingerlings. The fishery man told him, "Yes,... it would get a few, but he sure kept the others lively". I sat there dumbfounded that this was the end of the story. Then suddenly I realized what this story was about. I laughed so hard; I almost fell off the stool. He put

his whittling aside and we drank a glass of lemonade, his favorite drink. Afterwards, every time I saw Herb Peterson, I broke into a laughter or smile because I would be looking at the mouth of a huge bass. I have met other bass in life and, remembering this story, I kept lively and out of reach of that bass. Maybe we need a small bass sometimes.



The Men of the Church volunteered and worked almost every night helping to rebuild the church, sanding floors, painting, installing lighting and other tasks. The interior lighting was the original chapel lighting. It was a horizontal cross of thick pine with holes drilled out for light bulbs and suspended by a long chain. It was very dim with less than 100 watt bulbs. The bulbs heated the resin from the pine timber and would drip onto the persons seated in the pews. I had redesigned to enlarge the steeple area,

designed a steeple and built a cross atop the steeple built of cardboard and covered with fiberglass cloth and resin. It took almost a year to rebuild the church. I was transferred to Merced AFB to become a B-52 instructor pilot about two months before completion. Ken Snoddy took my place and finished the job. They had four little girls. The church waited until I got back to dedicate the sanctuary. I was honored.



The church had a high percentage of military personnel who seemed to always be transferring away while others filled their place and magnified. Within the first three years of the church, military personnel being transferred started four churches at their new destinations, Michigan, South Dakota, California and Florida. Our little fledgling church helped support them in some of their needs for Bibles and literature. We were always grateful for the good news of the growth of the churches they had planted.

Dr. Raburn, President of Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri was a frequent visitor to our church. He came with excitement one day to tell us that he had signed a contract to buy the famed Hotel Casino atop Lookout Mountain, at Chattanooga, Tenn. The city fathers had closed the gambling, liquor and prostitution operations and the hotel owners dramatically reduced their price to him, to begin a college using those facilities that had brought shame upon Chattanooga. He needed \$100,000 within thirty days. Mary and I borrowed \$5,000 as others also borrowed and donated to the purchase. He not only raised the money in ten days, but he collected enough cash to pay the full amount of \$200,000 within 30 days.

Work crews were formed from our church and other participating churches to go and rehabilitate the place for opening of the college in three



The Blueberry Pickers

Tom, Cammy, Eddy, Val, Ricky

months. The Stegall adults and Mary were unable to attend. I took their two children and our three and away we went to do whatever job we were assigned and were capable of doing. We were assigned to clean and patch the concrete swimming pool and when it was too hot or rainy to work outside, we were to strip thousands of plastic autumn leaves that had been stapled onto the ceiling of the huge bar-lounge. Those leaves smelled so much like a bar, saturated with the odors; I did not let the children do that task. One afternoon we all got baskets and went on a blueberry picking excursion walking along the mountain ridge trail from the college site to the battlefield site of Lookout Mountain. A distance of about four miles. The children were so tired when we got there, I called back to the office and someone came to get us. They all had blue tongues and lips. The cook took our berries and made a cobbler for everyone the next day at supper. I returned in the fall to survey for the septic system that was installed and for a soccer field, which is used to this day.



Mr. Reggie and Mrs. Ellen Fleet were managers of the Allied Van Lines. They were from England and were lonely for friendships. They became dear friends who loved our children. They lived in a tiny apartment, so they came to our home to visit, making themselves thoroughly at home with us and the children, who loved them as grandparents. They liked a drink called ‘chantilly’ which was half cola and half beer without ice. After a few months of our close friendship, they were called back to England. We never saw them again but we kept communications open until Mrs. Fleet died. We eventually lost contact with him.

Our children were always active into something that brought laughter or scorn from us. Cammy was about three years old when she visited her first dentist, Dr. Ferdon. Mary was sitting in the waiting room when she heard him say, “ Punkin, if you kick me again, I am going to spank you.” She never found why that little exchange happened. The boys were melting lead to make fishing sinkers when someone poured water into the molten lead. As it exploded, molten lead went everywhere. Mary found deep holes in Tom’s head days later from that molten lead. He never complained and it eventually healed..

Eddy made best scout at a scout camp. He swam across the bayou twice before we learned of it and stopped that very dangerous fun play for him. Alligators were in that bayou. Tom would never turn loose the rope when he was learning to water ski. He would lose his skis and almost drown before the boat could be stopped and he would paddle-swim up to the boat, laughing. Eddy found a Coral snake in the leaves of the yard. We usually carried the neighborhood children to Sunday School and Church. We packed



them into our Station Wagon and always had room for one more. One Sunday after church service when we got home, Tom was missing. We rushed back to the church and there was Tom, smiling, sitting on the curb. He laughed as he said, “I knew you would come back

for me". I never knew him to be really angry in his childhood, or adulthood, at least I never knew of it.

We had the 1955 Chrysler New Yorker we had bought new when we were in Bangor, Maine. Tom told us many years later that he thought they built the front of the car to smile like his mother and the back to look like his father. Eddy called spaghetti, mugetti and jello was Lad Li to him. Cammy was a tomboy, following her older brothers everywhere. Poquito Bayou was across the road and we all enjoyed the beach, swimming, boating, water skiing and good family fun. We were concerned when Eddy swam alone.

Buckingham Road was little more than a sand trail leading to our house. Mary ran alongside Tom and Cammy on their bicycles, many a mile, holding them up and yelling, "Pedal, Pedal." The sand was not a good surface to train or ride a bicycle, but it sure was easier on them than asphalt, as they were always falling. Somehow the boys, and a neighbor boy, Willy who called himself Wooly, and always had a terrible yellow to green runny nose, dug a rather deep hole in the sandy woods across from our home. Those little guys got boards from all over the neighborhood, covered it over, piled straw and dirt on top and had themselves a hideout. No one in the neighborhood even suspected they were doing this, although they saw them hauling away boards in their little red wagons. One day Tom came in filled with sand because one of the sides had partially collapsed. That is the first we knew of the hideout. That night we all went across the sand road and filled in their hideout. We told Willy's father and they helped us to fill that fair sized hole.

We put in a lawn sprinkler system and planted many shrubs and flowers in the beds. We had sodded the huge yard in St. Augustine grass. One would dig, another would place sod, another would cover and pack and another would water with the hose...Oh yes, I would supervise. We all built Mary and Cammy a greenhouse as an attachment to the garage. They both loved growing African Violets mostly, but they grew other plants too. They were told to water the violets individually from the bottom, but they turned the garden hose to spray and soaked the whole greenhouse every day. The violets thrived. The entire family joined in with projects like sodding the lawn, plantings, and household chores. We bought things as a family and one night we went to Grants Department store and bought a riding lawn mower. Everybody wanted to mow the grass now, whether it needed it or not. We had the best manicured lawn in the neighborhood. I was elected as chairman of the newly organized Neighborhood Improvement Council and neighbors teased me that I wanted recognition as the best lawn when I suggested that we recognize well-kept yards monthly. Eddy was mowing the side yard one day and the blade struck something like a rock. He investigated and dug out a grenade from the lawn. It was a wonderful experience for me to watch our family working together.

The floors were beautiful Oak Parquet squares. They waxed so nice and Mary had well coordinated scatter rugs with nonskid backing placed about. We had been in the house about three months when we had a disaster. Mary was in Montgomery with Sarah after surgery. We had gone to the movie, "How to Murder Your Wife" with Dr. Stegall. When we opened the front door, the house was flooded. The dishwasher became stuck and flooded the floor. We mopped and scooped water most of the rest of the night. The next

morning those beautiful Oak Parquet flooring squares had curled up like potato chips. It had gone all over the house. We had it fixed in about a week, but it was never the same.

We became good friends of the builders of our house, Elise and Albin Acree. She was the builder as he worked at Eglin AFB. One stormy night about midnight, Al came to our home asking for me to go with him to take his cabin cruiser boat and park it in a slip next to where our boat was. A hurricane was bearing down on Ft. Walton Beach about fifty miles offshore with a predicted surge of ten feet, which would push his cruiser through his boathouse roof. I reluctantly got dressed and joined him to take his boat far out into Choctahatchee Bay, almost to Destin and then back to Niceville and on into the Eglin harbor where we kept our boat. It would be a twelve-mile trip. I tried to dissuade him from going and I almost refused to go because he was now so distraught he was not acting or thinking with reasoning. I felt that I must go now, to attempt to settle him down. I checked the fuel levels, battery security, lights, anchor secure and that he had multiple life jackets that fit. I did not feel good about that awesome bay in a storm at night.

Off we went on this ill-conceived adventure to save his twenty-four foot cabin cruiser. The bayou waters were choppy more than usual and when we got out into the open bay, the waves began to swell, to as much as ten feet by my estimate. Al was going insane with fear. He was shouting at the top of his lungs “Oh Lord, Oh Lord, get me out of this and I will straighten up.” The boat was pitching wildly and got sideways to those huge roller waves. I thought we were about to capsize and I held onto another preserver besides the one I was wearing. A very large wave struck his boat with such force that he was knocked away from the wheel and was on the deck in a fetal position still screaming his “Oh Lord, Oh Lord, get me out of this and I will straighten up” bargaining plea. I made a lunge for the wheel and throttle and was able to maneuver the boat to catch the waves to the stern and with throttle control, ride the waves back toward the bayou. When we got into the calmer waters of the bayou, Albin came up from the floor and forcefully took the wheel and throttle. He kept full throttle on, in the bayou, heading the boat toward his waterfront home. He hit the beach at full throttle. I was sure the boat would be fiberglass splinters as it was ricocheting off the pine trees in his spacious yard at about forty miles and hour. It came to rest in his driveway about 150’ from the beach, with the throttle at full power. Albin jumped out of the boat and ran up his driveway about fifty feet. He slowly came back to his boat, cursing like I had never heard before. His boat suffered heavy damage. He was cursing God for sending the hurricane and everything else he could think of. Neighbors came out to see what was the terrific explosion crash they had heard. The wind was now howling and it was raining cold rain going horizontal. I left him. I saw him about a month later and he was his same old profane self.



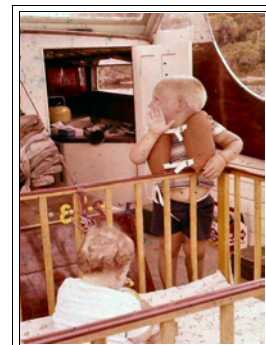
We bought a Volkswagen Minivan one day when we were visiting in Montgomery. The children loved it because they could stand up and climb all over the inside of the thing. It was very roomy. One day we went to Bon Secour, south of Foley, to see my classmate and good friend John Ray Nelson who was the owner and operator of Bon Secour Fisheries. This was a very popular wholesale fish outlet throughout the

Southeast. We had ordered 100 pounds of frozen shrimp in four twenty-five pound boxes. We were almost home when we had engine trouble and could go no farther. A friend came along, took us home, helped put the shrimp in the freezer and took me back to the Volkswagen with tools. He helped me get it started again and get it home. We have had so many wonderful friends, everywhere. Not long after this, I was traveling about 40 mph on base at Eglin when the left front axle broke. The tire and wheel came loose and really gave me a bounce. It was such a bounce that I thought I was about to turn over as the entire front end came up off the pavement, giving me a good bump on the head. Now, that was some ride until I could get it stopped and off the highway. I sold it to the tow truck driver. He took me home to get the title.



We bought, maybe I should say, I bought a 28 foot cabin cruiser powered by a straight eight Chrysler engine. We bought fishing tackle and all the gear to enjoy trolling fishing on the Gulf. The family loaded onto the boat, complete with life preservers and we all went out for a test run in Choctahatchee Bay. We needed to first get refreshments and dockside fuel in Valparaiso. As I approached the dock at a rather slow speed in neutral, we just sailed on past the dock. Turning around and trying again, I put it in neutral and then to reverse as we sailed past the dock again. By this time a crowd had begun to gather on the dock to watch this accident about to happen. I could hear them laughing and jeering “Atta way to go Fly Boy” as I approached this third time. I had the approach speed right. I went into neutral for a few seconds and put it into reverse but I did not rev the engine in reverse to stop the forward motion, so we went sailing by for the third time. I thought of what my father had said about the frog, to keep kicking. I thought of the lesson of Mr. Fikes so many years ago, “Just get in there with them, we are all the same” and I decided to try one more time. I looked around and the children were hiding in the cabin from embarrassment but Mary was sitting in a chair on the aft deck so nonchalant in her big sun hat like Katherine Hepburn, floating down the river in the “African Queen.” I was determined to do it right this time. The dock crowd had gotten bigger and louder, raising their beer steins, cans and bottles in a jeering salute. I slowly aimed the boat to come alongside the dock, approaching with forward idle throttle, for steering control, and then at the right moment I went from forward to neutral and then reverse, giving the engine a little throttle to stop the boat at precisely the right spot at the dockside fuel tank. The crowd cheered and dismissed. The children came out of hiding. We all had refreshments and I got fifty gallons of gasoline for \$13.00. I left that dock, not seasoned, but a lot wiser about boats.

We had many wonderful family outings on the boat, catching King and Spanish Mackerel, Pompano and the fight of a Bonito. We always caught fish when we fished in the gulf through the Destin Pass. Tom would go to sleep on the mahogany engine cover as soon as we got underway. A former B-29 co-pilot and friend, Joe Neal of Macon, Georgia, came to visit for a few days and do some fishing. Joe teased Tom as he poured a little beer on his cigar



minnow bait, that this would attract the big fish. He immediately got a strike and landed a huge 14 pound King Mackerel. Tom was hooked; he wanted Joe to put beer on his minnow every ten minutes if the fish were not striking his lure. Joe ‘messed up’ his mind for several months at least.

Our pastor Dr. Carroll Stegall loved to go fishing. We went out about every week during the season. On this particular trip, we were alone and fishing for Cobia that swam near the shoreline. He was up on the cabin roof when he spotted a huge Cobia. He had an artificial lure which was not a good lure for Cobia, but nevertheless he kept teasing that Cobia, placing the lure before its swimming path and as it would prepare to strike, he would snatch the lure away, casting and teasing again and again. I had my hands full trying to keep the boat from striking bottom because we were between the fish and the beach. I was also keeping the bow pointed ahead of the Cobia for him to have his fun at teasing that Cobia, as it swam along parallel to the beach. I thought he had lost his opportunity several times, but we kept sight of this huge fish and propelled the boat some distance ahead and along its path. After some time of this cat and mouse teasing the fish. I was beginning to be frustrated, but it was his game and he was literally “reeling in it.”

The lure was out there, clearly visible before the waves made a surf. He began to speak out in a language I didn’t understand. I learned later that he was praying in his boyhood tongue of Belgian Congo Swahili. He began speaking this jumbo faster and faster in an almost hushed tone at first but it got louder and more desperate. His father would do this same thing when we fished. I loved fishing with him because he told so many uplifting stories of his days in the Congo, riding his motorcycle on the jungles trails and always carrying tooth puller pliers in his pocket to pull the natives teeth. He was a missionary.

I watched the Cobia as it made a vicious swirl and strike the lure from a side motion with lightning speed. He set the hook as hard as he could. We learned when we cleaned that fish, he had no cause to set the hook because it was buried deep into its’ gullet. He fought that fish for more than three hours because he had only a twelve-pound test line and didn’t want to lose this, his biggest fish ever to catch. I kept pace with the Cobia following its every move as he, sitting in a chair atop the cabin held pressure almost doubling the rod. Sometimes he would gain a foot of line and loose two or more. I was reminded of the “Old Man and the Sea” by Ernest Hemmingway. At last, the fisherman and fish were both exhausted as the Cobia came alongside the boat but I was unable to gaff it. It sounded twice more before I was able to gaff and hold this thirty-six pound Cobia. He jumped down from the cabin top, knocking his chair into the Gulf, almost losing his rod and reel, but we both held onto that gaff and Cobia as it fought us during the entire landing. We won.

He was in fine physical condition, but after more than three hours of reeling and fighting with that Cobia, he was totally exhausted. We had drunk all of our water and colas. His mouth was so dry he could barely speak. I remembered one can of beer down in the cabin that was left by Joe Neal. I went to get it but he quickly and adamantly declined. After about ten minutes he asked me to get it, that he



might take just a little sip to rinse his mouth. I went down into the cabin to get it and, Oh No. It had rusted and all leaked out.

We laughed all the way back to Destin. We were about ten miles East, down the beach from Destin and another three miles to our base dock. We stopped at Destin to get water and ice, and to do a little show and tell bragging, before we went on to our docking slip at the Eglin marina. That was certainly a day to remember for the both of us.

Fishing for King Mackerel was so assuring to catch whatever amount was desired, that our church on two occasions announced a Saturday noon fish fry before we had any fish. We were so confident, that four fisherpersons and myself as driver, would leave the Destin dock at daylight, go offshore less than a mile, catch about 100 pounds of mackerel before mid-morning, return and have them cleaned, filleted, or steaked and ready for Bill Trimm, Earl Smith and their cooking crew before noon. A fish fry always brought out everybody in the church and visitors too. We had so many fish fries with hush puppies, coleslaw and beans, that we were called “that fish church”. We accepted that title and organized ourselves into a fisherman’s club and wore a little gold plated lapel fish. We were evangelistic in this as we were fishers for men, going about the neighborhood asking those who were unchurched to come, worship and fellowship with us. The church membership grew mightily. We considered two worship services, as the church seemed to be filled every Sunday morning. We decided against that as people filled the balcony.

The family loved our fishing outings or sometimes just a boat ride with snacks or even a full meal aboard. We were enroute home from a fishing trip that had led us about eight miles offshore, racing at full speed to get to our docking slip before the terrible lightning storm cloud could catch us. We were in the middle of Choctawhatchee Bay as the storm was upon us.



I stopped the engine, as the family all got into the cabin to ride it out, dead in the water as they say. The worst lightning I have ever seen struck all about us, leaving the odor of ozone saturating the air. The lightning struck several times as close as twenty feet with deafening sounds. Mary was holding the children down in the cabin and praying. I was very concerned, even though everyone was in life jackets. That lightning storm with strong winds creating heavy seas lasted about ten minutes and moved on. Eddy started the engine and steered us in the moderately heavy waves of the bay, on to our dock. I think everyone was watching him and forgot the fears of a few minutes ago. It worked.



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We took a week vacation to visit the Kissling family and tour North Georgia Mountains during their apple season. It was a wonderful trip with the family all in good health and



spirits. They took us out to Stone Mountain and we rode the train on its entertainment program around the mountain. The big feature was when the Indians jumped aboard the passenger train and ran wild down the aisles, while the crowds screamed and yelled. Tom was very quiet amid all the shooting, scalping, war whoops and excitement. When the Indians cleared the train, Bob asked Tom, who was sitting very tight against him, what he thought about the Indian raid. Tom told him in a somber tone and expression, that he wished he had a gun because he would “Pow Pow” all of them. He remembered that shoot-out raid many times in his nightmares for several weeks. It was very realistic to all of us as some passengers were a part of the act.

One day I was enroute to work and was at the section of the entry road that parallels the three-mile runway for a distance. The road was about 200 feet from the side of the runway, and was separated by a shallow ditch and small scrub oak trees. I was traveling about 40 mph as I saw an unusual movement from the runway. A B-47 drone aircraft (radio controlled, pilot-less) was leaving the right side of the runway and was headed for the road. It slammed across the small ravine and flames burst from it. I slammed on brakes hard, as the drone passed about 100 feet in front of me, crossing the road and careening into a deep ravine on the right side of the road. I could feel the heat from it as it passed in front of me. It burst into flames and nobody went into that ravine to check for survivors. Several crash/rescue trucks had been standing by on the sides of the runway and were there on the scene before I could even get out of the Ford stationwagon. They told us it was a drone and for us to clear the highway and move on. That was a close call.

I was working in the Command Center and flying the B-52 whenever I could get scheduled. Sometimes budget cuts would affect the flying of the aircraft to the extent that pilots and other crewmembers would be overly scheduled (too many persons for the available stations) for the few flights available. There are only four positions available to log pilot time; AC, Aircraft Commander; IP, Instructor Pilot; P, Pilot and CP, Co pilot. Often, five pilots would be scheduled for the same flight. This meant that someone must be deadhead part time and log no time. This happened to me a lot even though I was rated as an Aircraft Commander. It was not personal, it was an economy crunch. I was also an Air Force qualified Navigator, Radar Operator and Bombardier as a result of the special school at James B. Connally AFB, Waco, Texas. I would simply log my dead time as Navigator. I must have more than 600 hours as Navigator, which is a mild sort of insult to those few of us who were select pilots to go to Waco for B-1 training and now have to deadhead or log Navigator time in order to give some staff pilot a chance to log pilot time. Sometimes those flights were 20, 30 or even 40 hours aloft. I often wondered



“What am I doing up here?” I was flying the twin engine Cessna U-3 twice a week on radar site mail courier runs to Eufala, Demopolis, Jackson, Alexandria, and Houma. I flew other aircraft based at Eglin. Fighter test pilots liked to take me up and “wring it out” with that B-52 pilot in the back seat. I never got sick, wobbly maybe, but not sick in the bag. The only time I went through the sound barrier was on one of the piggyback rides in a F-105 and we went to Mach 1.4. I was on

the stick as he was monitoring the throttle. I was disappointed after all the hype about the speed of sound flutter that was not there. It was a great “Boom Buster” ride.

The Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe was founded and headquartered in a specially built installation near Paris, France. A high security area had been well fortified and secured as the site for the Strategic Air Command, SAC, to monitor the ultra sensitive signals from the Pentagon that would alert and launch missiles and nuclear loaded aircraft in the event of the beginnings of WW III. This concept of how the Nuclear war was to be conducted was called “The Roll Back,” meaning that short range nuclear missals would be launched simultaneous as medium range fighter bombers were launched as well as the entire fleet of long range bomber loaded with six nuclear weapons to strike deep into enemy territory. The nuclear devastation would roll back from the European area to deep into the USSR territory. All of this European based activity would be set in motion from our confines at the old SHAPE headquarters War Room as we would receive the coded message from Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs.

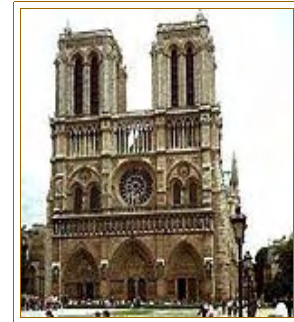
Six highly trained officers manned this facility 24/7 even after the main headquarters and all others had moved to Brussels two years earlier. I was selected to be one of those Officers to duty in 1963, for three months, Nov, Dec Jan. We all stayed in the Miami Hotel about two blocks from the Arch of Triumph. We had a staff car with driver assigned to us. I was enchanted with the sights, sounds and smells of Paris. I even enjoyed a visit to the Chiens doggie cemetery on an island in the middle of the Seine River. Now that was a fascinating place. Oh My, the money those French people put into Marble, Granite, and Brass tombstones, statues of doggies and artistic designs. It was remarkable to me as I spent several hours there. The rides on the METRO were fascination for the many places I could go and see wonders of the ancient and modern cultures. I enjoyed the art shops and junk art shops in the Montmartre District. The name comes from the tale tourist guides tell tourists that a monk was beheaded. He picked up his head climbed the 100 plus steps to the top of the Mt. and became a Martyr.

I was in the Pigalle District, WW II soldiers named the red light district “Pig Alley” and it stuck, standing in line for a ticket to see “Moulin Rouge” by Toulouse Lautrec when a speaker announced that President Kennedy had been assassinated. I took the metro back to the Arch and went immediately to the Hotel. We all went to the command Post and lived there for the next three days. I never did go back to the Pig Alley or get to see the play. I think that may be where the “Can Can” originated. I think the red light district reputation had been cleaned up and it appeared to be just another tourist attraction for shows. There were places we were advised not to go however. These places were considered “Off Limits” to American service men and I believed them to be dangerous.

It was Christmas Eve night 1963 and the four of us at the Miami Hotel began singing carols. We got louder and louder in our singing and heard people singing along with us down in the street below our window. We went down and all began to sing, the same carol but it was sung in at least four languages at the same time. It was hilarious. Everyone commented about those ‘Crazy Americans.’ It was a good three months of exploring new worlds of culture and old worlds of historical sites. I went to Amsterdam,

Marken Island and other places. I think Marken Island was the most interesting of the places I had to visit in such a short time. They seemed to have so many of the things I had heard about of the Dutch, such as wooden shoes, huge windmills that turned in the breeze, dikes and levees, pottery, glassware and just all sorts of things to go broke fast. The canals with observation boats, cafes, Anne Frank home, art galleries and museums and so many thing to see and experience in Amsterdam. I saw all that time permitted. Before I was about to leave, I visited a bank and bought Mary a five dollar US gold eagle coin of 1929. They had lots of US gold coinage, impossible to buy in the US.

One of the men knew I really enjoyed oysters, any way they were served. He came in from a round of drinking with half a bushel of oysters to celebrate my birthday. I seemed to be the only one who knew how to open them so I set to work. We were all eating as fast as I could open them. One of the men ran across the street to Marie's restaurant and got crackers, sauce and lemons. The owner, Marie, was a friend who loved Americans and had one of the finest of neighborhood restaurants. We spent a lot of time at her place. Anyway, we were down to the bottom of the burlap bag, having eaten most of that half bushel. The oysters were getting smaller and smaller. I was using the only knife I could find, a serrated steak knife. My hands were cold and slippery wet and I made a mistake. The knife slipped and I cut my left hand between the little finger and the ring finger, to the bone. I held my fingers closed and stopped the bleeding. The five of us, one of the bachelors had a date, piled into a taxi and went to a hospital. They refused to accept Americans. The French lady directed the taxi driver to two other hospitals and I was refused treatment at these as well because I was an American pilot and something may go wrong with the surgical repair. We were all getting desperate. She directed the taxi driver to take us to the Notre Dame Cathedral, down an alley way and to a room with a light. She explained that this was the resident doctor for the Cathedral. We all went in and he refused to sew up the wound, which was beginning to ache with pain. I told him to give me the needle and thread. He handed me a curved needle, which seemed to have a long thread attached to it somehow. I asked for iodine and he gave me that too. I made a puncture on one side, brought the thread through and did the same for the other side of the wound. I was having trouble doing this closure of the deep wound with one hand. I think he mumbled a prayer, took the needle and thread and finished the job with several pretty laces, and no anesthetics. I have a scar there but I have perfect use of the fingers involved. I will always be grateful to the French lady date and that young doctor who performed a Good Samaritan deed in the wee hours of the morning. The next day I took him two bottles of five star cognac. The taxi driver was well tipped and he was grateful.

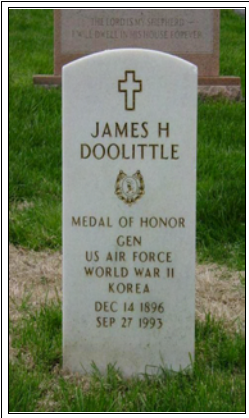


Notre Dame Cathedral

I was grateful to get back home after the three-month absence. I was home a few months when I was sent back to Castle AFB, Merced Calif. to train for Flight Instructor Pilot training in the B-52G. This was to be a six weeks course of instruction with a lot of flying and no class work. Major John Doolittle, son of the famed Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, was my Instructor. He had remembered me from the time I had prepared the personal effects of his brother William, after his death at Bergstrom AFB in Austin, Texas. He saw my name

as an incoming pilot for the instructor course and he requested that I be his student. I was thrilled. We became friends and I enjoyed the times I could baby-sit their children. The twins, Pat and Mike were the age of Eddy and we had a lot of fun together. John had a unique cold beer dispenser. He took a refrigerator and converted it to hold a keg of beer with a tank of compressed air to keep pressure on it and put a fancy pull dispenser in the front door. He liked beer and always kept a fresh mug while he was home.

His delightful wife Patricia served Artichokes as the vegetable one evening. I had never eaten this. We all laughed as I tried to grip the leaf between my teeth and pull it to extract the goodness of this plant. They invited me to accompany them for a four-day visit to the Doolittle compound in Santa Monica, California. I was very honored. It was one of the most memorable weekends I could remember. General and Mrs. Doolittle were the perfect hosts. I felt that they wanted to know about me while I wanted to know about them. I was able to spend hours in his presence; just asking and listening with idolization. He was one of the most remarkable men I have ever known. He had an open air, custom built Volkswagen bus so he could take people about the compound with pride. He was one of the firsts to have a camper on wheels, custom built by Volkswagen. His garage workshop was filled with tinkering projects. I often baby-sat their daughter and the twins back in Atwater, just outside Castle AFB. They were fun children.



Mrs. Moon Brown was the maid who attended to my floor in the BOQ. She and her husband were full Creek Indians from Sapulpa, Oklahoma. She was a very smart woman and I enjoyed visiting many evenings in their home just off base in Atwater. He enjoyed two drinks of Jack Daniels liquor a day. I would usually take them a bottle when I ate with them. The whole family played their guitars and did a very good job. They usually sang in Creek. About two weeks before I was scheduled to leave, she and her husband asked me if I would take Moon and their twelve-year-old daughter, Starlight to their home in Oklahoma. I looked it up on the map and it was not really out of the way. John and Patricia Doolittle knew the Browns personally, as she did housework for her on occasions. They approved. I agreed to take them. They offered to pay gasoline and the one night of their motel. I agreed to the motel but I would pay all auto expenses.

They loaded the Ford Woody Wagon full of things they wished to carry. They wanted to go now as this was their "Corn Harvest" or "Busk" festival and she was a leader of her clan, "The Bear". The trip was uneventful as they chattered in Creek the whole trip. She did plead that I come to the festival and it would take only three days. She said I would never regret the time and experience of this adventure. She has been right. We were to get there the afternoon before it started early the next morning. I agreed to attend. We went to her family's home and unloaded some of the piles of "stuff". Early the next morning, she and her family all piled into the station wagon somehow, and we drove about five miles to the campground. The various clans had their grounds staked out and brush arbor shelters had been constructed on each side of a level, cleared grassy area about the size of a football field. They carried blankets and utensils to their designated area preparing to

stay at the campgrounds for several days. Not for me. I realized somewhere in this activity, these were a very serious people about their Busk, and I began to wonder what in the world was I doing here. The children played kick ball and other running games on the spacious grassy open field surrounded by the clan camps, each with a campfire before it.

About noon, without having eaten breakfast, everyone began to drink from a wooden bucket with a gourd dipper that was being passed around. I sipped but little Miss. Starlight insisted that I drink more and more. It was a gagging bitter tonic of some kind, and I had had enough. Within a matter of minutes my stomach was wrenching in knots. I thought I had been poisoned. My whole body ached in pain. Some men led me to a slit trench toilet. The burlap cloth hung on a framework offered minimal modesty walls. I couldn't seem to get my clothes off fast enough. I was given a loincloth, but I was too occupied to think of putting that thing on. Some men brought the bucket and dipper back and told me it would help in the pain. I gulped some more. I really thought I was going to die now and Mary would never learn what had happened to me. I was so weak I couldn't stand. They put me under the Bear Clan shelter. I agonized all afternoon and into the evening. I think I may have lost 10-15 pounds. They beat on their homemade drums all evening and night. About ten men would beat on one huge drum, with the same beat over and over. Each clan had a different drum. It was mesmerizing. Drums were everywhere.

The dancers, men, women and children all danced until they seemed to pass out. They had dried turtle shells with stones in them strapped to their arms, legs and torso. Well into the night I began to recover somewhat and I almost enjoyed the dancing rituals as they wove in and out in circles so gracefully with their steps and the shaking of the turtle shells. Mrs. Brown began to talk to me sometime in the night, explaining the rituals. The place smelled like a forest fire as every clan kept a fire before their shelter. I was unable to sleep because of the painful diarrhea and body aches all over. At daylight, men brought unshucked ears of roasted corn in a basket. Everyone was taking one, so did I. The corn shuck was to be pulled back, exposing the corn and left as a handle to desilk and eat the corn off the cob. It was good and very sweet. I have seen these at carnivals since that day.

I stayed awake all day enchanted with all the activity and the children's play. That afternoon, I was taken with three others, all of us in immodest loincloths, before a man in the center of the clearing. He was the Chief. He did not wear feathers but was dressed in very bright colored clothes and a strange hat, the likes that I had never seen. Mrs. Brown had told me this was the "scratching ceremony" that completed my initiation into the Bear clan of the Creek Nation of Native North Americans. He took an eagle claw, at least that is what they said it was, and scratched the calf of each leg and a slight scratch on my chest, just enough to get blood. I was first and I was glad because there was no effort to sanitize that hideous claw foot. No one uttered a sound during the scratching procedure. Even the drums were silent for the first time. I felt no pain. I did feel the trickle of blood.

That night the entire campground ate a most delicious meal of meats. I was afraid to ask what it was. Peas, corn, pumpkins, beans, okra and tomato gumbo, lined the long tables along with delicious breads, pastries and delicacies. Mrs. Brown had explained these ritualistic events with great enthusiasm and I hadn't listened closely enough. She

explained more to me that night after the meal. The campground was hard, but I slept well. The next day I left them after many thanks and handshakes, wondering why I ever submitted to such a ritual. I felt good physically, better than I had in a long time. When I got home, I told Mary of these things She laughed and teased me that this was just another one of my curiosity adventures that I was so gullible to be involved in. Maybe so.

During the Cuban Crisis I was at the Command Center for five days without seeing the family, yet knowing of the stress they were experiencing. Mary had prepared the family for evacuation, if it was called for. She had stocked on juices and fluids as well as cans of staples, vegetables and meats such as tuna, Spam, hash and other canned meats. There were no school days so she had control and kept the children in close quarters.

At the Command Center, Pentagon Brass and dignitaries invaded us, but not as bad as at Homestead AFB, south of Miami. All flying was suspended. Aircrews and ground crews were sequestered in makeshift quarters, sleeping on cots. All test alerts from NORAD and SAC Headquarters were suspended. If that red button lit-up and rang, and the code being sent, matched the code we held, it was the start and the end of the “Atomic War”. Aircraft would be launched toward their Russian targets with six hydrogen bombs on each aircraft, and absolutely no way to recall them. I repeat, there was no way to recall the aircraft. I was intimately familiar with this system of codes for launching aircraft.

During the second day of the crisis, I was lying in my cot when the clear vision of the fallacy of this code launch system and the remedy for it appeared to me. I rushed in to tell Colonel Wilson about it. He instantly grasped what I was telling him, both the fallacy and the solution. He made some quick telephone calls. He arranged for a F-101, dual seater, to take me to Westover AFB in Mass. and explain the situation to the Eighth AF Commanding General John Ryan. I remembered him from Biggs AFB, El Paso, but I was not about to remind him of that event. I was escorted under three armed guards to his office under the Mountain Command Headquarters a few miles away. I had about a ten-minute explanation to give him. He asked a few questions and instructed me not to talk to anyone about this subject or my visit to his office. I was escorted back to the plane and was back at Eglin that afternoon. I trembled at the thought that someone would or could compromise the system and intentionally start that dreaded “Atomic War” of obliteration. After the Russians turned their ships around and headed for home, the crisis was over.



F-101 Voodoo

My suggestion of a revised code system of launching aircraft towards targets in Russia was implemented. It was called “Fail Safe” and the public was reassured that SAC was always in full command of its Atomic fleet of aircraft by authorizing and encouraging a book called “Fail Safe.” Colonel Wilson was always friendly to me and when I asked him about not yet receiving the rank of Major; he told me clearly that he had no control. He explained that because I did not have a college degree “even in fashion designing” he said, I would never receive that promotion until I retired. The Air Force wanted an officer

force of all college graduates and I was the last of those officers to not have a degree. He told me if I had not been receiving such outstanding annual efficiency reports through the years, I would have already been RIF (Reduction In Force) out of the Air Force. My pride was crushed. For the first time I felt dejected and a victim of Air Force Bureaucracy.

I designed and had base civil engineering shops build a very innovative-lighted flight following board. The board was built using three sheets 4' x 8' inch thick clear plastic Plexiglas. These were mounted in sliding spaces before a matching piece of plywood with an aeronautical map glued to it. Fluorescent bulbs were mounted at the clear sides of the Plexiglas and light would be directed through the selected panel and brightly showing the colored grease pencil markings used to mark routes, bomb runs, low level flight corridors and other significant data of in-flight following on a selected sheet of Plexiglas. Sounds complicated but it was simple and handsomely finished. Col. Wilson delighted in demonstrating this board to visiting VIP. Of course he claimed credit.

Colonel Wilson was replaced by Col. Earl Johnston, who declared that four years in the Command center was too long in any one assignment. Since I was a qualified Instructor Pilot, I should be assigned to the operational squadron of aircrews. They were filled with pilots already and could not use me except as a relief copilot. I was asked if I would like to go to Homestead and fly the new B-52H. Mary and I discussed it and with the children. We decided to decline the offer. SAC had a little known policy, if an officer had served more than twelve years in SAC, that officer might be assigned to a base of choice depending upon availability. I invoked that policy, asking to be assigned as Air Attaché to the Israeli Air Force. Personnel informed me that the position would not be available for another year. They did say that a position requiring the grade of Lt. Colonel was opening in Cigli AB, Izmir, Turkey. The job was Chief of Plans and Programs, Middle East. We got a map, found Izmir and read all the available literature about it.

We all voted and yes, we would like this assignment. In fact, we leaped at this opportunity for the family to spend our final three years together in a friendly overseas nation. I also hoped that performing well in such a position, that I would be promoted, which would help in retirement pay. I asked to be retired at the end of my twenty-year career and I would be thirty-nine years old. At this same time the Eglin B-52 organization received notification to be transferred to Barksdale AFB, Shreveport, Louisiana.

There was an epidemic of some strange strain of influenza that had really flooded the hospitals with patients. Mary, Tom and Cammy all came down with it. When I tried to get them into the hospital, we were turned away; patients were lying in cots in the hallways with nurses trying to control their temperatures. I was not able to control the temperatures of Tom and Cammy except to fill the tub and put them in, keeping the water flowing and sponging the tops of their heads. Now that was a chore for me, I was crying while they were screaming at the top of their lungs and clamoring to get out of that tub. Let me tell you, they were strong and I had only two hands to keep them in that tub.

They still ran temperatures that were hot to my touch. I couldn't keep thermometers in their mouths. Mary would sometimes be delirious with fever. I was truly scared. I got a

plastic sheet, put a beach towel over her body and poured cold water on her from head to toe, soak that up and do it again and again. Eddy was helping with Tom and Cammy while I was giving attention to Mary. This went on all day and into the night. I became groggy from lack of sleep and exhaustion after two days of caring. I was becoming too emotional. I am certain that it was the Lord who sent our loving neighbor, Dina Pierra, to check on us, as she had not seen activity for two days. She was from England and was truly a neighbor. She brought her two little girls over and they literally moved in until Mary could recover enough to sit up, which was several days. Dina was skilled in nursing and she took over the nursing of all three, keeping their fevers down and feeding them broth for nourishment and dehydration prevention. She insisted I get some sleep and I took further orders from her. I hope the Lord has three shiny stars for her crown. It was a long recovery for all of them especially Mary, who never smoked another cigarette.

I had a two months waiting period before we could go to Turkey and it was as though I had no organization now to be responsible to. I asked to be assigned to the Base Civil Engineering organization. I went down to interview with them and the captain told me he would be glad to grant me my wish to operate a motor grader, that is commonly called a road scraper. He told me to come to his office the next morning at seven, dressed in civilian work clothes and bring my lunch and not to disclose that I was an Air Force Officer. I was taken down to the equipment yard and given about a thirty minute demonstration of what all those levers and pedals could do to tilt the front wheels, angle the blade, slew the blade and that was called my check out. I was introduced to two real comedians that I was to work with. They called themselves Pat and Mike and called me Mo. We got into an Air Force truck; I had to take the middle as they got the windows so they could spit their snuff and chew. We went far back into the very wooded Eglin Reservation, the largest Base in the Air Force. They have miles and miles of sand roads.

A road grading crew is kept busy year-round scraping and working these sand and clay roads. The way we did it was for Pat to fix his blade and tilt his front wheels so as to clean the ditches and put the sand onto the edge of that lane of the road. My job was the easiest to follow behind and spread the sand and clay to make that lane of the road. Mike followed me as he smoothed the center of the road. We would grade until noon and stop at one of their fishing holes they knew so well. They carried fishing line and hooks in a little case in the bib of their overalls. They would cut a slender pole, dig for worms or catch grasshoppers and fish. I can't remember a day when we fished that they didn't catch three big fish, put them on a limb spit and cook them over a campfire. We swapped sandwich halves and had a happy meal with their antics. I liked peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with nuts sprinkled on the jelly. I would fix two and give them one to halve. They would each give me a half sandwich of maybe bologna or ham. We shared fruit too.

We enjoyed our times for about a month, until they found out that I was an Officer. They thought I was from the Inspector Generals office checking on them. No more fishing, no more shared sandwiches and fruit and no more jokes and antics. I tried for a few days to convince them otherwise but to no avail. They were uncomfortable with me. I had to go.

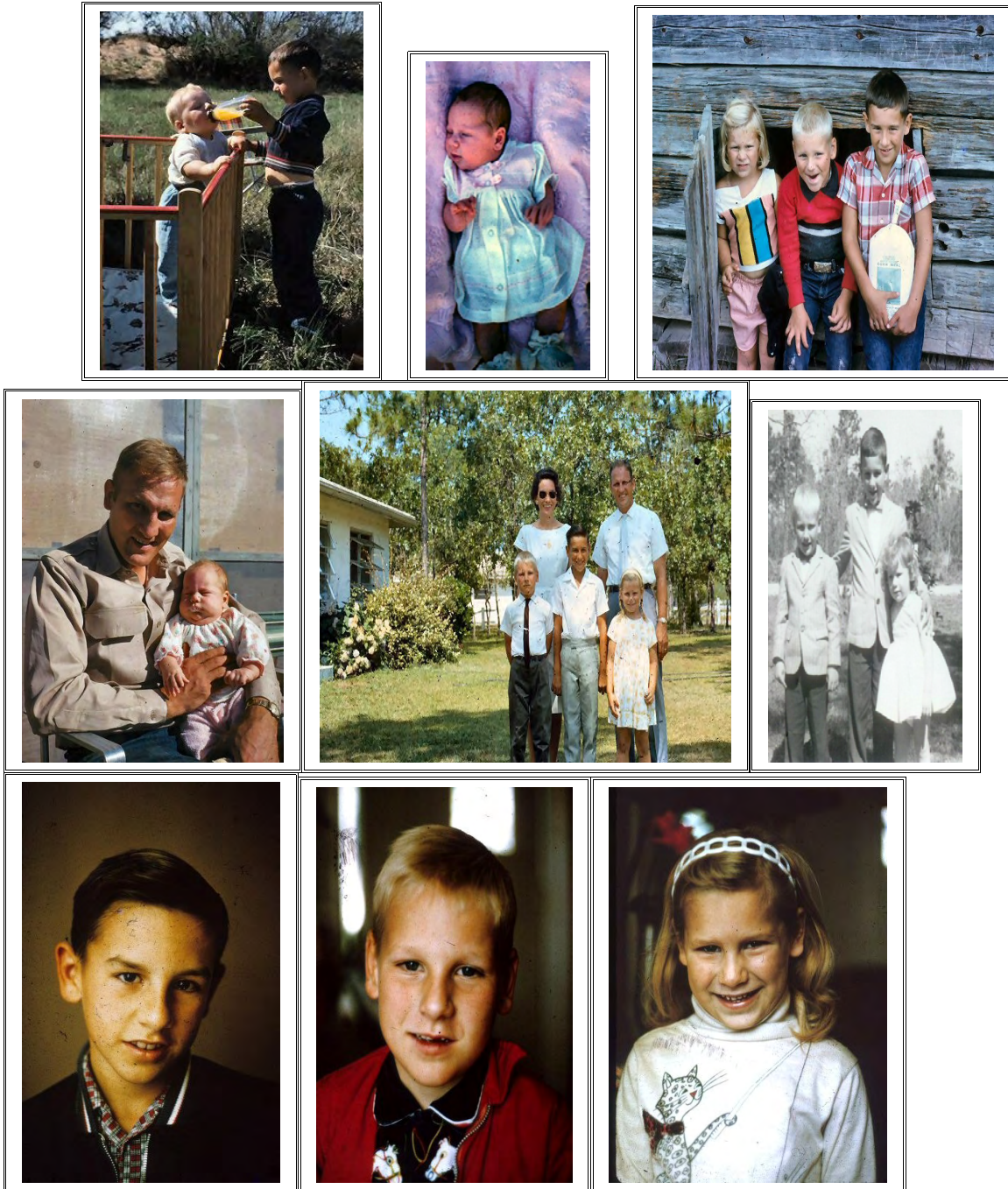
I went to the Captain, who knew of the situation and he let me operate a big Caterpillar D-9, clearing trees from a path for a new drone airstrip. After about a week of this monotony, I was assigned to an engineer named Clarence Moody from De Funiak Springs. My first day with him we played hooky and went up there to fly his Aeronica Champion. It was a pleasant two weeks following him as each day he took me to some fascinating site where a wee bit of history had been made. Eglin was the Air Force development, test and proving ground. I had never realized that so much history had been made there at Eglin. He gave me a tour to see the stripes on the old runway that the Doolittle raiders practiced their carrier take-offs from thirteen years earlier. I had practiced making takeoffs from that runway in a B-25 a few years earlier. The runway had been abandoned and Xed, meaning its' use was prohibited but I used it several times anyway. I found out later that every B-25 pilot at Eglin AFB had tried it too. I could never get it off before crossing the line indicating the end of the Hornet's flight deck. I had never seen it before that day, but there was one big yellow stripe across the runway and several different colored small stripes before and after the start stripes for calculating wind and carrier speed. The B-25 I had flown into Eglin back in 1951 was in place in the Doolittle Park nearby the Valpariso entrance to the base. I was honored to have flown it.

Clarence took me one day to the site where Chuck Yeager made his famed sled ride, setting a world record for acceleration and deceleration in a series of tests. The equipment was intact and the sled was there in a storage shed. We went to the bomb test range and he explained how EOD scientists measured the damage done by various bombs. One day we went out to the beach to the stratosphere launch site to see how they launched missiles with various chemical smoke trails far out, deep into the stratosphere. I had seen these trails on occasions as they left pretty cloud trails just about two hours after sunset. I enjoyed those two weeks with Clarence. He was a good asset to the engineering section.

I finally got my orders to report for duty at Cigli AB in Izmir, Turkey. We had gotten passports, shots, medical records, dog tags for everyone and arranged for movers to come and pick up our household goods. They took great care in packing and crating our dishes and household goods. We discarded many items of furniture and clothing to reduce the weight to within limits. I was provided five Pan American Airways tickets, and compensation money to drive the family vehicle to New York, with hotel reservations.

Life there on Buckingham Drive, a sand trail to our home, has always held special significance for me, as this is where the children grew up. We had spent six years there in helping them through some little people growing pains as well as sharing some of their discovery amazement of the wonders of life's excitement. It was a wonderful time for our family growing, sharing, learning, experiencing and experimenting and being themselves.





I got some cardboard and painted a sign with black shoe polish, "House for Sale" and stuck it on a stick down on the Bayou frontal road. About two hours later the doorbell rang and it was a man with the sign in his hand. We sold the house that quick, thinking maybe we sold too cheap. We bought a Jeep Wagoneer, four-wheel drive, all terrain vehicle. On one of our trips to the holy lands, we learned why we were often waved through checkpoints, because it was the same kind of vehicle used by the United Nations.

We went by way of Stockton where we were given a farewell dinner party by relatives. It was the last time I saw my beloved Grandmama Bryant. We went by Montgomery to see

Mother Eidson and Sarah. It was the last time we ever saw our beloved “Aunt Sally”. We also went by way of Atlanta to see Bob, Martha and family. His career was with the US Public Health Service in the grade of Navy Captain, or full Colonel. He was a virologist and made significant discoveries in isolating viruses like the Monkey disease, VA disease and many projects that greatly benefited humanity in health. He and Martha spent three years in Hawaii at the Leprosy Colony Sanatorium isolating the virus for treatment. Martha had worked as his assistant when the Labs were at Montgomery before locating to Atlanta. We laughed and sang all the way to New York. We all went to the Worlds Fair there for two days. We stayed in a very nice downtown military hotel for four days until our flight date. They took our Jeep to ship it with an expected delivery within two months. We were told to remove everything we wanted to keep. When it arrived in Turkey, it was covered with a thick layer of salt film. We thoroughly washed it on the finish and underneath.



The flight to Ankara, Turkey was uneventful. As we walked into the terminal building there, Cammy blurted out in a loud voice “This place Stinks”, and it did. The stench of body odor, musk and the Turkish tobacco was overwhelming. We never got used to it. When we got to

Izmir, a Capt. Williams, who was our escort and had written us several mailings of information, was waiting for us with a station wagon and a small truck to carry our luggage and “Hold Baggage”, which was an extra allowance of weight for clothing, until the household goods arrived. He had made reservations for us in the nicest and most luxuriant hotel in Izmir, The Ephesus. This was to be our home for two months while an apartment complex for us was being finished. There was a large statue of the Greek goddess Ephesus, or Roman goddess Diana in the lobby of the hotel. It was impressive. About a year later we were searching the grounds of the old temple of Ephesus, which had been destroyed and sent to Constantinople, and I found a marble flower that reminded me of the ring of flowers on the hem of the skirt of Ephesus. I cleaned it up and took it over to the Ephesus Hotel and it matched the missing place of a flower in the statue.



As we entered Izmir, Capt. Williams had the driver stop at a place called “Culture Park” as he explained that the week before, a woman’s body hung on a scaffolding there for several days. It seemed that she had gone into a ‘Tea House’ looking for her husband. She needed him to come attend to their sick child. It was forbidden for women to enter a teahouse. This offended the husband and the men smoking their opium while drinking strong tea. They took her out and immediately hanged her. No trial. That information, and the pungent odors at the airport in Ankara, served as our introduction to Turkey.

Cammy and the son of a Major were playing in the Ephesus hotel, using the elevator and stairs, playing tag. Cammy was coming out of an elevator and the boy was standing there waiting. He gave a little shove



as a good tag and she fell against a huge clay ashtray artwork. Of course it shattered into hundreds of pieces. One of the bellhops grabbed Cammy and she was now the one to pay, \$150 for that hideous ‘art work’. We scooped it all up. It was all there. We paid the bill and when our apartment was ready in two months, we all worked to restoring that thing with many tubes of glue. I think Cammy was grabbed because the boy was of African-American heritage and the Turks seem to be afraid of black people. When it was finished, we all roared with laughter and called it “Effie Hot Lips.” Cammy has the hideous thing prominently displayed in her home to laugh about.

The children were enrolled in school in a former tobacco warehouse that still had very strong odors of Turkish Tobacco. Eddy was in the fifth grade, Tom in the third and Cammy in the first. Tom had been schooled in phonics in Florida and now he had to read using the look-say method. His teacher was Mrs. Lucille Pfaff. After the first school year, she insisted that Tom be retained in her class for another year because of the “Phonics vs. Look Say” confusion he was experiencing. It became obvious that she loved Tom as her own and wanted to keep him another year. She faced rationale after much discussion and promoted him to the fourth grade. He has no problem in his engineering and has had a high degree of success in his profession, having founded three successful corporations.

We became good friends with her and her husband Sgt. Albert Pfaff. We shared the interest of photography, of historic and significant places, hunting for coins and glass in the fields and a desire to visit Jerusalem. We shared many weekends in the fields and eventually got to go to Jerusalem together. They drove their little Chevrolet. A Mennonite Missionary couple and their small son traveled along in our three-car caravan as we all merrily bounced along.



Mrs. Pfaff and our Mennonite Missionary friends were outstanding Bible scholars and provided us invaluable biblical information. We used a handbook called “Hachette World Guide” for each of the countries we would visit. It was a very thorough guidebook explaining a thorough historical and archaeological explanation of each significant site. It was so detailed that directions sometimes told the reader to go 20 paces east, turn left 10 paces and see a partially exposed stone with such and such inscription. We all studied the routes and things we wanted to see and visit for a month before we departed.

On the way down, we stayed in a nice hotel in Damascus to visit for two days. When we went to a hotel, everyone had an assignment of what to carry in. Cammy was to carry the camera bag with a shoulder strap. We had a very expensive SLR Minolta with several professional lenses in the camera bag. She was slinging the camera bag around and around and it came loose and hit the tile floor of the lobby with a clatter. I thought the camera was not damaged so we made hundreds of pictures using the automatic light settings, during our two weeks of vacation touring Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and parts of Israel. We wanted to visit Iraq but because I traveled on an official “Red” passport the Iraq government declared me “Persona Non Gratis” meaning that I was not

welcome. Film had to be mailed to the States to be processed into 35 mm slides. The process took about 2-3 weeks. When we got our slides back they were mostly very light as the automated lighting meter was damaged. Every time we have reviewed those slide pictures, we always get a good laugh recalling 7 year old Cammy saying “Uh Oh- -Scuse me” when the camera went flying across the tile floor. She had everyone’s attention.

It was at Christmas time 1966. On Christmas Eve night, we joined the throngs of people visiting Bethlehem and did the usual tourist things such as paying \$2 to place our hand on the rock hewn area alleged to be the site where Jesus was born. There was a religious man in robes who was taking money to say prayers for those who paid him. He would take a drink of his wine or whatever and say a prayer in Latin perhaps. He would then say in clear English, Next. He was drunk. He charged two dollars to place your hand in the hole of this onyx slab and touch the “Manger”. I felt this was sacrilege and we left the carnival like affair. We decided to take the Jeep and all go on an almost impassable path to an outcropping of rocks, said to be the place where Shepherds tended to their flock



at night. This was about a mile south of Bethlehem and was very remote with no habitation after leaving Bethlehem. The place had a huge outcropping of high vertical standing thin rocks that came straight out of the ground so as to form a good windbreaker for sheep to lie among those rocks. We sang several hymns as we were basking in the starlit darkness, joyful in our hearts that we could share the reflections of that miracle that had happened at this very spot two thousand years before. We heard the tinkling of bells in the distance. They were coming nearer, down that path we had taken. It was three policemen riding their colorfully harnessed camels, decorated with blankets and those bells. None of us spoke Arabic or Hebrew but collectively we all spoke Turkish and were able to communicate enough to understand that we must leave. We quickly gathered our blankets to leave. They then spoke cordially and welcomed us to their land, regretting that we must leave. We did not ask why, we simply left. They went their way also.

We spent four days visiting almost all of the noted tourist attractions of Jerusalem and environs. These were all worthwhile but I felt that every site was commercialized to the extent that one needed a pocket of cash to see the site. Everything had an admission price. For something like a dollar each, the children got to put a foot into the stone imprint of the footprint of Jesus as He ascended from the Mount of Olives. It cost something like a dollar to touch the stone in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed. The Church Of All Nations was very impressive with the stained glass windows of the nations supporting its construction. The Garden Tomb was probably the most expensive to visit. We were all impressed with this site. The serenity and landscaped flora of the garden created an atmosphere of reverence. The other burial site, Catherine the Great’s visionary site inside Jerusalem, was a highly commercial site. Money was piled atop the sarcophagus alleged to be His burial site. Attendants were demanding that everyone put money there for a blessing and curses to those infidels who did not. I did not and didn’t feel like an infidel either. Everything was very commercialized with no spirituality.

We stayed most of one-day visiting the old ruins of Byblos. We hung back and selected what we thought was perhaps the best of the multitude of guides hawking for the tourists to select them. We selected a man that did not do that. We interviewed him before we asked him to give us the grand tour with only truth and facts, as he understood them. Most guides seemed to please the tourist with made-up stories and cute things to keep their clients happy. The Bible is named from this old Phoenician city meaning “Books”. Parchment was the chief product as the sheep skins were cut very thin, written on and cut into pages, bound and called a book. This was the seat of government for a group of Phoenicians. They had a human sacrifice ritual in their pagan antiquity rituals. A guide had explained how a young maiden was placed in a stone trough and her heart was cut out and sacrificed. The trough had a hole in the slanted end where blood was collected. That story greatly disturbed me as he told of the minute gory details of the sacrifice. I had walked away for a few minutes to get the vivid pictures from my mind when Eddy and Tom called me back to the trough. I looked in and felt pain in my heart. I felt faint. They had arranged Cammy in the trough with a bouquet of wild flowers in her little hands crossed over her heart. My vivid imaginations really got to me. After recovering, I could only laugh at the innocent but Oh So realistic a prank the three of them had pulled on me.

Lebanon has a cavern that is impressively lighted among the stalactites and stalagmites, as well as under water colored lighting in the pools. We all enjoyed a refreshing tour of the cavern. We were served refreshing beverages in the refreshment seating area as we listened silently to the falling waters of the underground stream that flowed. Inspirational.

When we visited Lebanon we got caught on a highway where the Syrians were firing hostile shells overhead across the highway from Mt. Carmel. We could see the puffs of smoke, hear the whistling overhead shells and see where they struck the target. The children thought it was neat. We got away at 80mph. Our white Jeep Wagoneer was identical to the vehicles used by the United Nations except they had a large black UN on each front door. Sometimes we were waved through checkpoints and sometimes we were detained because they thought we had stolen the vehicle.



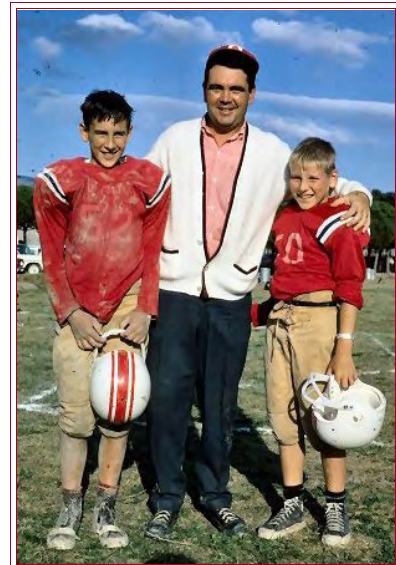
Dothan was a place of interest because this is where Joseph was lowered into a well. We found the well and really.... about ten feet down into the large dug well was a ledge large enough for Joseph to stand on. We lowered the water bucket and reeled it to the surface. Mary got her chlorine bottle and eyedropper, put a few drops into the bucket of water and we all drank water from Joseph’s well. While we were looking at the well, two young girls came up with their donkeys with water jugs strapped to their sides. I lowered the pail, filled it and wound it back to the surface,



offering it to the girls. One of them took the bucket abruptly and poured the water on the ground, mumbling something in Arabic about Beelzebub. We left shortly thereafter.

We visited Jericho and saw where excavations revealed that the old walls had fallen into the city. The site where Jesus was baptized was under about two feet of mud from the muddy flooding Jordan River. We swam in the Dead Sea, 1,300 feet below sea level. Eddy and Tom rode a horse at the Good Samaritan Inn, the place of the Parable by Jesus. We spent several days in Jerusalem visiting the holy sites and playing the role of the American Tourist. Eddy and Tom each bought a sheep hide jacket with the wool still attached. They were pretty and many people wore them. After the second day, a foul odor was emanating from the jackets. Those jackets smelled so bad they sealed them in a plastic bag. We learned later that the sheep hides with wool were often tanned using camel urine and were not cleaned well before making them into jackets. The boys had them treated but they never fully lost that distinct odor. That was a most enjoyable and memorable vacation with the family and friends and could never be repeated for us.

The boys played all of the little league sports activities. Eddy was pitcher for the baseball team for two years and won championship games. Tom played outfielder on his team. For one game, his team did not get to bat before the game was called because of darkness with the other team leading 28 to 0. Tom was so angry, declaring, "We could have won if we had ever gotten to bat." Eddy's and Tom's football team was in a big playoff in the closing seconds of a tied game when the referee inadvertently blew the whistle while the other team was running the ball. Eddy's team stopped and the other team easily scored. Parents almost came to blows over the ruling that the score would stand and Eddy's team lost. I wrote an article in the weekly American newspaper about the "Tarnished Shield." This did not please the Colonel whose son was the quarterback of the winning team. I learned a lesson to never express an opinion using a newspaper as the forum. He never forgave me for sending that article to be printed.



Cammy took piano lessons from Mrs. Enyedey, who was of a once very wealthy Hungarian industrial family and was a concert pianist in her native Budapest prior to their failed revolution during the Eisenhower administration. It seems that Pres. Eisenhower had promised American aid for an overthrow of the oppressive Communist USSR rule. The aid was withheld at the onset of the revolution and those of the opposition were killed or sent to Siberia. Her family was involved. Her husband was shot. She fled to Turkey; her son was sent to Siberia and escaped after five years to rendezvous with her in Izmir. She had selected a bride for her son. Anyway, Cammy really enjoyed her music lessons with her and we enjoyed her friendship, occasionally taking she and her son and daughter in-law to the Officers Club for a meal. Her son made us an onyx coffee table and an ornate onyx top patio table with six chairs of steel rods. It is a beautiful art work.

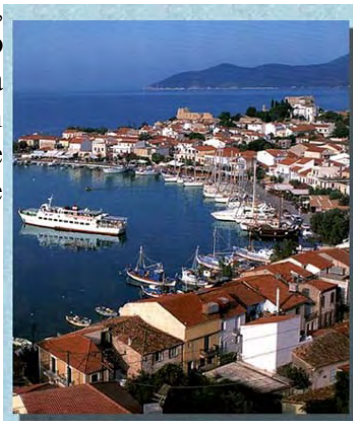


I enjoyed being in the fields with the Turkish people. They would let me work with them or even give me their oxen and plow to plow for an hour or so. I liked to ride the sled, which was a heavy timbered sled with flint rock driven into the planking. This was pulled by horse or oxen and ground the grain from the wheat stalk. We once went into a village up near the Black Sea that was reputed to be colonized by deserting Christian Crusaders. It was interesting to note

the European features of the villagers. I didn't smoke but I always carried several cartons of Winston Cigarettes for trading purposes. A package of cigarettes would trade for 2,000 year old statuettes and figurines or several coins of early Greek, Roman and Byzantine eras. I shipped 90 pounds of coins back to Bob and Martha's address in Atlanta. I would give these away at the speaking engagements as I was called upon to make presentations. A banker friend told me I was advertising for a home robbery. I stopped immediately. Mary insisted on putting ten drops of chlorine into every five gallons of our drinking water. It obviously worked. We always carried canned goods and drinks because we never knew what might happen that we would need these foodstuffs. It was a wonderful time in the lives of all of us. We loved the Turkish people.

I had been intrigued for some time that newer versions of the Bible did not include the site name of Trogyllium as mentioned in Acts 20:15 in the King James version. We had spent vast amounts of our travels in purposefully and enthusiastically visiting every site mentioned in scripture of the travels of Paul. This site created a void that I hoped to understand why. I wrote the Library of the Vatican and they had no explanation and declared that it was a mysterious site that had not yet been revealed. I was determined to visit the Island of Samos and try to resolve the mystery. Mary suggested that a frog was called a Troglodyte in Greek and the site may be a recessed cave somewhat like a frog might make in the soft muddy bank of a stream. She also said the Webster's Dictionary writes that a Troglodyte is "any of the prehistoric people who lived in caves, and secondly, a recluse." This information fired my desire to soon visit the island of Samos.

M/Sgt. James Barker, of San Antonio, Texas, had helped me immensely with his communication and electronic skills to build the Mobile Communications Center. He was an ordained minister of The Missionary Alliance Church. We had spent many hours discussing some of the significant sites of the immediate area of the "Cradle of Christianity", as we called our area of present day Turkey. I told him of my desire to go to Samos and he leaped to invite himself to go with Tom and me. That was good. It was an all day trip by ferryboat to Samos. They carried goats, sheep, donkeys, vehicles, as well as people. Tom said he wanted to take a shower as soon as we got to Samos. We got a ride in a minibus as far as it went to the west end of the Island. From there we walked several miles to a Monastery where we spent the night with the monks. We were asking everyone



along the way about caves and caverns. They all shook their heads. On our third day, we found an unattended donkey and commandeered it to carry our luggage and cameras. Tom also rode it part way. We were at the site of the ruins of the old Samos harbor. That would have been where Paul would have landed, I supposed. The place was totally uninhabited. I was somewhat despondent that the search had been futile. A Greek fisherman came to the ruins of the old port docks. We were able to communicate somewhat. We asked him to take us to Turkey, which was about 500 yards across an open water channel. He agreed to do so for the equivalent of about \$19 each, pay now.

I asked about a cave or cavern. He shook his head. I asked about a “Spelunka”. He lit up and pointed to the hillside about 200 yards away saying “Panaghia Spiliana” meaning “All Holy Cavern”. We raced up there and found a huge opening in the rocky face of the mountain. The outside entry leading to the entrance had been whitewashed many eons ago. We went into the huge opening. It was evident that a cooking area was near the opening and within the deeper recess was a very large open room area. Dozens of sleeping areas had been carved into the soft limestone walls. A cistern or pool of water with steps leading down into the pool was in one corner of the large room. Jim declared it was a baptismal pool. An ancient painted icon of a man (I assumed it was Paul because the lower eyelids drooped exposing a reddish flesh problem) was painted on a slick piece of marble and positioned above a stone container with a large slot in the top. I had read that the ancient Christians made a prayer, kissed the icon, kissed a coin and placed it on the face of the icon. If the prayer was to come true, the coin would stick, if not the coin would fall into the open slot below. I wanted to look into the stone container to determine the oldest coins in it, but I didn’t. I made more than a hundred pictures of the interior and exterior entrance to what I was convinced was Trogyllium. I sent many of these pictures and the story of our explorations to Zondervan Inc., National Geographic and to the American Bible Society. The only response I received was from National Geographic explaining that they would check my story. I never got any of my pictures back. Tacky, Tacky. I got a letter from the Governor General of the Island of Samos thanking me for the publicity of Trogyllium, as the cruise ships are now making a call to the desolate old Samos port to see Trogyllium. That has been the only mention of this significant find that I know of except some new cult movement now calls this the holy cave of Pythagoras.

Pilot made rare Biblical find

BY BOONE AIKEN, News correspondent

AUBURN

Although there is no sign reading "Apostle Paul Slept Here" an Auburn University history major believes he has located the heretofore unidentified Trogyllium where the apostle "tarried" overnight on his third missionary journey.

Stationed in the Holy Land for three years while he piloted planes for the U. S. Air Force Maj. Charles Bryant became interested in visiting the sites mentioned in the Bible.

On his days off the Foley native, his wife, and three children, racked up some 40,000 miles in their jeep wagonaire as they searched for interesting places to visit and photograph.



AIKEN

HOWEVER WHEN BRYANT began tracing the Apostle Paul's journeys no one could tell him where to find the Trogyllium mentioned in Acts 20:15.

Some of the Holy Land maps left it off. Others placed it loosely along the coast between Samos and Miletus as recorded by St. Luke in the Book of Acts. Several later editions of the Bible, notably The New English Bible, J. B.

Phillips edition, and the Revised Standard Version gave up and omitted the name entirely from their translations.

By helicopter, DC3 and on foot Bryant searched the coast line for a forgotten civilization but could find no signs.

Intrigued by the mystery Bryant, his nine-year-old son Tommy, and an Air Force buddy decided to make a search of the island of Samos. First he looked up the meaning of the word Trogyllium and found it meant "cavern, large cave, usually a habitat or inn" in the native tongue.

THEY WERE LUCKY, Bryant said, in finding a Samos "Mr. Chamber of Commerce" who gave them the history of the area and then introduced them to a native who said he knew where the Trogyllium was located.

Following his directions they worked their way across the island. About one-fourth mile from the old, abandoned Samos harbor they found a deserted monastery. It bore the name "Panaghia Spiliani" which means "All Holy Cavern."

The three-man party found it surrounded a cave which had apparently been a religious site at one time. A rusty cross stood in front of the entrance. Inside was a pool and an area large enough for a dwelling and could have easily been used as a generous-size inn.

At one end they found a small house or shrine. Trogyllium had been located.

As Chief of Plans and Programs of the Middle East, I was considered on the Command Staff and was responsible to host one of the monthly parties at the Officers Club. This social duty came to each Command Staff Director about once a year and it was my turn for August. After talking it over with staff and our wives, it was decided that we would put on a Hawaiian luau. Small green watermelons were cut open and scooped out to serve as drink cups. Housing provided us with mattresses and sheeting for seating on the floor. Base carpenters built long low tables for the food and eating while sitting. The Club prepared all of the Hawaiian foods they knew how to cook. Teenaged girls dressed in hula skirts performed. They giggled with every movement they had been tutored to do. It was hilarious as fathers and mothers cheered their daughters on. Every little detail was planned and all of the Officers and their Ladies were excited about the planned party. The Veterinarian located a pig for roasting, about 75 miles away. He and two sergeants went down there to get the pig in a pickup truck with an enclosure. They were to bring the pig to the loading ramp of the kitchen at the Officers club where it was to be slaughtered and dressed for roasting. One cook declared that he would not touch the pig and wanted off.

I had prepared a large sterile drum of hot water ready for scalding the pig to remove its' hair, as soon as they arrived. When they finally arrived, late, the poor young Lt. Veterinarian nervously told me that the only pig available was much larger than he had been told, but he bought it anyway. I assured him that was all right. Then he said the reason he was late was that they had to stop and pour water on the poor pig suffering from heat exhaustion. It did not work, the pig had died of heat exhaustion about an hour before he arrived and must be opened and cleaned immediately. He said the hair would not slip now with hot water immersion anyway. This situation was turning sour in a hurry. I sent to the exchange and bought a box of razors and blades. After he cleaned the

insides of the pig and prepared it for being roasted whole, we shaved that pig. It took us a long time to shave that big pig so that no hair could be detected on any part of its body. That pig seemed to be getting bigger and bigger as we shaved it. The club cooks came out and measured the pig, went back in and measured their oven, came back and told me the pig would not fit into their oven. Oh, Dear Gussie. What could possibly happen next?

Our neighbor, Nathan Wilkerson from back in Shalimar, Florida had been transferred to Izmir about six months before we arrived. He was custodian of the areas' big American Club downtown Izmir where the Consulate, General Officers, Military and Ranking Civilians were members and dined. He often invited us to come have meals with him in his small private dining room. I was now desperate. "Hello Nathan, This is Charlie and I have a problem." I gave him the pig's measurements. In a few moments he said, "Bring it on." Those were the sweetest words I had heard all week. He cooked the whole pig with an apple in its mouth. It was the centerpiece of the festive affair. He even sent one of his jolly cooks over to carve portions for the diners. It was considered to have been one of the best monthly affairs ever held at Cigli. I think everyone really enjoyed the affair.

In 1966, it was realized that the American forces were utilizing the Turkish nationals to do many tasks in the housekeeping and utility chores of the bases occupied by American Forces. They were disorganized and without leadership in their duty responsibilities. A group of Inspector General staff personnel came down from Germany to solve the problem. It was suggested that a group of the more intelligent of these Turkish Nationals be sent to Detroit to learn the practices and principles of union labor management. These folks making this suggestion did not know the Turks and were not aware of the vast differences in working with the Germans and the Turks. I was very strongly opposed to any such notion and was very vocal about it in all of the staff meeting I participated in on this subject. I really opposed any form of Unionizing labor, especially as I could envision what an unchecked authority could be exercised here with the US being a guest nation on Turk soil. The discussion went all the way to the top at USAFE.

Europe had permitted unionized civil servants performing similar tasks. There had been little problems. I was overruled and a contingency force of laborers went to Detroit to learn unionizing. Within two weeks after they got back, the laborers at Incerlik AB, Adana, Turkey, calling themselves TUMPANE, for Turkish Union Mgt..... called for a strike for more money and less time working. This is the base where the U-2 Spy Planes had been based and one flown by Gary Powers was shot down by the Russians. The Turks slaughtered six donkeys at the main entrance to the base, claiming the entry road was Turkish soil and was not a part of the leased base; therefore the Americans could not remove them. The odor became so pungent after a week the Americans gave in to the Turk Union demands. It was never the same again. The Turks had a "Gotcha" on U S installations throughout Turkey. It was very troublesome as everything was their way.

We took an extended trip with the Jeep up to old Constantinople, now Istanbul, and played the tourist role for a few days. Enroute, we wanted to visit the ruins of Nicea, where the Nicean Creed was formulated for Constantine in 423. We were told that there were no roads leading to the site. I got out the aeronautical charts I always carried and

determined that we could follow a camel trail to the site unless we encountered big gullies or washes. It was about eight miles of off road travel. We arrived there uneventfully. The site was surrounded by three walls within three walls. The walls were said to represent the Father, Son and The Holy Spirit. Inside the three walls and three huge gates, were the ruins of a very large building. The mosaic flooring had a square encompassing most of the floor. Inside the square was a circle. Inside the mosaic circle was a mosaic triangle, said to represent every facet of mathematics known to Pythagoras. There was a smokestack to a fireplace in the square. It is said that when the books of the Bible were selected and declared canonized, the remaining books were burned. The Roman church uses this as a smoke signal to the world that a new Pope has been selected.

People lived in the three massive walls encompassing the site. The children had never seen an automobile and came rushing out to see us. Our children spoke to them and they bonded as friends immediately. Eddy turned on the radio and the children fled in terror. It took a lot of persuasion to convince them that it was not some evil spirit, as they listened to Turkish music. I got two flat tires there as the men do their horseshoeing in the dirt road or wherever and throw the nails into the dust. I always carried lots of patching material, as this was a common occurrence. It was well worth the diversion to visit there.

We visited the Blue Mosque, the Topkapi and all of the significant places of interest. Then it was on to Mt Olympia taking in every site along the way. We went to Berea, where Paul was recorded to have traveled. After we had finished a noon meal we received an honored invitation by the mayor, to visit a very secluded, gated grotto containing a mosaic in gold and silver of Paul. It was beautiful. He let us make pictures of the mosaic. We were very honored, as he asked us not to ever reveal where the Grotto was located. We liked the rural Greek restaurants because they wanted us to come into the kitchen and fill our plates directly from the pots and pans of their wonderfully seasoned foods. I think they have a hundred ways to fix delicious eggplant in season. Every rural restaurant in Greece was a diner's delight to all of us. The Greeks liked to carry Cammy's plate as she filled it. She was a true strawberry blond with long curly hair.

When we got to The Plains of Marathon, there were dozens of bronze statues and monuments depicting the battle that was fought there. Little miss independence, Cammy, wandered around looking at the statues and reading the markers when all of a sudden she yelled, "Mom come look, You won't believe this." She had discovered the warring soldiers wore only a frontal modesty loincloth and their backsides were exposed. We enjoyed Athens for a few days. The little rickety bridge across the Corinth Canal was frightful over that deep gorge. When we got to Olympia, the children all lined up on those ancient starting slabs and raced to run the length of the field. Eddy had always been a very fast runner in competitions but it was fun for all of us to run in the original Olympic stadium.



They got a big laugh when we visited Delphi and the stone depicting this to be the naval of the world was explained to them. We all marveled at imagining the life style of the

secluded residents of Metoria. They lived high up in those inaccessible dwellings among the lofty rocky crags. We left Greece via a ship that carried the Jeep, as we got cabins for an overnight trip to the Turkish port at Cesme. From there it was about an hour's ride to Izmir and home again. While aboard the ship the next morning at breakfast, we met the archaeologist, Professor Julian Whittlesey and his team of students from Cornell University who were excavating the ruins of ancient Sardis. He was a full professor and head of the Department of Archaeology, yet he did not have a college degree. He was a master at knowing the culture and architecture of these ancient people. We invite him to come visit us in Izmir and have an American meal at the club. He drank two bottles of wine with his meal and seemed more alert than ever. He visited several times and we also hosted the students one day. We told them to order anything and everything they wanted, just eat all of what they ordered. That was no problem for them. They inhaled the American foods after six weeks of Turkish foods. They had 'Culture Shock.'

He told me of a problem they were having, locating the four known marble roads that led into the city of Sardis. I told him that I had recently read of an infrared film that was very sensitive to detect the slight increased temperature in the areas of human breast cancer. I suggested to him the possibility of using this film to take aerial photographs at about a hundred feet and hope the film would detect 2,000-year-old compost and other rotting material along the marble road, called an Iter by the Romans. It is a golden rule, "He who suggests gets involved the most." I wrote a letter to Kodak at Rochester, NY for his signature, asking for advice to this problem, and I mailed it through US Postal service. I got a reply in about a week in the form of two cameras loaded with the film, instructions and best wishes on this untried venture. We had an old helicopter at Cigli, which was sent there years earlier as an aircraft crash, fire fighter with a bottle of CO2. It had a single seat. No one there knew anything about flying helicopters. I would go out and start the thing and sometimes get it a few feet off the ground, turn it around in flight and check out the various controls, which I did not know their official names, such as a collector. I had disconnected the CO2 suspended bottle and had flown the thing close by, several times.

I told Col. Cattington what I would like to do, to fly the thing to Sardis, take pictures and return. He had a really hearty laugh about that notion. He saw that I was serious and his approval was something to the effect, don't kill your foolish self, we need you around here. We mounted the cameras onto the helicopter with the aid of the base photographer, complete with flexible wiring to operate the two shutters and fly the helicopter at the same time. With a full load of fuel and a pocket full of confidence, I flew up and made the routes and pictures according to what Prof. Whittlesey wanted me to do. I was scared several times in trying to work the shutter on both cameras and act like a coordinated spastic to control the thing. When I landed, I vowed that was to be my first, my last and my only ride in a helicopter. And it was. The cameras were removed immediately and sent intact, as we had received them, back to Kodak. In about two weeks, I received the developed pictures and film from Kodak. They had analyzed the film and marked on the prints the outline of the four lost roads. He came down to Izmir and we celebrated. That was the first use of infrared film in space



exploration, or archaeological search, which Prof. Whittlesey dubbed “undisturbed excavation archaeology.” That’s the term used in modern sonar and electronic soundings.

On one of his trips to Cigli to visit one of the ‘Seven Churches of Asia Minor’, I asked Gen. Agan about sending us a boat for perhaps a month that we could visit islands like Patmos. He told me he would do better than that, he would send a tug boat that had been converted to a river cruise observation boat and the Captain to go with it on a permanent transfer. The boat and Captain arrived in about two weeks. We immediately planned a trip to the island of Patmos. He got nautical clearances to travel there and thirty-two of us loaded up for a four-day trip. As we approached the Island of Patmos, we encountered a band of water that was extremely rough. The 65-foot boat was tossing like a fishing cork. I asked everyone to clear the decks and get inside. Everyone was holding onto something.

As Sgt. Irish’s daughter was entering the cabin, the heavy steel door slammed on her left hand, severing her index finger at the first knuckle. I saw that her finger was hanging by the tendon and she was bleeding profusely. Some of the men began to pile onto the little girl lying on the deck in the cabin. Women made a circle around the men who were speaking in a language I had never heard, but it sounded something like I heard when I went to a Pentecostal Holiness Apostolic Assemble in Pensacola as a teen. I asked that the men give the child air and let her get up. The women told me to leave the area, and I did. I was tempted to tell the Captain to turn back and get the child medical help but that would be four hours away. We proceeded to Skala, the Port for Patmos. As soon as we docked and before the boat was secured to the dock, the men whisked the child onto the dock. They took her to the hotel, which was at the dock area, and took her up to the second floor to a room. They knew the hotel I had made reservations with, but did not know the rooms that had been assigned to our group, but they had gone to one of the rooms that had been assigned. After things were secured and everyone registered in the hotel, I tried to see the child but her parents refused to let me see her that day and all the next day until the evening mealtime. The child was with her parents and I looked at and examined her hand, which was not bandaged. Her finger had a reddish band around it. She was able to wiggle her finger. I witnessed a miracle. I can’t explain it any other way.

While the men and the Captain were securing the boat to the wharf or dock, a kindly gentleman was greeting us with good handshakes and hugs. He was Mr. Petronis, owner and operator of one of the Gulf Coast’s finest restaurants, Capt. Anderson’s in Panama City, Florida. He was so happy to see Americans and welcome us to his home of Patmos. He provided us with guides as we visited the “Cave of the Apocalypse” where John wrote the Book of Revelation. The carved niche in the limestone was for his bed with a handhold carved above to help him roll into and out of his bed area. His writing area was carved from the walls of the cave or grotto. The beautifully ornate Monastery of Saint John the Theologian was most spectacular. It was built and maintained by the Eastern Orthodox Church, Greek. I shall never forget the miracle I had witnessed on that boat.

During worship service one Sunday morning, we experienced an earthquake that was rather strong. We were in the Basilica with worship services when the rumble started and then the tall massive columns began to sway. Chaplain Roger Arendsee, a strong Baptist

from San Antonio, was at the podium but he was the first one out the massive doorway to the rear. Others were making mad scrambles for the doorway. Mary was the organist and she rushed to the pew with the children and me. We pushed the children under the pew and got between the pews with them. We stayed that way through the whole rumble and falling of the ceiling. Plaster was everywhere. It was about two minutes in duration with the 40 foot ceiling swaying. Then a few minutes later, a big aftershock. I looked around and we were the only ones in there. As we exited there was a huge cheer from the crowd.

I got a call to expedite a flight to the island of Crete to pick up a little boy about 10 years old who had a ruptured appendix. He was in agony as he and his parents were loaded onto 'my' faithful VC-47 and I took them to Frankfurt, Germany. They were one of the most grateful persons I ever flew a rescue mission for. They wrote several letters of the progress of their son in his recovery. I flew several such mercy missions to Germany.

I flew the family down to Crete for a three-day vacation. In those days and with that aircraft, it was not required to have a copilot so I just put Eddy in the right seat and away we would go. We went through the ancient ruins of the maze, saw the valley of windmills and visited the many ruins of the Island. En route, we could clearly see the ruins of a city of antiquity submerged in the Mediterranean Sea. The sunlight was just right to get a wonderful view of that and other interesting formations nearby, all submerged in the sea. It is claimed by some that this is the "Lost City of Atlantis." Anyway it was a pretty sight.

The year 1967 was a very exciting time for me as many international events were unfolding in the Middle East and I was privileged to participate in some of them, far, far down the command of decisions but I was in a support role of several international activities that had serious impacts on some nations of the world. "My VC-47" was busy.

I was called upon in early January of 1967 to fly a de Havilland Canadian Beaver, STOL, a single engine large aircraft equipped with snow skis, up to a remote site to evacuate two Peace Corps workers, a male and a female who had become lost in a blinding snow storm and had frozen. The search party was to bring the bodies to a selected landing site, set smoke flares and I was to land and carry the bodies to the town of Bursa, then return to Izmir. I did and it was an eerie flight. I enjoyed flying the Beaver, sometimes just for fun.

On an occasion, late in 1966, I was directed to fly a special envoy of five men from Washington D.C. on a mission to Cairo, Egypt for an overnight and then on to Benghazi and Tripoli, Libya for an overnight. I was concerned for safety for the aircraft and for myself so I elected to sleep on the aircraft. It was equipped for such sleeping for eight. I waited all the next day for them to return to the aircraft as they had said they would return before noon. About dark thirty, I pulled the chocks and pitot cover and fired it up. I left without a flight plan and flew directly to Cigli. I don't know who they were or what ever happened to them. I was just glad to have gotten out of there without incident. They were a strange and weird lot, perhaps the most aloof ungrateful people I ever flew anywhere. I never understood that mission and I never asked. I was their taxi driver. It was the attitude of these men that deterred me from thinking of ever being a corporate pilot when I retired. They tried to treated me like their lackey, but I refused to handle their luggage.

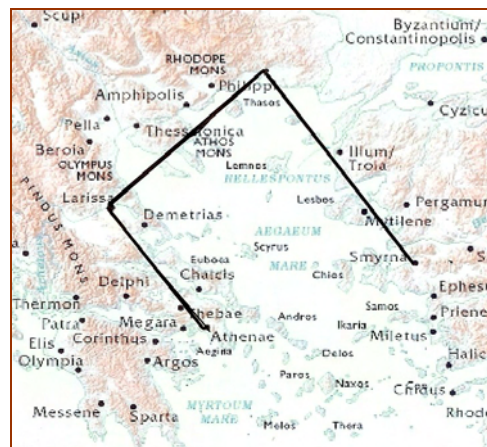
On some evenings when the cook, Mary, didn't want to cook, we would all go to the club and have a big fancy meal or go to the "low brow" snack bar and really enjoy their favorite dish. It was our favorite also. It was very thin slices of mutton and beef stacked onto a vertical spit, and placed into a large container that had a top and bottom but about half the vertical side was cut-away to have access to the meat on the spit. It was heated from behind with charcoal briquettes perched on little shelf holders, heating the vertical spit as it slowly spun. The cook would baste the vertical spit of meat with the drippings and slice the cooked ends of the meat on the spit. He served this with onion slivers over a bed of their delicious rice and scallions. We never tired of eating this delicious meal.

During the week preceding the 'Three Day Holy War' of June 1966, I was asked to take eight F-4 pilots and four crew chiefs from Incerlik AB, Adana Turkey to Hussein Air Base at Mafrak, Jordan for the purpose of flying eight F-4 aircrafts on loan from the United States to the nation of Jordan, back to Turkey. There was fear that the Jordanians would use these aircrafts against Israel if a war broke out. The Lt. Col. in charge of the mission had official written orders transferring the aircraft to the Swiss Air Force.

The crew chiefs, immediately after landing began painting a crude Red Cross on the vertical tail of the aircraft. Within thirty minutes after landing, the last of the aircraft was launched. The crew chiefs hopped back into the VC-47 and we were off to land back at Incerlik AB, where the F-104s had safely landed. It was learned later that the Swiss had no Air Force and the Official Orders were fictitious. The Jordanians had been tricked.

Another mission of interest was in April 1967, when I was called to fly with General Tipton, a former All-American end from the University of Alabama. He sent word directing that "my beloved VC-47" be stripped of all furniture and have a bare floor. This was to be done within one hour. It was done. He came out and told me that he was to be my copilot and we should take off immediately for the Mediterranean coastal town of Alexandroupolis in Greece. I had no charts or maps. He said that he had never flown the C-47 and I would need to tell him if he was needed. I showed him the cowl flap control, which I could not reach, and told him how to make the click turn settings which I would call out to him shortly after takeoff. He understood.

He showed me a roadmap and off we went. The flight path was over the waters of the Aegean Sea and the roadmap was useless. I had a pretty good idea of the heading and location. The Greeks and Turks were in a hot dispute over the island of Samothrace, the home of the "Winged Victory." Each claimed and used it as a bomb and target practice. We flew over it, noting the damages. At Alexandroupolis I parked at a restaurant immediately adjacent to the runway. There was a Lions Club International meeting in the

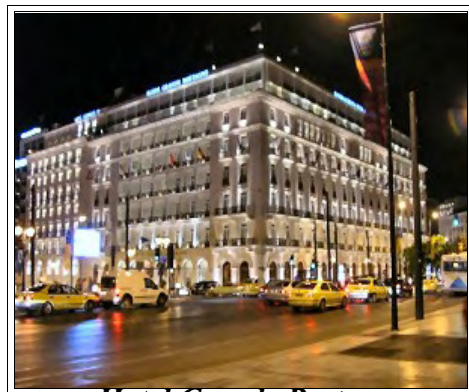


restaurant. We were brought plates of delicious mutton, rice and eggplant casserole and asked to remain at the aircraft. We just sat back and enjoyed our meal.

My curiosity was growing and I asked Gen. Tipton about our mission. He said that he could not discuss the situation now, except to say the Pentagon and higher had ordered the flight. After more than two hours, a group of Greek Colonels in full dress came out, told us to get aboard first and they then boarded the plane, closed the door and told me where to go, showing me a roadmap to Larissa, Greece. All of the flight was over water and the roadmap only helped to orient me as to how far inland the place was. I was to make normal radio calls identifying myself as US Air Force VC-47, 7068.

Gen. Tipton nodded. When we landed, another group of highly decorated officers in full dress were waiting. I was told not to cut the engines. I looked back in the cabin and it was stuffed with the men standing and bracing themselves against the ceiling. I told Gen. Tipton that we were obviously overloaded and definitely out of center of gravity. A gruff voiced Greek Col. ordered me to go. I challenged him and Gen. Tipton told me to do the best I could. I thought the best I could do, would be to cut the engines and we would survive. Gen. Tipton nudged the throttles and I taxied so as to use every foot of that jet fighter based runway for trying to get the thing off. I had no information aboard about the base and asked the tower for the longest runway. We were fortunate. We had about a fifteen-knot headwind. I ran the throttles at full power until they stabilized and then released the brakes. Normally the tail lifts at about 30mph and unsticks, takes off, at about 60mph. I finally got the tail up at about 60mph and got it off the ground at 94mph with only feet to spare at the end of the 8,000-foot runway. I immediately got the gear up and slowly milked the flaps up. Flaps are not normally used for take-off but in heavy loads, flaps provide that little extra airfoil lift. It was a struggle to keep it aloft, even with full power and only a mile or so above stall speed. The engines were overheating and I couldn't call for 'close flaps' to reduce drag. I was told to go to Athens International Airport. Please, Lord, hold this thing together for another twenty-five minutes or so.

We were grossly overweight and out of center of gravity. Not knowing what to expect during the approach and landing in this configuration, I asked for their 12,000-foot runway, which made for a slight crosswind landing, but maybe I would need that extra 2,000 feet to stop because I planned to fly the thing right onto the runway. I made a high speed, 150mph, approach and landed smoothly enough, but now my problem was to stop. The long runway was a welcomed factor of relief. I had no problem bringing it to a gentle stop and very slowly making wide turns to the hangar directed by the Greek Colonel. I have no idea how many men had crammed themselves aboard the aircraft. When all of them got off, I looked out and couldn't believe that many had been aboard. It had to be a record for passengers, and they were not slim and trim. A Colonel came up to kiss my cheek, others to slap my back.



Hotel Grande Bretagne

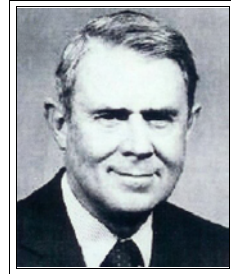
We were escorted from the plane to a staff car that took us to the five star Hotel Grande Bretagne. We had adjoining rooms that overlooked the Parliament Square, a huge marbled building with a large marbled assembly area. A well dressed and much decorated senior Greek officer came to Gen. Tipton's room and introduced himself as a General. He told him that history was to be made that night at midnight. He said that the men we had transported were Greek Colonels who would take control of the government in a bloodless Military Junta. He told us emphatically, to stay in our rooms and that we could be escorted back to the aircraft in about three days. Shortly thereafter, loudspeakers were touring the streets below, blaring in several languages for everyone to seek shelter and stay off the streets; anyone caught in the streets would be "shot like a dog". He and I watched the Junta and midnight ceremonies taking place on Parliament Square from our plush hotel balcony overlooking the square. We had ringside seats. Our telephones worked only for room service, and we used it, often. We ate well. Our every request, such as American newspapers were delivered to our rooms. We became friends over the next two days, talking Alabama politics and football.

He told me that his mission on this weird flight was to ensure that I did exactly as the Greek officers told me. He said that he did not know anything of the VC-47 but he knew of my flying skills. He was wearing a side arm. He said that the CIA chief ordered my involvement in this flight with approval by Pres. Johnston. He said his involvement was ordered by the Joint Chief of Staff, Pentagon and approved by Pres. Johnson. He said that any other type aircraft would have created suspicion but the VC-47 was never under suspicion of carrying more than six passengers. He told me that the American CIA had engineered the Junta through George Papandropoulis, a Greek allegedly working for the CIA. After two days of being detained under friendly conditions, we were escorted back to the aircraft. After checking it thoroughly for everything and anything and finding nothing, we departed for home. I'll wager that he and I gained at least five pounds each.

Mr. Cyrus Vance, who later served as Secretary of State with the Carter Administration, was appointed by President Johnston in June 1967 to become as an Ambassador at Large, to arbitrate a very serious dispute, which erupted into an armed clash between the Greeks and Turks over the governance areas of the island of Cyprus. He had a nice plush C-54 to fly his diplomatic trips in. I think Gen. Agan must have told him about "my" little VC-47, because he used the C-54 for his staff. He requested me several times to fly him. Maybe it was because I let him do all the flying but landings and takeoffs, which he tried several times but just didn't get the hang of that aircraft. He was very affable and he provided well for me when we had overnights. He would fly from Ankara, capital of Turkey, to Athens, capital of Greece and have high-level conferences. I waited at the aircraft. Then he would fly back to Ankara and have another series of high-level conferences. Then he would fly to Nicosia, capital of Cyprus and have a high-level conference. I told him one day that this all seemed so ridiculous to do all of this shuttling back and forth when sane and reasonable men and women should sit at a table and discuss their problems. When he stopped laughing, he slapped me on the knee and said something to the effect that national leaders are born to rise to power on confrontations

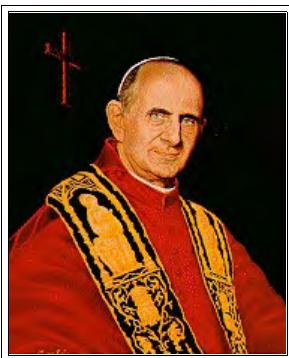
they can win. He believed that war was the result of the absence or collapse of diplomacy. He told me that diplomacy was an identification requirement of a civilization

I told him that sometimes the messenger gets shot in efforts of diplomatic endeavors and that I had never read anywhere in history of diplomacy being shuttled all over the Middle East or anywhere else. He said, "Bryant, what did you say?" I told him again that this kind of thing was "Shuttle Diplomacy." About two days later, the European newspapers had articles about Ambassador Vance involved in Shuttle Diplomacy. I never got credit for coining that phrase, and I really didn't care. I enjoyed flying with him. He had a great sense of humor.



Pope Paul VI decided to visit the ruins of Ephesus in Turkey. This site is about 35 miles from Izmir, where we lived. The Turks decided that no Americans would participate in the welcome to be given to the Pope, as this was the first visit by a pope in almost 1,000 years. Americans were told to stay off the streets and not be seen during the visit. They planned to take him from the landing at Cigli Air Base to Ephesus in an old Helicopter that had been given to the Turkish Air Force about five years earlier and was seldom if ever flown. I went to see Col Kemal and pleaded that please do not take him in that thing but to let us provide them with a helicopter that we could fly in from Naples Italy and we would arrange for a qualified Turkish pilot to fly it. We would even remove the US insignias. He refused the offer. I was able to convince him to make a trial run to Ephesus and blow the straw and dust from the landing site. He agreed to that plan. The helicopter with two pilots and a crew chief aboard made it halfway across the bay before the big splash. It was decided not to even attempt any recovery of the old helicopter.

The Turks hurriedly assembled a motor caravan to take the Pope down for a visit. As he came back through Izmir, old Smyrna of biblical times, he stopped into the St. Paul's Basilica where the only Christian worship service in all of Turkey was authorized, except on US military installations. Huge crowds gathered to get a glimpse of him. I had been on my way home as I was caught up in the crowd and was swept into the courtyard of people within the walls of the Basilica courtyard. Col. Hershell's wife Joyce, with two of their little girls made their way to me. She asked me to hold the girls up on my shoulders so they could see the Pope. I did. After the Pope made a short speech on the colonnaded porch of the Basilica, he began an exit as the Swiss guards wearing big yellow bloomer pants and a bright vest jacket, cleared the way for him. He made a direct path to the girls, Joyce and me. I was beginning to feel very uncomfortable as he slowly approached.



Pope Paul VI

He said something to the effect of bless you son for all the medals or ribbons on my chest. I looked into his eyes and the lower lids were drooped exposing a red area of the inner lower lid. An attendant constantly wiped the tears from his cheeks. His face was somewhat distorted. He extended his hand to me and I shook his hand. He smiled. I knelt down so the girls could shake his hand but they each kissed his ring. He

moved to Joyce as she was kneeling, and she kissed his ring. He asked her how many children she had and she told him seven. He told her "Bless you my child, your sins are forgiven seven times and your blessings are seven times seven." I almost said I have three but quickly I thought this would be confusing. He moved back in front to me and offered his hand again, saying, "Bless you my son". I shook his hand again as camera flash bulbs lit up with the photographers on the wall and on a platform within the courtyard. The following day the European newspapers carried a picture captioned "Air Force Officer Shakes Hand of Pope". Col. Hershell called me in. I was expecting a mild reprimand, but he grinned and said he would like to shake the only hand that had ever shaken the hand of a pope. I simply did not share the adoration he and Joyce had for him.

I got permission to use a surplus four-wheel drive truck with a large enclosed body to make a mobile "Disaster Control Center". From spare equipment and parts, I had an air conditioner and heater installed, a very fancy work table for six, wall charts of Turkey and local maps, four radios with different frequencies capabilities, two mobile generators, a microwave oven, a 100 gallon potable water tank, medical supplies storage and other fixtures that the vehicle could respond instantly to a crash site or to a disaster anywhere in Turkey. The vehicle received wide praises of publicity throughout the European Theater and the Middle Eastern military installations. We used it several times. It was taken to a base installation near Istanbul to a little league ballgame to broadcast the events back to Cigli AB. During the Cyprus crisis of 1967, the Greeks wanted to borrow one of the radios that had been installed in the mobile Disaster Control vehicle. Col. Cattington, we sometimes called him "The Cat", approved the ten-day loan. It was removed and loaded onto the VC-47 for me to fly down there. Col. Kemal, the Turkish Commander and my friend, came to the Base Operations as I was making out the flight plan and questioned me about the deal. I called Col. Cattington and he came down. The two of them went into a conference. Some American airmen unloaded the radio and that ended the episode.

Mary told me one night that I wouldn't believe what she had done that day. I laughed, telling her that I could have no idea because she was always surprising me about something and I would get a laugh from her activities. She said she was in line to pay for a cart of Christmas gifts at the Base Exchange downtown Izmir. She had been in line for a while, but had to go pick up children at school. She told the lady in front of her that she would be back in five minutes and for her to please pay for her basket of goods and here was her wallet, full of cash money. When she got back, the lady was waiting with the basket all paid for and gave Mary back the wallet with the receipt and change. They introduced themselves and we all later became friends. That is the kind of trust we all had over there and at almost all of the other military installations wherever we were assigned. Perhaps it was the honor system.

Major Nelson was a staff operations officer. He seemed to really enjoy flying me in the F-104 he flew for his pilot proficiency. Maybe this was because I enjoyed taking him and his family down to Beirut, Lebanon in "my" VC-47, which no one else would fly. We flew around Mt. Ararat on two separate flights, looking for anything that may be considered Noah's Ark. He didn't look much as he was trying to stay out of



Communist Armenian territory. He enjoyed skimming along at 500mph only a few feet above the flat terrain of the desolate Lake Van area. He never pushed it past Mach 1.

My primary responsibility as chief of plans and programs for the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean was to write highly classified, Cosmic Top Secret, contingency plans. If they do this, we do that, sort of thing. These plans I wrote were approved, disapproved, corrected or revised by the Pentagon and filed away until implemented. I wrote one "War Games" exercise held in Turkey, which involved 18,000 U.S. Marines and 6,000 Turkish soldiers. I was more than a year in planning every aspect of the logistical deployment of troops and their equipment. It was very successful. When the weeklong exercise was over, the Marine Commanding General and some of his Colonels came by my office and gave me one of their jacket patches and a certificate declaring me "Honorary Commodore" of the Marine Battalion. I was honored. Altogether I wrote 168 classified war plans and peace plans. I never got that desired, always elusive promotion.



I often took one or more of the children with me when I would go on an excursion of sightseeing. Eddy and I went to the Island of Lesbos. This is the island of the legendary or mythical lesbians. It was a short ferry ride to the island, which had many shops, restaurants and hotels all along the harbor wharfs. The harbor had a huge statue of a woman at the entrance. We rented a motorbike and went to the far end of the island on a trail that led to the ruins of a Christian Crusader Castle. We stopped at an olive orchard, which was being pruned. We were given a nice piece of the olive wood about two feet long and eight inches in diameter. I still have that wood after all these years, trying to figure out what kind of statue is trapped within it's bark .We bought an Egyptian "Scarab" which is probably 2,500 years old, and a very ornate copper dish, dated 1843. I made a picture of Eddy holding huge grapes, which covered the palm of his hand.



We were scheduled to leave Turkey in a few weeks, and we wanted to see one more ancient city that had just been opened to the public after excavation. It was the city of Aphrodite, a place about 60 miles from Izmir. The boys did not want to see any more ruins, maybe Cammy didn't either, but we took her and spent a long day at the site. It was dark as we started back on a moonless dark night on a dirt road. We were going about 25mph when the headlights were reflected from the iron rims of one of those high-wheeled Roman Chariot carts just ahead of us, maybe 50 feet. I always drove with high beam lights because sheep, goats and other animals were often bedded down for the night on the dirt roads. I swerved as hard as I could but the right front part of the hood struck the left wheel of that high two wheeled cart and it became a major accident with injury.

The man had three of his wives and several children on the cart coming from the fields. The oldest wife had her legs dangling from the back of the cart and they were injured. She was moaning most of all but others were hurt as the horse bolted, dragged the cart until it freed itself and the old farmer declared at the trial that he had never seen the horse since. The three judges laughed. We loaded the older wife and the old farmer into the Jeep Wagoneer and drove on to get her to the American Hospital in Izmir. We got about five miles from Izmir and met a roadblock. I will never know how they got the word, but they had heard that it was a hit and run accident back there 15 miles. There was no explanation that would satisfy them, even with the old man and woman groaning in the back seat. The corporal in charge loaded one of his simple-minded soldiers with a big long World War One rifle into the back seat directly behind me. The barrel was too long so he gave him an American made .45 cal pistol. He kept that thing rubbing into my neck. I don't believe he knew how to use it but that gave me no confidence that he wouldn't try if he wanted to. Mary tried to calm him.



When we got to Izmir, I turned to take them to the American Hospital but the soldier knew the Turkish hospital was in the other direction. He was excitedly threatening to shoot me. I partly believed him but I kept thinking that he did not know how to use that semi-automatic American made pistol. We were now at the downtown building where the American military police were headquartered. I slowed down as Mary and Cammy jumped from the car and ran into the building. He slid the charger back and put a round into the chamber. Oh, Oh, you bet he knew how to use it and I was concerned that he would. I actually thought he was going to pull the trigger and I don't know why he didn't. We were at the American Hospital in a matter of seconds. The Military police and the Turkish Police were all over the Jeep and surrounding it with weapons drawn at the poor Turkish soldier. They are called Oscars. He finally took the gun from my head and got out. They whisked him away. The old couple was wheeled into the hospital and treated. I learned later that my name was on a roster maintained by the Military Police as one of the few military and civilian diplomats there who held the Cosmic Top Secret security ratings and I was to be afforded maximum protection in the event of arrest or capture.

I had to go to trial three times before a panel of five judges, none of whom spoke English. They went to the wreck site in US vehicles General Tipton provided. He was a great help. He provided them catered meals the three days of the court in session. Finally, the judges ruled that the total damages amounted to \$1,000. I was found to be 70 % responsible and the old farmer was 30% responsible because he had no reflectors or a lighted lantern hanging from the rear. I paid the farmer directly in Turkish Lira the equivalent of \$700, and \$100 to the court. I got the Jeep repaired in three days and turned it over to be shipped back to the states. The Jeep Wagoneer had served us well. We traveled more than 44,000 miles in pursuit of the travels of Paul, a trip to the holy lands and our family pleasures, traveling mostly off paved roads and onto gravel roads, rough terrain and

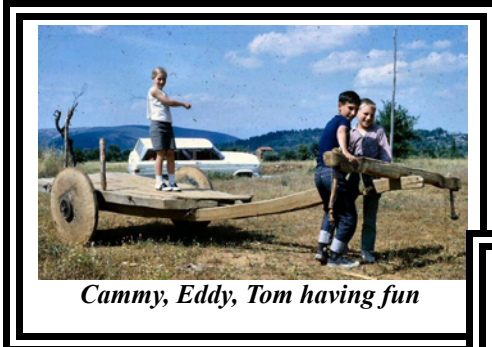
sometimes only camel trails. There was an Olive Oil producer who wanted to trade me his 1925 Lincoln Grand Touring Car, built expressly for Attaturk, for the Jeep. I sometimes think of the money I could have made with that car in the states. It was a work of art but needed much restoration as it was out in the open for public viewing.

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt had the War Department enact a policy that required a person to have residence in the US for six months before discharge or retirement. She felt that men being brought from the jungles of the South Pacific and released into the civilian world presented a hazard to society. I was caught in that situation and had to be reassigned to some base within the US for six months before my scheduled 30 June 1968 retirement. This cut my three-year Turkish assignment a little short but that was all right after that accident I was ready to come home. The packers and movers were a marvel to watch. They would load a heavy refrigerator onto one little man's back with straps and help guide him up or down three flights of stairs, with him alone bearing the total weight. I don't know how they did it. One 140 # man carrying a 300 # piano? I saw them do it.

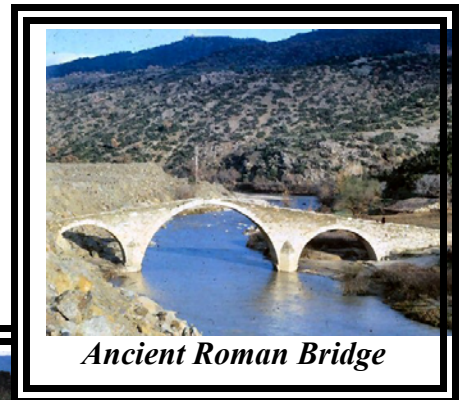
When we left Turkey, we had to inventory everything for the Turkish Government for them to make sure we took everything out that we brought in or else pay import tax on anything not accounted for. Their import tax for Americans was 100% of the value of the item. We could never give away an item to a Turkish friend unless it was done illegally. Some would want to hitch a ride with me in my beloved little VC-47 to Greece, Lebanon, or Italy and buy loads of things. They did not declare these when we got back to Cigli Air Base, as this was not a customs clearing Air Base. These items brought in often became gifts to Turkish friends and domestics. This inventory list was called a 'beyonome'. We had to bring back a junk refrigerator, stove, TV and lots of appliances and things. When we left Marietta, we piled that junk in the basement and left it, paying the realtor \$100 to dispose of it. Three weeks later Allied Movers delivered that junk to us in Auburn as a separate lot, charging us \$630. I threw up my hands and hauled it to the garbage pile. I think the disgruntled realtor pocketed that \$100 and smiled, a "gotcha smile."

It was an ordeal to inventory and check every item to be loaded against every item that we had brought over with us. We had spent two days in the process and were bogged down with the two inspectors. I went down to the "Grog Shop" got two bottles of colorfully labeled whiskey and brought it to them. We were cleared in about an hour and we never saw them again. It was a cheap bribe because some returning families had paid considerable sums of US money, not Turkish Lira, to get the "OK" signatures of those two inspectors. The Turkish people were not bad about bribes, only those two. We were taking back home to America many wonderful memories of Turkey and its people. We all learned Bible geography and a hands-on historical artifacts even more than 2,000 years old. Mary, the children and I will never forget our experiences of those three years. The children tell us it has helped so much in their reading and understanding the Bible. I know that those three years of experiences made so much of the Bible recordings just come alive. We made more than 14,000 pictures with a lifetime of wonderful memories.

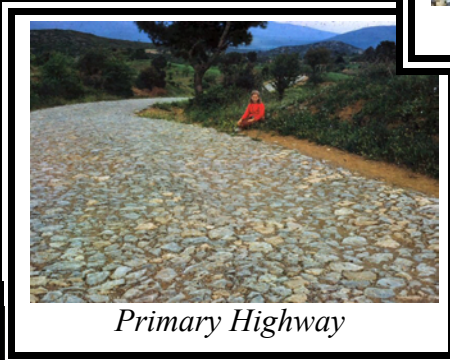
Memories of Turkey



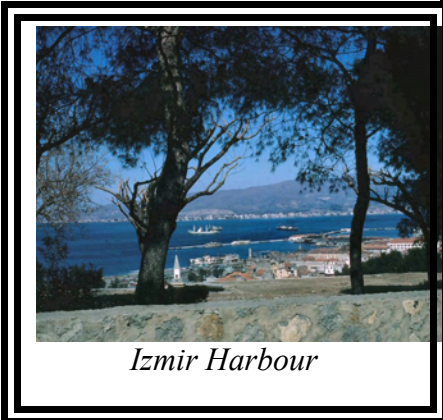
Cammy, Eddy, Tom having fun



Ancient Roman Bridge



Primary Highway



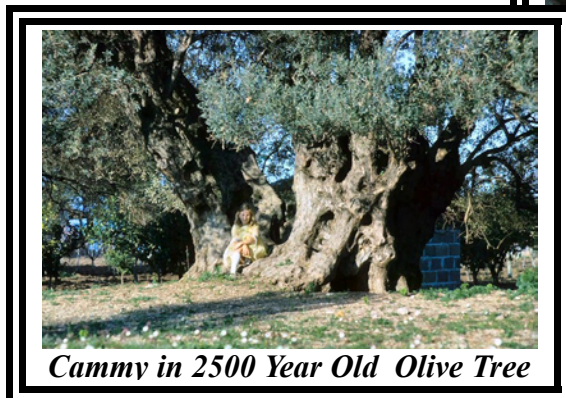
Izmir Harbour



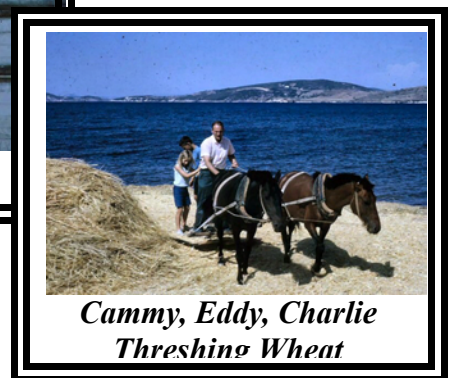
Moslem Minaret



Izmir Basilica



Cammy in 2500 Year Old Olive Tree



Cammy, Eddy, Charlie Threshing Wheat

It was Christmas time when we left Turkey. We had a three-day delay in our flight at Rome. It was a good time and we got to really see the old Rome, visit the Vatican, the



Circus Maximus, go down into the Catacombs and every tourist scene we could. I think the children enjoyed this side trip also. We bought many loaves of different breads to bring back with us. When we boarded the plane in Rome for Atlanta, there were only three other passengers aboard that huge airliner and six attendants. Those flight attendants did all they could to spoil our three, gave them wings to pin on their shirts and blouse, fed them all the way across the Atlantic, kept them in colas and played games with them. They even gave them each a set of United Airlines Wings to pin on their shirts. They got to go to the cockpit and have the run of the plane. I had emotions that bubbled over as we landed and I saw all of those American Flags waving in the breeze. Mary's sister Martha, Bob and family were waiting for us. We bunked in with them for a week until we could buy a car and get a house there in Roswell, Georgia. The Kissling family really helped us.

We bought a house in Roswell from a realtor who desperately wanted a qualified buyer to get it established on the FHA loan schedule. The house was hard to sell because of the steep hillside. We agreed if he would buy it back in six months at exactly the price we paid and he put it in writing. When it became retirement time, we had a little discussion. With the contract in hand and a little nudge, he paid us and took the house back.

The children adapted to their new Roswell home instantly. It was situated on a very steep hillside with a sun porch about fifteen feet above the ground. It had a full basement also. Every day after school, Tom and Cammy rode the same bus. They would run into the house, fix a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a glass of milk and sit up close to watch "Dark Shadows." They were both terrified and would sit real close together to watch it. To calm them down they would watch Gilligan's Island, which followed Dark Shadows. I don't know why they liked scary stories and movies so much. Cammy would often have nightmares over a story that was told to her little girl group one night at church back in Shalimar, called "The Hand", but she liked the scary ghost stories.



I was assigned to the Special Air Missions, SAM, at Dobbins AFB, Marietta, Georgia. Our mission was to fly Congressmen, VIP, Federal Judges and other dignitaries. It was like flying a small Air Force airlines. Our aircraft were thirty passenger T-29s with plush interiors. The flight attendants knew how to prepare and serve the pilots and passengers the best of Del Monaco steaks and all the usuals to go with it. They taught me to drink iced coffee. I could have easily become addicted to their preparations. Some of us got into a staff car with tower frequency and went out near the runway when the C-5 made the three taxi runs and the next day it took-off. Oh what a marvelous sight to watch that monstrous aluminum overcast take to the air, blowing black smoke in its' wake.

The boys adopted two dogs from a mongrel litter. They named them Toby and Gomer. These were their pets for several years. We all decided to go to Fort Myers and the island of Sanibel to collect seashells and swim in the Gulf. We got as far as Tampa and the dogs were so unmanageable, we all decided it would be best to return home after three days. When we got home, the basement was so filled with fleas that our legs were black. The exterminator took two trips and still had not gotten them before we moved. Those dogs loved to swim every morning for an hour in the creeks that flowed behind our house in Roswell and also in Auburn. They were loveable but smelled like a hound dog.

The children drug out the old riding lawn mower, took the engine and blade off and used it as a go-cart to whiz down the steep hill street in front of our house. Cammy oiled the wheels and the boys did not know it until they got it going down the hill one day. It was flying so fast the front wheels started wobbling out of control. Eddy had already hopped off and Tom tried to keep it in the street, but he and it veered to the right and went off the street down into a steep ravine with jagged rocks. He was really cut-up and bleeding. He was bruised for a week. I believe they just left their go-cart down in that ravine.

Eddy was fourteen, and we have never learned when or how he learned to drive. Mary and I were coming home one afternoon and met the Wagoneer loaded with Tom, Cammy and the neighborhood children, all waving from every window. Eddy was driving with a smile of confidence. As we passed, we broke out in laughter, but not so as he could see.

At last the day came for my retirement. I had considerable mixed emotions, yet this is what I had asked for, a 20-year career and it was time now to close that chapter of my life at age 39 and with my strong and supportive family, begin a new career. Traditionally, retiring officers are given a lot of pomp and circumstance but I requested no party, no parade, and no fan fare for my retirement. Just give me the papers and I shall be gone. That is about the way it happened, except the flight and support crews gave me a very nice luncheon at a local restaurant.

My last month in the Air Force was a time of leisure, physicals and corresponding with universities to get the most academic credit available for Air Force schools that I had attended. Auburn University was the most generous or liberal in awarding me the most academic credit, which advanced me into the mid semester of sophomore. We visited Auburn several times in that last month and found a



two-story house located in a pecan grove, Willow Creek Farms, about two miles off campus. The house had been moved from Auburn to the grove on a two-acre lot, to be a show-home/sales office for the developer of the 600-acre pecan grove. He told me he was in a cash flow problem and was willing to drastically reduce his price for a cash sale of the house and property. He said he needed cash money to either repair the house or to

build a dam on the creek flowing through the property. Our family all sat down in the front yard under a pecan tree there in undeveloped Willow Creek Farms and had a discussion, prayer and a vote. The vote was yes; let's call this home. I offered Guy Folmer, the developer, \$12,000 and he quickly seized it, saying that was exactly the cost of the dam, and now he could sell lake front lots and make lots of money. We felt like it was a God-sent bargain for us. Our family shared our lives here for eight blissful years.



We bought a lot of building material in Atlanta and hauled it to Auburn. On one of those trips to Auburn, we closed an upstairs closet door where two small cats were hiding. We discovered those two kitty cats when we returned a week later. When Eddy opened that closet door where all the smell was coming from, those cats leaped from the top of the stairs to the mid landing section and then to the bottom. We never saw them again. It took a week to clean and deodorize that closet. The children would hide in the seats of the Jeep when we passed through small towns with all the stuff tied to the roof and hanging out the tailgate. During that last month of active duty before retirement, I was given no duties and told to use the time as I wished. We made weekly visits to Auburn to make arrangements to have a deep well submersible pump, 224 feet to the bottom, installed with plumbing to the house. We also made arrangements for a septic tank and connections to be installed. The electrical system had to be thoroughly checked and repaired, as damage was done to some of the wires during the moving of the house. With electricity, water and sewage in place, we were ready to occupy our house after the retirement date of 30 June 1968 when our furniture could be moved. We had much to do.

We had taken that last month of active duty, to all enroll at Auburn public school and the University for me, secure an appointment to a position in the Cataloguing Department of the University Ralph B. Draughn Library for Mary, buy a house, and begin making it into a beautiful home, all the while gaining many friends and neighbors at our new home in Auburn. Our neighbors and friends helped us immensely in the transition from a military life to being a college student, seeking a career in teaching fifth graders in social science.

In retrospect, I retired from the Air Force with twenty years active duty and was credited with two and a half years National Guard service accounting for twenty-two and a half years of service duty in the pay grade of Major. I was actively engaged in flying for eighteen years, amassing nineteen thousand and three hundred hours of pilot time plus about 600 hours of flight navigator/ radar operator time. I was gone a lot and Mary is to be credited for being the guiding influence in the lives of our children, more so than me.

I am concluding this story of my life at this juncture, the end of an Air Force career, as we embark into a new career in Education. My years have been so very gratifying and fulfilling to be with Mary and the children as they have matured with their own families.

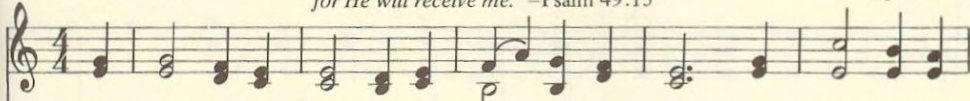


It Is Well with My Soul

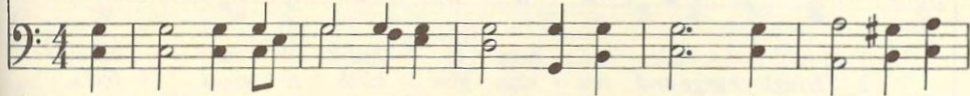
Horatio G. Spafford

*But God will redeem my soul from the power of death,
for He will receive me. —Psalm 49:15*

Philip P. Bliss



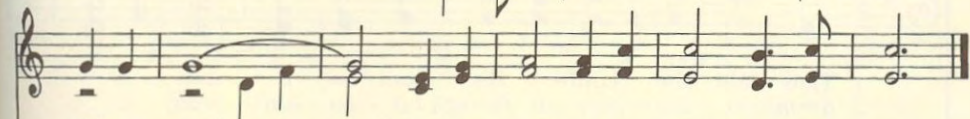
1 When peace, like a riv - er, at - tend - eth my way, When sor - rows like
2 My sin— O the joy of this glo - ri - ous thought—My sin, not in
3 And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled



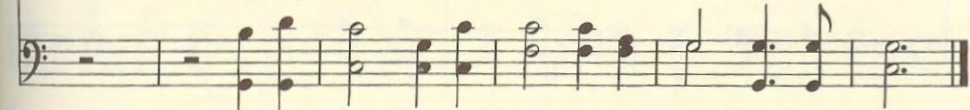
1 sea bil-lows roll— What - ev - er my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
2 part, but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more:
3 back as a scroll: The trump shall re - sound and the Lord shall de - scend,



1 It is well, it is well with my soul. It is well
2 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! It is well
3 "E - ven so"— it is well with my soul. It is well



with my soul,
with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul.



INNER PEACE

