

Table of Contents

01 - 1937 Wheeler, Arkansas.pdf	6
02 - 1942 Fayette, Alabama.pdf	10
03 - 1943 Clear Creek, Arkansas.pdf	12
04 - 1944 Sycamore School, Arkansas.pdf	14
05 - 1945 Hollands Holler, Arkansas.pdf	19
06 - 1947 Charleston, South Carolina.pdf	25
07 - 1948 Clarksville, Tennessee.pdf	27
08 - 1949 Fort Campbell, Kentucky.pdf	29
09 - 1950 New Providence, Tennessee.pdf"	33
10 - 1952 Cunningham, Tennessee.pdf"	35
11 - 1952 New Providence, Tennessee.pdf	40
12 - 1954 Fort Campbell, Kentucky.pdf	41
13 - 1955 Lake Charles, Louisiana.pdf	47
14 - 1956 Homestead, Florida.pdf"	56
15 - 1959 San Diego, California.pdf	65
16 - 1960 New London, Connecticut.pdf	72
17 - 1960 Boston USS Edisto (AGB-2).pdf	74
18 - 1960 Arctic Cruise.pdf	79
19 - 1961 Antarctic Deep Freeze.pdf	82
20 - 1961 Arctic Cruise.pdf	95
21 - 1962 USS Glacier (AGB-4).pdf	99
22 - 1963 Jacksonville, Florida.pdf"	105
23 - 1966 Manned Space Flight.pdf"	110
24 - 1968 Ascension Island, UK.pdf"	118
25 - 1968 Kennedy Space Center, FL.pdf"	122
26 - 1978 Barstow, California (2).pdf"	133
27 - 1980 Fairbanks, Alaska.pdf"	140
28 - 1983 Goddard Space Flight Center, Maryland.pdf"	151
29 - 1986 MILA-PDL Tracking Stations.pdf"	165
30 - 1997 Retirement.pdf"	173
31 - Hobbies	182
32 - Milestones.pdf"	194

“Muzzygeezy”

Autobiography

To the Top and Bottom of the World and Sideways



Glenn D. Smith

“Muzzygeezy”

Copyright © 2020 by Glenn D. Smith

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the author.

ISBN (XXXXXXXXXXXXXX)

Printed in USA by 48HrBooks (WWW.48HrBooks.com)

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my dear wife Katherine who as my young bride traveled with me across the United States from top to bottom, side to side and tip (Florida) to tip (Alaska), a life that began with a new job and a two-year honeymoon in Canary Islands, Spain. Kathie shared the success of my career in the NASA Space Flight Programs in support of Apollo, Apollo-Soyuz, Space Lab, Space Shuttle and Space Station, launch and orbital support to a multitude of unmanned satellites. She was an equal partner in planning eleven reunions of my ship and without her encouragement and support I would not have written *The Story of An Icebreaker* or these memories. As the song so aptly describes, “*she is the wind beneath my wings.*”

Introduction

On my 77th birthday I lost a great deal of my memory because on that day my mother died at 96 years old. When any of us needed information she was always there with her outstanding memory. So I thought this is the time for me to use what little memory I have left to write my story.

In High School, I discovered that I enjoyed writing poems to entertain certain young ladies and as I grew older my urge to write stories grew stronger. After attempting at least two novels while serving in the US Navy, I succeeded in writing only short stories that amused my friends and coworkers but soon learned that Readers Digest didn't feel the same way. They gave me my first and only rejects. This didn't deter me from writing however, but it did cause me to stop sending any more stories to Readers Digest or to any publisher for that matter.

There came a time in recent years when this desire to write manifested itself in *The Story of an Icebreaker*, a history of the icebreaker USS/USCGC Edisto (AG-89/AGB-2/WAGB-284), that spanned nineteen years of US Navy operations and another seven years under the Coast Guard flag. Little did I anticipate that the published book would be 9 x11 inches, 604 pages and weigh 4.2 lbs. Muzzygeezy!

In addition to honoring the request from the Washington DC Naval Yard, the Navy's Chief Archivist, Navy Museum and the Edisto Island Museum, I hope that I have given a copy to all the people who are important in my life.

With that said, let me say right up front that there may be holes in my stories and those are probably intentional. In some cases it merely may be the lack of a good memory or one that has dimmed with age. Either way, I stand by both the lies and the truth because it is my story and I'm sticking to it.

1- Wheeler, Arkansas 1937



1937 Smiths

Once upon a time, long ago in the faraway land of Wheeler, Arkansas, a son was born to Jerry Primrose Smith and Anna Josielee Holland. They named him Glenn Devell, a name that has stuck with me all the years since. Born April 23, 1937, I was the first child of the Smith family, adding one more to the growing population of the small and booming metropolis of Wheeler.

Despite my mother's intentions, the attending physician misspelled my name on the birth certificate using only one "N" vice two which was and still is a common practice by most name spellers. Thus my birth certificate is spelled Glen vice Glenn and in the years since when I first began spelling my name, my mother made it perfectly clear that it should be spelled with two "Ns" and that is the way that the rest of the world has known me for 83 years.

Speaking of my birth certificate, I recently had to show it to renew my driver's license. I was given a new license without any problems but the next morning the DMV called and asked if I had a voter's registration card. Yes, I did. So I was asked if I would return to the DMV and bring my voter registration card. Upon my return the same young lady that issued my driver's license the day before asked to see my new license which I promptly handed it over along with my voter registration card.

After a few minutes of studying my new license, my voter registration card and her computer, she walked to another booth and became engaged in a long discussion with an older woman who worked there. After a few minutes she returned and said that my birth certificate had only one N vice two on my license and said they had to agree. She is still in possession of my new license and now I'm getting a little perturbed and was about to lose my cool because they were about to deny me a license despite having seen copies of my DD-214, my Passport, voter registration and every other piece of evidence proffered to show proof that my name had two N's.

After I threatened to bring a lawyer to the DMV there was considerable deliberation among the staff who decided that they needed the approval of some office in Tallahassee before they would issue me a new license. Eventually the approval was given and I was issued a new one. Now if I live that long, I may have to go through all this once more when it is time to renew. I will have to produce all the same paperwork and documents required but nothing to show that I have the approval of some office in Tallahassee.

Pity the poor soldiers that weren't dubbed with a middle name because when they were being processed by administrative staff, they would type in "NM" which stood for No Middle name. I've heard drill instructors call out a sailor's name as John "Nim" Doe or one DI once called out John No Middle Doe. You gotta have a middle name or you just can't win. Just look at the people you know that are called by their middle name instead of their first name. But no one wants to be called by No Middle Name or Middle instead of their first name. The military has got it right when they use only the surname.

Lest one should forget the importance of a name, I was often reminded that my middle name could be pronounced two ways; Devell or “Devil”. Devil wasn't used under normal circumstances but there times when I could sense one's displeasure when hailed by the name “Glenn Devil.” Mother was the one who used the name “Glenn Devil” most often and it generally meant I was in trouble.

Now that I'm older, only a few close friends and my Doctor's office, Social Security and the Voter Registration office know my middle name...and the Red Cross, Blue Cross, DNC, RNC and everyone else soliciting funds and of course General Knokitoff, of the Nigerian Army.

As a young boy, I may have occasionally been called by my proper name but my nickname of “Eli” was used most often. Now to be truthful, I don't recall who or why I was given that nickname but all of us boys had one; Gerald the Squirrel, Mousey, Rabbit, Snotty Nose and Eli. In addition to our new identities, we also had a secret password of Muzzygeezy and when yelled out anywhere in Wheeler, or even the vicinity of Fayetteville, one could always expect a reply of Far-ray-do!

The first few years of my life were spent in Wheeler so I have only vague memories but my recollection of those years and the many to follow were idyllic. It was a small community of houses, a few gardens here and there and fields of purple sage grass that were the focus of many of us kids during the late Autumn when the days were sunny but cool enough to require a jacket. We would lie down in the sage grass out of the wind where it was warm and stare at the billowing clouds as they floated overhead and try and name the many different shapes that passed overhead in the blue sky. There are few moments in one's life that could be any better.

No doubt we were poor as for income and how wealth is measured in finance and material things but we didn't know that. Never did we consider ourselves poor and would have found it difficult to imagine a life much better than the one we had at the time. We were rich in so many other ways and don't recall envying anyone else. It was a time of happiness because we knew little outside of Wheeler.

In addition to a church, Wheeler boasted a canning factory and a few scattered homes but the most important community structure was a Post Office and grocery store owned by one Miss Ada Hodges. Ada's store was the nexus of Wheeler's social life. In addition to the Post Office, the store sold groceries, books, newspapers, magazines, feed & seed, tools, plows and other equipment and dished out an equal amount of gossip from the folks that shopped there.

Wheeler now sports a Fire Station and numerous houses and businesses that weren't there when I was a kid. According to Wikipedia, the Post Office itself was established in 1873 and closed in 1996. Now the building appears to be a shop or someone's residence - or both.

Ada's store sat tightly in a curve of what was once a gravel road that it bears the question of which came first, the road or the store? The curve is so sharp that one has to blow the horn and proceed with caution whereas in the earlier days, the dust from the unpaved road could advertise an oncoming vehicle from the other direction.

Situated as it were, to a young kid the store was huge and seemed to be almost as big as today's Wal-Mart. In actuality, it may have been about the half the size of a 7-Eleven. Across from her store sat Ada's big house on top a hill overlooking the store and Wheeler in general. I don't recall a husband ever being mentioned and as far as I know, she was single all during her time in Wheeler.

Mom once told me that my birth was in a small house on Weir Road (SR 94) that was nestled at the bottom of a hill that ran down into Wheeler. Some years later that hill became known as Canning Factory Hill. It got its name from the stench of stewed tomatoes when the old Model 'A' truck used to haul the cores and peels lost a tie rod causing it to run off the side of the hill dumping its load in the trees. We seem to have lived in at least four different houses in Wheeler as well as two houses in Fayetteville as I was growing up and there were times when we lived briefly with Mom's parents.

Mom once told me a story that when I was about 3 months old, we were living in Fayetteville on Dixon Street when Dad left Mom and I behind to find work in Kansas harvesting wheat. She was pregnant with Sue at the time so we moved to Steele to live with my grandparents while Dad was still working in Kansas. Dad having left us behind really upset my Granddad who was convinced that Dad had abandoned us and now with Mom 9 months pregnant and me not much more than a year old, he was encouraging Mom to get a divorce. Then Sue was born. Now Mom had two infants. By now Granddad was certain that Mom was left alone to take care of two kids and Dad was not coming back and insisted that she should get a divorce.

When I was old enough to remember things, Mom told about me a story about me scalding myself as a toddler when I attempted to pull myself up using the stove. She had a pot of boiling water on the Range and while she wasn't looking I grabbed the edge of the pot pulling it off the stove onto me.

Evidently the boiling water splashed on my belly and legs narrowly missing my face. Though I don't remember any of the pain, she said I had a lot of large blisters and now only one remains that never popped – my stomach. What? You don't believe me?

Granddad Holland was old school. He was a tall, thin, rawboned man and stooped slightly from years of hard work and he had the stubbornness and iron will of the mules he kept. He was never known to have worn anything but coveralls (unless it was long underwear underneath), and long sleeve shirts. He always wore a wide brimmed hat to shade him from the sun.

Underneath his old sweat stained hat, without which he was rarely ever seen, Hugh had dark penetrating eyes and a set jaw that gave him a determined look that characterized the pioneer that he was, as were his father and grandfather before him.

In earlier times, Mother says she can remember Granddad owning a team of horses and a covered wagon in which he took his family from Mulberry, AR to Indian Territory in Oklahoma. They bought a place across the river from what had been the home of the infamous outlaw, Belle Starr. Of course Belle Starr was already deceased at that time. Was it a drive-by shooting? Back in those days, I very much doubt it but her death was caused by gunshot wounds. It is still a mystery as to who shot her.

With America coming off the great depression, Dad worked at whatever jobs he could find from harvesting grapes, wheat, hay and any type truck farms as well as driving a truck. In 1940 we moved to Mt. Comfort where both Mom and Dad worked on the Bradford's Dairy farm. A year later, when I was about 4 years old, the family moved back to Fayetteville where Dad found work in a produce market and we soon moved to Gregg Street where Sister Sue became deathly ill with pneumonia. She recovered but as a reminder of how near death she was, for the rest of her life she carried a scar from surgery that left a hole in her back.

As we got older, it was a great opportunity for a young entrepreneur to charge admission to get a peek at the hole in her back but Sue wasn't cooperative at all, even with the offer to share the proceeds.

After sister Sue's recovery we moved to another house in Fayetteville on Leverette Street. It was here that Dad left us to find work in Alabama, so it wasn't long before we three moved back to Steele to live with Granddad and Grandma Holland. This time Hugh was dead certain that Dad had left Mom and us two kids for good and he was again urging her to get a divorce.

I can only guess that Mom got tired of Granddad's nagging about getting a divorce and decided to move out so in late 1941 we moved back to Fayetteville into a house on Cleveland Street while Dad remained in Alabama trying to find work. By now I was near 5 years old and Sue wasn't far behind.

It was then that Dad's sister Myrtle Lucas paid us a visit in Fayetteville and provided moral support. Over the years she was always good to come when needed or to show up unannounced to visit. In later years Mom said that if Myrtle hadn't found us in Arkansas, she would have just gone on her way to visit someone else. I think it is safe to say that on Dad's side of the family, she was our favorite aunt.

In the meantime, Dad and friend Ray Hubbard had found work in the coal mines with Dad driving a coal truck in the city of Fayette, Alabama. His tale is that he sent money to Mom and us kids but Mom says, "She never got any of it."

When summer arrived, we moved from Fayetteville back to Steele to live once more with Granddad and Grandma Holland who were living in what was called the "Depot House."

I seem to remember the small house and stable being located on a hill just on south side of what was then the Steele School house. The house hadn't grown any and with only two rooms, we three stayed in the outbuilding in what some might call a Tack Room. Others might call it a stable. But it was cheap and cheap went a long way back then.

The old school house still stands as a church. It is called Thomas Lakeview Bible Church and a sign outside says Grace Fellowship. Whatever the name, the building has served its community well and is still in service.

Getting back to 1942, Mom was 8 months pregnant again. This time it was her third child and the last time she was here in Steele with her parents, my sister Sue was born. This might make a person think there is something strange about Steele and the Depot House.

During our brief stay we witnessed a bad hail storm so large and furious that it beat the leaves off the only tree that stood in the middle of the field where the horse was penned. Granddad's dog ran under the house but the poor old horse had used the only shelter it could find because we were in his Tack Room.

Fortunately for the horse - and for us - we didn't stay long because the next day, February 3, 1942, a day after Mom's birthday, Dad summoned us to Alabama. So once again, we were moving. Mom said it was Preacher Burns who carried our belongings in his truck and loaded them on a train for Fayette while we three - almost four - got on a bus and headed for Alabama.

2 - Fayette, Alabama 1942

A month or so after our arrival in Fayette County, Alabama, Mom gave birth to younger brother Jerry Herbert on March 22, 1942. He was born in a house owned by Jeff Hubbard that was situated between the cities of Winfield and Fayette. I don't recall what job Dad had in Fayette but before the year is out we moved again.

This time we moved to Birmingham where Dad went to work for the Alabama Power Company. I was not quite six years old and recall that Dad smoked Lucky Strike cigarettes back then and there were times when he couldn't afford to buy "store bought", so he would bring home Prince Albert tobacco in the can. He purchased a cigarette rolling machine which Sue and I used to roll his cigarettes. When twenty or more cigarettes were rolled, we would insert them inside an empty Lucky Strike package to give the appearance they were store bought.

Another great memory was when he and I would fly kites made of old newspaper, sticks and held together with paste made from flour and water. There was an area right near the house that was ideal for launching a kite and I could be found there on most windy days.

There was also a hill on which many of the colored folks lived and we were warned not to go up that hill. Of course that would be like telling two kids not to eat ice cream so naturally Sue and I were caught going up the hill. An older black lady corralled us and brought us back down and suggested to Mom that it would be a good idea if we didn't go up the hill again. I know it was a time of segregation but as kids we still didn't understand the concern and I seriously doubt anything would have happened to us two. The lady was just looking out for mine and Sue's welfare.

In the meantime we were reminded that there was still a war going on. The effect of the war was felt more by Mom and Dad than on us kids because of the Government's rationing of food, gasoline and other products. Our awakening was the air raid sirens.

At first it was a scary situation but eventually when the sirens went off, we dutifully snuffed the lamps and pulled down the window shades and then sat and waited for the All Clear to be sounded. But of course no bombs were dropped on Alabama. However, there was a bombing in the USA. In 1942 a Japanese aviator Nobuo Fujita flew a float-plane launched from a submarine sitting off the Oregon coast. His mission was to drop balloon bombs in hopes of starting fires but the mission failed. However one such bomb was dropped in Brookings Oregon where a woman and five neighborhood children were killed when the balloon exploded as they were attempting to bring it out of the woods.

Soon Dad's friend, Ray Hubbard invited him to work for Ray's dad who owned a peanut farm. It meant that we would be leaving Birmingham and moving back to Fayette County. As it happened Ray had already moved his wife Lulu, their daughter Betty June and son Harold to Fayette so it was nice to have another family living nearby. We rented a tiny two bed room house that had an outside toilet and no running water or electricity and was on a small hill making it difficult to carry water from the creek. I don't recall having to do that myself on a regular basis but my mother did that a couple times a day. She would haul enough water to bath baby Jerry and cook with during the day.

In the late afternoon Mom might go again and get more water for washing up dishes, etc. Daily baths were out of the question. If anyone wanted to take a daily bath, I suppose they would've gone down to the creek but not us kids. Of course the thought of washing in the cold water of the creek was much less desirable than the warm water of a No 2 wash tub even if you were second or third. So Mom heated enough hot water to bathe Sue and me although the one who bathed last rarely had anything but warm water. I don't recall the exact order but baby Jerry got more frequent baths around dish washing time. Now you know from whence comes the old saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the dish water."

On one of Mom's water trips I was entrusted to watch little Jerry. Sue never needed much watching but Jerry being the baby did need tending on occasion and this was one of those times. He had wet his drawers and I having seen Mom change his diaper many times, sat about doing that. The only problem was that I wrapped it around his little bottom like a skirt and it turns out he wasn't finished yet. You get the picture. He was doing more than just wetting his pants.

It was in that little house that I recall Sue and I being on the receiving end of some of the old home remedies even if our sickness was questionable. For example, if one of us had a cold, a spoon full of sugar and a touch of coal oil (Kerosene) would relieve a cough. Dangerous as it may sound, it works.

No one who has ever experienced the wonders of the magic elixir that cured most pains and other indescribable illnesses, providing you could swallow it down. This is the one and only time that you were permitted to drink coffee, hot chocolate, orange juice, milk and anything else that would disguise the taste of castor oil. Yuk. Nothing ever did and remember that we had an outdoor toilet!

Our short time in Fayette generated experiences that are not easily forgotten. Diaper duty, Castor oil, sugar and kerosene and the taste of raw peanuts. It was here that as a young man I began to discover the exciting sensation of romance. Yes. There were three Hubbard girls living on the farm ranging in age from thirteen to sixteen...or was it eighteen. I was now age six going on ten at the time and the only boy except for Harold who was too young to participate in the more adult pursuits of us older kids. Anyway, I won't bore you with the details because there were too many new experiences for a young boy. For instance hog killing time.

I would think it was too warm for killing hogs but apparently it was necessary to kill this one. It became a wide-eyed adventure to see the hog lifted into a barrel with a fire under it and filled with scalding hot water. Evidently this was to remove the hair or make it easier to scrape. Not very pleasant to see or smell. There was a time when I was older I recall Granddad Holland killing hogs but don't recall me having any special chores to help. The hogs were strung up by their hind legs tied to a single tree and using a rope and a pulley they could easily be lowered into the 55 gallon drum where awaited scalding water.

Back then neighbors would load up and go to another farmer and help him during hog killing time. Or another time it might be helping him get in a crop of hay or wheat during harvest time. Granddad was a man who like to go off on these jaunts and cut grapes or help other farmers in some fashion plus in some cases it was an opportunity to make a few dollars. When he went to a farm close to home Gerald and I would jump at the chance to go with him just to ride in the wagon.

3 - Clear Creek 1943

It wasn't long before Arkansas was calling the family home again and near the end of summer '43, the family moved back to Fayetteville where Dad had a job driving a truck. I was old enough to start school so I began my first year of school at Leverette Elementary. It is during this period that events are somewhat hazy but I remember walking two or three blocks to school but can't recall the name of any teachers or exactly when we left to move back home to Wheeler or the reason why. This time we moved into a house near Clear Creek which wasn't far from the Sycamore School house.

We moved into an old farm house that we shared with the Hubbard family who had previously moved back from Fayette. I must assume that Dad and Ray Hubbard were working together again for Mr. Porter who owned a farm and a good amount of property in and around Wheeler and the house that we shared with the Hubbard family.

The house sat just around the corner from Ada's store and though it was large, it was now being occupied by nine people; four adults, four juveniles and one baby. A lot can be said for getting to know your neighbor.

It was near Sycamore School so rain or shine Betty June and I walked the mile or so to Sycamore school where I finished the remainder of my First Grade class while she was in a class ahead of me. Harold and Sue were still too young to start school that year.

We were still living in the old farm house with the Hubbard family when on March 10, 1944 Dad was inducted into the US Navy while Ray went into the Air force. They joined many other men who were leaving families behind to fight in WWII. In this case, Dad was leaving behind a family of four while Ray was leaving three behind.

Dad was sent to Farragut, Idaho for boot camp. Afterwards he was able to make a quick trip home before shipping overseas to the Philippines to join the war. His military records indicate that he was on the USS General J.C. Breckinridge (AP-176), a troop transport used to shuttle soldiers to and from the war. He may have served also on the USS Hector (AR-7), which was a repair ship before serving on the USS Orvetta (IX-157), a barracks ship that provided service to forward based personnel in the Pacific arena.

Some years back I discovered a website for the USS Orvetta (IX-157) that was published by a WWII veteran of that ship. He was developing a roster of men who had served on the ship so I sent him a photo and short bio of Dad's career which he posted on the site. The website may be found at: <http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~ddorsey/military/orvetta/>. Dad is found on the **Memorial** page.

In the meantime we kids used the summer of '44 to explore the small farm where outbuildings stored plows and other farm equipment but no farm animals. There were buildings with bins of corn and wheat and musty lofts where potatoes were drying. These were all magical places for young lads and lassies to explore. In addition to the wonders of the outbuildings there was a large Mulberry tree that always had fruit. Its berries could be gained by climbing on the tin roof of one of the storage buildings where we would lie back and watch the clouds scuttling by while eating mulberries. We kids always had telltale signs of eating those berries on our mouths and clothes.

Hazel nuts could be found alongside the ditch where the grader plowed the gravel road. I don't know why they favored that ditch but they were always dusty from vehicle traffic.

Another feature of this house was an old oak tree that had the largest acorns that one would ever see. I mean these were really giant acorns! Larger than a golf ball in size.

It is doubtful that another tree like it existed in Arkansas or at least anywhere near that part of the state. We kids would hunt for these acorns and have Mom or Grandma fill these hulls with yarn to make colorful decorations for Christmas or whatever.

I've spoken of these acorns over the years and on one of our many trips home, Kathie and I drove to where the old tree should've been but it was gone. We did however find part of an old acorn and hull that was sufficient to show Kathie how large the acorns were.

And who can forget the thorny Chinquapins? The nut was delicious but one had to really work to extract them from their hulls which were a bundle of sharp cactus like thistles. In most cases a rock was a handy tool to sufficiently bash the hulls into surrendering their fruit. Then of course it was a delicate task to pick nuts out of their hulls but that didn't stop us from gathering them at every opportunity. I suppose one could say that they were edible raw but were so tasty when roasted.

Thinking back I can recall the farm and nearby woods yielded several wild products that included crab apples, strawberries, plums, cherries, mulberries, Chinquapins, hazel nuts and black walnuts to name a few. If the season wasn't ripe for picking any of these, then we could always grab a turnip or tomato or climb up into the potato drying shed and eat raw potatoes. There wasn't anything better to feed an appetite like eating a big cold biscuit and a raw potato and sometimes a sweet potato could be found. If the truth be known, even onions would taste good with a cold biscuit.

The wheat bins were another fun place to play but frowned on when caught and almost always led to a whipping. On the other hand, if we didn't get caught, the chaff discolored our hair and choked our youthful lungs. There were times when violent coughing or a bad whopping would clear the passageways. Yet, we went back at the first opportunity that looked safe.

About a half mile back of the farm Clear Creek ran and where it had flooded and ran out of its banks, it left a large slough behind where dwelled some big catfish. I wasn't into noodling in the muddy slough, though I once did a little with my dad in Hamstring Creek where we caught a few Sun Perch and crawdads. That was before I got smart...and scared.

With Clear Creek nearby it was like having your own swimming pool except this one had fish. Not far from the house there was a bend in the creek that made a big hole that was ideal for swimming in the summer months. On one outing accompanied by Mom and young Jerry, Sue and I were swimming when she stepped off into a deeper part of the creek and quickly learned she couldn't swim.

At first I thought all her flailing and hollering was merely her playing but the third time she went under all I could see was her long black hair floating on top of the water. I realized that she wasn't faking so I half swam and half splashed out to where I could grab her hair. Obviously it wasn't the best lifesaving method like you would see on TV or in a movie, but it worked. That was the last time we visited that hole to swim. Fortunately there were no alligators in Clear Creek and I doubt any could be found anywhere around Northwest Arkansas much less Wheeler.

4 - Sycamore Elementary 1944

An important chapter in my life was Sycamore school where I finished the First grade, part of the Second grade and part of Third grade. No, we didn't move in every case but I will explain more later on.

Sycamore was a classic one size fits all school that sat on the southern bank of Clear Creek. It was a one-story building with a tall belfry housing a large bell that rang to signal the start of school and end of recess.

It was a real treat to be selected to ring the bell. Of course a child had to be tall enough to pull the long rope and if sufficiently strong the boys would ring the bell vigorously in an attempt to stir the wasp. If that didn't work, a rubber gun often hit its target. This was especially attractive during the cold and rainy winter months when no one wanted to go outside and play.



Sycamore Elementary

There were several students attending classes ranging from First through Eighth grades being taught by one tough lady. I have fond memories of Second Grade under the tutorship of Mrs. Weir. She was a large lady that ran the school like a military post but one has to remember, she was teaching students in eight grades and some of the eight-graders were approaching manhood.

In the middle of the school house was an aisle that ran the length of the room in which sat a large potbellied stove. On the right were lower grades and higher grades on the left.

The stove was intended to heat the entire school room but if it was hot enough to reach the exterior desks, then it was too hot for those sitting near the stove. I recall that the rows up front were for the First Graders and the grades ascended as one moved to the rear. On the left side of the room were the upper grades where one might find ages ten to seventeen or maybe older. The joke was that the older boys were held back a few grades until their fathers completed the eighth grade. Totally untrue because some fathers may have never graduated from elementary school.

There are some great memories of Sycamore. It was a time when we boys carried rubber guns which were our weapons to use at recess to shoot other boys with like weapons.



Simple Rubber Gun

The guns were simple to make. All we needed is a block of wood, a clothes pin and a strip of inner-tube rubber. Back then there weren't any radial tires, only bias ply so there was a good supply of old inner-tubes. Some of the guns were pretty sophisticated. For example, I made a rifle that used a long rubber from an inner tube and when an opponent was shot there wasn't any argument if they had been hit or not. It would leave a good welt on one's arm, especially if a knot was tied in the center of the rubber and a fence staple inserted in the knot. There was no argument about who was hit or not.

But that was dangerous and was only used a few times like shooting at the wasp nest in the Belfry. Sometimes ringing the school bell at recess didn't stir them up so one had to resort to other means.

Of course the situations that generate good memories can be the source of not so good memories as well. Take the Boys and Girls outside toilets for example. The Girls toilet was not too far from the school and sat near the Clear Creek river bank. I mention this because during a storm the creek flooded and swept away the toilet. It floated downstream until it encountered a steel bridge a mile or so away. I don't know if it got reset properly but do know the boys didn't fare so well when it got turned over.

The boy's toilet was situated near the main road at the beginning of the driveway to the school and was much further away – it's anybody's guess why that was – so it took longer to get there if one was in a hurry. To complicate further, the story goes that on one Halloween night, some older boys on horses rode down and lassoed the toilet and pulled it across the driveway blocking access until it was moved. Whatever the reason or how it happened is a moot point but when restored to its resting place it sat at a about a 75-80 degree angle giving birth to considerable bathroom humor.

One has to remember that these days were long before Television, Tablets, I-pods, laptops and Smart phones so most anything would entertain us for at least 5 minutes, especially bathroom humor and that leaning toilet was the source of many jokes.

Most of us had never seen an actual football or baseball game and certainly not in Wheeler so we improvised in our sports. If we weren't playing with rubber guns, we played ball with a String Ball which is made up with yards of thread, yarn and whatever was used as the core which was generally some type of material. As the yarn and string was wrapped, glue was added to hold the material together until it was about baseball size. Though it was sometimes a little on the hard side, it made for a pretty good substitute for a baseball. We all sought the distinction of being the last batter to hit the ball and watch it unravel before anyone could catch it.

Another game we played was called "Shinny" which was a poor boys form of ice hockey. Each of us would own a favorite stick of some type and would dig holes in the ice one short of the number of players. Each boy would select his goal to guard while the boy without would use a tin can for the puck. The object of the game was for him to put the can into one of the guarded goals and if successful, he would then own that goal and the loser would then have to set about trying to secure a goal. The game would continue until the recess period was over or someone got hurt bad enough to bring the game to an end. The name "Shinny" comes from getting your shins hit so many times when defending your goal or attempting to put the can in someone else's "goal."

The older boys seem to have an advantage over us younger ones because they hit harder and had fewer hits to their shins. Or so it seems. Who knows if they had a few scars hidden under their britches' legs and who is going to ask them? Not me. But my guess is that the older boys had knots on their shins also.

Another game of sorts was to strip the leaves off what we called Horse Weeds. They were more bamboo-like stalks than weeds and were tall and straight, a characteristic that made them ideal for use as spears or arrows but was not so dense that one could use them to penetrate much of anything. As I said, they were just weeds.

There was one exception however. My uncle Gerald “The Squirrel” Holland and his team were playing against me and my cousin James Knight, aka “Mousey.” The weeds were 5-6ft tall so it was easy to hide in them. One might compare it to a game of Battleship where you try to determine the enemy’s location. We all were using sling shots to shoot the Horse weeds into the air to where we thought the others were hiding and they in turn were trying to pinpoint our location. Unfortunately, Mousey was about to shoot his arrow up into the air when one came down and hit him in the eye. We had seen broken arms and other injuries but this was a terrible sight! No pun intended.

We steered him to the school house and had him lie down on a bench in the back of the school building while his brother Bobby bicycled to Ada’s and called for an ambulance. It was obvious that James had lost his eye. We never played that game again.

As he grew older, it was rumored that he was a master at marbles. It was alleged that he would pop his eye out and shoot it like a Taw and take all the marbles. If true, then I wonder how many glass eyes my uncle had to buy when James was a teenager.

Looking back, my Second Grade behavior wasn’t anything to brag about. I didn’t get a whipping every day but often enough to keep Mrs. Weir’s box of switches full. When anyone did something that led to discipline, for girls that generally meant sitting in a corner – now called Time Out – but for boys it almost always led to a whipping. She had a peculiar method of spanking that began with the recipient going out and cutting his or her own switches. However, I don’t remember a girl ever getting a switching. The twist is that she required us to go out and cut three switches. You can bet we always got decent switches because if you ever made the mistake of getting brittle switches, you never did again. When the first one breaks, then she uses the other two on you or delves into her stash until she finds one that doesn’t break. Yep, we were allowed to have pocket knives back then which we used to cut switches and play Mumblety-peg.

There are multiple ways to play Mumblety-peg but the way we played it most often was the use of a knife that had at least two blades which we opened 90 degrees apart. A peg would be driven into the ground with about 2 inches or so sticking up. We would then flip the knife in the air hoping the long blade would stick in the ground. If it stuck, then using your knife, you got to strike the peg twice driving it further into the ground. If it was the short blade that stuck in the ground then you only got to hit the peg once. Your opponent then had his try and as long as one of your knives stuck in the ground the peg continues to be driven further in the ground. When one misses, then as a loser, he would have to remove the peg with his teeth. There are many variations of this game, many of which can be found on Wikipedia. Some of the games can be dangerous, particularly the one that involves throwing the knife as close to your feet as possible which is one of the original Mumblety-peg games. Now that I think back, maybe it wasn’t all that dangerous because most of us went barefooted and I don’t recall anyone missing a toe unless it was a genetic defect. Not from Mumblety-peg anyway.

There was a time when Mom took advantage of a sale on corduroy pants for me. I didn’t like them and swore I wouldn’t be found dead in them. But there came a day when the only clean pants I could find to wear to school were corduroy and the first day that I wore them I expected to get ridiculed by the older boys. Jeans, even with holes in them were the style if there was such a thing back then. We certainly had never heard of designer jeans or anything like that. The term “stile” meant it was stairs going over a fence or maybe a turnstile but nothing a designer would wear.

One day I won a whipping and I was wearing the corduroy pants which were heavier than my worn out jeans. I really don't recall what magic I had performed but regardless I had earned a whipping. To my great surprise, those switches didn't cut through the corduroys like my jeans and right then and there I became a fan. Of course there wasn't a need to wear them every day, just those days when I had a whipping.

We all have heard the expression, "my life flashed before my eyes." That can be true even if a person hasn't lived all that many years. It happened to me one cold winter day when it was basically study time for all us older kids except for the first graders who were being read to by Mrs. Weir. She was pacing back and forth reading to the first two rows and when she reached the potbellied stove, she would turn and go back the other way. This went on for the better part of an hour which meant if you looked around the room you would see a lot of heads nodding.

Well on this day as she turned with her back to me, I was showing off and pulled my rubber gun out from my desk and pointed it at her large backside. To my horror and to the delight of the older kids on the other side of the room, the rubber slipped out of the clothes pin and hit her right in the ass. Muzzygeezy! To the most casual observer, it would appear that she hadn't felt the rubber but since my life was flashing before my eyes and everything else was in slow motion, yeah, she felt it. However, the most amazing thing happened. She made the slightest hesitation in her reading out loud which confirmed she knew she had been hit but not with what and continued her pacing. When she turned and got back to the stove and the rubber lying on the floor, she merely stepped over it and kept on pacing. Yes, there is life after death.

It may have been a blessing that we moved to a house on Highway 16 which meant we would finish the last part of the school year at Mt Comfort Elementary. We still had a long 45 minute two-mile walk to school through the woods and that was a shortcut.

For me it was the last half of the second grade. Those days are not easily forgotten because in the winter time we had to wear shoes to school and for many of us it meant wearing shoes that had holes in the soles. I venture to say that there are many my age that put cardboard in their shoes to keep the small gravel from getting in. As for getting wet from rain or snow, the best thing one could do was to carry a dry piece of cardboard with you for the return trip home.

After the school year ended we moved back to Wheeler where it was time to enjoy the lazy summer. There was a slough not far from the house where little brother Jerry and I would go fishing. He was a little small to hold a fishing pole but was a good companion and quick to back me up when I boasted about my catch.

On one outing, something fluttered down from the trees into the water. At first I paid no mind because it looked like a leaf had fallen but then I noticed movement and thought it strange. It sort of fluttered on top of the water which made me think it was a bird that had fallen so I asked Jerry to check it out. He did. He wasn't afraid of anything so he waded into the muddy slough and picked up the strange bundle and returned to shore where I was standing and the darn thing bit him on the hand.

We quickly recognized it was a bat. I'm sure it didn't have rabies or anything dangerous except for its sharp teeth but it might explain some of Jerry's behavior these past 70 years. One just never knows do we. Besides I think Jerry had rabies he was supposed to start foaming at the mouth and he never did any of that, not that I could tell.

The summer days flew by rapidly and Sycamore school was back in session. Sue was attending Second grade and I was entering Third grade. I believe the teacher was named Ms. Cox. She was younger than Mrs. Weir and had a four or five year old son that accompanied her most every day. He had the run of the school. One interesting habit of his was to follow the girls to the toilet, no matter the age. I never knew if this was a problem for the girls but each time they were excused to go to the toilet, he would jump up and accompany them outside.

On one fine day, Mrs. Cox and one of the older boys got into it. She was going to discipline an Eighth Grader named Bobby. No telling what crime he may have committed but Ms. Cox was intent on administering capital punishment and to his credit, he had dutifully gone out and cut switches but apparently rebelled at getting a whipping and said that he would switch her each time she hit him. The battle was on. I didn't see him hit her but one could assume that he had because he began running down the aisle towards me and my desk mate Harold with her fast in chase. Just as the two neared our desk, she lashed out to hit Bobby but he grabbed our desk and spun the two of us in between them. Her switch came down and hit the tip of Harold's right ear and blood went everywhere. He must have been a bleeder and blood meant panic.

There are many stories about Clear Creek and Sycamore School but the most memorable is the premature ending of my third grade school year. It was canceled not long after the switching caper and just as school was getting interesting. Our teacher departed about three months after it started for reasons that are unclear. One rumor was that she was fired and another rumor was that she quit because the school board ran out of money and she wasn't getting paid. No matter the reason, Sue and I were among those students that did not pass and would have to retake the 2nd and 3rd grade respectively.

5 - Holland's Holler 1945

We were still in Wheeler and a lot of things had happened in Dad's absence. In late 1944 with him off to war, we four left the farm house and the Hubbard family and moved into the old Littrell place. It was only temporary because Granddad Hugh Holland became sick and we moved in with them so Mom could help tend to him. At the time of Hugh's illness they were renting a house at the top of Canning Factory Hill. Again, we had a house full with Hugh and Ora, Aunt Deon, Uncle Gerald, Mom, me, Sue and Jerry. I don't think I missed anyone.

Dad sent money home that he had won in a poker game so Mom used the money to partner with Granddad to purchase 38 acres of land from Mr. Shirley. Granddad took 20 acres and Mom took 18 acres and this is what we began calling Holland's Holler where Granddad built a small 2-room house. He later built a lean-to type bedroom on the side where we stayed temporarily.



The structure had a combination bedroom/living room a kitchen with a large range, no running water and an outdoor toilet. A 3-holer if my memory serves. To this day I can't ever remember having to share an outside toilet with anyone even if we had the runs. There never seemed to be any comfort in knowing there were more holes in the toilet than the one you were using.

We could always sleep on a pallet in the add-on and sometimes in the living room where we fell asleep listening to the battery operated Crosley radio. The console radio and associated battery took up some of the room's space but there was room for Granddad's bed and 2 or 3 pallets. Grandma slept on a bed in the kitchen.

The radio dial sat on WXYZ so long that it could have rusted there because that was about all we ever listened to. The Detroit station aired The Green Hornet, The Lone Ranger and many more great radio shows while we listened to the Amos and Andy show on WGN. There was also the Fibber McGee and Molly show and a mystery called Inner Sanctum and a big favorite, Grand Ole Opry. I don't know if we got any more pleasure out of Television when it came on the scene as we did that radio.

We kids weren't allowed to touch the radio dial so it was a wonderful experience to curl up on our pallets and let Granddad select our evening entertainment. We almost always went to sleep before the shows were over. Besides the radio had to be used sparingly so as not to run the battery down. When we weren't listening to the radio, Granddad Holland was a great story teller so if it wasn't the radio entertaining us, it would be his stories. In particular he liked to tell a ghost story where we were hanging on every word and then he would suddenly yell or do something to scare the snot out of us. He always had an audience that consisted of me, Uncle Gerald, Aunt Deon, Sister Sue, Brother Jerry, and Cousins Emailee, Dean, and Clell. It seems to me that it didn't matter what the ages were, the more listeners he had, the better his stories were.

So many memories were created in Holland's Holler. Mom's baby sister Aunt Deon and baby brother Uncle Gerald the Squirrel were older but still close in size and age to be good playmates, specially Uncle Gerald. One pastime was to bend a Prince Albert tobacco can into a "U" shape and nail it to a tobacco stick or something similar in size and shape. The tobacco can formed a saddle that allowed us to roll a hoop like those found on the hub of a wagon wheel. My guess is that we probably ran twenty miles a day rolling that hoop on those old country roads. We had the run of the place although Granddad seemed to find plenty chores for us to do.

We learned to pull weeds, feed chickens, draw water for the house or livestock and since there wasn't any electricity or ice, we made trips to the spring to get butter and milk or put a jug in to cool. And I learned a little about horses, mules, cows, pigs and chickens. Not much but enough not to want to make a living raising cows or pigs. On the one hand they were nice to have around when it comes to bacon for breakfast or fried chicken on Sunday. On those days Granddad would select a chicken by taking his dog Sport into the pen and throwing a piece of corn at the one or two hens that he chose for dinner. Like a shot Sport would get each of the hens that were hit with the kernel of corn.

I've often wondered if the rest of the country experienced a fried chicken Sunday. Thinking back, to the years in Lake Charles where I had friends who were Catholic, some complained the Priest would come and eat chicken, drink their wine or whatever else and smoke all their cigarettes. I guess that is a tradition everywhere be it a Catholic or Protestant Sunday. Chicken dinner day.

When it comes to livestock, I learned they could be quite ornery. One example was an old mule that would try and bite Granddad any time he got near him and there were times when he succeeded as the bruises would testify. When it was time to put a harness on him or the occasional saddle, he would turn his head and bite whatever he could reach, either Granddad's arm or leg. Though they were covered up, both appendages had to have bruises where the mule had bit him but that didn't stop Granddad from putting a saddle on him. Instead it brought out Granddad's terrible temper that often manifested itself in a rawboned fist to the mule's head, if the mule was lucky. It could be something harder than a fist.

The mule would get out every once in a while and try to escape but old Sport, Granddad's dog, would go after the mule and chase him back to where he got out which enabled Granddad to repair the section that the mule tore down. It almost seemed like a game between the three of them.

When building his house Granddad had picked up a lot of rocks from around the perimeter of the house and loaded them into his wagon. The wagon had rubber tires vice the steel rims that you would normally see on wagons. However, the weight of the rocks was causing the tires to slowly lose air and to help move things along, Sport would race out and grab one of the tires. Amazingly, Granddad never bothered to correct or discipline the dog so over many many moons, Sport was eventually successful in chewing the rubber off all four wagon wheels. We all came to the conclusion that Granddad Holland enjoyed seeing the dog's performance so the wagon sat there with rocks for years.

This was before the era of radials so keeping the tires inflated might have been a chore, they did provide a nice comfortable and quiet ride. I have memories of riding in the wagon with both steel and rubber tired wheels. One in particular was a ride to Fayetteville behind a pretty matched pair of horses pulling the wagon with rubber tires. What a ride.

World War II was still raging with Dad, Mom's brothers Uncle Odell, Uncle Hobert and men from Wheeler were still overseas fighting. Mom's older brother Uncle AV and family were Jehovah's Witnesses and refused to enter service because they were conscientious objectors. I've no objections for them not wanting to go to war but I believe every adult man or woman should do something for their country. I, along with Dad, my Brother Jerry, and my uncles are all veterans. I can never respect their decision not to do anything for their country. In some countries, conscientious objectors can perform military duties that do not involve carrying a rifle. I say, do something for one's country.

The gravel road was extended from Granddad Holland's place to the 18 acres that Mom bought and circled around a small hill and then swept up to the top. It was here that Mom, Granddad Holland, Uncle Bee Holland and Ora – yes, Grandma Ora Holland - built our house. That road has since been named Clark's Road and now circles all the way back to Wheeler Road.

The small farm and one-room house was as almost as magical as the farm house in Wheeler. There were woods to roam and an old homestead that was part of the property Mom had purchased that had stuff to explore. One attraction was a big crab apple tree. They were a larger than a golf ball and sour as a lemon. They didn't taste so bad with a little salt and one of Grandma Ora's biscuits. But they would give us the runs. No need for castor oil here. And there were plenty of wild onions, strawberries and hazel nuts to pick and eat.

Water being the precious commodity, no matter if it is carried in or it is delivered, it is best to have it pumped into your house but we had no electricity or water. It was at this new house that a new well was planned and the drilling started. The Rig drilled for days and drilled down 200ft or more but came up dry. All that came from this drilling was cold air. A decision was made to go even deeper but the drilling yielded only cold air blowing up through the hole.

Eventually the rig was pulled and the spoils were dumped back into the deep hole. Gravel, rocks, dirt and anything else that one could think of was thrown down the deep hole and then a cover was put on top. A few weeks later dust could be seen blowing out of the well where air had found its way back up. And to think, no one thought of piping the cool air into the house to provide air conditioning. It would have been a simple matter to run a stove pipe from the well into the house.

Instead, another attempt was made to stop up the well. In the meantime, we carried water from Granddad's place up to the house. Based on critiques that visited his house and drank from his well – a must for all visitors – his was the best water in that part of Arkansas. Remarkably, it was always cool and would almost hurt your teeth to drink. If you had any...teeth that is.

Granddad with our help put in a crop of corn, tomatoes, onions and sugar cane on the few acres that were tillable. There may not have been many jobs that he would have us do but one thing we did often and that was weeding. It was hot, nasty work but something that had to be done. Or else.

On 2 September 1945 the war was over. Hallelujah. That meant that Dad and some of my uncles would be returning home. I recall how handsome he looked in his Navy uniform. The first thing he did after kissing Mom was to hug Jerry and Sue, then swatted me on the rear and said that was in case I did something while he was sleeping. Then he hugged me and we were out the door to play.



1945 Smiths - Post War

As stated earlier, the house sat on a hill and the driveway, such as it was, circled around the house and then shot up on top of the hill alongside the house. Dad or anyone else driving a car would park at the top of the driveway and when departing, they merely let it roll downhill, released the clutch and the car would start. If it didn't then you would have to get out the old crank. You certainly can't do that in today's automobiles.

On one occasion we kids were playing out in the burns that were created when a controlled burn got out of control and dang near burn the house down. It seems that Granddad and a couple neighbors decided to burn some sagebrush and other small stuff but the wind came up and they lost control. I guess that makes it an "out of control burn." Our concern was two 55 gal barrels of kerosene used for cooking and heating in the winter.

When it was all over, the fire had given birth to all new plants and bushes and especially to our favorite, the Huckleberry. While out picking Huckleberries, I was carrying my favorite stick. Everyone had to have a stick. It was an identity. Hand carved with perfection. Initials, rings and other magic insignia that made it no one else's stick but yours.

Anyway, as I was picking huckleberries, I pulled down on this strand of berries when I suddenly espied the wide open mouth of a Cotton Mouth and it was ready to strike. I picked the snake up on my stick and carried it to the house with Sue tagging along behind. Dad wasn't home from work at the time but Mom was particularly upset. When she saw what kind of snake it was, she demanded that we take it back to the woods or kill it. We decided to do the latter so we dropped it in the middle of the driveway and piled lots of rocks on it. All the while keeping in mind the warning that if the snake's belly is up, it will rain. We liked the sunny days too much to want it to rain.

What we didn't plan on was Dad coming home to a hill of rocks in the driveway. He had to goose the old Model-A to get it up the hill so he was accelerating coming around the hill when he hit the rocks. Fortunately, no serious damage was done, the radiator was okay and no one got bit by the snake. In fact, it was gone. We removed all the rocks and not a sign of the snake could be found.

Since the well drilling rig didn't find water but only cool air instead, Dad decided to try his luck and set about digging his own. This was a tough job and anyone that has ever been to Arkansas can testify that it is a state full of rocks.

My granddad once said that if you dig through the six feet of rocks you will find soil as fertile as the bottom of the Mississippi river but most people didn't find the Mississippi. In this case Dad removed several layers of rock but no soil or water was to be found. When he finally gave it up as a lost cause, we had a large hole about 10ft deep and 8ft across and no Mississippi river was found, not even a trickle.

I hadn't been much help in digging this hole except being a gofer for Dad but covering it up was something else. One day we had gone down to throw some more rocks and dirt in the great dig and discovered a small copperhead snake at the bottom of the dry well. I was about to throw down some rocks and dirt on the poisonous snake but Dad saw a King snake lying near the edge of the well. He walked over and with the toe of his boot slid the King over into the hole. It was like sitting in an arena watching the two snakes fight but in the end the King snake won. Granddad had taught us kids that the Kings were predators towards copperheads and rattlers but never had Dad and I saw anything like that before.

We kids knew there were poisonous snakes in the woods but that didn't stop us from playing. The only snake bite I'm aware of was Uncle Gerald the Squirrel who was bitten when he was young. He had picked up a rock where a copperhead was lying and it bit him on the ring finger. Later on we learned it just made him meaner. Not the snake, but Gerald the Squirrel.

When it came time to harvest the sugar cane, my job was to tend to an old mule that we hooked up to a sorghum mill which was nothing more than a grinder where cane was fed into the mill and juice ran out. The mule was tethered to a long pole that basically was a handle that turned the mill when the mule walked around in circles. I can still smell the sorghum and recall the sweet taste of chewing on the cane. It doesn't take much to overdo it and soon the smell and sweetness makes one gag.

An interesting thing about that old mule was that he was easy to manage until noon when it was time to take him down to Granddad's well and give him water. After he had his fill, he would fight me to return back up the hill. He was strong enough that he could pull the reins from my hands if I wasn't prepared. One day I had taken him to water and he broke loose and began running down the road. To my surprise Dad came roaring by in the old Model-A in the direction the mule had taken. Of course there was only one way out of Holland's Holler and one way back. Only Dad and the mule know what happened but it wasn't long before the old mule was running back with Dad close behind in the car. Dad let me jump on the running board and ride up the hill where the old mule waited at the sorghum mill. He never ran away again.



Dolly

It wasn't too long afterwards that Granddad found a large draft horse named Dolly and talked Dad into trading the old mule for what Mom called a breed of Percheron which is very large draft horses. Dolly was almost as wide as she was tall and very gentle so it was a comfortable ride to take her to water. There are several breeds of Draft horses but from what I found through research, the Percheron came from France and was one of the most widely used Draft horses in the USA. Her color said that she was a mixed breed.

Fortunately Dad wasn't much of a farmer but he liked to hunt and fish so we managed to get out in the woods during hunting season though I don't know how concerned folks were back then about a "season."

As for fishing, I mentioned earlier in the story about making minnow traps. Dad showed me how by first being selective about the jug you pick. It had to be clear glass and have a handle to which you could tie a rope to. The trick was to wrap a thin piece of cloth soaked in kerosene around the neck of the jug and set it on fire. When the fire had made a ring around the neck, Dad would strike it with a knife blade and it would cut the neck off smooth as if it had been made that way. One day while making a trap, the cloth had been wrapped and the fire set but when Dad struck the neck, it flew off and hit me just below the left knee. My skinny knee just about got wrapped by the circular piece of glass that was once the neck of the jug and cut me to the bone. I may have bled a lot but like most injuries of that time, you merely sterilize the best you can, wrap it up and go about your play. To this day I still have a 3 inch scar below the knee for identification. Now I buy my own minnows when I go fishing. But for those who wish to make a homemade trap, all you need is a large plastic bottle of some type, cut the top off, place bread or other bait inside the container, invert the top and place it back into the bottle creating a tunnel that minnows will swim into to get to the bait. Believe me, it works very well. In my case we didn't have plastic water bottles at the time, only glass.

We grew up with guns. Dad was a crack shot. Don't know if he was always good or was taught to be a marksman by the Navy or later in the Air Force but however it came about, he was good. When he returned home from the Navy, he would allow me to accompany him when he went squirrel hunting or whatever was his target. Often it was quail or some other fowl such as dove. The objective was to put some kind of meat on the table. My brother Jerry and I always had guns and as we grew older and had an occasion to bring the families together, there was an inevitable shoot off with .22 rifles to see who the better shot was. I would like to say me but all three of us were pretty good shots so it could go either way.

The contest began with maybe a small can and then reduced to a half dollar or even a quarter. The idea was to just barely see the target. Dad still had a good eye and Brother Jerry had become a very good shooter so it was difficult at times to determine the winner because we all performed well. As the old saying goes, "anyone of us could shoot the eye out of a squirrel." In later years, I learned that Jerry fancied himself as a quick draw artist but that is another story. I would tell you about it here but it would cost you money because I had to pay to see how fast he could draw his gun. After suckering me in for several demonstrations, I soon ran out of money. Yep. He was that fast.

Jeannie was put out with all his practicing in front of a mirror but in all honesty, it paid off. I was the sucker that wanted to see how fast he could draw so he bet me a dollar that I couldn't clap my hands before he drew his revolver. Did I say he was fast? Did I not say that it cost me a few bucks to see him draw? Like I said, that is another story but if you want to see for yourself how fast he is, as old as he is now, I suggest you make damn sure the gun is unloaded.

6 – Charleston, South Carolina 1947

Dad decided quickly that farming wasn't his cup of tea and after the crops were in, he sold the farm and everything that went with it to Mr. Ruth Carney and bought a Model-A sedan for us to travel in. You can't imagine the excitement of riding the narrow two lane winding road of Hwy 71 that took us up and over Boston Mountain and down to Fort Smith where we picked up Hwy 64 and headed east to Wade, NC. If you were to travel the Interstate I-49 to Fayetteville or the drive the new and improved Hwy 71, you will see snatches of the old highway and make you thankful that you were not driving it in a Model-A.

The family had now relocated to Wade, North Carolina where I spent a lazy summer playing with a black boy my age that lived nearby. It was here that I suffered my first real bodily harm when I fell climbing a lumber stack and dislocated my right elbow. The joint distension was so great that doctors first thought that it was broken in two places but X-rays revealed that it was only badly dislocated. Of course to me it felt like it was broken. The summer ended and school was about to begin but on the first day just as I had received my seat assignment for the third grade, the door darkened and it was Dad who had come to retrieve me and Sue. Soon I was attending 3rd grade in Charleston, SC.

We picked up our belongings and moved to Charleston where Dad was promised a job working for his older brother Uncle Harold. He and his nephew William Lonnie, aka "WL", who was one of Harold's sons, were hired as painters. In later years "WL" told this story many times, that on one particular day in 1947 when the two were on their way to work, Dad said he was going in to see older brother Harold and demand a pay raise for the two of them. "WL" asked, "what if my dad says no?" Obviously Harold's answer wasn't what they wanted to hear since both joined the Air Force soon after.

I'm not positive what the work entailed but I believe it involved painting ships in the shipyard. Uncle Harold was always painting something. Apparently neither Bill nor Dad was happy with the job because on September 30, 1947 both of them enlisted in the US Air Force.

I have memories of Charleston and our many visits to dad's brother Uncle Dewey, Aunt Ellen and Cousins Buddy and Hazel. Buddy and I were about the same age and were in the same 3rd grade class at school that I had to repeat. The name of the school eludes me but I recall there were two or three bullies that waited for us after school. Buddy was faster and could outrun us all so I would try and fight but it only resulted in getting my butt whipped. There came a time when even the bullies got tired of beating me up.

It was these visits to Uncle Dewey's house that caused me and Aunt Ellen to bump heads. To begin, she had a nasty habit of chewing tobacco and the spitting that goes with it. However, the real friction between us was when she cooked – and she was a good cook – she would serve us kids on the same dirty plates that the adults had used. There were times when it was difficult to even look at a dirty plate much less eating out of it. I refused to eat off the dirty plate.

God Bless my mother because she didn't approve either and would get up and wash our plates. I don't recall Aunt Ellen's reaction to this but do recall that more than once, she tried to serve me that way and I refused to eat on a dirty plate.

Another memory was my girlfriend Tululu. How could I ever forget a name like Tululu Gongas? She had long dark hair, dark eyes and was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen...in Charleston anyway. More importantly, her father owned the only grocery store in the neighborhood. We would sit in Hampstead Park and she would let me lay my head in her lap where I could watch the clouds scutter across the sky. This had to be true love.



21 Aiken Street

Our apartment was in an old frame house at 21 Aiken Street that had been divided up into multiple apartments and was situated on a street that sort of divided white residents from a predominately black neighborhood.

In those days, not all was harmony because segregation was in full force in South Carolina. I mentioned Hampstead Park earlier. We lived on the west side of the Park and behind us lived predominately blacks. As I recall, on Tuesdays the neighborhood black kids would assemble and enter the park from the south gate causing the white kids to move out through the north gate. This transition was done with little if any violence and they would take over the playground for the evening and the next day the Park would return to its normal inhabitants.

A couple of my playmates were black and lived on the next street behind us. One in particular lived directly in back of us and he often joined me in climbing a tree in our back yard. It's surprising that neither of us were injured jumping and swinging from limb to limb in a pretty daring fashion pretending we were Tarzan.

This is the same kid that became my skating partner when I received a pair of steel skates for Christmas. He and I would skate around the neighborhood streets without straying too far from home. One day we had an argument about something that I don't recall but certainly must have been trivial. Whatever the reason, I sat down on the sidewalk curb to pull my skates off but before I could say Jack Robinson, he had jerked a skate off and hit me in the head with it. Suddenly a big knot popped up on my head accompanied by blood and pain. However that tiff didn't stop us from skating and playing together but we didn't fight anymore after that. I scared him and he hurt me.

When these old iron skates were nearing their useful life on the bottom of shoes, some of the kids would make scooters out of them. There were always about a half dozen running the streets. Every once in a while just before sundown, a police car would cruise down the street and go around the corner towards Cooper River Bridge before turning around and coming back on Aiken Street. The squad car would have 2 or 3 scooters hanging from the car. Of course that didn't stop boys from making them because they would come back in a week or two and find that many more.



Homemade Scooter

7 – Clarksville, Tennessee 1948

The Air Force sent Dad to Roswell, New Mexico so we four moved back to Wheeler to stay until he was given a permanent assignment. We stayed in an old storage house that had no plumbing or indoor toilet but plenty of air conditioning with all the cracks in the floor and walls. It was here that Aunt Myrtle once more came to visit. Mom told a story about her and Myrtle sitting at the table one evening when Myrtle whispered, “There is that damn Jerry Smith.” Dad had managed a few days of leave to stop and visit us on his way to his new assignment in Kentucky. It was a surprise visit because the last that Mom had heard from Dad was that he might be going to Iceland or Greenland (Thule maybe?).

We stayed in Wheeler long enough for we three kids to start school at Sycamore but it wasn’t long before Dad was assigned to the Air Force Base at Camp Campbell, Kentucky. The Camp was later renamed as a Fort and the 8th Army Air Force became known as the Strategic Air Command (SAC).

The family moved from Wheeler to Clarksville, Tennessee and rented one half of a duplex. The other half was occupied by the Goosetree family. For years later Mom liked to tell a story about young Jerry who was about seven at the time, making a wolf whistle at Mrs. Goosetree while she was hanging up clothes on the clothesline. She looked around and saw Jerry sitting on the porch step watching her hang clothes. Mom always giggled when she would tell that story.

It was in Clarksville that Jerry finished up first grade Sue I can’t recall the name of the school or the street we lived on but remember some eighth grade boys played a prank on one of the teachers by picking up and bouncing his small car where it was wedged between two wings of the school. It was impossible to drive out but eventually the same boys removed it from its predicament. I don’t know if the boys got in any trouble for the prank but it was sort of funny.

That Christmas I received my first bicycle. It was a brand new bike and I believe it was a Schwinn with all the trappings. I rode it to school and back and recall that going to school was a breeze because it was downhill. Coming back up wasn’t so much. But still, it was wheels.

I remember a neighbor who was a couple years younger than me who became my main playmate. His dad may have been a veteran but however he lost his leg, it was replaced by a wooden one. On this one occasion when there were three or four of us boys playing with homemade helicopters that he had shown us how to make with a couple nails and an empty thread spool, he suddenly stabbed himself in the leg and calmly went about making a helicopter. You can bet there were a bunch of wide-eyed boys. I’ll admit we backed up in hurry and one boy fled but the rest of us stood there in awe waiting for him to stab the other leg

I can still make the helicopters we were making back then. All one needs is an empty spool, some tin and a couple small nails and a wooden stick whittled to make a handle on which the spool sets. The nails are driven into the top of the spool directly across from one another and the heads are cut off. Then tin is cut possibly from a tomato can and formed into a propeller. Two holes are punched into the tin that match up with the nails and a cord is wound around the spool.



Helicopter

When the cord is pulled rapidly, the propeller spins up and rises off the spool like a helicopter. It is a simple design but makes for an effective toy. I think all of us boys on that street had one to play with.

Another toy that was favored was cutting a piece of cane and making a pea shooter out of it. We had a wild cherry tree growing in back of the house and I learned to cut a piece of cane from an old broken fishing pole that exactly fit the cherries. My pockets were always full of plenty ammo.

One more exciting feature of our neighborhood was living right behind us. It was a pretty girl whose last name was Fuqua and who went to the same school. Her dad had a plumbing business if my recollection is correct. I decided that she was someone I should know, but I could never generate any interest from her. Even with my new bike!

My relatively new bike with a shiny bell on the handle bar and flags flowing out of the ends of the handle bar grips just weren't enough. I thought the image of me racing downhill was especially effective but she wasn't interested.

I even made a helicopter for her and when that didn't help, I shot her with one of my pea shooters – not hard – but that didn't help either. No matter what I did to get her attention, it didn't work. I suppose it is just as well that we didn't get a romance started because we soon moved again. This time we moved across the state line into Kentucky to live at the air base on Camp Campbell.

Back then the Air Force base sat remotely from the main army camp and there wasn't much to it. A runway, mess hall, airmen's club, men's barracks and a few old barracks converted into dependent housing. The base was reached by one road in from the Army's Fort Campbell and one road in from the secret facility, the Bird Cage.

8 - Fort Campbell, Kentucky 1949

Dad's assignment was Fort Campbell, home of the 101st Airborne Division, also known as the Screaming Eagles. His duty station was a remote airbase separate from the rest of the Army base. When school was out we moved from Clarksville into the airbase's family housing that consisted of four old tar-papered barracks that had been converted into rudimentary apartments.

The interior was about as rough as the exterior and again no inside toilet. A common latrine was divided to provide half for women and half for men. One side was showers and one side was toilets. There were no dividers or privacy walls between showers and toilets so it wasn't a place for bashful folks.

It was here that I used my bike most, a necessary possession since I was the Base's only paper boy and needed transportation to pick up my papers on the Fort proper. Rain or shine. I tried to keep my bike in good working order but there was a time when Jerry stuck his foot into the spokes of the front wheel while he was riding on the front handlebars and fender.

I don't know why but he just had to fly off the handlebars and hit the road hard enough to make a knot on his head. His foot bent the spokes in my wheel. I don't recall how his foot fared but EMTs were called and they took the wheel off my bike to extract his foot. Nah, if you ask me, I don't think the knot on his head has anything to do with his behavior now.



1949 Fort Campbell Paper Boy

On one of our visits to Arkansas, Mom talked about this caper and said that the EMT's brought Jerry home and he whimpered a little and carried on until his friend showed up and wanted to know if he wanted to play. She says he threw his cover off and out the door he went. Muzzygeezy

Mom was pregnant with Sister Carla Ann when we moved into the barracks and it was in December that Carla was born. It was a time when the nation was reeling from a new threat called Polio. Sadly our infant sister became a victim of the terrible disease at a time when we saw images of victims being encapsulated in iron lungs. We feared the worse but fortunately the disease affected only her right leg causing it to be slightly shorter than the left.

Throughout her young years, she wore oxford type shoes that were modified to make her right leg equal in height to the left so she wouldn't limp when walking and as she grew older it was less noticeable until there came a time when one couldn't tell that she had ever had Polio. I'm convinced that much of her success is attributed to her attitude and determination to improve her posture.

As paper boy, the Base Commander was one of my customers so I had seen his young daughter often and would tease her playfully when she came out on the porch. She too came down with Polio at about the same time as Carla. I suppose the disease brought the two families together.

His daughter wasn't as fortunate and had to be transported to Nashville where they had an iron lung to assist her breathing. The ambulance that was taking her to Nashville broke down so the Base Commander sat in the back seat of a State Trooper car holding the young girl. It was described as a scary ride but I don't recall how the young girl fared. There were so many that died from the disease before the vaccine was developed.

We had some nice neighbors living in the barracks under the same conditions as we were. One particular neighbor was the Ambrusters whose son Rusty became one of my frequent playmates though he was slightly younger and he was more interested in Sue than me. Another family had a son my age named Jimmie and we pretty much liked the same sports and other things in common but if the truth be known, I think he too had an interest in Sue.

Our favorite hangout was buildings that were built for skeet shooting but were no longer used for that purpose. There was a tall one that had an upstairs of sort that we kept leather goods for making wallets, etc., which could be obtained from Special Services. I suppose you could get most anything from Special Services but all we wanted at the time was wallet making supplies. Interesting enough, neither of us had much money to put in a wallet.

I also remember our base bus driver named Snodgrass. He was always friendly and good to us kids so it was always a pleasure to ride his bus. I think he too was fond of Sue. Not that he was a pervert or anything of sorts, it's just that he liked us kids and looked out for us. That was one of the advantages of a base so small that you get to know the airmen and they get to know you.

The airbase was pretty isolated from the surrounding elements which made it a good location for practicing jumps. Adjacent to the base was a large field where the paratroopers were dropped along with tanks, jeeps and other armament. Fortunately, the heavy equipment was dropped before the young men jumped out of a perfectly good plane.

Jump Day was a real eye opener for a young lad as we stood in awe as the C-119's discharged their cargo. These planes were called Flying Box Cars and were not supposed to be able to fly. First there would be 3 big parachutes unfold attached to a tank followed by a jeep or two before discharging paratroopers. As they dropped out of the sky, we could hear the soldiers talking and betting who would be on the ground first.

Some never made the ground but got tangled in the power lines instead or slammed into the side of one of the barracks as some did. Our barracks were the only buildings anywhere near the jump field and power was cut off but they still managed to find a roof. Despite the erroneous landings, I don't recall any of them getting seriously hurt and if they did, I doubt we would ever know.

I mentioned earlier in this story about being the base's paper boy. The man that distributed the papers dropped them off at a location in Fort Campbell away from the airbase. He wouldn't make the drive to the airbase so rain or shine I had to bike into the Fort to pick up my papers. But on the bright side I had a good sized paper route and the airmen stationed around the base made sure that I went home empty handed.

More often than not, it was the Airman's Club that generally took all the papers I had left so I made that my last stop. On one occasion, I stuck a spare quarter into one of the Quarter Slots and hit a jackpot. I think I won \$2.50. Wow. What a prize. It was illegal for me to gamble but the bartender merely looked away. Maybe he was a paper boy once.

I was old enough and sufficiently big enough for the Camp bowling alley to hire me as a pin setter. Soon I was sitting four lanes at a time for the women but had to down size to two lanes for the men's league. They bowled hard and fast and tipped well. The last ball thrown almost always had a generous tip in the finger hole. One Sunday when I was setting pins for a men's league on a lark I purchased a Crook Cigar. It is a crooked dark tobacco rum-soaked cigar. As I continued to jump from one alley to another and set pins, I would take a puff off that cigar and soon found myself getting light headed. With the men bowling so fast, my transition from one alley to another got a little slower until I finally got sick enough to puke. Never again did I ever smoke a Crook cigar. Just the taste and smell of it would make me sick.

When I wasn't setting pins, I was upstairs putting on skates at a Quarter a pair. With a good tip, I sometimes made as much as a dollar putting on mother and daughter skates. When finished putting on skates, I would move to the floor where I learned to skate well, do dance steps and just generally show off. It might be hard to believe for some, but I was a pretty good skater.

A secret enclave sat outside of the airbase and the Fort. The name given it by the locals was "The Birdcage." It was surrounded by 2 or 3 fences with a road between them to allow a jeep with armed men to patrol the perimeter. Usually our awareness of the Birdcage existence was when they rolled down the only access road into the airbase blocking all intersections with tanks and gun-mounted jeeps. A truck or convoy of trucks would enter the base and drive to an airplane sitting on the tarmac. After their delivery, all would roll back and disappear down the access road.

One morning after an overnight camping trip of our Boy Scout Troop at Lake Taal, my friend and classmate Charles Steckle and I were walking home along the road that parallels the perimeter of the Birdcage when Charles suddenly jumped down into the roadside ditch. I should mention he was carrying a BB gun and had seen a crow flying overhead.

Anyway, we hadn't walked a hundred yards when a jeep came roaring up inside the perimeter of the fence. One man was sitting behind a machine gun pointing in our direction but not directly at us. Another armed man waved us forward to the fence and we complied because they had guns, big guns. After a quick interrogation they decided we weren't an assault team and were harmless so they sent us packing. It didn't matter that Charles' dad was an Army Lieutenant or that mine was a USAF Sargent. That encounter was scary and spooky and added further to the mysteries of the Birdcage.

Getting back to Lake Taal, it was the site of many family outings. We would all pile in the car with our jugs of water, sandwiches that Mom packed for us and of course, our fishing poles. Along the way, the gravel road was bordered by large sagebrush fields where we stopped to catch grasshoppers and stuffed them into Coke Cola bottles to use as our bait. The Bass and Bluegills loved them.

During one of our stops to get bait Dad and I had waded out in the sage grass when I reached down to get a grass hopper and disturbed an underground nest of Yellow Jackets. Unlike bees which can sting only once before losing their stinger, not so with these dang wasp.

Wasp can sting over and over again but we managed to get inside the car before they hurt us too bad. Of course it wouldn't be the first or last time we got stung. Despite the risk, the grasshoppers made good bait and didn't cost anything. Even today that would be good bait.

A great memory, Lake Taal. It was a favorite place for the family to go. Mom would carry a large quilt to throw down around the edge of the lake or the small stream called Fletcher's Fork that ran through the lake. She could put baby Carla down and sit in the shade while we fished. Of course there would always be drinks and sandwiches to top off the day.

There was another location where the family would go to fish and picnic but I don't recall the name but do remember it was a dam. Dad liked to fish at the bottom of the spillway because big catfish and other large fish liked that part of the dam. The river rock was bleached white and was smooth and round and with a heavy quilt thrown across the rocks, it made a good place to picnic and comfortable for baby Carla. Besides she wasn't about to crawl off that quilt onto those rocks.

With the new technology that Google provides, I took a look at today's Fort Campbell via the satellite view and it shows a large city has grown up since we were there many years ago and I believe the lake has gotten smaller. But that could be the difference in the eyes of an adult versus the child's.

9 - New Providence, Tennessee 1950

After the school year ended, the family moved from Fort Campbell back to Tennessee where we rented a small house in New Providence on Preachers Mill Road right next to what is now Kenwood Baptist Church. I don't know if that was the name of the church back then but it still looks like the place we were living except we lived in a small house in back of our landlord, a retired Rail Road Engineer.

The memory I have of our landlord was that he always wore coveralls to remind him of when he was an engineer or something associated with the railroad. He had to be a real engineer because he wore an engineer's hat. His house was at the front near the road and we lived directly in back of him. He hired me to do a job that involved digging a ditch so the water would drain from the washing machine. It meant digging a ditch approximately 60 feet long and 10 inches deep to insure that it would drain away from the house. After all these years I don't recall the wages but do recall that it was hard work but I managed to complete the job to his satisfaction.

The church was right next door so we went to church and Bible school every Sunday. The Preacher was quite young and if my memory serves me, he drove a Plymouth sedan and was criticized by the Elders at the speed he would drive on the gravel road. He was pretty much identified as the oncoming driver when a cloud of dust could be seen fast approaching at a high rate of speed. I think his answer to his critics was that he was safe because God was a passenger or some sorts.

Other than that, my memory of him was a baptism of me and Sue and some other young folks in the Red River. There was a bend where the road crossed the river and an ideal place to swim or be baptized. It was here that the preacher fully clothed waded out into the water to baptize us.

What was so unusual was all of the young people were dressed in bathing suits and he was fully dressed in jeans and a shirt. It was sort of awkward but we managed to get our heads immersed and he managed to stay above water despite the heaviness of his water-soaked clothes. Far-ra-do.

The wonderful thing about the Fifties is that our family would make it home to Wheeler each year to visit our Grandparents Hugh and Ora and of course those visits were filled with aunts, uncles and cousins which enabled us to remember who's who. Without that reinforcement, I don't know if we would recognize some of our kin.

We stayed in New Providence long enough for me to complete sixth and seventh grades with Sue a year behind and Jerry following three years behind her. I was thirteen and going on fourteen and big for my age, or so I was told. I mention this because my teacher was one Ms. Post who took a shine to me and went as far as to allow me to drive her car. It was a Plymouth coupe, green in color and stick shift. I was in heaven.

Of course she only let me drive around the city of New Providence and the countryside and always accompanied by her. It was mostly short runs to the grocery store or someplace like that but it didn't matter as long as I could drive her car. I suppose you could call me a Teacher's Pet but who knows, she hadn't any children that I know of and was not married and was a pretty large lady at about 300lbs. One might say she was obese but she was very nice to me and other people she knew.

Leaving New Providence the highway went down a hill across a bridge over Red River and back up a hill into Clarksville. My recollection is that Acme Boot Company was on the left as you entered Clarksville but if one turned before crossing the bridge onto Quarry Road and followed the river it would take you to an old Mill. Many years later Kathie and I visited Fort Campbell and New Providence and as we drove towards Clarksville I turned just before we reached the bridge and drove along Red River towards the old Mill.

As we rounded a curve we suddenly ran into a sheriff's car blocking the road and we were turned around. We had stumbled into the filming of a scene for one of Burt Reynolds's movies.

Another memory of the highway from Fort Campbell to New Providence was that it boasted a Drive-In Movie Theater where the family often watched movies. Of course all of us kids would fall asleep on the way home to the air base if we had managed to stay awake that long.

The mention of the Acme Boot Company reminds me of a caper that occurred many years later when Camel Cigarette Company had a promotion that involved boots from Acme. The promotion was if you sent 10 empty packs of Camel Cigarettes and \$10, you could purchase a pair of brown or black quality Acme Boots. I had a friend who smoked Camels so I ordered a black pair of boots.

After a few years of wear to where they were broken in good, I happened to read a headline in the Florida Today Newspaper about a fisherman who was stung by a Skate. He was fishing while wading in the Indian River when he stepped on a Skate lying on the bottom of the river. Startled, the Skate hit him with its barb which left a nasty hole about the size of one's little finger. I imagine that he was in considerable pain since he had a hole in his foot and was standing in the water bleeding while the Skate's venom was doing its work. In hindsight, he should've been pleased that there were no alligators around.

That news article changed my way of fishing. I often went out on the flats and anchored my boat and climbed out to wade in the grass. It was one of the best ways to catch lunker trout or a Red. Of course I always shuffled my feet to avoid stepping on one but I still changed my fishing habit. From that day on I wore those Acme boots when I went into the water. Of course nowadays, they wouldn't be too much protection against the many alligators that have taken up residence in the areas where I used to fish. But life is full of changes.

10 – Cunningham, Tennessee 1952

After school was out we did what we did best, we moved from New Providence to Cunningham, TN. The house we rented was an old farm house belonging to one Mr. Hargrove who gave me my first real job. He had a fair sized farm and after learning that I could drive, he put me to work driving a tractor and harrow for \$2 per day. It could be hot dirty work and it was sunup to sundown but what better job could a young man ask for and get paid too!

It was working for Mr. Hargrove that I learned a little about tobacco and how it was grown. A good bit of the work I did was to plow a field and then pull a disc harrow over it to make it smooth and ready for planting. His chief crop was tobacco. I was never involved in building a tobacco bed but seem to recall that Mr. Hargrove used the steaming method which kills all the weeds, insects and any other foreign matter before planting tobacco seeds.

When the plants were big enough, a black man named Tom and I would pull the plants and ready them for planting using a motorized contraption that mounted on the back of a tractor. He sat on one side and me on the other with each having a platform in front loaded with tobacco plants. As the tractor pulled us along with our butt just inches above the ground, the device would dig a hole where one of us would stick a plant. The machine would then close the hole and pack the plant in its new surroundings. Tom and I would get into a rhythm alternating setting plants staying in sync with the machine. The larger farms have much bigger planters but the principle and design are the same. When it came time to harvest the tobacco at Mr. Hargrove's farm we used the stalking method which involved using a spike on the end of a tobacco stick and spiking the whole plant down onto the tobacco stick. These sticks would then be loaded onto a narrow sled built with a rack on top for the purpose of carrying a load of tobacco plants to the barn for drying.

The family visited my Uncle Walter Smith's tobacco farm in North Carolina where I got to see how they harvest tobacco. Just as they were in Tennessee the sleds were built narrow so that a mule could pull them through the tobacco rows without problem. However, Uncle Walter's sleds were made to carry just the leaves.



Tobacco Sled



Hands of Tobacco

This was called Priming tobacco where only 2 or 3 leaves were taken from a plant. When the sled was full and taken to the barn the ladies would tie a dozen or so leaves into what is called a "hand" then hang them on a tobacco stick for hanging in the barn to dry. This was favored because a farmer could harvest more often and get better prices for the prime tobacco. My cousin and I were permitted to drive a mule with a sled while men pulled the prime leaves and filled the sleds. When full it was off to the barn where the sled would be exchanged for an empty one. It may have been the only time we visited Uncle Walter but I have memories of that visit not soon forgotten. The first is when Dad and I visited Walter's Radio Repair shop. He was working on an old radio and first pulled the tubes and ran them through a tube tester. That may have been when I decided to be an electronic technician.

Another memory was at the dinner table when we were eating collard greens that Aunt Brookie had cooked when Dad found a big fat green caterpillar in his greens. He stabbed it and laid it by his plate and kept on eating. I don't think Brookie ever forgave him for that.

Finally, the one great memory of our visit was the early morning wake-ups before dawn, a hearty breakfast and then set about getting ready to work. Mules had to be harnessed and an old Case tractor had to be started. It was hooked up to a truck and pulled until it started and then it basically ran all day until the work was done in the evening. The next morning this exercise would be repeated.

Overall I must say I did a pretty good job for Mr. Hargrove. There was an occasion however where I lost control of the tractor and dang near killed myself. I was dragging a disc harrow over this large field that had a swale with a telephone pole in the middle. As I approached the swale, I didn't realize that I was so near the pole until the harrow slid sideways. It slid ever so slightly but just enough to prevent me from going forward. Fortunately it didn't hit the pole hard because I had stopped quickly before any damage was done to either the pole or the harrow.

My problem began when I unhooked the tractor from the harrow with plans to go around in back and pull it away from the pole. As soon as the tractor was released from the harrow, the tractor slid sideways and started sliding downhill. It happened so quickly that all I could do was hang on as it barreled down a steep hill full of trees.

I managed to avoid most of the trees but eventually the tractor stopped abruptly when I hit a stump. After a long walk back to the farm, Mr. Hargrove and Tom came to the rescue. Fortunately, only a fender got the worst end of the deal. After seeing where the harrow was and the skid marks of the tractor tires, he understood what had happened. Phew. I still had a job.

One year he permitted me to use the tractor to plow a half-acre near our house so that we could plant a garden. The following year I planted Crowder peas and was surprised at the crop this plot yielded. We had Crowder peas coming out of our ears so I began bagging peas and selling them for \$5 a bag. That was good money.

We were still living in Cunningham when Dad, a Sargent in the Mess Hall, suffered a back injury when he and another cook were lifting a large pot of potatoes onto a stove. His injury resulted in surgery to his back which never seemed to heal properly. Eventually the pain was so great that he wasn't able to make the long commute back and forth to Fort Campbell. So once again he went under the knife when it was discovered that his pain was caused by a piece of sponge that had been overlooked from the first surgery causing an infection.

Now Dad was miles away in the hospital in Fort Campbell and us living way out in Cunningham complicated things because Mom didn't drive and even though I was capable, I wasn't old enough to drive legally.

But I recall the first year we were in Kentucky when Dad traded cars with one of the airmen for a 1935 Pontiac sedan that had a long hood and spare tires mounted on either side. Looking back, we called it a gangster car. My recollection is that this was the first vehicle for me to sit behind the wheel but on his lap of course. He would let me steer and shift when he called for a gear because I was unable to reach the pedals. The steering wheel was huge and looked like it was made of ivory while the gearshift knob was a skull. This was a real treat but didn't happen too often.

Before moving to Cunningham he traded the Pontiac for a lime green 1940 Plymouth sedan that he later loaned to a fellow airman who with two or three other airmen wrecked the car somewhere along the winding highway that skirts the Cumberland River. There were injuries (no seat belts in those days) but I believe they all survived but the car was totaled. I never got the chance to drive that car.

To replace the wrecked Plymouth he purchased a black 1947 Oldsmobile sedan that we named Lucille. It was automatic and so easy to drive and I had grown some but still not old enough to get my license. So once again Aunt Myrtle was called upon to help. She became Mom's driver while Sue and I took care of the younger ones. .

One winter we lost electrical power while Dad was still in the hospital and it turned bitter cold. The old frame house wasn't the warmest shelter but did have a big fireplace. It was merely a matter of having plenty wood so that one big room could be heated.

The kitchen was generally warm as a result of Mom cooking but it didn't take long for that space to cool down so the family migrated to the big room where there was a fireplace.

There came a day when we ran out of firewood so off to the back forty I went with Jerry in tow to cut down a cedar tree. That wasn't difficult but dragging and carrying the wood back up to the house was the real chore but we managed. At night we actually slept between two mattresses. Jerry and I slept in one bed, Sue and Myrtle in one, Carla and Mom slept in another. Fortunately after a few days of outage, power was restored and that part of winter didn't last very long.

The day came when Dad was able to return home. When July 4th came around, we celebrated his birthday. It wasn't until many years later that we learned his birthday was actually July 8th but we were happy he was back with us and would welcome any occasion to celebrate.

Having been in the Boy Scouts a short time, I always wanted to build an English Long Bow and decided that the heart of a Cedar tree would do the job. I cut down the tree, chopped and whittled until I had only the inner grain of the tree which was supposed to yield the greatest strength. When complete, it was a beautiful recurve.

Dad suggested I string it for shape and put it on top of the metal roof of the barn and let it cure. After months up there in the sun, I took it down and strung it, pulled it back to discover that the upper limb of the bow was weak. Even with that weak spot, the bow still had about a 35lb pull. But eventually the bow broke at that weak spot. All that work for nothing.



Then there was the Christmas when Jerry and I each had BB guns. Mine was the fancy Red Ryder saddle gun and Jerry's was just a plain rifle. I think I had gotten mine a year earlier but what Jerry's gun lacked in style, it made up for it in velocity. It was a powerful sucker.

His would shoot so hard that the BB would stick in the wood on the barn where my rifle would merely bounce off. Since his gun had a higher velocity, we could shoot at smaller targets with a good bit of accuracy such as Mom's clothes pins. They made excellent targets. He and I were shooting at them on the clothes line and doing a pretty good job of hitting them causing them to break up when Sue caught us and was about to run inside and tattle.

That was when Jerry lowered his gun and shot Sis in the butt. He put another notch in his gun. Little things like this kept adding up until we were beginning to build a reputation of our superb marksmanship. I think both rifles had a lot of notches on them by now. While my memory doesn't support the thought, but I do wonder if sister Sue may have often been a target. Oh no, not me because I only shot her once.

There was another time when I was shooting his rifle because of its accuracy and I talked him into holding a small tomato can lid in his hand. He knew how good I could shoot and as I said earlier in this story, he wasn't afraid of much. So he held the lid in his hand and I, William Tell, shot at the can but missed and hit him on his thumb. Immediately a big purple knot popped on his thumb. It looked nasty and I'm sure it hurt. Fortunately he wasn't in possession of a rifle at the time.

One fine day while we still had guns, Jerry and I were out playing in a field next to the house. This field was separated from the house by four strands of barbed wire that were strung as tight as guitar strings. We were playing a sort of cowboy and Indians game that involved circling around and shooting at bottles. I made one such shot that may have caused either a piece of glass or a BB to ricochet and hit Jerry. Despite my protest, he immediately turned his gun on me. Of course I was already running for my life and could feel the BBs hitting my backside but it would be much worse if I couldn't get through the fence. Fortunately the fence had a corner post with one large post set at an angle as a brace for the corner post. I saw that as my opportunity to escape so I ran up the brace and over the fence and into the kitchen and kept running as fast as I could. When a couple BBs came through the screen and hit the refrigerator, Mom got involved Muzzygeezy!

There were other incidents that led up to me and Jerry and losing our BB guns. One was when I was going down in back to the woods and wanted our dog Sonny to follow me. We had just gotten over the gate and were walking towards the woods when Sue whistled for Sonny to come to her. The dog hesitated and then decided to return to the house with her.

As Sue was climbing back over the gate she had her back to me and her butt in the air and I just couldn't resist putting a sting in that butt. Another notch in my gun but things like that were adding up and eventually it lead to dismantlement and the throwing of parts into the well. No more guns.

At home the barn had a basketball hoop where Jerry and I could practice our shots. We couldn't very well do layups because of the wall but we could play Horse and other games to sharpen our shooting skills. Jerry was too young for basketball at school because he was in the 3rd grade at the time. Even so, he was tall for his age and could shoot and rebound well enough when we played together on the barn.

All three of us kids were in a country school called Central High. Typical of most country schools, there weren't sufficient funds to support football but they had a good basketball team and baseball program. Both of which I played very well.

Though I was assigned to First Base a few times because of my height, I was a much better outfielder and in basketball I almost always played in the Center position. Again, because of my height. How things have changed with today's extraordinary heights.

I still have in my possession the 1952 Oak Leaves Year Book from Central High School. It was a great place to play sports and go to school as well. I remember my 8th grade teacher very well, Mrs. John Eckenroth who was from Pennsylvania and had a distinct manner of speaking. She was forever being asked where she parked her “Kire” and of course she parked it in the “Gairodge.” For us country bumpkins, her speech was entertainment.



1952 Central High School



Central High Papooses

11 - New Providence, Tennessee 1952

Once more school was out and again and we did what we did best. We moved. The family moved back into New Providence to be closer to Clarksville High School since I was entering High School as a freshman and it was closer to Dad's work at Fort Campbell.

I began my freshman year at Clarksville High with the intent to play all sports. Football practice started in August with our first game in September after school started. Dummy me, I thought I wanted to be a Fullback because I was big for my age but didn't have the physical size and weight nor was I fast enough to make a running back. Since I had never seen a football game much less played in one, I had to learn the hard way.

My lesson came about one day in practice when the coach began singling out players for different positions. We had pushed around some sleds and hung from the bars and generally loosened up our muscles in preparation for a good workout. We were told to form two lines on either side of two tires that left a small path through which to run. Coach then stood aside with the football and threw it to the lead player in one line whose job it was to run between the tires while trying to avoid a tackle from the lead player in the opposite line. My turn came. Coach threw the ball to a boy named Potter who ran over me like a freight train. Needless to say, he became our Fullback. I switched to Defensive Tackle.

That wasn't the end of my football career nor was it the end of my injuries. Our first game of the season I believe was against Castle Heights Military Academy. It was also the first ever football game for me to see and I was in it. To be honest, I sat on the bench for most of the game and had no idea what I was supposed to do except tackle somebody on the opposing team.

On one final play I along with a couple teammates tackled this runner and somehow someone's cleat managed to miss my helmet and stuck in my left eye. Ouch! It hurt like hell in the beginning but after some bandages and pampering, it began to feel better. So much so that while mending at home, I decided to do some chores that I had put off, like cutting the grass in the backyard. We had what was called a Lively Lad weed cutter. I'm not sure how it got its name but it had a long handle and a corrugated blade like the one shown at right. I had sharpened the blade earlier before the injury to my eye so it was ready to use and I was bored having nothing to do but sit around. It was awkward to read with just the one eye so I decided to cut the grass. What I didn't plan on was losing sight in both eyes.

Lively Lad

With my left eye bandaged my vision wasn't very good and as I began cutting the grass under the clothes line the blade caught the clothes line wire. My down swing caused the blade to slip down the wire straight into my right eyebrow laying it wide open. Now I can't see.

When Mom got through doctoring my right eye, I was blind as a bat. Both eyes were now bandaged over and by the time my eyes healed well enough to play football again, the season was pretty much gone. Besides we did what we did best. We moved.

12 – Fort Campbell, Kentucky 1954

We moved again and this time we moved back across the state line into Kentucky just outside Fort Campbell's Gate 6 where Dad had purchased a house trailer in Braboy's Trailer Park. Once more this meant we had a new school to attend and new friends to make and some lived in the same trailer park. We three still had a school year to complete.

As it turned out, one of my best friends at the time was one Jack Hollis and he and the other kids that lived in the Park went to South Christian High, a country school in Christian County. The population of the high school classes was too small to field anything more than basketball and baseball. It so happened that Jack was a walking encyclopedia when it came to baseball but was not a member of the team.

His love of the sport caused me to urge him to try out for our baseball team. After repeated evenings and sometime nights of hitting ground balls to him that he got the nerve to try out for shortstop. He was accepted immediately and was so quick that it was difficult if not impossible to get a ball past him. I believe his shortstop performance for the season was that he fielded one thousand. He wasn't a great batter but I learned in later years that after high school he played for a semi-pro team in Hopkinsville.

One day Jack discovered that he loved the game of Chess. So much so that he bought a Chess board and a book about chess games of great chess players and their tactics and a book to record all his games. He wanted to know when he played, with whom and how long and if he won or lost. At first he didn't have many entries in the latter column because he was playing me and I had neither a chess board nor any past experience with the game. But as the school year progressed, so did my skill at chess until I finally beat him. That was the beginning of many hard fought battles that often lasted for hours and once or twice, lasted all night. My chess got better and his baseball batting average improved as well.

On a nice summer day, Jack, me and another boy were all in a truck belonging to Jack's dad. We three had gone to a store and purchased a little gas for the truck and a pack of cigarillos. We three each had lit one of the small cigars and were about to drive away from the store when Jack needing both hands to steer the truck asked me to hold his cigar. In the meantime I had sort of chewed on the end of mine and when it came time for him to ask me to return his, I gave him my cigar by mistake.

As soon as he put the cigar in his mouth, he spat it out and turned to fuss at me. Unfortunately he turned the wheel when he did and off the road we went and rolled down a deep bank. Witnesses said we rolled two and half turns before coming to a stop upside down. Apparently Jack and the other kid were thrown clear but with me in the middle, I wound up still in the truck with my leg wrapped around and under the steering wheel. I was in a good bit of pain but oddly enough, I couldn't straighten my leg out. I was having Charlie Horses causing my leg to draw up. The man that stopped and took me to the hospital placed a large truck tire on part of my leg to keep it straight which alleviated a lot of the pain. Fortunately, nothing was broken. It was merely a severe case of Charlie Horse that was causing my leg to draw up in a disfigured manner.

There once was a pretty young girl from Georgia who was visiting a family that lived in the trailer park. Her name was Inez and she liked to call herself a Georgia Peach. Both Jack and I wanted to date her but neither had succeeded until one day she ran into my sister and they agreed to double date.

Inez's brother was Sue's date and the first part of the evening went well with a movie in Clarksville and afterwards a visit to Roy Acuff's Dunbar Cave where we decided to walk around the lakes shore. Then trouble. When we arrived at the Cave it was dark but with enough park lights and moonlight for us to see to walk around the edge of the lake. Inez and I were walking up ahead just out of sight of Sue and her date when we heard a big splash. We turned back to see Sue huffing up the beach and one could tell she was mad. At least I could because I had seen her mad many times. Anyway, it seems the guy made an unwelcome pass and didn't take no for an answer, Sue having grown up with boys hit him. I think she said she hit him with her shoe hard enough to knock him in the water. There was no talking amongst us on the drive back home.

Another interesting tidbit about Braboy's is that Mom managed the laundromat that Mr. Braboy built for the park residents. I suppose it gave her extra money that we could surely use or it may have been a way to pay or offset the monthly rent. If I recall correctly, we had a 40ft house trailer with a family of six living in it. Braboy seemed to take a liking to our family and with Mom managing the laundromat, Brother Jerry and I were permitted to fish in his pond.

On one such fishing trip, I was casting a big plug and got it hung on some bushes out in the middle of the pond. I asked Jerry if he would go get it and he did. Remember, he wasn't *scart* of anything. Unfortunately, after retrieving the lure, he managed somehow to get a couple of the big treble hooks in his leg. I suppose the adrenaline kicked in because I picked him up and hurriedly carried him across the field to the trailer park where he was driven to a Fort Campbell clinic where the lure was removed. That incident must have scared the fish because we never caught any out of that pond.

Once upon a time a Gypsy caravan pulled into Braboy's and wanted to park their trailers and set up their tents. We kids were agog with excitement thinking about all that we had read about gypsies and imagining what we could expect out of them. We imagined a campfire, music and dancing girls. Although the park residents were uneasy about the Gypsies staying there, Mr. Braboy decided to let them set up camp in the field adjacent to the trailer park. There were about eight to ten trailers being pulled by pickup trucks. The closest structure to their camp was the laundromat where Mom worked.

Park residents began preparations to batten down the hatches. Even my dad backed the car up against our trailer so that access to the gas tank was impossible. I'm sure there were a multitude of safeguards put into place before the evening was over but to my knowledge nothing ever happened. Maybe it was because of all the lock-downs and maybe not. We will never know. We did get some of our expectations fulfilled when at night they would build a fire and began playing music and dancing just as described in books that involved Gypsies. The men played guitars while the ladies in long colorful skirts sang and danced. It was captivating to watch and listen to the music and sufficiently luring to make us want to clap our hands in time with the dance.

There was an incident at the laundromat that involved Mom and some gypsy women. It was one of those rare occasions when Mom got pissed. I mean really mad! Even Brayboy was smart enough not to interfere. Though she told us the story in later years and explained what happened, I can't remember all the details.

I seem to recall that it had something to do with the women insisting on putting too many clothes in a machine at one time or something of that sort. Whatever the reason, it was one of those few times that you would ever see Mom mad enough to fight. It escalated to the point that Mom ran them out of the building. After seeing how mad she was, Mr. Braboy let the matter slide and not long afterwards the gypsies pulled up camp and moved out and the Park residents went back to normal routine. No more cars pulled up against trees or trailers to prevent access to the gas tanks. Grills and other outdoor accouterments were rolled back outside and all was well.



I was now into my sophomore year at South Christian. Sue had just begun her freshman year and Jerry was in the sixth grade. The school had all the wonderful assets that you would expect from a country school. Home grown beautiful girls and handsome young men who were shaped by farm work. I'm not talking about me because I wasn't always on a farm.

What Christian County produced were fine basketball and baseball players. We had a sufficient number of players to make up both a JV and varsity basketball teams called the Dragons. There were enough boys to make up a competitive baseball team but basketball was king. In fact, SCH had one of the best high school basketball teams in the state and I was proud to have played on the team. I'm curious. Does that look like a baseball team? I played the position of Center and wore the number 67. As one can see in the picture these were some of the most unusual baseball uniforms.

1954 was a great year for South Christian's basketball team and the coach but more important for the number one star, Al Rochelle. His dad was our coach and at the end of the year, he and Coach Rochelle were recognized as the best father and son team in Kentucky. They moved on after the school year with Al taking a scholarship from Austin Peay State College in Clarksville.

If you can ignore the uniforms our "baseball" team allegedly wore, we were a pretty good team. My position was outfield, mostly center field and often right field.

Initially I was tried at first base because we didn't have a lefty at the time but even then I was better in the outfield than on first. I had a good arm and could throw the ball from center to home plate with ease. But of course, if I could play in the left field behind Jack, I wouldn't have so many balls to chase. One benefit of playing a sport, any sport, was girls. We all managed to have a least one girlfriend even if it was a strange relationship.

Players



GLENN SMITH
Sophomore
ROBERT GRAHAM
Junior
Centers

For example, the Principle. Teachers and most of the students in the lowest grade were convinced that Betty Cunningham was my girlfriend though I don't recall that we ever kissed or went on a date. I doubt that either of us cared one way or another.



Betty

Her best friend Kate Sewell was always by her side and anywhere Betty would be found, so would Kate. What I can't explain is how or when Kate and I began dating. But it was true love. It was magic. If there was any doubt it went away after she and I went downtown to a theater in Hopkinsville and watched the movie *Kiss Me Kate*. So I did!



Kate

We dated from that moment on and there was never a sign that Betty minded because she and I never dated anyway. It was just a matter of everyone else taking it for granted that Betty and I was an item and we never bothered to correct them.

I was doing more driving now and seeking jobs in/around the Fort Campbell area. With the base sticker on the car I could pretty much go anywhere on the base but jobs were scarce in the Fort.

Eventually I was given a job by Staff Sargent Wright who owned a Fireworks stand in New Providence. Bang! What better job could a sixteen year old pyromaniac boy have? And the bonus was his beautiful blonde haired English wife. I believe her name was Lilly and on summer days when we were closed for fireworks we picked peppers and okra from the garden Sargent Wright had planted and during rest breaks Lilly would play the piano. I have no memory of how much I was paid but it may have been the best job ever.

Sue and I were good about going to church, no matter the denomination. A church was a church. My first church was Pentecostal, next was Baptist and now she and I were going to a Presbyterian church. On one Sunday morning when snow was on the ground and ice not yet melted from sections of the roads, I was driving Lucille when I hit a patch of black ice. Zip and we were in the ditch. Thank goodness that we were not speeding but this was before seat belts and before I could prepare Sue, we hit the ditch. The impact caused her to go forward and hit her head on the windshield causing it to spider on her side. It may have left a small knot on her forehead.

Not too long after the ditch caper, Dad traded the Olds for a 1950 Chevy. Bye, bye Lucille. The Chevy was a two-tone blue and white hardtop automatic. There were three significant events that involved me and that Chevy. The first occurred when going over a thrill bump at too high of speed. When the car settled landed back on the road, it landed hard enough to screw up the gasoline gauge to where it always showed near empty. That meant we had to put gas in frequently whether we needed it or not just so we wouldn't run out. I know, I know, it could have been avoided. But the truth is we went over that bump several times after the gas gauge quit working. It was still fun.

The next accident so to speak was during a cold winter night while going to pick up my Kate. I was a smoker at the time and was about to throw my ashes out the small side vent which wasn't fully open when I hit the glass instead. I ignored the slight burn on my fingers when the cigarette coals fell back on my hand.

What I didn't know at the time was that the coals from the cigarette had fallen on the seat between my legs and I didn't discover this until I began to feel heat between my legs and to my horror the coal had burned a hole down in to the vinyl and was about the diameter of my index finger.

I didn't want to set the seat on fire so I did a stupid thing by quickly spitting a big gob of saliva on the end of my finger and sticking it down the hole. Dang! I put the fire out but as soon as I pulled my finger out of the seat, the blister literally grew right before my eyes. Muzzygeezy! How stupid was that?

The final episode with the Chevy happened on a dark rainy night when we arrived at Kate's home. The dirt road was slippery wet but I managed to plow my way through the mud to her house. We had been to some shindig at school that required us to dress up that night and as I pulled to the side of the road where I normally parked, the shoulder gave way and the car slid ever so slowly into the ditch.

We were in the country where there were no lights anywhere but I knew I had to find my way to the house and wake her dad so that he could get the tractor and pull the car out. The problem was I had no flashlight or any kind of light to guide me to where the small bridge crossed to the front of the house. This definitely was a case where it was so dark I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. It was so dark that even with the Chevy's headlights on, I was unable to see the bridge behind us and I'm getting pretty wet so I paced back to where I remembered seeing the bridge when we drove up.

After a few minutes of kneeling in the dark and feeling around in the mud I found what I was looking for. It had been right there all the time. Instead of crawling across the bridge, I didn't want to get any muddier so I stood up. As it were, I stepped halfway on the bridge and halfway off and went plunging into the darkness and the ditch. After crawling out of the water and stumbling around the yard, I found the porch and managed to wake her dad who got up and pulled the car out with his tractor. Afterwards I learned that she had cracked the window slightly just before we slid over into the ditch and some of the mud had entered messing up her hair.

Oh what a night. I was never so happy to get that car home. I told Dad about the mud and just how it had happened. I don't recall him ever asking about the hole in the seat.

The time came when Kate and I broke up. I don't really know why I broke up with her nor do I remember anyone else in the picture. The best that I can recall is that the family was moving again because Dad was being transferred to the Chennault Airbase in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

I did date a couple girls in the few months before we departed. One girl lived about 20 miles northeast of Hopkinsville so I would drive 25 miles to "Hop Town" and 20 miles to her house, pick her up and drive back to Hop Town for a movie and then another round-trip of 40 miles to take her home, then 25 miles back to our house in Braboy's Trailer Park. So one night's date was burning up 130 miles and wearing me out. On one occasion I had worked that day, then made this trek to her house and back and was returning home. We still had Lucille, the '47 Olds. What was scary is that I was so tired that I fell asleep between Hop Town and the house but didn't know it until a tractor trailer came roaring by shaking the car and woke me up. I calmly threw my arm across the back of the seat and suddenly sat up when I realized what had happened. The car was in Park, the Parking lights were on and I was sitting well off the road. Scary! It has never happened again.

I dated another girl that was closer to home. I was a lowly sophomore and She was a senior but nice. Mom always thought she was sweet on me but nothing came of our dates but friendship. There was a time however that I discovered what a kiss was like. Boy, she could kiss and I suppose for me that set the benchmark for kissing in the years to come.

No doubt there are so many good memories of South Christian that are not being addressed here. A classmate Norman Parson had a black '49 or '50 Ford coupe that he and his girlfriend rode around in. He and I became good friends and one image that is difficult to erase is him sitting in the corner of the car's cab, his left arm wrapped under the steering wheel and his body turned slightly so that he could see everyone in the car. Now that was cool.

There were others that I remember well. Bobby Haile and I played ball together and became good friends. If I remember correctly, they discovered his dad had slipped into an ice covered pond while cutting a hole so the cows could get water. He didn't survive. When Kathie and I attended the 50th reunion of my class, the first people we met to welcome us was my old girlfriend Betty and best friend Bobby Haile. The two had gotten married and Bobby was Dr Haile, a dentist.

The family made an effort to return to Arkansas about every other year to visit my grandparents. I was still in High School when on one of our visits back to Arkansas, Gerald and I visited Fayetteville city square. The design of downtown Fayetteville was of the familiar old design where a large courthouse sat right in the middle of a park like setting surrounded on all four sides by shops. The difference from most cities is that this city's square is on top of a hill and at each corner there are two streets that come up the hill from different directions.

Mine and Gerald's plan was to meet some girls and see if we could talk them into going to the Drive-in Theater. Actually the plan was for me to find a date for the evening because Gerald already had a date with a girl that worked at the Drive-in.

The downside looking for girls on the Square was that every time I espied a pretty girl my age, Gerald would say, "She's your cousin." An hour or so of watching cousins walk around the shops became boring but my luck changed when Gerald's date said she had a girl for me.

It turns out this pretty little blue-eyed blonde was smitten with me and I her. It was true love. When the movie was over we took her home and I saw that she was living part way up the mountain in the wealthier part of town in a big two story house. Even so we two kept our love alive through letters after I returned home to Kentucky. It lasted all of two months before she sent me a Dear John letter. Maybe she confused me with someone else. I never heard from her again nor did I see her on return trips to Arkansas.

What is memorable about this short-lived relationship is on the evening of the breakup letter, Dad and I were sitting on the stoop of our trailer in Braboy's trailer park when he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Son, you will get over this. Remember there are bigger fish in the sea." Wow. It was so profound. It worked then and may still work for somebody. Let's face it. How many times have you heard that statement? An old cliché. Maybe it isn't what is said but when or how it is said.

But the best part of that evening was what came next while sitting there staring at what was a beautiful Kentucky moon. It was so large and we remarked how visible the Man in the Moon was when Dad said, "*Son, one of these days we are going to put a man on the moon.*" He was correct.

He was an avid reader of Science Fiction books. Not only am I very proud that his prediction came true but even more so that he lived to see me living a dream we both shared. For 32 years I enjoyed a career in spaceflight that involved assignments in Maryland, Canary Islands, Spain, Ascension Island, UK, Florida, California, Alaska and Maryland again and finally back home in Florida.

13 - Lake Charles, Louisiana 1955

Once again our family of six was moving. Dad bought a 1950 Chevy to pull the house trailer to Louisiana. The park he chose in Lake Charles was owned by one Grandma Hebert (pronounced A-Bear) and populated by several Air Force families. Grandma Hebert's son Dallas had recently been discharged from the Navy and was not only a good mechanic, he loved anything to do with water.

Dallas and I spent a lot of time fishing, crabbing and water skiing at Moss Bluff, the Calcasieu River and in the local bayous, The latter was best for crabbing and Moss Bluff was an ideal place for us to water ski behind an old open fisherman boat powered by a 20 HP Mercury that he had rebuilt. It was at Moss Bluff and behind that boat that I learned to ski but could never master the single ski. I could jump up on skis quickly and ski well until I dropped one ski, then I too dropped.

Dallas and I would go crabbing when Grandma Hebert and others in the trailer park needed a resupply of crabs. In this day and time it would be hard to believe but he and I would go out on the river and catch so many crabs that we would stand up on the seats in the boat and fill it with crabs. On one crabbing trip we decided to dive down under the bridge to see why we were catching so many crabs and what we saw was unbelievable. The river bottom was covered with crabs. When we had caught all that the boat would hold without crabs spilling back into the water, we would hook the boat up to the trailer and tow it home. It didn't matter if a crab or two crawled out on the way home because we had so many. When we arrived at the park, neighbors would come out to help clean and sort into random quantities to fit everyone's needs. It was a tried and true process.

An assembly line of sorts would form around a couple tubs while a hose with hot water was dropped into the boat to cause the crabs to purge themselves and die. The first group pulled the outer shells off the crabs, a second group would then pull the legs and throw them into a tub where the third group using finger nail brushes would scrub the membrane from the crab and throw them into a clean tub where the final process was to wash and pack into milk jugs filled with water ready for freezing. A few weeks would pass before we went crabbing again and this whole process was repeated.

This may be a good time to interject a story about Dallas. When we moved to Florida in the sixties, Mom told me that she thought Dallas was living somewhere near and sure enough, I found him working as a Park Ranger in Sebastian Inlet. He said he was married to an Italian girl and they had a bunch of daughters. He then asked if I wanted to go diving with him the next day which was the opening of Lobster season. Despite our ages, he was still diving. I passed. A few years later the Florida Today newspaper had a photo of him holding a 14lb Florida lobster. The next time his name came up it was an obituary and I regret not seeing him while he was still living.

Summer of 1954 soon came to an end and I began my junior year at Marion High. We hadn't been in Lake Charles very long before Dad was transferred to Korea where he was assigned to the Air Force's Crash Rescue Squadron that provided rescue and other services to pilots and other personnel. A rescue squadron's main task was to provide both combat and peacetime search and rescue operations involving the search for those in danger or distress.

One pretty schoolmate was Sally Goins whose house we had to pass each day on the way to school. She and I became good friends as we were in some of the same classes and I visited her house a few times. One day when I was invited to stop by, her mother told me about a fox that was plaguing their hens and she had killed it. She said that she shot it and the kick of the 6ga shot gun hurt like hell.

During our junior year, Sally and I wrote poems to one another which stirred the interest of our classmates who waited to see the latest. My poem to her started it all.

OUT OF MY MIND

Oh my Darling dear there are time when I'm blue,
Maybe it's because I'm in love with you.
I sit around all day dreaming of you,
What more is there for me to do.
Maybe I shouldn't say the things I do,
Maybe my mind is confused about you.
But if my mind should be,
Then Darling listen to my heart...not me.
Sally's response to me went like this.

MY DREAM MAN IS THIS

He walks down the hall with absent strides,
His arms swinging gaily by his sides,
His head is lifted and his nose is high,
Everyone stares as he goes by.
On the basketball court he is a whiz,
He's as fast and sure as anyone is.
He handles himself with fragile care.
Can you blame me if I too stare?
He talks and dances like a dream.
His smile is and innocent sunbeam.
The girls all envy his charms,
And wonder what it's like to be in his arms.



Sally left Lake Charles before our senior year started. I learned later that the family moved to California where she met a young man, got married and moved on.

The summer months seem to drag by and I had found some part time work at a local service station not far from the house. The job brought with it an interesting development that involved a pretty girl who came to the station almost every day to purchase a coke from a coke machine.

She had a beautiful smile and when anyone said anything to her, she would smile and acknowledge your comment. That gave me encouragement to ask her name which again, only resulted in a smile and one day while I was trying my hardest to extract a conversation out of her, I just happened to catch my boss laughing behind my back. It was only then that he told me that the girl was a deaf mute. Dang it! And I didn't know sign language. Well...not that kind of sign language anyway.

She attended a school especially for students with these disabilities and often stayed at the school during breaks but decided to spend this summer at home. Once I knew what I was dealing with, I had a pad and pencil ready the next time she showed up and within minutes I had her name and a date. I will admit that there were times things were a little dicey because I couldn't respond quickly enough with sign and pen and paper weren't always handy. Even so she and I managed to converse and share one another's interest. In particular was her interest in clothes.

Mind you, not just any clothes but sexy lingerie. She had just about every item that Frederick's of Hollywood advertised in their magazine. I was curious as to how she could afford all this underwear and learned that her dad owned the local drive in restaurant where most of us kids like to hang out.

In addition to a healthy allowance, she was also furnished with a fairly new Plymouth convertible in which she liked to drive us around town. I've never before ridden with anyone that couldn't speak or hear so this was a new horrifying experience. Especially scary was when she entered an intersection that would cause a normal driver to put on brakes and use caution but instead she would blow her horn loudly and blow right on through. What she did then reminds me of many years later when Kathie and I were in Canary Islands, Spain. Drivers there blow their horns before entering an intersection which if first, gives them the right of way. Similar rules apply at night. Whoever flashes their lights first when entering an intersection has the right-of-way. Go figure.

There came a time when I felt our relationship wasn't going anywhere and the start of her school was nearing so I tried to end it gracefully by having fewer dates. Then a previous boyfriend or someone she went to school with was trying to get her to return to school early. Finally I quit calling on her altogether. It didn't matter because she would come roaring down the street and start blowing her horn about a block before she got to the driveway of the trailer park. She made quite a scene with the top down on her car, dark hair blowing in the wind and the horn waking up the neighborhood. She was pretty.

Finally the day came when she came blowing down the street and I quickly stepped out of the house and hid. That way Mom could say with truth that I wasn't there. The last time she came roaring down the street with horn blaring I was in luck that my neighbor had just returned from working on an oil rig. He had invited me to join him in a long weekend visit to his Cajun parents down in the Bayou Teche area. That was a great weekend though I couldn't speak French and they wouldn't speak English. Language was unimportant because food was the main course and I ate some of the best Cajun dishes many with names that I couldn't pronounce.

After that trip I thought it was over but one day I was downtown Lake Charles when out of nowhere came this green and white Plymouth convertible with its horn blaring and bearing down on my front bumper. Fortunately we both manage to stop in time without damaging the front end of our cars.

She was oblivious to the fact that she was in the wrong lane and had stopped traffic in one direction. It didn't matter. She could always fall on her sword and tell her aggressors that she was deaf and mute. Sitting there in the middle of town while everyone is looking at us and some blowing their horn which she couldn't hear, we had a brief conversation in which I was able to encourage her to go back to school and find a handsome boy that could converse with Sign.

To this day I'm not sure what I said that made her kiss me and get back in her car and honk at me for the last time as she drove off. She was pretty.

My dating activities fell off after that. Oh I did have a few dates but nothing serious. A family moved into the trailer park that had a pretty blonde my age so eventually I asked her out. Mary Jane was also a senior and attended Marion High. Another young lady was Dallas' sister Wanda Hebert.

She was a couple years older than me but I recall that I asked her to attend a school dance or something like that where I was escorted by Wanda and Sue. That was a night some yo-yo crossed the wires on my car, a price I had to pay for not locking the doors but I had been under the hood of that Chevy enough times that I could rewire the six cylinders and get us on the road again. I seem to recall the evening didn't end so well when I accidentally brushed her dress leaving a small grease mark. Hey, three is a crowd.

At school I tried out for all three sports. When it came to football I was at a disadvantage because I had never played the game except for the short time in Clarksville. Most of my teammates had grown up playing football before High School and were already familiar with the different positions and other rules. I was willing to learn but this time I smart enough to try out for a defensive position.

I should make it clear that during my senior year I was the man of the house. Mom was the boss but she looked to me to do a lot of things that had Dad been there, he would have done. We had a 1950 Chevrolet with its slip-along-power glide transmission. The best that could be said about it was it got us from point A to point B, sometimes not but more importantly when we really needed it such as hospital and doctor appointments at Chennault Air Force base. Eventually the transmission's reverse gear failed so we got in the habit of pushing it backwards with one foot out the door or parking where we didn't have to back up. Mom had stories about sticking her leg out to push the car backwards.

My responsibilities at home was forcing me to take more time away from school and while I was being excused in my classes, that wasn't the case with Coach Camp and football. Because I was missing a good many practices, he would work my ass off when I showed up. It was one of those days when I told him that I would miss after school practice because I had to visit Mom in the hospital that he and I had a heated exchange. The end result was I was no longer playing football. In fact, if he had his way, I wouldn't be playing any sport...but I did.

Another time I was called upon to drive to the airbase hospital was to take Jerry to the ER. He had been playing basketball and had a collision with another player's teeth causing a large gash on his forehead. I took him to ER and was watching the doctor open the wound and about to insert a large needle into it. Bam! The next thing I was aware of was me trying to kick free of a large black man, a hospital orderly who was holding my legs in the air. I had passed out and hit my head pretty hard on the wall or the floor and he was reviving me by lifting my legs to get the blood back to my head.

Basketball and baseball were two sports that I had played in my previous schools so in these two arenas I excelled. Our coach was Anthony Kravchuck. He taught math and coached our varsity basketball team and he also became a friend and mentor to me. I don't know if that was because Dad was overseas or that he and I just hit it off because I liked Math. He also hired me to help build the foundation of the house he was building. That involved building a form and pouring a concrete pad on which was covered with tar paper and then swabbed down with tar. It was a hot and laborious job.

Mr. Kravchuck wasn't the only teacher that I became good friends with. One in particular was a Mrs. Violet Breed under whom I had an English class. She was about seven months pregnant and her husband was in the Air Force. She and Mrs. O'Connor who taught the typing class were good friends which may be the reason why Mrs. Nelda O'Connor and I hit it off as well.

There were so many times I had to be absent from her class but she seem to understand. Once she told me that when it came test time that I had to make a "C" to pass. Fortunately I made the grade and the typing skill I learned has served me well these years since. So thank you Coach Kravchuck, Mrs. Violet Breed and Mrs. Nelda O'Connor.

Many years later Sue and I were looking at my senior yearbook and I remarked that I had played a lot of sports but missed a lot of the football and basketball teams photo ops. Sue reminded me that I was absent during those times because I was driving Mom to and from the hospital. I had forgotten that.



We did note that she was in many of the photos and there were some that I had managed to be there when the photos were taken. One thing I noted is that I was wearing a shirt that Mom had designed and made for me. There was also a cupid shot of me and Margie Thibodeaux who I was dating at the time I suppose you could say that after two dates, we were serious but what most people didn't know was when I dated Margie, I was taking her mom out too. My first inkling of this arrangement was on our first date when her mother began looking at the newspaper to see what movies were on and if she liked any of them. After a few dates, her younger sister and her boyfriend were permitted to join us. Wow. They were the two that needed a chaperon. I think they later got married. Margie and I always had to have a chaperon but I got so I didn't mind so much, especially if it were her sister. In 2006 Kathie and I attended the 50th anniversary of my graduating class and were welcomed by several classmates that were still living in Lake Charles and Margie was one of them.

Of course dating wasn't everything. There were so many good times to be had at Marion High. Just to see our Chemistry teacher Mr. Burns do the Paso Doble with one of our teachers was fantastic! He was an ace and she was grace. The rest of us sitting in the bleachers were mesmerized by the beautiful dance that is supposed to emulate a Spanish bull fight.

Another highlight of school at Marion was when Sue and I were commissioned to design and construct the décor for the Senior Prom. The theme was the Deep South with old plantations, trees with hanging moss and buggies with beautiful women in their crinoline petticoats and gowns. So she and I decided on a huge mural that we would paint on a large poster-like cardboard wall rather than painting it on the actual wall of the gym.

Sue was very good at drawing the women and gowns while I drew the buggies, horses and other images. It turned out very nice.

When I look back I can see that both Sue and I attended both the junior and senior proms at Marion and I was also invited by a senior to attend the Senior Prom at South Christian. I was just a prom going guy. I bet it was because I could dance.

On the night of 28 February 1955, just as I had arrived home from a date or some other outing, I was about to take my jeans off when I heard this unusual sound from a B-47E Stratojet bomber as it was on a final approach into Chenault AFB. Since the trailer park was in the flight pattern of the airbase, we became accustomed to the sound of the jets when they were either taking off or landing and in this case, it did not sound good.



1956 Sue and I dressed for Junior Prom

Instinctively, I pulled my jeans back on and stepped outside just as our neighbor Jack appeared and climbed into his Pontiac convertible. He saw me and motioned for me to climb in as the car was already moving. We could hear the sound of the crash and what sounded like ammo going off and were the first on the scene and observed that the plane had crashed into a trailer park after hitting a small home where two newlyweds died in their sleep. Wreckage from the bomber was strewn for a mile or two in the woods and all throughout the trailer park and there were fires everywhere.

To compound matters, the number of rubberneckers had grown to the extent that traffic on the two lane road was at a standstill preventing emergency vehicles from responding but it wasn't long before the airbase wreckers and other emergency vehicles arrived and if cars didn't get out of their way, then they just pushed them off the road. When all the damage was assessed, we learned that the house where the young couple was killed was completely obliterated and a wheel had cut like a knife through a trailer right under bunk beds where two young boys were sleeping. Had it bounced, it would have cut them in two. It was a sad time with the loss of the crew and the two newlyweds. It was tough on Jack because he may have known the crew because his job was to fly in the tail bubble and position the boom to refuel the bombers in midair. Being associated with the Air Force, it was a long time before the trailer park residents got over it.

So many other surprises were in store for me when we were playing Starks in basketball. Starks is located west of Lake Charles near the Sabine River which forms the border between Texas and Louisiana. It was during the one particular game that I kept eyeing this raven haired beauty in the bleachers who turned out to be the sister of one of one of our opponents. The stares turned to flirting and as soon as the game was over, I went to her and introduced myself. Her name was Jeanette and she was beautiful. I guess there are a couple ways to describe her; a dark haired Texas filly or a raven haired Cajun beauty. Either would describe her beauty.

I quickly turned the introduction into a date and not long afterwards I was visiting her and her brother where they lived outside of Starks near the Sabine reserve. It turns out that her brother and some friends were capturing some of the wild ponies that populated the Sabine region and were breaking them to make riding ponies. A tough job. Fortunately he and I got along okay as did his sister and I. But that came to an end in an unlikely way.

One night when Marion was playing basketball against a local school, Jeanette and her brother just happened to ride over to Lake Charles to watch the game with the intention to surprise me. It turns out that she picked a seat right next to my sister and Margie, the girl that I was also dating at the time. It didn't take long for her and Sue to introduce themselves and shortly after, she met Margie. Bingo. My relationship with Jeanette was gone up in smoke. Besides, it was a 40 minute drive to her house in Starks and another 40 minutes to a movie in Lake Charles so by the time I did all this, I was beat. Margie was closer to home.

I was into my senior year when Dad returned home on leave from Korea and was able to watch a couple of my basketball games before the season ended. In one particular game I was high scorer and to this day I believe it was because Staff Sargent Smith was sitting in the bleachers in his Air Force uniform. I really had a hot hand and couldn't miss anything that I threw towards the basket. When the game was over, Dad tossed his hat in the air and it almost landed on a girder. We may have never gotten it down.

Senior Prom signaled the end of a school year and good things to come. Believe it or not, this was the fourth prom that I had gone to. One at South Christian and now three at Marion High, Lake Charles. Who knows, I might have made another prom before we left Louisiana but if so, I don't recall.



Me & Jackie '56 Prom

Dad went back to Korea and now that I was out of school, it was time to find a job. I was a soda jerk at a Drive Inn where black car hops each had a cardboard with a number on it that they sailed onto the windshields before the cars entering the Drive In could park. The one who got his card on first was the one that waited on the car. It was showmanship that customers came to see and a system that worked and my guess the tips were good.

One of the car hops was an elderly black man that had a Plymouth for sale that looked immaculate inside and out where he had babied it since he purchased it new. It was a baby blue and sparkled like a gem with all the chrome trim and chrome hub caps. It was like a lure and I took the bait. Wanting to upgrade my ride, I relented and took it for a test drive on my lunch break.

I should mention that this Drive In was situated on top of a big hill. When going to the restaurant, one drove up a hill before dropping down to enter an intersection with a traffic light where the road crossed over a rail road track and went straight up to the top of the hill where the Drive In was located. An easy climb for most vehicles but low gear was almost necessary to get up the steep hill.

On this day while test driving the Plymouth, I came up the hill behind a 1954 Green Pontiac with a woman driver and a small girl in the passenger seat (before seat belts). As I approached, I hit the brakes and the pedal went straight to the floor. Nothing. I pumped the brake pedal again and again and it went straight to the floor. Holy Toledo, no brakes!

It happened so fast but I quickly jerked the steering wheel just enough that I only grazed the corner of the left rear bumper before shooting over into the yard of a house that sat on the corner of the intersection. I went down the other side of the lawn across a ditch and into the highway without hitting a single car or being hit. With down shifting and using every other trick I knew to slow the car, when it came to a stop I got out and kissed the street.

There were several witnesses to all that happened and as they drove by, they honked their horns and gave me the thumbs up sign though they couldn't have known that I had no brakes. The lady in the Pontiac checked her bumper and said that all was well and no damage had been done. My next delicate chore was to coax the Plymouth up the hill to the restaurant and tell the owner what happened before he tried to drive it home after work. It was a scary event.



Chuck Wagon

Not long afterwards I changed jobs to work at a burger joint called the Chuck Wagon. The Chuck Wagon was just that. I was the grill king. Our menu was simple; we served Spokes, Hubs and Wheels. Spokes were regular hot dogs, Hubs were regular hamburgers and Wheels were larger hamburgers and of course we had the regular fountain drinks. Our largest order was a mixture of about 300 hamburgers and hot dogs.

At some point during the summer months I met a guy named Toe Boy. He was a Sears Appliance Mechanic and was very happy in his job, much to the chagrin of his parents. His mom and dad hoped so much that he would get tired of the Sears work and come back home to work the ranch. To my knowledge he never did what his parents hoped for but his younger brother Guy took over when the elders were no longer able to manage.

Toe Boy and I traveled to cities in Texas and locations all around southern Louisiana in a 1939 LaSalle that he had discovered by accident when trying to locate a transmission for his car. The old man that owned the LaSalle had it up on blocks in his barn and after some dickering, Toe Boy bought the car or should I say, the Tank.



1939 LaSalle

I think describing the LaSalle as a tank is appropriate because it was made out of steel and weighed a ton but unlike a tank, it was pretty luxurious on the inside. The LaSalle was made by General Motor's Cadillac Division so it had much of the characteristics of the Caddy.

There was an incident one night while at a Drive Inn Theater when we decided to leave near the end of the movie so we could beat the other cars out. Unfortunately, in our haste we forgot to replace the speaker back on the stand before Toe Boy drove off. The speaker was hanging on the door vice the window so when he rolled off the mound, the speaker ran out of wire.

You guessed it. It began pulling the pole out of the ground before the speaker broke and all the audio in the Drive Inn went out. Toe Boy just kept going because the only thing left was the speaker in the back door. We were on our way to the Drive Inn Restaurant where many of the young folks our age would be hanging out and we hadn't gone but a couple miles before the city police pulled us over. I think the car may have matched the description the Drive Inn Theater had given the police.

There was a good chance that it was the only car like it in all of Louisiana. No matter, the cop kept looking towards the back seat of the car but he couldn't see any glass and the speaker was down on the floor where I had taken it off the door so he finally let us go.



A young Classy Ballou

We drove the LaSalle everywhere and most frequently to some distant nightclub where we would listen and dance to a band called Classy Ballou and the Tempo Kings. Classy became a legend in Lake Charles and other parts of Louisiana. The clubs would always have beautiful Cajun girls but along with them were their mom, dad, grandma and who knows how many kin were there to chaperon the young ladies. We drove to a lot of places in southern Louisiana like Cameron, Gueydan, Lake Arthur, Kaplan and others.

It was on one of these outings that Toe Boy asked this girl to dance and discovered that she was as tall as him. He was smitten. When the dance was over he hurried over to me with her in tow and introduced her as his Long Tall Sally and said this is the girl he was going to marry. And so he did marry Sally. My recollection is that she was from New Iberia, LA.

Classy Ballou was born in 1937, is my age and still going strong. Playing Zydeco and Blues he still draws a crowd at his performances. His story and his music can be found on You Tube and throughout the Internet.

14 – Homestead, Florida 1956

Dad returned from Japan and we gypsies were on the move again pulling a 40ft house trailer towards Florida where Dad had received a transfer to the Homestead Air Force Base. Before departing Lake Charles, he purchased a 1956 Chevrolet with a V8 engine so there was plenty of power to pull the trailer and the six of us and all our belongings. Imagine the comfort of this 24-hour trip. In the front seat were Mom, Dad and Carla and in back were me, Sue and Jerry. We were squished and there were no seat belts back then.

Not very far outside of Biloxi I fell ill with a bad case of what we believe was the flu. At some point the congestion in my chest was causing me to cough a lot and have trouble breathing. My temperature reached a dangerous level, so Dad pulled the trailer under a big set of trees full of hanging Spanish moss.

I was moved inside the trailer where Mom set about creating another home remedy, a mustard pack. I can still remember the smell and feel of the mustard pack on my chest but more important, it worked. My temperature broke and the congestion in my chest began breaking up. Though there were times when I was delirious, I believe the family spent the night under the trees and by the next morning I was feeling much better and able to travel again. To this day, I don't recall being that sick again.

Once more we were on our way to Florida. Occasionally, the miles of boredom were broken when the wavy two-lane highway caused the trailer to bounce causing the front-end of the car to bounce making the steering a little dicey. Most any driver will tell you that steering is best with both front wheels touching the road.

We came down the western coast of Florida on US 93, what is now I-75, to the infamous Alligator Alley that was a long stretch of road through the middle of the Everglades Swamp. Unfortunately by the time we had driven that far south, it was dark. It was real dark. There were no houses or stores of any kind that might provide some light. There was nothing but darkness. About half way across Alligator Alley it became clear that we were running low on gas and we hadn't seen any buildings much less a gas station. With most of the family asleep there wasn't any need to cause concern so Dad drove on. Then like a ghost rising out of the swamp, a building loomed. It had a gas pump! I believe it was on or near the Miccosukee Indian Reservation.

Of course at that late hour the station was closed. However, the gas gauge was showing near empty. I suppose the alternative was to spend the night parked in front of the gas pumps but Dad began knocking on the door until the owner woke up. He opened a window on the top floor and Dad explained how important it was for him to be at the Homestead Airbase so the man came down and turned the pump on so we could gas up and continue on to Hwy 27 or Chrome Avenue where we turned south and drove to Homestead. Do you reckon a storeowner would do that now? Not a chance.

Many more miles later we arrived in Goulds, a small city just north of Homestead where Dad rented a space in a trailer park. Goulds was not far from Homestead and home to many of the servicemen who were stationed at Homestead Air Force base.

I was still living at home when I got a job at a Southern Oil gas station owned by Ray Mooney. The station was on US-1 and wasn't far from Goulds so if I didn't have a ride, I hitchhiked. Those were the days when a Service Station was just that. All customers got serviced. Gas was pumped, windshields were wiped, tire pressure checked and once in a while a pretty girl would have her floors vacuumed.

A man named Melvin stopped at the station almost every evening not to buy gas but just to visit since he managed a gas station in Homestead. He lived in the same trailer park as our family and liked to stop on his way home. After many such visits we began to look forward to having him stop by because he had a speech impediment. He stuttered. It may have been the reason we found any conversation with him was entertaining. We came to believe that had he not had a small child that he would divorce his wife which is very likely when the child got older. I don't recall him ever saying a nice thing about his spouse but instead complained about her being too fat and slovenly. Or that may be just what it sounded like when he said it.

On one such visit while Ray and I were busy with customers an older man and woman stopped to get directions. Melvin kindly walked up to their car and asked if he could help and learned they wanted to know if they were going in the right direction for Homestead. He replied, *"iff yooooo gooo straaaigght dooownnn 2 2 2 2 miiles..."* Then he suddenly blurted out without a sutter. *"Hell, if you go straight you will get there before I can tell you!!!"* Now I don't need to tell you that we found that funny.

There was an occasion when a small carnival came to Goulds and set up in the predominately black neighborhood and Ray learned that Melvin had never gone to a carnival before. So we three closed shop and drove up to carnival and watching Melvin was all the entertainment anyone needed. He was like a child and mesmerized at all that he saw. When we went into a tent where some nude ladies were dancing – one black lady being pregnant or recently had a baby was dancing in front of us. Ray kept nudging Melvin closer to the stage and I think maybe this lady could see that he was awed by what he was seeing. Then when Melvin got close enough she aimed her tit and squeezed milk into his face. I honestly don't think Ray saw that coming and wouldn't have moved him forward had he known what Melvin's reaction would be. His reacted as if he had been squirted with acid and we didn't understand a single word he was uttering. But in all fairness Melvin talked about that encounter for days afterward if anyone could stand still long enough for him to stutter the story out.

One elderly man came in regularly about every two weeks to get his truck serviced. It was easy to spot his truck before he turned into the station because it was the only white truck that had a round clear spot in the windshield just large enough for the driver to see the road ahead. He did two things very well. He tipped good and always laughed hard when we asked him how he got so many bugs on his windshield.

There came a time when he drove up with a 55 gallon drum in the back of his truck and asked if he could fill it with water. Of course Ray agreed. When we asked what the water might be for, he laughed and said it was to water his corn.

While we were waiting for the drum to fill we three began talking about windshields having a lot of bugs and where you might find that many outside of the Everglades. Again we got a big laugh.

One day he brought a small bottle of moonshine for Ray and me and told us a story about making shine. He said that as a young man he had got caught making shine and sent to prison. He said some people go to college to learn a profession but his education was in prison. He said he learned to really make good moonshine and how to protect his self and not get caught but most important was not to get greedy. He made only enough each month to buy gas for his truck, pay for electricity and groceries and other needs that he and his wife might have.

I suppose it changed the way I felt about the chore of scraping the bugs off his windshield. I might add also that I'm not a good judge of moonshine. It was crystal clear and strong and you could burp it up for a week. I had much rather buy a bottle of Jim Beam.

There was a short period during the winter of 1956 when it was cold enough to generate snowflakes in Homestead or at least at the gas station. I was pumping gas when I saw what I first thought was ashes from a fire but then discovered it was snowflakes.

When I caught a snowflake in my hand, it would quickly melt and were melting as soon as they landed on the asphalt. It happened only long enough to say that it snowed in south Florida.

Ray sold the station to his brother Claude Mooney and I agreed to work for him at a new Southern Oil station that Ray had purchased near the Hialeah Race Track in Miami. Unfortunately, business was so poor that Ray could barely pay for the cost of the Grand Opening so it wasn't long before he decided that it was best to close the station and cut his losses. We both were out of a job.

After we closed the station I moved back to Goulds, bought a suit and accepted a job with Thom McAn shoe store in Homestead. It was what Thom McAn called a Gold Line store because women, children and men's shoes were sold as well as handbags and other accessories.

There was only me, the manager and a Hosiery lady who was also our cashier that worked at the store. Extra help was hired during holiday seasons such as Easter and Christmas when the shoe business picked up.

Across the street from our trailer lived a young airman who owned a 1935 Ford with Maybelline written across the back. Grass was growing up all around it which was an indication that the car wasn't running or hadn't been moved in some time.

I walked over to his house and asked if he was interested in selling it. He told me that it ran but needed a battery before it would start. At first he wanted \$50 but when I offered him a dollar for every year, he took it.



Maybelline

My next move was to get a battery but I didn't have enough money at the time so I went to Jerry and asked Brother to make an investment for half ownership. He dug into his savings and lo and behold, he and I owned a car together. Surprisingly, with the new battery, Maybelline cranked right up and allowed me to drive it up to the highway where I purchased gas and oil and pumped more air in the tires. This car could best be described as a dream car. It had no top to speak of because it had rotted so I removed all the fabric and all that remained were wooden ribs. My plan was to remove those eventually and install a Plexiglas sunroof. It never happened. Besides, Jerry liked to stand up between the ribs and shout at the wind.

Instead I tied a plastic table cloth over the top to keep the rain out since I was now working for Thom McAn and wearing a coat and tie so I needed to look my best. On one such day I had just pulled out onto US-1 and headed south down the highway when I noted that a Florida Highway Patrol car was behind me. I hadn't quite left the speed limits of Goulds so I thought I was being careful of my speed but he turned his lights on anyway. When I pulled over he walked up to my car and said that I was doing 50 in a 45 MPH speed zone – which I probably was because it was a '35 Ford Maybelline. Anyway, while the trooper was advising me about Florida speed laws, the mating of turtles and other trivia about Florida wildlife, a small T-storm blew up.

A sudden gust of wind caused the plastic table cloth top to fly off and land on the hood of his car. He looked at his car then at me who was now getting wet and decided to give me a verbal warning before walking back to his car. He pulled off the table cloth and drove off down US-1.

I guess he figured my day was ruined anyway since I was getting soaked without my plastic roof. I was just happy that the storm hadn't come sooner and blew off the top onto his windshield. There was a good chance that I wouldn't have received a warning then.

Despite the absence of a top, I continued to drive the car to work but it was missing more than a top. The muffler was rusting out and was beginning to sound louder each time I started the car. Another malady was a missing seat on the passenger side. One had to sit on the metal floor but it wasn't often that I had passengers. The driver's seat wasn't much better and wasn't bolted down and on sudden stops it tended to rock forward then back. Other than that, it was a dream machine.

One morning when I arrived at work late in the morning, the cops drove by and suggested that I either get a muffler or not drive the car into the small shopping center because it was disturbing the other businesses. So I tried arriving earlier than the businesses and staying later after they closed.

There was this one occasion when Jerry was in town and was going to ride home with me when I closed the store. He and I walked over to the town's record store where he met a young girl with whom he went to school with. The girl's older sister was the manager of the record store and we volunteered to take them home since their house was on the way to Goulds.

So when it came to close the record store and the shoe store, we all met out front of Thom McAn's and were about to climb into Maybelline when I threw the keys to Jerry. Although the seat was a little low for him, he managed to get situated and we all piled into the car with Jerry's school mate in between and the older sister sitting on my lap on the passenger side. Jerry did great for first 50 feet before driving off in a ditch. At that hour there were no street lights and it was difficult to see the road much less the culvert that he ran into.

The headlights on Maybelline weren't very bright at approximately two candle power. And I won't even mention the mechanical brakes. But together we managed to push the car out of the ditch and get on the road again. Soon we were on our merry way to Goulds. Jerry did a good job of driving and don't forget, we had an open top with a balmy Florida night above our heads. Far-ra-do!

A big highlight of my short career at the Homestead store was the day that I could take my sister Carla's shoe size and slip on a pair of plain white patent flats. Until that moment, all she had ever worn were oxford type shoes with one shoe built up to correct for the difference in leg length. And as she grew older it became less obvious that she ever had Polio.

One morning as I entered the vestibule to unlock the store, I espied a small alligator lying in a corner. After opening the store and letting the cashier in, I took a small box and put the 2ft alligator inside. After a few minutes thinking about what to do with the gator, I took it to the back and put it in the restroom.

Did I mention that my boss was an alcoholic? One of the first things he did on most mornings was to go the restroom and shave and maybe change into a clean shirt. I figured it would jump start his day if he saw a gator in there with him. The hosiery lady and I waited for about a half-hour but nothing happened. The manager came out to the front of the store, clean shaven and acted as though nothing was untoward. After I had a chance to check on the gator I found it curled up into a corner behind the commode where it wouldn't be seen unless someone sat down on the commode. Or if it had moved or made any kind of noise, it would have been spotted.

By this time the hosiery gal could hardly contain herself and I thought she was going to give things away so after some deliberation, I decided to move the gator into the Hosiery and Handbag storage room. I placed it near the handbags and tied it up so it couldn't wander. Then we found a reason for the manager to go to the storage room to check on a supposedly missing purse.

It is important here to describe the backroom of a Thom McAn shoe store. Behind the wall of the store is a hallway much like an alley that stores shoe boxes all the way to the ceiling and the way the shoes can be reached is by ladders.

You may have seen this type ladder in libraries where they were needed to reach the higher shelves. These ladders have wheels on the bottom so that you can roll them up and down the back hallway and the bottoms can be pulled out to the desired angle.

These ladders were also fastened to a rail at the top of the ladder such that the ladders could either be rolled down the hallway or pulled out at different angles. At this particular store, I believe we had four such ladders and despite the desire to have the ladders flush against the wall they were almost always staggered because we didn't store them properly after use.

As it happened, the manager knew right where this particular handbag was located and went back to retrieve it. I was directly behind him when he walked into the room and since he knew where the handbag was, he flipped the fluorescent lights on and walked straight to the handbag.

Just as he bent over to pick up the handbag the lights flickered on and there was the gator. The first sound I heard was Ahizzzy from the gator and the second sound was Bahaaaaaa from the manager as he turned and ran over me. I tried to grab his waste and explain but he was gone in a flash and all I could hear was a crash here and another there as he ran down the hallway hitting ladders that should've been stowed.

Now I have to admit that I had to stop a time or two to get my laughter under control and it didn't help when I got out front and saw the hosiery girl was doubled up and laughing uncontrollably and pointing to the door.

When she finally could talk she told me that he had ran out the door calling for police. When the police did show up I had already put the gator back in the box.

It wasn't until the next morning when we opened the store that we saw the manager again and I'm here to tell you, he didn't go back to the restroom.

At that time Thom McAn printed a magazine with news and other company info and distributed it to over 850 stores nationwide. My gator story appeared in the next issue of the magazine. It is a shame that they didn't know the whole story.

Not long after the gator incident, I was asked to go work at the Thom McAn store in Jacksonville. It was to be a temporary job to fill-in for a couple months. The Jacksonville store was larger and much more interesting than Homestead and the more I became familiar with the city, the better I liked it. Obviously it was colder than the southern part of Florida and it even snowed while I was there. The shoe store was located on Beach Boulevard in the Southgate Plaza.

The Plaza was host to several stores but the ones that I frequented most were a cafeteria, drug store, men's clothing store and a corner bar. I became friends with one of the salesmen at the clothing store where I bought my Van Heusen shirts and ties. Since we both worked at the same shopping center and had roughly the same working hours, we rented a two bedroom apartment together. At the same time I was attending a catechism class held by one Father McCann. No relation to the shoe store. It was a new experience but I still remember some of the teachings.

Thinking back I seem to have been baptized as a Baptist, a Presbyterian and again a Baptist. Now I've added a sprinkle by Father McCann. I don't recall if Kathie and I were baptized when we attended the First Christian Church in Titusville but hopefully one of those will work.

On Sundays after Mass, my roomy and I would buy a whole roasted chicken each and a case of beer between us then head for the beach. What could be better than a day in the sun, a half case of beer and a whole chicken on your day off?

Well, there was one thing better and that was a Sunday night social where young Catholics would meet with more drinks and members of the opposite sex. I believe it was St Paul's Catholic Church on the beach but can't be positive because of the many years that have passed. After one fine day of beer and chicken and lying in the sun, I went to sleep and only when the tide began lapping at my feet did I wake up.

My roomy had moved the car so that it didn't get stranded but decided to let me sleep. The result was the worst sunburn I had ever gotten before or since. The blisters were so severe that I had to find a store that sold shorts in enormous sizes so that when I put them on, they wouldn't touch my legs. I went to the Catholic social wearing those shorts. It was like wearing a tent on both legs. Muzzygeezy!

After a short visit by Rulee Thieneman whom I had met and dated before leaving Homestead, I decided to quit Thom McAn and return to south Florida. Now that I was back home, I paid a visit to my old work site and learned that Thom McAn had charged the manager with embezzlement. I was told that he had been under investigation for some time. The story was that the money he was taking from the store was supporting his alcohol addiction. Today, they might have treated it as a disease and handled the issue differently. Possibly require him to submit to some type of corrective treatment and put him on probation. True or not, the story goes that he was sentenced and sent to Florida's Raiford Prison. He was a likable guy and I'm sorry that it came to those ends.

I was again looking for a job and was soon hired as a Plant Manager with the Kendall Packing Company. Goulds, FL. Don't let the title fool you. What it really meant was I was a truck driver whose job it was to get them to and from work.

The men were from Bahamas and made up a crew for planting new orange trees. There were about a dozen in the crew and most had done this job before. Any knowledge I had wasn't much and I had learned that from my father-in-law. And although my job was to supervise the planting, I was a much better driver.

Besides their speech which had the British accent, they were entertaining with their jokes and good humor. The young ones were more rambunctious and at lunch time, they like to "Dosh" one another. I eventually discovered that the word was Dash, not Dosh when a young man was added to my crew that was born in Homestead. His dad was one of the foremen for Kendall Packing Company who had wrangled a job for his son who would be the only American in the plant crew.

About the kid's second day one or two of the young workers asked the American kid if he wanted to play "Dosh." The kid made the mistake of agreeing to play and soon found himself on the ground. Then a couple other boys wanted a chance to Dosh him. I had to put a stop to the game.

It seems the object of the game was to draw a circle and remain standing while throwing your opponent to the ground, or in other words Dosh him to the ground. Of course the other young workers wanted the kid to play Dosh with them so it wasn't but a couple days and the kid was gone, never to be seen anymore. I don't think his dad was very happy with me.

There came a time for weddings. Sue had met and fell for this sailor, Bob Martin and soon the two were married. All of us Smiths were there to witness the vows but there was another event about to happen. Dad and I were arguing who might be the first one home when they said "I do." He was driving a '57 Ford Fairlane and Jerry and I were in 'Ole Maybelline. When the priest said, "You may kiss the bride..." I turned the key in Maybelline and it sounded like a bomb went off. Dad said that the noise caused him to jump out of his seat and head for his car but he had to wait for Mom.

Jerry and I were gone like a rocket but with no muffler and when we hit US-1 heading north in all our fury, Jerry was standing up through the top urging me to drive faster while Dad and Mom were coming up a distant second and somewhere behind them was Bob and Sue trying to catch up.

I suppose this is where the story ends for Maybelline. She was kicked out of Homestead for making too much noise and removed from a football game by the police. She was persona non grata.

It was about an eighth of a mile from the entry to the trailer park when a terrible sound came from the engine. It was a metallic sound like a tin can or something falling on the highway but Jerry said he didn't see anything. Then the engine quit. As it turned out we had enough speed to turn into the park and drift to a place in front of the trailer. We arrived first but old Maybelline was unable to go anymore and before long, she was towed off to the old cars junk yard.

As Rulee and I continued to date, it became obvious that we were in love and we soon decided to marry. In keeping with her way of doing things, it was to be the biggest wedding Homestead had ever seen. Her dad was trying to talk her out of it by offering something different. He said that he would put money towards my tuition to whatever school I would like if she would have a smaller event. Instead we had a big Catholic wedding that Homestead may have ever seen. I think maybe that was the idea. What I remember most about it...I was a handsome dude.



1958 Wedding

We were fortunate in that her parents had allowed us to move into a small house they owned. It was surrounded by avocado groves that sat in the middle of a one mile square area off Naranja Road. The attraction Monkey Jungle was just north on the next road and at night the peacocks and monkeys would make horrible sounds, enough to keep one awake. Their slogan was Monkeys are wild and people are caged.

I had quit working for Kendall and taken a job at a service station in Goulds. Which at the time was closer to my parent's home than to our house? One night while on the evening shift, two young black men walked up to the pumps and wanted gas but it was a subterfuge to rob me at gunpoint.

The clues to what they were about to do weren't that obvious until I began reconstructing what happened in hindsight. Not knowing they intended to rob me, my actions weren't according to their plan so they had to wait until I finished the phone call and went inside to deposit the cash in the register.

The event happened not too long before closing time when the two came up with a gas can so I pumped a dollar's worth which about filled the can. One handed me a dollar while the other stuck out a five dollar bill but was a tad late because I had already taken the dollar from the first guy. Thinking about it later, I inadvertently foiled their plan because they wanted me to have to go inside and make change.

Then the pay telephone rang so I walked to the booth as the two men disappeared in the darkness. When the call was completed, I hung up the phone and went inside to deposit the money in the cash register. Just as the cash drawer opened, suddenly my ribs were rammed on both sides by a gun. It seems they had waited just out of my sight until I opened the drawer to deposit the money.

After giving them the money from the register they began ordering me to open the floor safe but I convinced them that I neither had a key nor knew the combination if that was the type of lock on the safe. Finally, they grabbed me and took me into the garage area arguing about taking me to the woods in back of the station where it was dark and out of sight of any onlookers. I was beginning to balk though I still had a gun in each rib but I had decided that at first opportunity I would bolt and take my chances outside where there were lights.

The two were still arguing when one asked me to hand over my wallet and was about to ram his hand into my pockets when I resisted. The next thing I knew was being aware that I was on the floor lying in a small pool of blood from a head wound. One or both had pistol-whipped me. Because I could hear them talking while I was on the floor, I couldn't really understand anything they said which made me realize that I had been unconscious if only a short time. I made calls to my parent's house, to the police and to Rulee letting them know what happened. Brother Jerry came to the station to help however he could and to wait with me until the police came.

While waiting on the police, there suddenly came a blast of sirens from many cars flying down US-1 headed in our direction. At first I thought, I must really be special to have that many cops but they kept going to Homestead. When a Metro police car finally showed up, I learned that there had been an incident at the Homestead Jail where it was first thought it was an escape and a hostage situation. It turned out not to be the case because the secretary crawled out of a window while the father of the young man talked him into giving himself up to the police. The men that robbed me were never caught.

I had purchased a Cushman Eagle from a guy who had built it with parts from all different models and squeezed as much horsepower as one cat get out of the small engine. I rode it to and from work as it was the cheapest transportation I could find. Gas was really cheap so a quart would last me a week. I had to be thrifty because after all, gas was 25 cents a gallon.

There was a time when Rulee tried to ride the scooter but during a turn she burned the calves of both legs. Before the week was over I was getting phone calls about the scooter and learned that she had put an ad in the paper offering it for sale.

I had purchased it from a man who had taken parts from different years of Cushman scooters and assembled a sporty black, pin stripped scooter with a tan leather seat and chrome exhaust. It was a nice contrast in colors and a pretty fancy ride. It sold quickly.

There came a time when I finally realized that with a new wife and a new life, I needed to find a more rewarding career so I enlisted in the US Navy for a 4-year hitch. The day I decided to enlist, April 22, 1959, I went to the recruiting office in South Miami and was told that I would be sent to Great Lakes, IL for boot camp. I declined and said I would only go to a warm climate.

The next day I was called by one Ed Clanton, BM1 who asked if I would reconsider if he could offer me San Diego, California. I accepted and the next day, April 23rd I enlisted on my 22nd birthday and swore that I would honor the US Flag and the Constitution of the United States. I was one proud Navy recruit. Ed handed me my orders along with 3 or 4 others and said I was in charge and I was instructed to take them to San Diego. I was called Pops.

An addendum to this story is that 49 years later after searching for thousands of sailors that served on the Edisto, I was looking at my DD-214 and saw the name of my recruiter. I searched the Internet for this man and found a man by that name that served in WWII and other wars and now was retired.

He retired and was living in North Carolina. After contacting him by phone, I learned that he was indeed my recruiter but was no longer a BM1 because he had been promoted to LT during the war.

Kathie and I had dinner with him and his wife Glenda in Lumberton when on our way to Newport News, VA for a ship's reunion. In the years following, Ed and I became good friends via email. Two or three times weekly I would get an email from him or I would be sending mail to him until one day I heard from Glenda that Ed had died.

Ed – or Clancy as he was known to friends – at the age of 16 joined the Merchant Marines in June of 1944 and was exposed to enemy action in Italy and the Philippines. He stayed in the Merchant Marines after the war and joined the U.S. Navy in October 1947 and spent the next 25 years in a very successful career. He was awarded numerous medals and citations for his service and was commissioned an Ensign and 10 years later he retired as a Lieutenant. He was a hero.

I'm saddened to say that his wife informed me that Ed died February 15, 2020 at age 90.

15 - San Diego, California 1959

The overall flight from Miami to Los Angeles was uneventful and a pleasant experience for those of us who hadn't flown before. The trip from LA to San Diego was a different flight. The plane flew almost directly over the coast and low enough we could see the beaches below and occasional beachgoers but before we could get a better view of the sunbather, the currents over the surf caused the plane to quickly drop down or bounce up 10-15 ft. If none of us got air sick on that flight, there would be little chance of getting seasick.



Arrival at Boot Camp

Upon arrival at the San Diego Naval Training Center, we disembarked from the bus with the only possessions that we brought with us which wasn't much more than a duffel bag. We were met by this nice man, Chief James Weir, BMC who called himself our Company Commander. If there was any doubt, his first command was, *"you bunch of pussies drop your bags and line up and sound off when I call your name!"*

After roll call, we were told that we were now members of Company 59-187 and were taken into a processing center where we were all marched to a supply room where clerks ask us our sizes in pants, shirts and shoes. We received clothes that didn't fit, hats and shoes that were too big and various other essentials like soap, shaving material, etc.

Next we were marched to a barracks where bunks were assigned depending on physical height and any phobia about sleeping on a top bunk. I recall that I selected the top bunk and remember that a recruit named Long chose the bottom bunk. He was from Oklahoma and a former Marine who decided to try the Navy. One evening he told me that he was tired of this shit and the next morning it was discovered that he was gone and never returned nor did we hear what may have happened to him.

Now that we had a place to sleep and been given a new identity, Company 187, we all were wearing floppy white hats, wrinkled white uniforms and the same black shoes, it was time to make us less like individuals. First we were given a razor and those with beards had to shave it off. Next they gave us a comb and asked us what hairstyle we liked before cutting it all off. Then we sailors were given a toothbrush with some having teeth pulled but the final straw for one sailor was when they began handing out Jock Straps. He went AWOL. Can you blame him? Muzzygeezy.

One of the first lessons was how to make up our bunks. They had to be just perfect and meet the critical eye of Chief Weir. If not, then the bunk was stripped and we had to do 100 pushups or some such punishment and then remake the bunk again. It seems that right away some of sailors were all developing our biceps.

It's not surprising that we learned quickly how to make our bunks look like every other sailor's in the barracks. The same was true about our lockers. They had to be neatly organized. Then it was time to wash our whites and they had to be spotless or more pushups were in store. We were taken outside and shown a concrete table on which we were to scrub our clothes using a bar of soap and a scrub brush that had bristles so stiff that after many scrubblings we worried that we would scrub a hole in our jerseys before we graduated. But on the bright side, they were white and no longer smelled like mothballs. Then when all the Company's whites were hanging to dry, we had to post guards at each clothes line. Now what idiot is going to steal our clothes?

Even if there was such a clown, what is the guard going to do. All he has is a dummy rifle – oops – a “piece.” When we were issued our weapon, the Company Commander holds up the rifle and says, “Don't forget this is your piece...” then grabs his crotch and says, “...and this is your gun!” If anyone forgot and called it a gun or rifle, then the punishment generally meant you slept with your piece and then maybe did a few rounds of the 16 count manual of arms. The latter was an exercise that we all had to perfect and do it in unison with as much synchronization as possible. I don't recall how much the piece weighed but can testify that when you do the 16 count manual a few times it gets pretty dang heavy.

I was appointed a Squad Leader which meant that I was to lead many of the training exercises such as rifle practice, whale boat racing, 16-count manual, synchronized marching and many other activities leading to competition among squads and most definitely against other companies.

All the companies were in pursuit of the Meat Ball Pennant which signified the company with the best overall performance. It was more of a benefit to the Company Commander than us recruits. There was classroom training, tests and shooting practice with our pieces. My squad were pretty good marksmen and could compete with most any of the companies. We were not so good at whale boat racing however. I was coxswain and was pretty good at hollering Stroke! Stroke! Then there was our exposure to tear gas. We cried like babies. Muzzygeezy!

Our Company had a celebrity of sorts, or at least he thought he should be treated as one. First off, he was a Phillipino and for some that could mean he was from Russia or some sinister place like that. His story was that he was once Mr. Philippines. Someone thought it was a beauty contest. I don't know that any of us knew what that meant and even fewer gave a damn.

Whatever the reason, he didn't take a shower every evening like the rest of us and he was beginning to stink. I mean really stink. Anyone who has been through Boot Camp will tell you that after a day of intense physical exercise, you will need a shower. But after a week, you will need a GI shower.

After repeated warnings after 2-3 days of him avoiding the shower, some of the guys decided it was time to hold a field day. Now Merriam-Webster defines a field day as this:

- 1a: a day for military exercises or maneuvers
 - b: an outdoor meeting or social gathering
 - c: a day of sports and athletic competition
- 2: a time of extraordinary pleasure or opportunity

The Navy's definition of a field day is not quite the same as Merriam-Webster's because it entails a day of soap, brooms and scrub brushes. Barracks are scrubbed clean from top to bottom. It also meant that we should be clean, ergo, Mr. Philippines. Some of the guys caught him in the shower with their scrub brushes and had a field day. He was lucky to have any skin left.

Of course it wasn't all fun and games. One of the Navy's favorite pastimes was seeing how many lines we could form. We lined up for almost everything we did. Toilets were in a line. Showers were in a line, we stood in a line for just about everything. If we weren't running or marching, then we were standing in a line. Our day started with Reveille, fall in to formation, double-time to the chow hall, form a line, eat, then we walked back to the barracks...but quickly.

Especially exciting was shot day. We formed another line and serially walked up to a counter where two or three corpsmen were waiting with a needle in each hand. Bang. We got shots in both shoulders and blood drawn from our arms. Afterwards you felt like a pin cushion. Who knows what all we were given to protect ourselves except for real bullets. They must have saved the penicillin for later use when the sailors got the Clap.

Another event that required us to stand in line was what the Navy called Parade. That was where all the companies marched to the Grinder and stood in formation in front of a podium and bleachers populated by guest and Navy brass. We all received a caution not to lock our knees while standing at parade rest for an hour or so because standing in the heat on the concrete grinder with your knees locked may cause you to pass out. When that happened it was telegraphed by the sound of the piece hitting the pavement. The protocol was the men standing on either side of the man who passed out would each grab an arm and carry him out to a designated shaded area. You guessed it if you thought all of us hoped the guy next to us would pass out. I never passed out nor did I ever get the chance to carry anyone off the grinder.



Seaman Apprentice

Boot camp was done! Starting with my induction and all during Boot camp, any time I was asked or took a test, I asked for electronics training and one day near graduation I was told that I would be transferred to Treasure Island to attend Electronics "A" school.



Wooden roller coaster, Belmont Park

We were near graduation from boot camp and were at a point where we were given a short liberty in San Diego. A handful of us went down to Mission Beach where there was a large amusement park with a wooden roller coaster. And of course there were bars and tattoo parlors where sailors would first get drunk then get a tattoo. I didn't experience either but did go with a couple other sailors to see an old time burlesque show.

I had earned some leave so I caught a bus and headed for Homestead. It was a long hot ride to Florida, especially when traveling through Arizona and Texas. We were in the middle of nowhere in the desert between El Paso and Austin when the bus blew a tire or had some other problem. I guess it couldn't stand the heat either.

The driver pulled over about a 100 yards from what looked like a gas station but we didn't need gas. We needed tire air, water and air condition. I was in my white uniform and after Boot Camp the heat wasn't bothering me as much as it was other passengers.

Whatever the reason, the driver couldn't resolve our issue so we sat for a couple hours waiting on another bus to come get us. I think we may have bought out everything in that little store. Maybe they are the ones that put nails in the road?? Upon arrival in Homestead I was reunited with my wife Rulee. Now we had been married for the better part of a year and it was a relief not to have to get up and get dressed and hurry to the chow hall before class.

No doubt it was during this leave that Randall Scott Smith was conceived because he was born April 7, 1960. After my leave was up I was due to return to California but my next destination this time was Treasure Island which was just outside San Francisco. I decided to fly back to California and as it turned out my father-in-law worked for Eastern Airlines and had done so for a number of years. He knew people and as a result I was given a letter written on Eastern letterhead that granted me permission to fly on unscheduled flights such as maintenance flights.

In this case, it was a Super Connie on a special flight to Long Beach, CA to pick up the Eastern's new plane the McDonald Douglas DC-7B. The pilot was none other than Mr. Eddie Rickenbacker, WWI Ace and CEO of Eastern Airlines. The plane wasn't loaded but carried several passengers whom many were female. Apparently they were wives of some of the men onboard and some were employees of the airlines. No matter their relationship with the men onboard, one thing some may have had in common was experience as a flight attendant because they served champagne and canapes with practiced ease.

Once the Super Connie was at flight altitude, Mr. Rickenbacker turned the controls over to the copilot and came back to the cabin to visit. He couldn't help but noticed the only sailor in uniform and it was his letter that allowed me to fly on this plane so it gave me an opportunity to say thanks. I learned that all the food and drinks was for the return flight to Miami in the new aircraft they were picking up. All was well until we landed in Long Beach and were taxing to a hangar when the Connie ran over some new asphalt and the wheels fell in causing the props to hit the surface. Bang. All stop.

Treasure Island (TI) is located about half way between San Francisco and Oakland. The Navy had a large presence in San Francisco and a good-sized training facility on TI. I don't know if there were other schools being taught but here I attended Basic Electronics School followed by Radar School and at every opportunity I volunteered for Submarine School.

We volunteers were all subjected to a few rounds of physicals that included an eye and dental exams, chest X-rays, finger pokes, tongue depressors (not with the same finger) and a myriad of other test to certify that we were actually of human descent but I felt more like a guinea pig.

The first time I was given an eye exam I really screwed up because someone - I don't remember who - had told me that they would try and fool me. They said that those administering the test would try and trick me so I went into the exam suspicious of what I might be subjected to. The Navy was using the Farnsworth Lantern Test or FALANT which is basically three lights, Red, Green and Yellow-white. However in the back of my mind I was remembering that they may try and trick me to see if I was color blind. That memory set the stage for what was about to happen next.

I got the first two colors correct but they were trying to trick me on the third and I don't recall what color I gave them. So they switched the order of the lights when they flashed them. I knew then that they were trying to trick me. They were no longer giving me Red then Green, but now the order was White, then Green and Red. Were they trying to trick me? I had been warned about this.

I was sent to an eye doctor. There were three of us scheduled for an eye exam as part of the preparation for submarine school and were scheduled to take the exam at the same time. One volunteer was a sailor whom we called Speed. Not sure why the nickname but Speed wore glasses and it was common knowledge that his vision wasn't all that good but he was well liked among us students so we decided to do what we could to help.

We decided that the best way to help him was to memorize the smaller lines on the eye chart. I would take one and Scott would take another and pass them on to Speed. That didn't turn out so good but what Speed did was even better. When asked to cover his right eye and read the chart, he put his right hand over his right eye and read most of the chart. When asked to cover his left eye, he took his left hand and put it over the right eye and read the chart. Unfortunately, we all were given another eye exam later on and this time Speed was caught red handed...no pun intended.

The next test was called the Ishihara test, a [color perception test](#) for red-green [color deficiencies](#). It is designed to check for color blindness or the ability to distinguish different colors. A sailor brought out this little book full of colored dots and asked me what I saw. I told him that I could see a lot of pink dots. Did I see anything else? I did. I told him I saw a blue "22".

I think he began to doubt me but turned to another page which had a bunch of blue dots and he asked me again if I saw anything. I wasn't trying to be smart but in this case I said blue dots. And there were more colors and I saw more numbers that he didn't see. Apparently he didn't agree with my answers because he called in the doctor and pointed out two or three pages and told the Doc what I had seen. Lo and behold, the doctor looked at those colors and saw the same numbers I did. That was the end of my eye test and I left with the promise of submarines

After completing Electronics "A" school, we graduates were given a choice of ETN or ETR rating. I chose the latter and was promoted from SA to SN and enrolled in Radar school which was supposed to be the most difficult to learn, whereas the class we just completed was pretty much about radio transmitters and receivers.

I must not forget to mention this caper involving a student who I believe had already graduated and most likely assigned to a ship by now. Anyway, his name was Bird. We learned that about every desk had "Bird Lives" written on it. Of course those same desks have multiple "Horses" written on them as well. A horse got its name from a list of test answers. If you picked the correct horse, you might get all the answers correct. The key word here is "if." Anyone who used a horse and failed the test could rightly suspect the instructor wrote it. I'm pretty sure there were plenty of those.

Getting back to Bird Lives. It was reported that Bird Lives was written on almost everything in the classroom. I should say classrooms since he hit them all and seemed to direct most of his attention to one instructor that was more of a target than others. This instructor was tall and the way he would stand to address the class caused us to call him "Slew Foot." I think most men recognize the physical characteristics of a slew foot by the way they stand or walk. He was however well liked by all his students.

As I said, Slew Foot was a target of Bird. Anything that could be written on carried the slogan Bird Lives. Chalk, erasers, pointers, desks, blackboards, chairs, books and it was reported that his coffee cup even had an inscription. It wasn't so much as to what carried the slogan as much as it was a mystery how these items got on them without being observed. I personally suspect that once started by Bird – who was long gone - other instructors were doing the work for him.

Another interesting trait of Slew Foot, or should I say skill, was the unerring accuracy of chalk throwing. He could stand at the front of the room and hit a dozing sailor in the head dead center. Rarely did he miss. Believe me, it woke up a sailor. Of course now that would be considered abuse.

Radio Detection And Ranging (RADAR), school was entirely different. First we were locked in a vault to study. No pencils, paper, notebooks or anything other than our bodies were permitted inside the enclosure because it was a confidential or classified setting. I don't remember which it was but definitely a protected subject on special circuits related to Radar. There was also Long Range Navigation (LORAN) equipment to study and learn to repair.

Since I had just completed Radar school and was destined for New London, CT, the Navy enrolled me in Submarine Radar School which meant I would spend a few more weeks on the island. At the beginning of this class, the instructor said he was going to make technicians out of us and teach us what we should have learned all these weeks before. He was right. He taught us how to read an Equipment Manual and how to troubleshoot and to test our skills, our final exam was to detect and correct a simulated failure of the radar onboard a submarine. We soon learned why the windows had dark shades on them. They could be pulled down to turn the room into darkness to simulate a darkened sub as much as possible.

We went inside the school room and everything was dark so we had to find the battle lanterns, turn them on and begin our troubleshooting of the radar assigned to me and another technician. We quickly discovered the radar was not powering up. Yeah, that was a clue. It took us the better part of an hour to find a light, turn on the power to the radar – which it didn't – and conduct an inspection of all the power circuits until we found a blown fuse in a power supply. Wallah! It was great satisfaction to turn the power on and see the Radar come up in an operating position. We passed and now were on our way to submarine school.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention a student called Gedunk, a Navy term for a snack bar. He got his nickname from always having a candy bar in his mouth or in his hand. He was really a nice guy who somehow failed to lose any excess fat during boot camp as most of us did. Maybe he managed to put on those pounds immediately after graduation. Either way, he was a tad obese. Students learned they could barter with Gedunk by waving a dollar or two or better yet, a chocolate candy bar such as a Baby Ruth or Butter Finger or any kind of candy would render the same results.

As it turned out, Gedunk's parents gave him an older Chevrolet coupe. He decided to sell it, so after a few rounds of negotiations a handful of guys came up with \$300 to buy it from Gedunk. I don't think anyone actually purchased the car from Gedunk because no title or registration ever got exchanged, only cash.

Two guys in particular borrowed the car most often and both were native Californian, one from Los Angeles and the other from San Francisco. One night after they had borrowed the car we learned that the car had been abandoned on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

The Navy towed the car down to the base and impounded it but not before we saw that the driver's door was missing. There was a lot of guesses as to how but only two knew. Poor Gedunk. He was still the owner. There was much speculation as to how the door became missing but we never found out but did learn about their night out. When they went on liberty, they liked to have gay men (Queers) pick them up and take them back to their apartment where the two sailors would rip them off. Basically they were criminals.

Anyway, one evening they returned to the base with their clothes all torn up and eyes blackened and one can only guess what other injuries they had sustained. It seems that the gay community had spread the word about these two and planned their revenge. After two guys picked them up and took them back to their apartment, one locked the door and the other turned and said the only thing he liked better than sex was to fight sailors and the two proceeded to kick the shit out of the two sailors. When they returned to the base their clothes were torn and their bodies were black and blue. We heard that they had quit picking up queers.

While we were in Electronics school we didn't have too many inspections but we did have them often enough so we wouldn't forget how. There came a time when we learned that Five Day Deodorant pads would make our shoes look like glass. We shined our shoes to make them look as nice as possible then wipe them down with the deodorant pads and they shined so good that it made the shoes look wet.

Unfortunately, we discovered a problem with this method of shoe shines. During one inspection when our company lined up, we all really looked sharp, especially our shoes all nice and shiny. Then it began to sprinkle rain. Just a drop here and there but when those drops hit our shoe, it left a white spot. You would have thought a pigeon shit on the shoe. That pretty much was the end of us using Five Day Deodorant pads.

16 - New London, Connecticut 1960

The next thing I know, I was packing my bags and catching a train to Connecticut. It was a long ride from San Francisco to Chicago, to New York and then New London for Submarine School. Fortunately I was on a car with a preacher, a soldier, a school teacher and another guy who all liked to play poker. My old classmate Scott wasn't there to screw things up so I managed to win a few dollars but not before I learned that the preacher was able to see a couple of the player's hand in the reflection of the coach's window. The only other thing I recall about that trip was that the school teacher got off the train in Ogden, Utah.

It was March 1960 and as luck would have it, New London was cold. There was about a foot of snow on the ground and everything was dreary looking and very little activity was visually present in the city which was quite a change from San Francisco and San Diego. I reported in and submitted my orders before the Master at Arms assigned me a bunk and got me settled. There was no more luxury here than we had at Treasure Island which was none.

New London was a teeming with nightlife. There was a USO where a sailor could get a free doughnut and a cup of coffee and maybe even a magazine. But best of all was a Polish Polka Club where one could always find good friendly people and good Polka music to dance to.

The club was almost like a speakeasy in that someone would open a small flap in the door to see if a member was asking entry and it seems a sailor in uniform was always welcome. Or so I was the couple times I visited there. Until then I hadn't heard much accordion music, but one could say that in New London I learned to appreciate the sound of an accordion.

About three weeks into training when checking my mail, I discovered something that I failed to mention earlier that happened in Electronics School at Treasure Island. Another sailor by the same name was a few weeks behind me. He and I opened and read one another's mail over a period of many weeks but never met one another. I never found out his middle name to see if it was the same as mine. It was ironic that he too was in Sub school and once again, we are receiving the other's mail. Looking back I believe he was the reason behind a mystery that wasn't resolved for some time after I left New London. This was long before cell phones and for that matter, calling cards or credit cards, so in order for me to call home I would have to go through a long distance operator.

Apparently there weren't many operators on night duty in New London or wherever there call center was, so it wasn't unusual to get the same operator and after a few calls, she knew our names and what city we were calling. That is where the other sailor with the same name came in. Evidently he was making calls about the same time in the evening – as most of us did – but calling another city.

So one evening when I was about to make a call to Homestead, she wanted to know why I wasn't calling Atlanta. I explained that I didn't know anyone in Atlanta but she insisted that she knew my name was Smith. After a few sparring words, I got her name – Operator 2 – and she got mine. She said she already knew my name and that I was 19 and single, etc., etc. That may have been my last phone call to *Atlanta while single* because I was soon to leave New London and transfer to Boston as a married man. I hope Operator 2 wasn't too disappointed.

One morning I received instructions to lay down to Sick Bay because the doctor wanted to see me. When I arrived I noted there were a Chief and a LTJG in the waiting room. It was a day where all three representatives of Navy rank got their notice that each of us were being dropped from school because of irregular lung X-rays.

The spots on my lungs were attributed to possible calcium deposits which diagnosis meant that no matter what I did in the rest of the school, I would not be permitted to take the buoyancy test. That was the fate of the other two men as well.

The test is in 40ft tall water tower that simulates conditions that a submariner might experience during an escape from a submerged submarine. Candidates are expected to ascend without the aid of scuba tanks or other breathing apparatus. The exercise is relatively safe for one with good lung capacity. It's been said that if you see mermaids on the way up, you are in trouble.

This structure was constructed after the Navy lost several sailors from a sunken sub and apparently the Navy decided to screen candidates for any irregularities of the lungs and prohibit them from taking the test because of the risk of causing breathing difficulties that could lead to serious injury. No Dolphins for us three sailors.



Buoyancy Ascent Tower

While waiting for my disposition, I was assigned to be a driver and a gopher for the Admiral (COMSUBLANT), who one day asked if I was happy in my job. I thought it best to be truthful and told him that I would prefer a job in electronics and somewhere warmer so he said he would get me an assignment.

Soon my orders came in for the USS Edisto (AGB-2) and after seeing the classification AGB, the Admiral said that I would be happy because it was an auxiliary ship and they rarely went to sea. He failed to mention however that it was in Boston and that it was an icebreaker. Actually, I don't think he knew what an icebreaker was.

Maybe as a submariner, he hadn't seen many surface ships except through a periscope but then I'm reminded, he was an Admiral.

17 – Boston, USS Edisto (AGB-2) 1960



Dry Dock Bethlehem Steel

There was a time when I thought I should write the Admiral and tell him he didn't know a damn thing about the Auxiliary Navy because the icebreaker USS Edisto (AGB-2) didn't stay long in a port.

The early part of the year Edisto was resting on keel blocks in the floating dry dock of the Bethlehem Steel Shipyard, Boston, MA when workers of the Bethlehem Steel Corp. went on strike. This action stopped any yard work so Edisto remained in the strike-bound yard until 20 March when she passed through the water-borne picket line and tied up at the South Boston Annex of the Boston Naval Shipyard. Not long afterwards I reported aboard 14 May and on 28 May 1960, under the command of CDR Robert A. Martin, the Edisto was declared ready for sea and we commenced storing supplies and refueling for an Arctic deployment.

I used this time to familiarize myself with the equipment and where it was located. There were basically three work areas requiring the most attention. They were the Bridge, the Combat Information Center (CIC) where the radar controls and PPI scopes were in use and finally the Radio Shack.

I picked out a top rack just across from a metal door that led to the officer's quarters where midshipmen and civilians were bunked when aboard and next day I reported to the small ET shop to find Al Hudson who had just received his promotion to a new rate ET2. Al asked if I would drive his car to retrieve his jumpers that he had left with a seamstress to sew on his new Second Class crow. His car turned out to be a brand new 1960 Chevrolet Impala with big fins on the back giving the impression that the car was much wider in the back than in the front. I wasn't afraid to drive it but was very conscious of the fins.

The shop was reached by a one way cobble stone street that ran straight under an elevated track of the Boston El. The tires made a good bit of noise on the cobble stone street and the roar intensified as I neared an intersection ahead where cars were coming directly at me. Just before I reached the intersection with the anticipation of a crash, the cars turned right and left and by now the noise was deafening which was caused by a train on an elevated track running overhead. That was the last and only time I would drive his car. A land yacht it was and probably shouldn't be on the streets.

The ET complement was a First Class ET named Castleberry. Al was our ET2, Crane was our ET3 and I was the ETRSN or Electronic Technician Radar Seaman. As it turned out I was the super tech amongst us and many times I gave thanks to the Submarine Radar Instructor for what he taught me. My skill and confidence served me well into my career and I had to draw on it many times to effect repairs to the old VJB Radar Repeater. It was ancient but I managed to keep it working.

The Edisto was equipped with equipment made in the 1930's for the US Coast Guard. In order to use it onboard the Edisto the equipment had been battle hardened to make it seaworthy which served its purpose in the ice because the whole ship took a pounding at times. But it was old. About the only modern equipment were the transmitter/receiver (TED/RED) used to communicate with the helicopters.

A sample of our equipment we were responsible to maintain and repair was the AN/SPS-10A Surface Search and AN/SPS-6C Air Search Radar, and corresponding Plan Position Indicators (PPI). A PPI is a type of radar repeater that represents the ship in the center of the display with the distance drawn as concentric circles. Each circle on the PPI represents a variable range marker which tells the Radar Tech the direction and distance of the object from the ship.

There were Radio Receivers and Constant Wave (CW) Transmitters, Air to Ground Transceivers, Sonar, Fathometers, and Ship to Shore Radios, Radio Direction Finder (RDF) and IFF & SIF (Identification Friend or Foe and Selective Friend or Foe). I don't recall anyone but me working on the radars, radar antenna or the IFF & SIF equipment but that was my specialty rating.

There was an occasion for me to perform maintenance on the surface search radar while tied up in South Boston. I was at the very top of the mast where the antenna is located and happened to observe two men climbing the mast on the aircraft carrier USS Wasp (CVS-18). It was tied up not far from the Edisto and while I watched them climb I noted a really dark cloud approaching and thought to myself, how dumb they were to go up with that storm approaching because they were flirting with danger.

As I stood there and continued to watch them climb I thought about trying to signal them somehow but before I knew it, BAM! My head tingled, I saw a bluish light and then my ears popped and I heard a loud noise. A bolt of lightning hit the mast where I was standing and ran down a guy wire and jumped an insulator before hitting the deck right behind the Officer of the Deck (OD).

A normal posture of many of the OD's was to stand with both hands behind their back holding the symbolic telescope of command. When the lightning strike hit, the OD unconsciously flipped the telescope so high that I could almost reach out and catch it. But I didn't and it landed back down behind the OD. It was heavy brass so maybe they got it back together again. But I can tell you that it didn't take long for me to shinny down the mast to the deck below. I might note that I don't know what happened to the two guys on the Wasp's mast but I did learn that it isn't necessary for a storm cloud to be directly over you in order for lightning to strike elsewhere. In fact, I've heard that lightning can strike without a cloud in the sky.

The ship was preparing for an Arctic trip and supplies were being brought onboard and ammunition was being returned to the ship. Ammo transfer was an All Hands working party. Only the infirmed and high ranking officers were exempt except I'm sure some of the officers stepped in at one time or another. I don't know which was the hardest on our hands, the cans that held several rounds of 40mm shells or the heavy 5 inch shell which could mash a finger if not careful when putting it down. Carrying a 40mm can in each hand helped balance the load while we cradled the 5 inch shell like a baby.

If my memory serves me right, I may have only had to carry ammo no more than twice during the four years of service. My arms and hands were in bad shape when I finished the first time but hopefully I was smarter the next.

One thing for certain, if you carried the 40's your arms would be useless when it was over. On the other hand if you were in the 5 inch line, you would have a couple sore fingers from being mashed when you put them down on other rounds.

It didn't help either when the old gunners mate would talk about magazines going up. I think that by the time that I might likely be called to haul ammo, I had ET strikers working under me that got called and I had to stand watch in case any of the electronic equipment went down. Oh such is the life of a petty officer.

As we prepared for an Arctic cruise, Rulee brought baby Randy to visit me in Boston. Anyone know how difficult it is to rent a room with the name Smith while in a Navy uniform? It helps to have a baby handy.

Their stay was a little longer than one night so I rented a small upstairs apartment in a frame house across the harbor in Winthrop. It provided a nice view of the Logan Airport and surrounding area. Getting to and from the ship required taking the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MTBA) to the Maverick station, which was the last stop before taking a bus to Winthrop.



Randy 2 Months

Before Edisto could get underway for SUNEK 60, there was an incident that occurred just before Edisto was to depart Boston to support her annual Arctic resupply Operation SUNEK 60. The following describes the incident where a Pistol Packing Swabbie invaded the Officers Wardroom and how it was resolved.



Pistol Packing Swabbie

Shortly after midnight, 1 June 1960 before we were to sail north, the ship's Postal Clerk came aboard from a night's Liberty and went straight below decks and soon returned to the quarterdeck.

He asked the Messenger of the watch to get the Petty Officer out of bed and to meet him in the Officer's Wardroom. The Messenger asked the Postal Clerk if it was important, at which time the Postal Clerk pulled out a .45 caliber pistol that he had had hidden under his jumper. The Petty Officer of the watch did not see the gun but had overheard the conversation.

He told the Messenger and the Postal Clerk that he, as Petty Officer of the Watch and only he would order the Messenger off the quarterdeck as necessary. The Postal Clerk then fired one shot into the air and demanded to see Supply Officer. The Petty Officer of the watch dispatched the Messenger to wake Supply Officer. The Postal Clerk then pointed his gun at the Petty Officer of the watch and demanded his gun who complied. Then the Postal Clerk went into the Officers Wardroom, a pistol in each hand demanding that he see the Supply Officer.

The Messenger of the watch, meanwhile, instead of waking Supply Officer, had gone in search of the Junior Officer of the Deck (JOOD) and found CW0 Deming just outside the Chief Petty Officer (CPO) Mess on his way to the quarterdeck.

Upon learning the circumstances, the JOOD sent the Messenger to wake the Command Duty Officer (CDO), LTJG Morris. The JOOD then returned to the quarterdeck and phoned the Officer of the Deck. While this was going on a majority of the crew were still asleep in their racks.

Believing that the Postal Clerk wanted to shoot the Supply Officer, the CDO immediately woke him up and hastened him off the ship to safety. The CDO then phoned the Base Security Police and one officer arrived at 0055 local time.

Meanwhile CWO Deming entered the wardroom, turned on the lights and found the Postal Clerk seated on the couch with a loaded pistol in each hand and insisting on talking to the Supply Officer. At that time the Base Security Policeman Richmond entered the door and the Postal Clerk snatched up the guns again. Richmond tried to talk to the Postal Clerk but only made him more nervous so he was asked to leave the room by CWO Deming who followed soon afterwards. The Postal Clerk was now alone and decided to fire a shot. It was now after 0100 and most of the crew was still in their bunks asleep.

A call to the Charlestown Navy Yard Marine Barracks brought six armed marines to the ship. All accesses to the wardroom were guarded by armed men and all personnel were removed from adjacent spaces and ships at nearby berths, (USS Atka AGB-3 and USS Providence CLG-6), were told of the developments by telephone and to use caution.

The South Boston Annex duty officer was also notified. By 0200 more Marines and some Armed Forces Police had arrived and three squad cars of Boston City Police were on the pier. The ship was under a siege by armed men. I repeat, most of the crew was still asleep in their racks.

Then it occurred to someone that the Postal Clerk might go down one deck below to where the midshipmen and civilians were provided temporary quarters when onboard. I think I mentioned earlier that I had taken a top bunk directly across from these quarters which was separated not by a hatch but only by a standard metal door. If the Postal Clerk decided to enter that compartment and shoot through that door, the slug would easily penetrate the metal door and hit either me or the middle rack or God only knows who else might have been hit.

I was awakened suddenly at 0200 by a sailor standing over me with his face almost nose to nose and he said in an urgent voice, "Smith! This is urgent! Get up and go forward fast!" That's what I did immediately. I ran up the ladder and began running through the mess deck at what I thought was top speed until I tripped over an arm that was being stretched out with a gun in the hand. Now I was running at top speed.

It was a marine who was just stretching out on the floor between the mess tables when I came running through. Timing couldn't have been worse for either. It's a wonder that he didn't fire his gun, thinking he was being attacked.

As for me, I didn't have the foggiest clue as to why a man with a gun was lying on the mess deck. Now I was really running faster than top speed. When I got to the forward passageway that runs port to starboard across the ship, there were other men standing in their skivvies just like me. Having no idea what was happening, one of the sailors asked me if I knew and I turned and saw the Logan International Airport strobe lights going off like rockets and said, "We are under attack!" Muzzygeez!

The Boston Police did not come aboard, but they did supply some tear gas. The exact total number of these personnel at the scene is not known, but is estimated at twenty-five. CWO Deming fired two tear gas bombs through the lower panels of the locked after wardroom door, one at 0200 and the second at 0210. Several shots rang out from inside the wardroom following the firing of these bombs.

At 0220 the Postal Clerk opened the after port on the starboard side of the wardroom and tossed the two pistols out on deck. The ammunition clips had been taken out of the guns. He crawled out of the after door of the wardroom and collapsed in the passageway outside, He was then dragged out on deck by CWO Deming and a Marine where first aid and oxygen were administered. Upon revival the Postal Clerk was transferred by ambulance to the Chelsea Naval Hospital.

During the Postal Clerk's siege in the wardroom he fired several shots from his pistols. The number of shots heard by observers varies from eight to eleven. Subsequently eleven empty shells and two unused bullets were found in the wardroom, and one empty shell on the quarterdeck.

Since there are seven bullets in a clip, the number of shots taken by the Postal Clerk can be fixed at eleven in the wardroom and one on the quarterdeck.

Evidence of this whole incident and the number of shots fired in the wardroom may be seen by holes in the couch, room dividers, chairs, and bulkheads and the empty tear gas canisters. It was a war scene. I repeat, most of the crew was still asleep in their racks.

What may have triggered the Postal Clerk's outburst was his request for special pay had been denied by the Supply Officer., mainly because Payday was the very next day.

This affair should have resulted in the following:

1. Commendations for the CWO Deming and the others involved in bringing this matter to a safe resolution.
2. A supply of tear gas for Edisto and other ships
3. Better controls established for fire arms.
4. Medals for us sailors who set new speed records.

Now you know the origin of the phrase, "Going Postal."

In preparation for the ship's departure, Rulee packed up and she and Randy returned to Homestead while I released the apartment back to the landlord. Now it was a matter of getting our electronic equipment ready for my first of two Arctic cruises, Operation Support Northeastern Command (SUNEC 60).

18– Arctic Cruise 1960

On 5 June Helicopter Unit Det 2 (HU-2) and one HRS (Horse) Sikorsky helicopter and one HUL (Bell) were loaded and on the next day under the command of CDR Robert A. Martin, the Edisto sailed for Hamilton Inlet, Labrador on Operation SUNEK 60.

For two weeks we remained in the Hamilton Inlet area, during which time we escorted the USNS Greenville Victory and USNS Bondia through the coastal ice belt into the Inlet.

Our sister ship USS Atka (AGB-3), suffered some ice damage on 16 June so we took her USNA midshipmen detachment aboard and became the first icebreaker to conduct a midshipmen training cruise. A week later we were ordered to proceed to at best possible speed to aid in the rescue of the crew of a Danish motor vessel which had been sunk by heavy ice. However, after a day's steaming the word was received that the crew had been saved by aircraft so we returned to Hamilton Inlet.

On 28 June Edisto proceeded to the Straits of Belle Isle to rendezvous with USNS Redbud, which was drifting in shoal water with all propulsion disabled. On 29 June rendezvous was effected and we took Redbud in tow and proceeded with her to the Gulf of St. Lawrence (50 000N, 58 30°W), where on 30 June, the tow was transferred to the USS Preserver (ARS-8). We then sailed for Upernavik, Greenland, where on 6 July rendezvous was made with the USCGC Westwind (WAGB 281), USNS Point Barrow and USS John McKay. With the Westwind in the lead, the group proceeded in column to Thule, Greenland, arriving there on 8 July.

On the way up we stopped long enough to initiate us Red Noses into the Royal Domain of the Blue Nose. I am here to tell you that crawling through that chute of freezing water and smelling that stinking “stuff” is an unforgettable experience.

Thule – now called Qaanaaq - is located 750 miles north of the Arctic Circle and a little more than 900 miles south of the North Pole. The Danish call Greenland “Kalaallit Nanaat” which I cannot pronounce and wouldn't be able to spell without looking it up.



Realm of the Arctic Circle – Blue Nose Certificate

Like most USAF bases, Thule had a Non Commissioned Officers (NCO) Club that boasted gambling and entertainment and was called “The Top of the World Club.” This being our first visit to Thule most of the crew joined the club, I seem to think that it cost a whole dollar to join in 1960.

I don't know if it was because we were sailors or if everyone had to buy a membership. Either way, it was a unique place in the world. Thule isn't exactly what a sailor expects as a liberty port but then it had alcohol, slots and entertainment, a female band actually.

There was one major side effect from visiting the Top of the World Club and that was a headache. After a couple hours or so of drinking, then stepping outside to catch the bus and that brilliant northern sun hits you in the eyes. Wow. After downing beer all afternoon, you experience a sudden blindness and a bad headache and out loud you tell your shipmates that you are never going to do that again. Of course tomorrow is the same club, the same beer and the same sun.



On 11 July we departed Thule escorting USNS Point Barrow through light ice and detaching her that same day at Sabine Island, Melville Bay, thence returning to Thule and detaching the midshipmen the next day. On 14 July Edisto was underway again for Cape Farewell under orders from CTF-6 and on 17 July was ordered back to Thule where the next day she rendezvoused with USNS Bondia and USNS Crain who fell in behind the Edisto to convoy to Thule.

July 19th was spent in very heavy flow ice west of Sabine Island with Edisto continually having to turn about and break out the two merchant ships. By evening favorable winds released. The convoy arrived in Thule on 21 July where we embarked Underwater Demolition Team (UDT Alfa and nine NROTC midshipmen. And on 22 July, we departed for Kulusuk, East Greenland and on 29 July rendezvoused with USNS John R. Towle. On 30 July we escorted the Towle into Kulusuk. During this time UDT Alfa surveyed and charted the Kulusuk beaches and Hydrographic Office Representatives embarked.

Our primary objective for this cruise was to provide ice escort to Goose Bay, Labrador and establish a shipping lane for ships that were in route from the states. When we weren't providing an escort to a ship, then we were breaking or moving ice to keep the shipping lane open.

The Edisto worked with the Westwind to provide escort services to and from Thule, Greenland, shipping to Kulusuk, Greenland and support the Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) Alfa whose task was to clear the beach and conduct survey operations in Kulusuk. And as with all cruises another major objective was to conduct bathythermographs (BTs) at multiple stations around the Arctic.

Finally, our mission was to provide training to nine ROTC midshipmen and to another nine USNA midshipmen who were originally scheduled for USS Atka. I'm sure the midshipmen along with our own crewmen learned a lot when we towed the USNS Redbud from Camp Island, Labrador to a rendezvous with the USS Preserver (ARS-8) then had to respond to an emergency to aid a sinking Danish motor vessel. The Edisto was a day away when the mission was aborted after the crew was rescued by aircraft.

On 13 August, the ship departed Kulusuk to occupy ocean stations 1A through 7A which were completed by 15 August before she arrived in Boston 21 August. Now back in Boston from the Arctic after the completion of Operation SUNEK 60, we faced the challenge of preparing for the lengthy, important cruise to the Antarctic, as part of Task Force 43, in support of the U.S. Antarctic Research Project. On 17 September 1960 the ship entered the Bromfield Shipyard to prepare for her fourth visit to the Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze 61.

Now for most of the crew this was our first trip to the Arctic and when it was over we could call ourselves “Ice Water Sailors.” We had seen big icebergs, small bergy bits, growlers, ice flows, pancake ice, seals, polar bears and Eskimos. To add to these “firsts” one night we ran upon a large fleet of Russian Trawlers that allegedly were fishing however electronic analysis of their “fishing gear” revealed a lot of sophisticated electronics onboard. Enough said.

19 - Antarctic Deep Freeze 1961

In addition to the food, fuel, and ammunition supplies necessary to the operation of the ship itself, the ship loaded several cryptic boxes of scientific gear, a bathy-thermograph team, and the now familiar compatriots of HUTRON 4 and their gaudy flying machines. Day after day the slab-sided gray trucks rolled to the side of the ship as working party after working party was called away to cope with the influx of stores. The Officer-of-the-Deck (OOD) was forced to deal with angry division officers who saw their whole department leave on one working party. In reply to the queries, the OOD could only say, "This stuff has to come aboard."

Finally, the last truck was emptied and there were no more to take its place. This signaled the end of the preparations and it was during this period that Edisto got more than a facelift but she got a new skipper as well. On 27 October, a day before we were to set sail for Antarctica a change in command ceremony was held where CDR Robert A. Martin was replaced by CDR Bernard G. Fold.

Once more we had an all hands working party to load ammo in preparation for the trip south. It was then that I learned how important the VJ-B Radar Repeater was to the bridge and the skipper. It may have not been the oldest piece of electronic equipment but it was old and to make matters worse, the technician that worked on it last had made a few wiring changes. Much later I learned he was good but had a tendency to jury-rig equipment to make it work. The technician following him had no idea of how the equipment worked with these unauthorized changes. That meant starting all over and rewiring per the schematic then you could begin troubleshooting the problem. From that point on I approached a lot of the equipment problems with caution knowing he may have worked on them.

Also I quickly learned that the new skipper expected the VJ-B Repeater to be operational before we entered the waters off Cape Hatteras where treacherous waters off the coast of the Outer Banks are known as the Graveyard of the Atlantic. Over 600 ships wrecked here as victims of shallow shoals, storms, and war. Shifting sand ridges hidden beneath the turbulent sea off Cape Hatteras has never promised safe passage for ships. I had to call on all my skills but I managed to rewire the Repeater so that I could troubleshoot the equipment and find the original problem which turned out to be a shorted pin in the tube socket. The tube always checked as good but when it was inserted in the socket it caused the circuit to fail. That experience accelerated my electronics skills tremendously.

Early on the morning of 28 October 1 1960, members of the engineering department were already hard at work getting the ship prepared to sail. She remained shackled however to the unfamiliar land only by her doubled-up morning lines. Soon these too were reduced so that only six single strands of manila held her. At 1010 local time on that sunny New England morning, before a crowd of friends, relatives, and idly curious, the last line was hauled aboard and stowed. The ship, even in those calm harbor waters began a gentle rolling motion which told those of us who had sailed her before that Edisto was truly underway passing Boston Lightship serenely to starboard, rounded Cape Race, and steadied on a southerly course towards Panama and the Canal.

Soon Edisto began to plunge and rear in the troughs of the open Atlantic and it soon became obvious to the neophytes that finding one's sea legs was a matter of survival, not of mere whim. For late that first night the stormy North Atlantic gave the crew a taste of what was to become routine.

This too was an important exercise for me because the Skipper made it clear that when we entered the waters of Cape Hatteras, NC he wanted the VJB PPI radar scope working. It was older than the other PPI scopes but in easy view of the Captain's chair.

Another event that became routine was being awakened in the middle of the night by a Klaxon horn sounding a General Quarters alarm which demands that all hands man their battle stations. This was not a drill but was a fire in the stack where soot had built up in the stack and had caught fire, something that seemed to occur when new engines were put online. Whatever the reason, it wouldn't be the last time the crew responded to a call to General Quarter.

My next adventure with tube sockets was during a General Quarters drill. When the klaxon sounded the crew scrambled to occupy their stations. My station was the Radar Transmitter room which was located behind the bridge. It housed the transmitting tubes for the surface search and air search radars and was also the normal approach to the ship's mast and upper rigging.

The day before I had been working on the radar and still had some unfinished work and decided to use this opportunity to complete during General Quarters. I pulled the drawer out that I had been troubleshooting and was still a little drowsy from having been awakened in the middle of the night so I leaned back on the bulkhead behind me. It was at that moment directly behind me that the Twin 40 MM on the Port Gun Turret went off and I was shot right in the belly!

After finding no blood on my chest or stomach I espied a tube shield lying on the floor near my feet. Apparently I had not fastened the spring-loaded tube shield down when working on the chassis and when the 40 MM guns went off, the vibration caused it to fly off and hit me right in the stomach. Muzzygeezy.

05 Nov we arrived at the Panama Canal and dropped anchor in Limon Bay to allow the Panamanian officials to come aboard to inspect Edisto's papers and cargo. The Edisto also permitted a group of students and instructors from various South American military academies to come onboard.

Eventually we were permitted to enter the Gatun Locks which consisted of 3 locks that lifted the ship up 85ft to Gatun Lake, a fresh water lake created when the canal was built in the 1900's. Once we were on the lake, Swim Call was ordered for all hands which was a nice break from all the salt that had accumulated over the past weeks.

At the western end of the lake, we entered 3 locks to take us back down 85ft to the Pacific Ocean where we docked at Rodman Naval Base to take on fuel and supplies and to grant Liberty in Balboa before heading south to New Zealand.

You can imagine the crew's surprise when on 14 November we learned that we were being mustered to witness another change of command ceremony. It had only been a mere 18 days since we had left Boston and now CDR Bernard Fold was being relieved by CDR Griffith Conrad Evans, Jr., a seasoned ice water sailor. It was rumored that CDR Fold had made it clear that he wouldn't go to the Antarctic with this ship and crew so he was replaced by CDR Evans.

In the months to follow, it became quite clear that putting Captain Evans onboard as our skipper was a life-saving move on the Navy's part. It was his experience that saved the ship and crew from a severe Antarctic storm.

While the crew was enjoying a protracted liberty in Panama, a call went out for volunteers to donate blood to aid a Panamanian mother who was hemorrhaging following childbirth. When the call reached the ship about 3 dozen sailors loaded a bus and went to the hospital to give blood. Ample blood was donated to aid the mother and provide a supply to accident victims that were injured in a recent bridge collapse.



King Neptune Rex

Just before sunset, 22 November, as the ship crossed the Equator, Davy Jones slid in thru the port hawse pipe, hailed the O.O.D and said he had a message for the Captain. When the Captain went forward he was informed that King Neptune Rex had heard that a ship full of slimy, crawly "Polliwogs" was heading into his domain. That on the 'morrow he and his royal party would board the EDISTO to investigate. In the meanwhile all "polliwogs" were to wear their shirts reversed until further orders and follow the Plan of the Day. The next day we were invaded by King Neptune Rex and his Krewe and despite the extended liberty in Balboa, Edisto sailors were enamored by the comely maidens if only one could ignore the hairy legs.

All along the Shellbacks had been preparing for this crossing by making shillelaghs out of canvas stuffed with cotton or other material. This bat-like device was to inflict punishment when a Polliwog ran the gauntlet that was one of the obstacles where Shellbacks formed a corridor in which Polliwog had to run through. The idea was when hit with the shillelaghs it would be felt but they were not hard enough to break bones or leave lasting scars. There might be a few bruises however.

But first, I should mention that a Polliwog was prepared for this initiation before meeting the King by "beautifying" him. What this really meant is the Royal Barber was going to cut all your hair off. Then you had to crawl through this chute full of a rancid concoction that smelled like shit and felt like it when you crawled through the tube. The tub full of warm water at the end was a blessing – if you got in first.

Only the mess cooks could tell you what some of it was or how long it had been fermenting in the reefers. This concoction not only stunk but it soaked into our pores so that it took a lot of scrubbing and sometime days passed before we could get it out of your nostrils.

Friendly advice to any future Polliwog that might cross the line is to make sure you go through the chute first or as near to the front of the line as possible. That way you hope to avoid the puke of any guys ahead of you. I suppose I should say *any persons* since there are both males and females onboard ships now and surely, there must be some adjustments to accommodate females. And there may even be *real* comely maidens. When you have endured all the obstacles, the reward is yet to come.



Royal Baby

First you are given some Royal Jelly which is the nastiest long lasting taste of pure garbage that you will likely experience in a life time. Then you are required to kiss the Royal Baby's belly which also has its *rewards*. Nasty stuff.

Finally, we were hauled or crawled to the feet of King Neptune Rex who bestowed the title of Trusty Shellback upon us and from that moment on, be it known to all sailors, landlubbers and the like, that we are a member of the Royal Domain of King Neptune Rex. For me that served me well because I was to make another trip to New Zealand and to the Antarctic and McMurdo on the USS *Glacier*, not as a Polliwog but as a Shellback. I think it was more fun as a Polliwog than as a Shellback.

Mid-December we arrived in Port Lyttelton, New Zealand which gave us about ten days of liberty in Christchurch, a sleepy little town on the southern island. The Heathcote River flows slowly through the city with its banks adorned by park like settings all along the river making it one of the most picturesque rivers in the world.

No doubt the city has grown considerably since that time but in those days, Christchurch was deemed to be slow and easy, Wellington on the North Island was considered to be a faster pace and Auckland was much faster and was even described as being more like an American city. I think that was because the city had grown much larger and had many of the same problems as an American city that size.

While most of my liberty was in Christchurch, I did get a chance to visit Wellington more than once. The first was a dry dock visit by the icebreaker USS *Glacier* to have broken screws replaced and the second time was to accompany a Chief Corpsman to visit his friends by taking an overnight ferry from Port Lyttelton to Wellington.

Christchurch was only a short train ride away through the mountain that separates Port Lyttelton and Christchurch. If not the train, then it was a matter of catching a taxi and going up and over the mountain which took much longer to get to town. The “white hats” quickly learned the language of the locals and sought out the pubs. They soon learned that the latter closed at 1800 (6 pm) but like the old “speak easy’s,” a knock on the door or a walk around to the back entrance would result in admittance. I doubt there was a bar or hotel that didn’t open its doors to a sailor in uniform.

If going to a hotel bar to drink, it was best to go early before they closed their doors because afterwards they would move the bar to the back of the hotel. If you were inside when that happened, they would permit you to stay as if you were a guest. I’m sure the Bobbies knew what was going on but I don’t recall a sailor ever being harassed for an after hour drink.

I discovered a small pub that didn’t have much more than a dirt floor – or it was just a dirty floor – and a really nice quality dart board. The beer was not what we were accustomed to in the USA but it was cheap and it was luke-warm. The patrons were friendly however, especially if I was buying the beer. There were only men in the pub and one Yank. Me. Soon I was beginning to like the beer and the darts but I was losing the latter. The loser had to buy the other players a round of beer which was basically everyone in the pub including the bar keeper. Fortunately, the beer cost only a few cents a glass so I could afford to lose without doing much damage to my wallet, only to my ego.

After loading 64.4 tons of cargo, we set sail for the Antarctic and I carried with me a genuine horsehair dart board and about a gross of darts. Almost every day I practiced. I practiced throwing darts when the ship was rolling and when we got into the ice where the bow bumps a bergy bit or rides up on the ice shelf, I still threw the darts and became quite good. I was ready for the pub. But we were still in the ice so beer and darts had to wait.

The Spirit of Christmas Past



Icebreaker USS Edisto AGB-2

We arrived in McMurdo about mid-December and spent Christmas and New Year's assisting the USCGC *Eastwind* and the USS *Glacier* (AGB-4) in mooring cargo ships and maintaining a clear ice channel. Throughout January 1961, we provided escort to USNS *Alatna* (AOG-81) to McMurdo, USNS *Private John R. Towle* (AK-240) and then rendezvoused with New Zealand's HMNZS *Endeavour* and transferred more than 13,000 gallons of fuel along with 9,125 gallons of water. We later rendezvoused with USNS *Greenville Victory* (TAK-237) and escorted her to the McMurdo turning basin and held her in place until her deadmen froze in the ice. Near the end of January we transferred an additional 10,000 gallons of water to the *Endeavour*.

Our damage control men entered the tanker YOG-34 and de-iced the interior spaces and pumped her dry so she could be used to store fuel for McMurdo. Then high winds caused the *Greenville Victory*'s deadmen to pull loose from the ice breaking her from her moorings so we stood by until she could straighten and finish her unloading. The high winds continued so we towed her out to the end of the channel. On 6 February we saw a pile of brass come aboard. The first was Commander Task Force 43 who presented our Captain Evans with a commendation for Deep Freeze 60 work as skipper of the USS *Burton Island* (AGB-1). Then CDR Thurman came aboard with his staff and off we went to Little America V.

We arrived 8 February and saw that the ice shelf was 60ft high and badly crevassed. The more solid ice was even higher. It was decided that blasting a ramp to shipboard level was out of the question so the helicopters were put into action to fly cargo from Little America to the ship. After three days of work, 15 tons of beds, mattresses, tools and other equipment, including 2 cargo sleds, were brought onboard and taken to McMurdo. At McMurdo, CDR Thurman and his staff left the ship and we pumped another 5,140 gallons of water to the *Endeavour* before she departed McMurdo.

On 19 February, high winds broke the YOG-34 from its moorings so we took her in tow. Edisto used her two small craft in an attempt to return the YOG to Hut Point but winds were preventing the smaller craft from positioning the tanker so she had to be returned by Edisto. It was much easier for us to push the tanker up against the ice wharf. After the wind died down we loaded an HUS helicopter to return it to VX-60. A few days later and we were at the Hallet Station to standby to ensure the USNS *Arneb* (AKA-56) was ice free while she unloaded her cargo. While tending to *Arneb*, Edisto was taking soundings and bottom samples of Moubray Bay and providing technical assistance to Hallet Station for repair of their evaporator and reefer. Finally, on 6 March the high winds and surf caused us to pull alongside the *Arneb* and off load 500 drums of fuel for the helicopters to transfer to the Hallet Station. The *Eastwind* showed up and in a couple days of flying, the fuel was transferred to the Hallet Station. Before the job was complete, more than 7 tons of frozen and dry goods were flown over and we transferred 3,200 gallons of water to the station. Our job was done. We were released from Antarctic duty and arrived back in Port Lyttelton on 17 March.

After a few short days of liberty in Christchurch, all hands were mustered and preparations made to get underway again. Once more we were bound for the ice despite winter closing in down under. We were told that the YOG-34 had broken loose from its moorings and we were to tow it back to McMurdo. This was second time the YOG had broken loose from its anchors so Edisto was dispatched to replace sister ship USS Staten Island (AG-5) which had run into difficulties that required her to return to Port Lyttelton. The concern was the storm that battered the Staten Island had caused the tanker to break loose from its moorings. The YOG-34 was carrying 200,000 gallons of fuel presenting a hazard to the shipping lanes. Our mission was to capture or sink it. It sounded simple enough.

After all the ship did have a UDT unit who were explosives experts and there was enough TNT onboard to blow up Mount Erebus. And for added firepower we had a five inch gun and twin 40MM mounts. No US Naval ship had ever entered the ice so late in the Antarctic season. As Edisto headed south we hit some extremely heavy winds and rough seas and the winds were causing some severe icing conditions on the superstructure. The ice was forming popcorn balls on the long wire antennas and was beginning to cover the radio whip antennas.



Edisto Flight Deck

The further south the ship went, the more severe the weather with ice building up all over the top of the ship. Radar antennas failed to turn and the tall aluminum whips were loading up with ice.



Damage to Radar and 5 Inch Gun

On 25 March, EDISTO encountered 45 knot winds and green water over the bow that was freezing quickly as it landed on the superstructure and by March 30th the winds averaged 60 knots with gusting to 90. Steep swells 60 feet high added to the icing conditions. All exposed surfaces forward had at least 4 feet of ice cover while cavities, such as behind wind screens, had more than 6 feet.

The area from the 5 inch mount to the top of the pilot house was a bumpy slope entirely filled with ice. All of the pilot house windows were covered with ice making it necessary to continually dig out the pilot house windows for the only vision possible. The ship's Navigator used NAVSHIPS Cold Weather Handbook to calculate that more than 650-700 tons of ice had accumulated on this 6000 ton vessel.

The ice was making the Edisto stiff and sluggish and seriously unstable. Handling was becoming difficult and steering slow and sometimes dangerously unresponsive. Then the storm increased strength and damage to the ship began. The forestay parted, the forward antenna mast was broken, the air search radar antenna snapped, all of the installed helicopter blades were cracked, 4 pilot house windows were cracked, the forward starboard lifeline was carried away and 5 wire and whip antennas were snapped. Popcorn ice adorned all upright rigging and wires making them easier to break in the high winds.

Six days later, 31 March, the winds moderated to 40 knots and the crew began deicing procedures but stormy high seas still raged with Edisto experiencing 56 degree rolls. Suddenly she lost her starboard propeller assembly. Unable to establish communications with the outside world and no rescue possible, it was a grave situation for the ship and crew. After a day or two of working between rolls, by 3 April the crew was able to remove some of the ice and restore a couple radio antennas that enabled Edisto to contact New Zealand. The Navigator was able to get outside to use the sextant to determine our location. We were within 58 miles of Cape Hallett but the storm prevented us from going any further south. And an air search failed to find any signs of the YOG so it was assumed that the high seas had sunk the tanker and its fuel.

In addition to the locals turning out to greet the EDISTO, we were welcomed by Derry's Brass Band playing marches, nautical tunes and popular numbers. Rear Admiral Tyree, Commander of the Navy's Antarctic support force was the first man to come aboard. He was greeted by Edisto's Skipper, Commander G.C. Evans. After a week of well-earned and well savored rest and recreation in Lyttelton, we departed on 17 April for Pearl Harbor. With one screw missing and the other shaft bent, it was a long thump thump ride to Hawaii arriving on 29 April.

Entering dry dock in Pearl, all storm damage was repaired and the missing screw replaced. This was the first time in the Hawaiian Islands for the ship and most of the crew. This visit enabled me to see Diamond Head and the beautiful Oahu beach and even managed to visit the Waikiki Beachcomber and catch legendary Don Ho's show.

With essential repairs made to the radio and radar equipment, we were back in the water 23 May and on our way to Panama arriving 6 June in Balboa for a couple days of liberty and then on to Mayport, Florida arriving 13 June. We off loaded our helicopters and took on some brass who conducted an administrative inspection while on our way to Norfolk, Virginia and on 17 June the Edisto was back at her berth in South Boston.

This is Edisto's itinerary since leaving Boston 28 Oct 1960 and returning 17 June 1961

Arrival and Departures

28 Oct 60 Departed Boston, Mass.

05 Nov 60 Transit Panama Canal

05 Nov 60 to 19 Nov 60 Rodman, Canal Zone

21 Nov 60 Crossed Equator

09 Dec 60 Crossed International Date Line

13 Dec 60 to 19 Dec 60 Port Lyttelton, New Zealand

25 Dec 60 Crossed the Antarctic Circle

29 Dec 60 to 06 Feb 61 McMurdo Sound, Antarctica

08 Feb 61 to 11 Feb 61 Little America

12 Feb 61 to 11 Mar 61 Hallet Station

17 Mar 61 23 Mar 61 Port Lyttelton, New Zealand

28 Mar 61 Ross Sea Area

03 Apr 61 Departed Ross Sea Area

09 Apr 61 to 17 Apr 61 Port Lyttelton, New Zealand

30 Apr 61 to 23 May 61 Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

06 June 61 to 08 Jun 61 Rodman, Canal Zone

08 Jun 61 Transit Panama Canal

13 Jun 61 to 13 Jun 61 Mayport, Florida

15 Jun 61 to 15 Jun 61 Norfolk, Virginia

17 Jun 61 Arrive Boston, Mass

The Edisto pulled into a South Boston pier where it was met by a large crowd of wives, girlfriends, journalist and Navy dignitaries to welcome the crew back to the good ole USA. It had been a harrowing near death experience.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DIRECTORATE FOR NEWS SERVICES
Washington 25, D.C.

SERVICE JOURNALS April 10, 1961 N-78-61

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, April 10 (DELAYED) after nearly a week of battling violent Antarctic storms, the Navy icebreaker USS EDISTO returned to Port Lyttelton, New Zealand on Sunday afternoon.

The EDISTO experienced a week of 40 to 60 foot seas and winds up to 90 knots. The EDISTO's commanding officer, Commander G. C. Evans, Jr., USN, said that the seas and winds were worse than any typhoon he had ever experienced. He likened his position to being in a street of towering buildings, all of which "were falling down on us."

After six days of battling the storms, the EDISTO lost her starboard propeller. Because of the lost propeller, Rear Admiral David M. Tyree, USN, Commander of Operation DEEP FREEZE, ordered the battered ship to return to New Zealand, and abandon her mission to recover a fuel storage tanker adrift in McMurdo Sound. The tanker was loaded with 200,000 gallons of aviation gasoline.

The seas smashing over EDISTO covered her with ice that in places was over six feet thick. It is estimated that her load of ice weighed over a 1,000 tons. The weight of the ice carried away a radio antenna and some of the rigging.

EDISTO will remain in New Zealand for a week of rest and repair and then will go on to Hawaii for major repairs and replacement of her propeller.

END

I was awarded the Order of the Ditch after going through the Panama Canal four times; Twice on the USS Edisto and twice on the USS Glacier.



The following are some of the awards and commendations that we received for our mission performance during Deep Freeze 61.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS

SHIP OR STATION USS EDISTO (AGB-2) at Boston

The following MSG received from CTF 43 is quoted below for inclusion in your service record:

CTF 43 MSG 080104Z of April 1961: Congratulations upon completion of your successful penetration of Antarctic Circle and Ross Sea and your valiant attempt to recover the derelict storage tanker YOG 34 subsequent to the normal operating season on the frozen continent. Except for drifting (Aurora) do not know of any ship operating this area as late as this. While encountering heavy seas with winds reaching up to 90 knots and with extreme topside damage from icing, you pushed forward in your endeavor, only after the adverse elements of nature proved too great a risk to life and ship did you reluctantly head north. Your contribution to science by gaining first hand, knowledge of late March and early April conditions while operating in Ross Sea in itself is a major achievement.

Well done on your gallant efforts carried out in the highest traditions of the Navy

RADM D. M. TYREE

The following message received from CTU 43.1.1 is quoted below for inclusion in your service record.

CTU 43.1.1 MSG 112150Z of March 1961: Upon your departure from the Ross Sea Area I wish to say well done to a fine crew and a fine ship. Your services were invaluable to operations in Antarctica. I particularly want to thank you for the good show at Little America Station, for recovering the YOG and the vertical assault and back door approach which contributed so greatly in the success of the battle of HALLETT. Sorry we had to keep you in the area so long. Your hospitality is without equal.

RADM D. M. TYREE

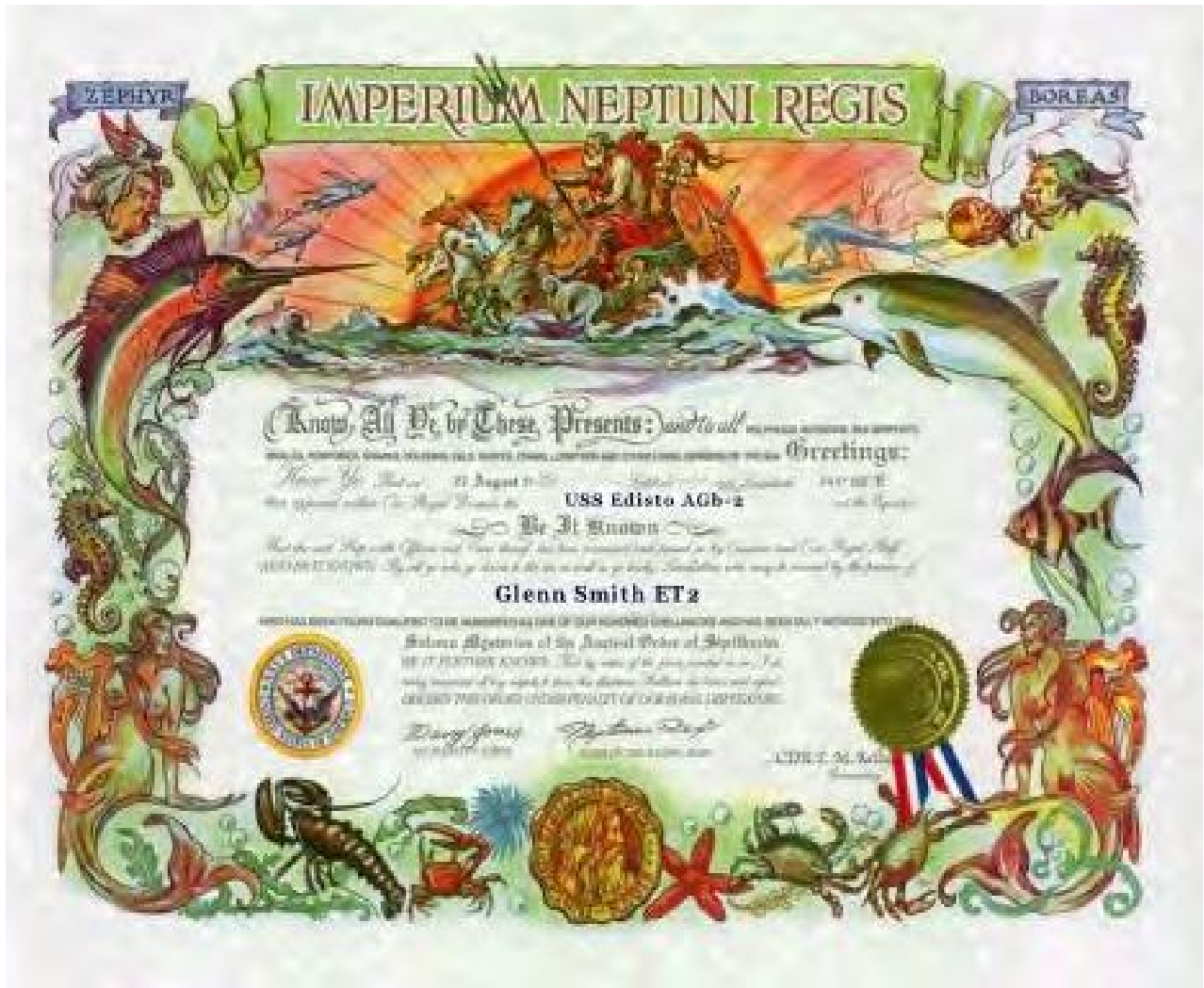
ANCIENT ORDER OF THE DEEP

22 November 1960: This is to certify that Glenn D. Smith has been gathered into our fold and duly initiated as a TRUSTY SHELLBACK having crossed the Equator and invaded my realm while serving aboard the U.S.S. Edisto (AGB-2) on this date at Longitude 86.45W.

A.Rachap LTJG USN

Asst. Personnel Officer

By direction of Commanding Officer



Ancient Order of the Deep

SACRED ORDER OF THE GOLDEN DRAGON

9 December 1960: This is to certify that Glenn D. Smith has been duly inducted into the Silent Mysteries of the Far East, having crossed the 180th Meridian while serving onboard the U.S.S. Edisto (AGB-2) this date and is a member of the Sacred Order of the Golden Dragon.

A.Rachap LTJG USN

Asst. Personnel Officer

By direction of Commanding Officer



Sacred Order of the Golden Dragon

ROYAL ORDER OF THE PENGUIN – RULER OF ANTARCTICA

25 December 1960: This is to certify that Glenn D. Smith has duly inducted into the Royal Order of the Penguin, Ruler of the Antarctica having crossed the Antarctic Circle this date while serving onboard the U.S.S. Edisto (AGB-2).

A.Rachap LTJG USN

Asst. Personnel Officer

By direction of Commanding Officer



Ancient Order of the Penguin Court

20 – Arctic Cruise 1961

After arriving back in Boston the ship had a short stay at the Monroe Shipyard in Chelsea, Mass., before making preparations to go north again to the Arctic in support of SUNEK 61. While still in the Arctic, I received word that I was promoted to ETR3, Third Class Petty Officer, Electronics Technician.

We left Boston 25 July 61 headed for Argentia, Newfoundland to rendezvous a couple days later with the USS Atka. After meeting the Atka, we proceeded on to Argentia where we stayed only briefly before sailing to Kulusuk, Greenland to pick up UDT Bravo. On 3 August we rendezvoused with the USNS Greenville Victory and escorted her into Kulusuk Harbor. A couple days later civilians from the U.S. Hydrographic Office came aboard to conduct oceanographic operations on the East and West coasts of Greenland. Again, one of our primary missions was to perform BT drops throughout the Arctic waters.

The month of August was devoted to providing escort service to the USNS Greenville Victory, USNS Redbud and the USNS Chattahoochee in and out of the Kulusuk Harbor. Near the end of August, the three ships were escorted out of the Kulusuk Harbor and the weather conditions turned nasty so we sought refuge in Scoresby Sound where we held an initiation into the Royal Order of the Bluenose. There were 100 Red Noses transformed into the royal domain of the Blue Noses. Having experienced an initiation last year crossing the Arctic Circle I enjoyed the privileges of a Blue Nose.

After the Oceanographers took some BTs, on 15 September I was dispatched by helicopter to Cruncher Island which sets at the mouth of the Davis Straights that takes you into Sondrestrom. I was sent to repair an unmanned radio beacon used for navigation. It didn't take long to determine the cause and get one-half of the system working so I rewarded myself by stretching out on the Lichens and getting some sun before calling for a ride back to the ship. We departed Thule 24 September 1961 and headed south to the U.S.A. via the Belle Isle Straits and arrived in Boston on 7 October where we enjoyed almost a month of rest and relaxation before getting underway again.

This time we sailed to Norfolk for an administrative inspection by COMSERVRON FOUR and to receive some work from the tender USS Vulcan (AR-5). Before returning back to Boston on 17 November, I was able to use that short time in Norfolk to visit my cousin Sylvia, one of Aunt Myrtle's daughters who worked as a nurse at the Norfolk hospital at that time.

I had not seen her since we were kids during our visit to North Carolina in 1947. She was a few years younger than me and was the love of Uncle Jesse's life. Wherever he went, so did Sylvia. I recall that during our visit to his farm he took me and Sylvia into town in his old Model A coup and what I recall most about that trip was the fact that the car's transmission would not stay in 3rd gear. To prevent it from jumping out of gear he used a piece of wood cut to the correct length with a notch in it so that after shifting to third gear he would place the notch in the gear shift and prop the board between the gear shift and the dash. Genius. Uncle Jesse had taught his traveling companion little Sylvia how to insert the board after he shifted gears. They were a team. That was the only time I ever saw Uncle Jesse Lucas and I was many years later that I saw Sylvia and now she was grown. That visit in Norfolk was the last time I saw her.

We spent Christmas and New Year's in our home port of Boston waiting for access to a shipyard so that Edisto would get her bi-annual overhaul in preparations for another trip to the Antarctic for Operation Deep Freeze 63. After the overhaul Edisto was destined to make one more trip to the Arctic. We went north in support of SUNEK 62, the annual resupply to Thule Greenland. Performing BTs and providing escort and rescue services to the maritime fleet were becoming a routine duty for our crew. These annual missions were critical so supplies could be shipped to those regions.

Liberty in Thule took a couple exciting twists this time. The first was when the USAF Base Commander demanded that any sailor that left the ship for liberty must be clean shaven. No beards. That pissed off a lot of sailors including our skipper and the XO.

The next event was when I got thrown out of the Top of the World Club and my membership was revoked. I was told that I shouldn't bother to rejoin. Whoop ta Do. I wasn't broken up about it because I was pretty sure that this would be my last trip to the Arctic and especially Thule. It was an accident. A sailor walking behind my chair kicked a power cord that was being used to power an amplifier for an All Girls band. Of course they were right in the middle of a song so it was a room full of Boos. Even a little finger pointing in my direction but the power was restored and civility returned to the club.

Then it happened again. No one was walking by nor did I hit it with my chair or knock it out of the socket but I got blamed for it. I think what may have happened is when the sailor that tripped on it the first time and plugged the cord back in, it wasn't seated all the way and any vibration around it caused it to lose the connection. Because the outlet was right behind me, I got the blame.

Another unexpected event is when I was the duty Petty Office on a morning watch when our ship's barber came up on deck with his duffle bag. He was returning to the states. I was surprised that he was leaving from Thule and I made the smart remark, "It goes to show, it's not who you know but who you blow." He grinned and walked off the deck to catch the bus for a ride to the airfield. I found out later that he and another sailor had been caught in the same rack. Muzzygeezy.

One final thing that proved to be more than a ride in a truck to the airfield was when a member of the UDT asked me to join him on quick run to an ammo dump. Sure, I'll go and jumped into the bed of the truck with him while two other UDT members were up front. We drove up the runway to a bunker type facility and hauled out a bunch of hoses with metal caps. When we got back in the truck and were sitting on these things, I asked him what they were and he told me they were explosives. Hmm. I asked him if it was safe to sit on these things bouncing and vibrating like they were. He said not to worry; they are set off by electronic frequency.

About that time he and I saw a shadow overhead and it was a small airplane coming into a landing on the air strip. Yes, No need to ask, it was tight. What about the radio frequency from the plane? Nah, I don't think so. Anyway, the plane rode up over us and down on the runway and we got the hell off as quickly as we could but it was unlikely there were any more planes landing.

Upon return to Boston, I summed up my second Arctic cruise as a very successful one. Now that I didn't have many months left on my enlistment, I was looking forward to shore duty where I expected to relax and milk the last few months of my Navy life. Oh boy, was I wrong! It had now been almost two years since Rulee and I had seen one another and I didn't know if she had found other interest or not, only that she needed money.

By now I had accumulated almost a month of leave time so I planned a trip to Homestead. There was a Navy plane headed to Norfolk, Virginia and I was told that it would be easy to catch a military flight out of there that would take me south. We could use military flights at no cost by showing our ID. It helped if we were in uniform too.

The flight out of Norfolk was a passenger plane with lots of brass onboard on their way to Patrick Air Force Base in Cocoa Beach, Florida. On this particular flight the plane was carrying a Captain or Admiral and his staff along with me and a Chief.

The seats in this passenger aircraft faced the tail of the plane so we couldn't see who the brass might be or what rank he was. What was obvious is that all of the men on the plane were officers but for me and the Chief. Once we reached our cruising altitude the steward made fresh coffee and handed it out to the officers before serving me and the Chief who were sitting in the seats nearest the cockpit.

Suddenly the plane hit turbulence and I noticed the Chief setting his coffee on the floor between us so I followed suit. I soon learned why because the next big drop of the aircraft saw coffee going to the roof before descending down on those khaki uniforms.

We landed at PAFB about 3AM and I was offered a ride to the main gate at A1A. The staff car was going north and I was going south so they sat me out on the highway and drove off. Once I could no longer see their taillights, it was dark. I mean really dark. No Street lights, no moonlight and no car lights. I sat down on my sea bag and lit a cigarette and began to wonder how long I might have to wait for a fisherman or surfer going south that might be inclined to pick up a sailor in uniform.

After about an hour or two of waiting without a single car going south, I saw the glint of what could be headlights coming my way. When the car stopped in front of me, the first thought was that it was a gay guy looking to pick up a sailor. Even so, I really wanted to get off A1A and get somewhere that I might get a ride to Homestead. As it turned out, this guy was a soldier just returning from active duty and was on his way to Miami. He said he had made a wrong turn off US-1 onto A1A and was now trying to get back to US-1. Of course I-95 did not exist then.

We learned more about each other's plight and it turns out that he was a Dade County Sheriff's deputy who had been urged by fellow deputies to join the National Guard so that he might not be drafted to fight in Vietnam. Soon after he enlisted, his unit was called up for active duty.

I gave him a short story of my Navy experience on an icebreaker and kept him awake for the drive to Miami. It was early morning when we arrived so I had him drop me off at a Royal Castle so that I could get coffee and breakfast. I offered to buy him breakfast but he was in a hurry to get home to his family.

I had to wait for a couple hours until the buses started running but then learned that I couldn't get one that would take me near Homestead. Now it was later in the morning and I knew Rulee or someone would be up so I called to ask if someone would give me a ride. Rulee wasn't there but her mother agreed to come and pick me up.

After a half hour ride and all the greetings had been exchanged between me and Meme I asked where Rulee and Randy were and learned that she had an apartment in Miami. That was news to me but Rulee and I were a little estranged at the time. It was decided that her mother would drive me up to see Rulee and Randy who was now about 18 months old.

Upon arrival at her new address, it was becoming clear to me there was much about her life that I didn't know nor did she know much about my Navy life. For instance, I didn't know that she was not at the grove but living in an apartment in Miami and would not have been able to find her if I hadn't gone to the grove first.

Soon I was beginning to see that we were going back to the area where I had been earlier that morning. Upon arrival her mother stayed in the car while I walked to the door and was met by Rulee who wouldn't open the door to allow me inside to see Randy. Instead we talked through the screen and agreed that to speak further, we would meet at the Royal Castle, the same Royal Castle that I had waited a couple hours in earlier that day.

Soon we were sitting across from one another at the Royal Castle but it didn't take long before it became clear that this meeting wasn't going to end well. I learned that she had taken a job as a dance instructor at an Arthur Murray Dance Studio and was making a new life for her and Randy and short of going AWOL there wasn't much I could do about it.

We finally ran out of words without much satisfaction for either of us so I asked Meme to take me back to the grove. During lunch with Rulee's parents very little was said. I had only been home a day but I was beginning to see that it was a mistake. The only other thing to do was to go back to Boston.

So after lunch I called the Homestead Air Force Base Operations Center and learned there was a plane going back north to Norfolk but I had to get there within the next half hour. Mr. Thieneman said he could get me there. Sure enough he drove his Volkswagen as fast as it would go to the airbase where I was told that I had to get a parachute before getting on the plane and was giving directions where to pick it up.

When I ran inside, I guess the Sargent had been warned because he had a parachute pack sitting on the counter. All I had to do was sign. I did and grabbed the bag to run out when he said, "Don't grab the D ring..." Poof! It sprang out in front of me. Embarrassed, I gathered it all up and carried it back to the Sargent and asked him for another just like it. To clarify I said I wanted one that works as good as that one. He wasn't happy.

Next we were back in Operations where I said goodbye to Mr. "T" and hopped on a jeep to be taken to the runway where a C-119 was already warmed up and ready to take off. As soon as we rolled up to the open door where the Flight Sargent stood, he grabbed my sea bag and pulled me in after it.

I hadn't settled in my seat and buckled up before the plane started rolling down the runway. The Sargent disappeared in the cockpit and I sat alone in a web seat in this big old wide box car. Now the plane was really winding up and the vibration in the empty box car was literally teeth jarring when we reached altitude, I was invited to sit in the cockpit in what was the Engineer's chair. It was a very nice flight to Norfolk.

After a few hours of flight the crew had learned that I served on an icebreaker and had cut my leave short so they invited me to fly with them first to Norfolk then on to San Antonio or somewhere out west. They would arrange for me to stay in BOQ barracks wherever they stopped. They were in the National Guard and were getting their flight hours in so they could get extra pay. When we arrived in Norfolk I caught a bus and headed back to Boston and the Edisto.

21 - USS Glacier (AGB-4) 1962



Back in Boston, I was about to leave the ship that had been my home for almost three years and while I hadn't been in every nook and cranny, many times I had visited every place on the ship where there was electronic equipment.

I could only imagine where the Navy would send me to while out my last few months of duty. My last Arctic cruise resulted in a promotion to Electronic Technician Radar, Second Class Petty Officer (ETR2). It was also accompanied by transfer orders effective 12 September 1962 to the USS Glacier (AGB-4)

I had made a lot of good friends among my shipmates and one being a yeoman who was delivering my orders. Others volunteered to carry my sea bag, an old Navy custom reserved for good friends. When all my stuff was loaded, I climbed in the truck with the Yeoman who still had my orders. We drove down the pier about 100 yards and stopped in front of the USS Glacier where he said he had to make a delivery. What he did was hand over my orders to the Petty Officer of the watch and then he carried my sea bag and sat it on the quarter deck.



USS Glacier Logo

There had to be some mistake or it is one last joke being played on me. I knew this because I was destined for shore duty to while away my last few months of Navy service. Unfortunately, it wasn't a joke nor was it a mistake. I was now assigned to the USS Glacier (AGB-4), the Navy's Flagship icebreaker. It had the largest capacity single armature DC motors ever installed on a ship and was capable of breaking ice up to 20 feet thick, and of continuous breaking of 4 feet thick ice at speeds of 3 knots. On the other hand Edisto could break about 12 feet of ice with its reinforced double hull. The heavy bow rises up on the ice until it breaks. If not, then you repeat until it does break.

After signing in with the Watch the first thing I did was to find out what the cutoff date was for the upcoming cruise because the Glacier was scheduled to depart soon for Operation Deep Freeze 63. Thank goodness, I had beaten the cutoff date so I requested an audience with the Executive Officer and explained my good fortune. He said he would take it up with the Captain and get back to me. In the meantime I was learning that I had a large ET shop and three technicians to help maintain the electronic gear which was ample.

In the short time that I had been onboard, the Chief Petty Officer of Operations, a Radioman and I had become friends so when the ship was asked to provide men for Shore Patrol, he volunteered the two of us to perform that duty. Now I might suggest that this is Boston, home of the Irish cop.

That duty was one of the most interesting assignments I had in the Navy. We were assigned to a Boston cop who would normally walk a beat by himself. When we asked why he wasn't partnered up with another cop, he said they had no fear because if any citizen caused harm to a cop, he would be arrested and taken to the precinct station where he would be introduced to several other Boston cops.

The Shore Patrol (SP) officer in charge was a Chief Petty Officer, a black man that was well liked by all that had worked under him. He was a straight shooter.

One day while in his office a sailor in custody was sitting down waiting to be taken to a cell while the arresting SP officer was doing the paperwork. The Chief asked him if he had searched the sailor and the response was no. A look from the Chief told the sailor what he should do next and it turned out that a search of the arrested sailor produced a .45 tucked in his waistband at his back. The SP had driven him around in the patrol car without doing a proper search.

I'm sure there were hundreds of other stories that could come out of that office but one does come to mind and that is the SP officer that liked to use a sleeper hold on rowdy sailors. I understand that he had been warned several times not to perform this hold, especially on drunken sailors because there had been some serious injuries as a result. We happened to be in the office the day the Chief was reaming this guy out.

A week went by and I didn't hear anything. Then another week ran into another. Finally on the morning of 17 September, I woke up to the sound of engines running and black smoke coming out of the stack and within hours, we were underway. By now it was clear that I would be going south on this Antarctic cruise and was expected to mentor the men in the ET shop.

After a few days at sea we received a message that told of the death of the Shore Patrol Chief. The story had it that he was killed by his longtime girlfriend. After several years of living together she asked him if he was ever going to marry her and evidently he said not. So she poured a pot of scalding hot water over his head killing him instantly.

After transiting the Panama Canal we crossed the Equator and stopped long enough to initiate the Pollywogs on ship. It was an interesting initiation as I was now a Shellback. We had a group of midshipmen onboard who made it clear that they were not going to be subjected to an initiation.

What they hadn't planned on was our UDT members were all Shellbacks and seen that as a challenge so when the Middies locked themselves in their quarters, or so they thought, the UDT went in after them. The end result was some hogtied men being carried out to the mess deck. Their initiation couldn't have been worse.

As a Pollywog one could expect a bad haircut and could only hope it grows fast enough to look presentable when you pull your first liberty. Otherwise, you might want to wear your hat every day while on liberty.

Which brings me to the story that one guy managed to escape the party. In fact, he was absent the next day at muster. A full search of the ship was ordered and it was believed that every nook and cranny was explored but the sailor hadn't been found. Then one morning just after dawn someone spotted movement in the Crow's Nest which is way up near the top of the mast. A bosun climbed up the mast and found the missing sailor. The Crow's Nest is used by lookouts or by Navigators seeking a lead through the ice. Now to be clear, this sailor was now the ONLY Pollywog on the ship because now there were over 200 Shellbacks. I might add that he did get an initiation but some of the newly crowned shellbacks but unlike them, his records did not reflect that he ever made the crossing. Plus his haircut was so bad that he had to shave it all off before going on liberty.

After the Equator we sailed on towards New Zealand but first we stopped for R&R in Bora Bora, part of the Society Islands, French Polynesia. The best description of Bora Bora is that it was something right out of the movie South Pacific.

This was the first US Navy warship (we had guns) to enter the atoll. We were met by an armada of outrigger canoes loaded with girls wearing leis and men wanting to trade carved trinkets, grass skirts, sandals and mother of pearl necklaces for cigarettes. All we needed to complete the scene was someone singing the song Bali Hai.



The Beautiful Island of Bora Bora

Several of the men and young ladies were permitted to come aboard and drape their leis around the skipper and some of the other officers while we white hats were bartering with the small fleet of canoes for the wares being offered for cigarettes. It cost me a whole carton (\$2) of Pall Mall cigarettes to barter for a grass skirt, a pair of grass sandals, a mother of pearl necklace and beautiful outrigger canoe made of teak wood. Its dark ebony color with big white sails was a site to see. Of course all of this was mistakenly thrown away years later and I can only hope that someone recovered this stuff.

We hadn't been there a full day before my friend the Chief Radioman came to me and said he had volunteered the two of us for shore patrol. It seems that a couple sailors had a few too many drinks and were causing a disturbance at this upscale hotel on the other end of the island. The ship's jeep was off loaded and he and I slipped on our SP armbands and off we went. The dirt road was ringed with palm trees and shone bright in the moonlight as it ran around the edge of the island with the lagoon on the right hand side. It was magic. At the end of the road overlooking the water was a beautiful hotel that was owned by Marie, a Tahitian lady whose husband was away in New York. She had met him when she was a young Tahitian dancer in a movie.

We learned the hotel had several Americans staying there, two of which we met. They were two middle aged school teachers who had read about Bora Bora and decided to take a vacation there. It wasn't cheap. First there was the airline cost and second, each bungalow was separate from the others and the daily rates were expensive. But the ladies said the service was outstanding.

The Chief and I had only one incident and that was on the second night when driving down the road we espied a lot of white movement in the trees near what was left of an abandoned house. We stopped to check it out and sailors started running in every direction.

Inside against a wall was a young lady with no bikini bottom and a towel full of cigarette lighters, coins, knives and who knows what else. She was a working girl.

We left Bora Bora 6 November and continued on south reaching the edge of the fast bay ice of McMurdo Sound a week later. After a few weeks of prayer and pounding thick ice breaking a channel into McMurdo Sound, we broke one of the screws and had to return to Wellington, NZ for repairs. If the truth be known, crew members that had sailed before on the USS Glacier had started their prayers to break a screw as soon as we left Port Lyttelton, NZ. Wellington had a dry dock that could make the essential repairs to the Glacier. Since they had made these repairs before, it was a homecoming for some of the crew.

One night as sailors were coming back to the ship after liberty, one of *our* First Class Petty Officers staggered up to the gangway, turned and saluted the Flag and was about to step onboard when the OD stopped him because it was obvious that he was carrying. He said, "*Ray, you know you can't bring that booze aboard so I'm going to look elsewhere for a moment.*" Shortly afterwards there were two big splashes and when the OD and the Messenger of the Watch turned around, Ray was gone. The crew found out later that Ray had thrown his shoes over the side. There is always a way. My friend Wilson the photographer would mail himself a case of scotch to McMurdo. When we got back down in the ice, we would have mail call and the helicopter would bring our mail and his scotch onboard.



As the lead in the ET shop, I was responsible for the day to day supervision and guidance to three other technicians. I had two seamen and one third class petty officer. All were good technicians and between us, there was nothing that we couldn't troubleshoot and repair.

While in dry dock, I decided it was a good opportunity to perform preventive maintenance on much of the equipment. One of the Techs decided to work on the IFF & SIFF gear which entailed removing the protective shroud from the antenna. A sudden burst of wind blew the shroud off the deck and into about 100 feet of water. The same Tech that was working on the IFF & SIFF was a certified diver so he was permitted to go down and retrieve the shroud, which he did. That was a close call.

One of the yeomen was a good friend and before we arrived in New Zealand I believe it was he that started the rumor that when we arrived I was going to be flown back to the states until discharged. It didn't happen. The next rumor was that upon arrival in McMurdo that I would be flown back to New Zealand and then to the states.

Glacier was again churning through McMurdo Sound towards McMurdo Station by 31 December 1962. There waiting for us was Mail Call. I might add here that my friend Wilson was the ship's photographer whose lab was right next to the ET shop. Since he didn't have sufficient room to store much but chemicals, I permitted him to store some of his stuff in our overhead storage bins. Well it turns out that Wilson married a New Zealander from Christchurch and while we stopped for R&R, he mailed himself a case of scotch. It was well wrapped in plain brown paper and delivered with the other mail to the ship by helicopter. We always had plenty of room to store the scotch in the overhead bins where no one ever looked. In the evening between chow and movie time, two of my ETs would get their guitars out and turn lights off except for a battle lantern which they had wrapped in red cellophane making the shop take on an air of a smoky joint. Wilson would join us and the scotch was poured. We never drank in excess, just enough to enjoy the music and make the case last the cruise.

This was the Plan of the Day until one day when we were all enjoying the entertainment and a key rattled in the door. Only one other person had a key to the shop. It had to be our Electronics Officer and it was too late to do anything but get caught. Sure enough it was him. He walked in, closed the door behind him and then turned and said, "I'll take one of those." Wilson poured him a drink and that was that. When he finished he left without further ado. Of course we all knew we were headed for a court martial but nothing ever came out of it.

I figured that if he knew what we were doing in the evening, then someone else knew. But who? My suspicions were confirmed when the Captain called me in for my shipping over lecture. First he told me that he was pleased with mine and the ET shop's performance and said he would recommend me for reenlistment should I desire. Then without batting an eye, he said he wasn't going to waste his time trying to get me to ship over because I had acted like a civilian since I came aboard.

One day the Skipper summoned me and said I would be sent to aid a ship that we were escorting. I was to see if I could repair their radar so I was motored across to the cargo ship and taken aboard where I was met by the First Officer and taken to the radar room. It may have been the only time for me to see a Raytheon Pathfinder radar much less repair. After studying the manual and troubleshooting for an hour or so, I was able to discern the problem and get the unit back online. The ship's captain was pleased and said I could have anything special I wanted to eat. Dinner was excellent. A big juicy steak, a glass of beer and a Cuban cigar afterwards. Then to my surprise, he gave me what was left of the box of cigars to take back to the Glacier with me. I was smart enough to give one of those good cigars to the Skipper.

While on this cruise I received a letter from Rulee in which she described a dire situation where she hadn't sufficient money to live. Since I was unable to send more money because her allotment was maxed out and I was receiving very little pay, I did the only thing I knew to do and that was to turn the letter over to our ship's chaplain. He in turn contacted the Navy Personnel Office who in turn contacted the Red Cross who in turn paid a visit to Homestead and explained that I was sending all the money the Navy would allow plus extra money out of my own pocket.

The Red Cross also noted the situation she had described in her letter to me wasn't all that dire. Apparently the Red Cross's visit embarrassed the family and pissed a lot of people off, one person in particular. Needless to say the chasm between us was growing larger each day. We didn't know it at the time but the rift would eventually lead to a permanent separation.

All the months of rumors of when and how the Glacier was going to avoid extending my enlistment by sending me back to the states wasn't anything but a morale issue that the whole crew enjoyed. Instead of going to Boston, the Glacier pulled into Rhode Island, dropped me off and I was processed there. Discharged, I caught a bus to Boston and retrieved any personal items I had left behind and then headed south to a small town in Pennsylvania to visit my sister Sue and two little nieces and a nephew. From there I headed further south to Jacksonville, Florida.

I had two sea bags of prized possessions that I obtained in Bora Bora and New Zealand, all my clothes and certificates documenting all the circles I'd crossed at the top and bottom of the world and the International Date Line. In the meantime I had filed for a divorce and it became effective April 22, 1963 the same day I was released from active duty from the Navy.



22 – Jacksonville, Florida 1963

Now that I was homeless, I left Boston with my worldly possessions that consisted of two sea bags and traveled to 208 North St, Elwood City, Pennsylvania to visit my sister. Sue was now a single parent with three small children; one boy and two girls. I learned upon arrival that the kids were in the care of a babysitter and Sis was working at a local cafe so I decided to go to the cafe and surprise her. It was me that got a surprise. When she came out of the kitchen holding plates in each hand, I almost didn't recognize her and was shocked to see how much she had gained. The sister I had grown up with was a tiny five feet, two inch package that weighed a whopping 110lbs wet. Now she was almost as round as she was tall. It was a big change.

After visiting with Sue and her children, I traveled to Jacksonville, Florida where my brother Jerry was stationed at the Mayport Naval base which is situated east of Jacksonville, aka "Jax." He was assigned to VP-62, a photographic squadron that primarily flew off the aircraft carrier Enterprise (CVN-65). While stationed in Jax he married Jeannie.

Although my original plan was to return to Homestead, I stopped in Jacksonville and never got started again, taking odd jobs here and there, but always looking for work that would require my electronic skills.

I took a door-to-door sales job selling Grolier Encyclopedia of Knowledge which is obsolete now with the introduction of the Internet. This turned out to be an interesting line of work though one had to be a good salesman to generate an adequate income.

To begin, I was assigned to a crew whose leader along with a trainer, would teach you the sales pitch they expected you to use. The rule was if you knocked on enough doors, you would make three sales pitches and sell at least one library. The sales pitch was perfected over time and was always the same. One memorable line was, "*Look at it this way, I'm sure you will want to keep your library up to date and it cost less than a pack of cigarettes...only pennies a day.*"

Since I was broke most of the time I decided to go back into shoes sales and took a job with Beck Shoes in Southgate Plaza. It was in the same location as the old Thom McAn store. Then I learned that the May Cohen store downtown was looking for an experienced shoe salesman so I hired on and worked the men's shoe department. It was here that I met and began dating a young lady by the name of Mary Ann who worked in the Women's department adjacent to Men's shoes. We dated for a year or so before breaking up. She was a student at Jacksonville University and I being divorced wasn't what her catholic family hoped for. So I finally came to the conclusion that it was best for me to break up and go my way.

While at May Cohen's store, the shoe department assistant manager offered to sell me his '55 Oldsmobile convertible for a price I couldn't refuse. It was a two-tone pink and white and beautiful inside and out. He had spent some time and money to make it look this nice. However, what he didn't fix or tell me is that when you stomped on the accelerator, the car would starve for gas. As long as I was driving a moderate speed, everything was just great but accelerate to try and pass another car and the big V8 would sputter. It was time to take it to Brother Jerry the mechanic.

I took the car to brother Jerry's service station in Five Points to see if he might be able to help. We had our heads in the engine compartment and discussing this problem when an elderly gentleman that frequented the station said for \$2 he would fix it. I gave him \$5 and he departed only to return a short time later with a short piece of hose and the change from my \$5. He was right. When the 4-barrel carburetor kicked-in, this small piece of hose in the gas line collapsed when accelerating. With the new piece installed, the car was a monster.

One night as I was about to leave work I received a call from Jack, my roommate at the time, who also worked for May Cohen. He was at a bar out on Timuquana Road and needed a ride home and I agreed to go out and get him. As we were returning home and talking about our work day, we were approaching a small strip mall on the right when a car backed out across the highway then turned towards us. I was doing about 50 mph and was just reducing my speed when the car suddenly turned in front of me and hit my left front headlight. Basically it was a head-on collision.

This was before seat belts so the impact caused Jack to fly forward and hit his head on the rear view mirror whereas my head went into the left corner post of the car. His injury was more severe but mine looked the worse because of all the blood from my torn left ear. I managed to get out of the car when a young lady ran up to me to check on us. Soon there were police and ambulances on the scene and EMTs were tending to the fellow in the car that ran into me. In the meantime Jack was still in the front floorboard.

The young lady offered me a cigarette and as we stood leaning against my car door, I saw these two headlights bearing down on us and I quickly grabbed the girl and pulled her into me. The car went whizzing by missing us both and ran into two cars parked at the bar from whence the guy who hit me had just backed out of. A cop ran over and pulled this Navy Chief out and asked him what the hell was he doing. There were red lights and blue lights from all the police and ambulances but the Chief was drunk and could hardly stand up. He said he was blinded by bright lights behind him but the cops looked down the road and couldn't see another car for miles. The Chief was arrested.

I lost a beautiful car because it was totaled. The insurance company wanted to settle right away but we had lost a few days work and Jack suffered a concussion. Jack however was in a hurry to settle so he could return to his home in Texas. I saw this other driver only once for a few minutes but can still remember his name and the fact that it took 90 stitches to sew his tongue after nearly biting it off when he hit his steering wheel upon impact.

I continued to look for jobs in electronics and my next job was with A&M Distributors selling CB Radios, Sound Systems and T-1 Intruder Alarms, which were microwave transmitters that served as motion detectors. It was the same company that sold 8-track tape players that could be used in conjunction with the alarms or other switching devices. One example was the sale of a tape player to the Old Jail in Saint Augustine which was set up to play when a person stopped to view one of the cells. The tape player contained audio that sounded like prisoners talking and raking their cups across the bars and was triggered when the visitor stepped on a mat. The sounds were designed to give the sensation that the Old Jail was still occupied. I sold a similar setup to the Ross Allen Reptile Institute where I believe the recorders were used at the Prince of Peace exhibit. It was at the Institute that I saw photos that showed what a rattlesnake bite could do to a person's hand when Ross Allen was bitten by a rattler. I believe he was milking it for its venom when he was bitten.

And there was “George,” a 14ft. alligator that was allegedly the largest in captivity. Of course at that time George was stuffed and greeted visitors to the Institute. I recall that George was killed when fighting with another large gator. Another huge alligator not easily forgotten was named Stumpy because most of its tail had been bitten off. Silver Springs was one of the great Florida attractions.

Not making much money with 8-tracks, I moved to repairing radios with Dale Andrews, Inc., who had the Delco warranty repairs. I worked alongside another Tech named Jim Trucks. He and I were the only technicians to perform bench repairs to hundreds of Delco radios that were under warranty.

There was also the occasional installation of a Reverberator which was the poor man’s stereo but the bench work gave us plenty of time to discuss current events, explore world crisis and solve the personal problems of our friends and acquaintances.

But most important the bench repairs provided us the perfect opportunity to compose and polish Jim's opening for his country music band. His introduction would go something like this: *“Hi. My name is Jim Trucks. You may not know me but I'm sure you are familiar with members of my family. My two brothers Peter and Mac Trucks for example. Then there is my sister who many know by her nickname, “Pickup.”* Of course a song Jim liked to sing was *“Mary Ann, down by the seaside sifting sand.”* No matter that she and I were no longer and item.

One day while returning repaired radios to John Diehl Chevrolet I learned that they were hiring so I applied and was hired as a new car salesman. I didn’t sell many cars but I bet I had more fun than the other salesmen. It was here that I met a young lady by the name of Kathie Oliver for the first time who was a cashier for the dealership.

Much like the door-to-door sales job, I was broke but learned that Welex Electronics was hiring electronic technicians to work in St Augustine repairing equipment of the Navy’s P5M Marlin aircraft. I was hired immediately. It was a commute from Jacksonville to St. Augustine but another man Jim Barnett hired on who lived also in Jax so he and I carpooled. At the time I had a ’59 Triumph TR-3 which with its cutaway side doors was cold as a witch’s tit. I guess. Then we learned that another employee, an older lady lived in Jax so we three began carpooling. Can you imagine three grown people stuff into a ’59 Triumph? It can be done with a shoehorn. Did I not say that I sold shoes? It was a sight to see with both Jim and I measuring up to 6 to 61” and I dare say the woman was a bit on the plus side.

Always on the lookout for something better, Jim and I noticed that Bendix had placed an ad in a Sunday newspaper in which they were hiring engineers and technicians. We both contacted Bendix and within a couple weeks Jim was called for an interview. I, on the other hand, had applied for a position at NAS Jax for a laboratory technician and was called for an interview the same day Jim was hired by Bendix.

Both of us were interviewed and hired about the same time. He went north to Maryland and I went to work for NAS Jax in what was called the Digital Timing Section. There were two old retired Navy Chiefs that worked in the Timing Section and they took me under their wing. I was the new guy and too skinny for their liking so they insisted that each Friday we three would go to the Chief's Club for lunch where they would by a pitcher of beer trying to fatten me up. Retired Chief Raymond Kuzy and I became good friends and when in Jacksonville I kept in touch until his death.

The only thing I didn't like about the job was the Time Clock. Most mornings I would get there early but wasn't allowed to clock in so I would get to working and forget to clock in at the allotted time. This required my supervisor to initial my time card to authorize the time. If I showed up a few minutes late, though not very often, he would have to do the same thing. Sometimes my time card looked like a piece of art with all the signatures. Fortunately that was the only place in my career that I had to use a time clock.

I was a Civil Service employee for most of 1966 but all during the year I was receiving telegrams from Bendix with a request to call a number regarding employment. Actually, they had started soon after I took the NAS Jax job but I decided to commit to a year of employment before I took any other job. I suspect Jim had something to do with getting Bendix recruiters to send out the telegrams.

I had broken up with Mary Ann some months before and started dating again. Remember Kathie that worked at John Diehl Chevrolet as a cashier? As Kathie and I continued to see more of one another, I would often sit with the family and learn more about them and them of me. I learned that her dad Jim and I wore the same size shoes. One evening I noticed that he had a new pair of shoes that he had bought for church so just to screw with him I managed to slip them on and wear them home without him noticing. I had left my shoes behind and I understand that later on there was a lot of cussing when he found out his new shoes were missing and my old tennis shoes were left behind. I doubt that he wore them to church.

In December 1966 I decided to call that Bendix number and agreed to an interview in Mobil, Alabama. I had sold or traded my Triumph TR-3 to Jerry in return for a '55 Chevy that had a great little engine which we ran at the Thunder Bolt drag strip in Jacksonville most every weekend. Jerry had a Standard Oil service station at the time and was my mechanic, a job that he frequently performed because we were breaking about every weekend. We never won money but did win several trophies.

So it was that neither I nor Jerry was confident that the Chevy would make it to Mobil and back so Kathie and I decided to leave my car with her dad and take her little Buick instead. Her dad Jim and her brother Chuck were going to a party that required them to wear a costume so when we departed Jax, the last we saw of them was Jim driving with a tie flying out the window. I learned later that they took the Chevy to I-95 that was partially constructed at the time and run the car through its paces.

Kathie and I drove to Mobile, I did the interview the next day and we headed back to Jax that evening. It had been a long day and we both were a little tired until we came around a curve in which a car was blocking the highway. There were four or five young black men around the car pushing it and to this day, I don't know how I succeeded in avoiding the car or the men. It happened so fast but one thing for sure, we both were wide awake from that moment on.



December 23, 1966

December 23, 1966, Katherine and I got married in the Mayfair Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL, surrounded by good friends and family. Brother Jerry was Best Man and Kathie's best friend Audrey was her Bridesmaid. After a long day we retired to my apartment with the intent of getting up early and packing for our trip to Maryland. However, there wasn't much sleep to be had because that dang brother of mine was calling us every 5 minutes. This was the era before cell phones and most phones were hard wired so the only way to stop the noise was to yank it out of the wall or leave it off the hook but then it would buzz.

By now I had traded my '55 Chevy for a '59 Pontiac sedan which we loaded up with our possessions and headed north to Owings Mills, Maryland to the HQ of my new employer, Bendix Field Engineering Corporation (BFEC). The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) had awarded BFEC the contract for Maintenance and Operations (M&O) of the new Ground Satellite Tracking Data Network (GSTDN) designed to support the Apollo program. The GSTDN consisted of Control Centers and tracking stations built around the world to support the new Apollo missions and we were joining the group of field engineers that would provide the staffing for the M&O contract.

I was hired as an Antenna/Servo, RF and Optics Engineer. Quite a mouthful but what it consisted of was maintenance and operations (M&O) of the 30ft. Unified S-Band Antenna and associated X-Y axis hydraulics, antenna control systems and the collimation television camera and display for use in the alignment of the antenna's tracking.

Unlike antennas with Azimuth and Elevation (AZ-EL) mounts where cable wrap limits the movement of each axis, the X-Y mounted antenna can smoothly track from one horizon to the other without concern for cables and more importantly, it tracks smoothly when a spacecraft goes directly overhead or Zenith. This is the design chosen for tracking the Apollo spacecraft to the moon and back and was used for many years afterwards in support of the Space Shuttle program.

The original S-band Antenna Control System sported what normally would have been a Brunswick Duck Pin bowling ball but without the name Brunswick engraved in its surface. It was reported that NASA paid about \$300 per ball to have a supply of the balls made with the name removed. The ball was used to induce errors into the servo system to develop smooth antenna movement. A slow roll of the ball in any direction would cause the antenna to move accordingly and a rapid spin of the ball would cause the antenna to accelerate to higher velocities. Many years later the antenna control system was modified and the ball was replaced by a joy stick but all my years of experience was with the ball tracker.

It was well known among the network that all of the 9-meter S-band tracking stations had a ball tracker and some even had a *bald tracker*.

23 – Manned Space Flight 1966

On our way to Maryland and a new adventure we ran into a snow storm just south of Virginia and the further we went, the worse it got so we began looking for a motel. However, exit after exit, the motels were full until our next to last exit the owner said that he knew of a motel that had rooms and would call ahead. When we got there we saw a line waiting to see if we were going to check in. After getting into our room, we felt bad because it had 3 or 4 beds but that feeling didn't last long because we had a long day and were very tired.

We arrived at Owings Mills on December 30, 1966 where we began a career with BFEC. I was processed as a new hire and issued a badge along with orders to report to the Network Test and Training Facility (NTTF) located just outside the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC). Here I was introduced to the Apollo Space Flight Program and the ground network that was going to track the Apollo spacecraft. After that I was enrolled in the Antenna/Servo/RF & Optics class that prepared me for an assignment in Las Palmas, Canary Islands, Spain.

Having no knowledge of Greenbelt or the surrounding area we acted on someone's recommendation and rented an apartment in Landover where my commute to school was a real chore. It was still snowing and was deemed to be the worst storm that the District of Columbia and surrounding area had seen in many years. To compound things, there were so many students in the introduction class that we were split in two groups. One group went from 4am to 4pm while the other was 4pm to 4am. I was in the early morning class which meant that I would have to leave the apartment by 3am to get there by 4am if all went well.

And it didn't always go well. There were times the road graders had not yet cleaned the Beltway in our area so I had to plow through it the best I could. Then I had to turn off onto the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and it was just as bad. But one does what one has to do. I must confess that the old Pontiac scraped many railings to assist the turns. Once the bumper hit the rail the car would slide around the off ramp until it was time to straighten up. This maneuver worked best going off the BW Parkway down the ramp and onto Greenbelt Road. Piece of cake.

We were still honeymooners so we adapted to the rigors of the winter and adjusted to living with one another. The commute to the early classes was a pain but the school itself was interesting and almost always amusing.

One example was our instructor. There were too many students in a class for which he was ill prepared to teach. There was nothing that he wanted more than to tell a good joke and amuse the class but sadly, his never seemed to remember the punch line or screwed it up. One example was a test that someone gave him that went like this but he never seemed to have grasped the joke. If a plane is flying along the US and Canadian border and crashed, on what side would they bury the survivors?

Years later we had another instructor who I will call Mr. Ski. He too had difficulty telling a joke so one day he stopped a friend of mine in the hall and asked him why his class never found his jokes funny. He was aware that Hank always had a good joke for the day and his students found them funny so he asked Hank to give him a good joke that he could tell his students.

So Hank says it reminds him of a joke about a guy going to prison. Before the first meal, the cellmate gave him a sheet of paper with jokes written on it but each was numbered. He was told that they couldn't talk at dinner so they memorized the numbers and would call them out. So the newbie memorized the numbers and during the meal he stood up and called out number three! No body laughed. Later on one of the inmates called out number three and everyone laughed.

So when they got back to their cell, the newbie asked why no one thought his joke was funny and his cellmate said, "you know, some people can tell a joke and some can't." Well Mr. Ski was about to walk away when he turned and grabbed Hank's arm and asked, "Hank, what were those numbers again?" True story.

It was in these apartments that one weekend we were probably watching football or some kind of sports when Kathie and I decided to go down to a strip mall and get some food and drinks. From the apartments we had to walk through the snow down a bank and cross a road and go down another bank to enter the parking lot of the mall. It was a slippery slide to navigate down to the store.

On our way down about half way we met one of the BFEC guys that I was going to school with. He was coming up the bank and had on a T-shirt, a pair of shorts, flip-flops and a case of beer on his shoulder. His name was Don Wolfe and he was getting ready for the ballgame. From that moment and for more than 52 years, Don has been in our lives. He is apt to pop in and out of this story as the years go on and now that his name is mentioned he is likely to show up before the year is over.

While living in Maryland, Kathie and I used this opportunity to see as much of Washington DC and the Smithsonian Museums. The problem was so little time and so many museums. We basically ran through the floors of the museums because there was so much to see. It would take days to see them properly.

Finally, my technical classes were finished and we were on our way back to Florida to say goodbye to her parents before flying down to Miami to meet Rulee and Randy. We had made arrangements for Randy to accompany us to Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain.

From Miami we three flew Iberia Airlines to San Juan Puerto Rico and on to Las Palmas. It was a great flight with outstanding service. One thing that isn't easily forgotten is the flight service. We had Flight Attendants offering us food it seemed like about every hour and we were given sandals to make our feet comfortable. It was truly a comfortable flight.



Canary Islands Logo

Upon arrival we checked into the Hotel Las Palmas in downtown Las Palmas where we were met by some BFEC employees who came to welcome us to the island. Our per diem lasted only so long and after a couple weeks we began looking into cheaper accommodations and discovered the Mira Louz Hotel.

The hotel sat right on the edge of a cliff overlooking the city and the ocean and was owned by George and Minn, an English couple who had spent years in field service to the Queen. His favorite position was behind the bar serving El Tropical Especial a local beer made from bananas if I recall correctly. It isn't quite like Budweiser but you get used to it. Of course there were other varieties such as Heineken, Tuborg and other imports.

The island was an interesting place to see and learn a lot of new customs and a new language. Randy picked it up quickly and also like to explore so we had to keep an eye on him. Of course the local water was a no-no so I drink nothing but Fir Gas or El Tropical or Heineken when I could get it. Kathie on the other hand drank the local water right out of the tap since the first day we arrived on the Island. I tried to warn her. Unfortunately, it was me who was doubled up in bed with a severe bellyache while she pranced around like nothing was bothering her. As for Randy, I don't know how he was being affected because he didn't complain much but he probably drank the island's water and wasn't affected.

We continued to look for an apartment at every opportunity and discovered six new ones being built at 5 Calle Zuloaga in Tafira Alta a few miles further up the mountain. Since we were the first to inquire, we got the first apartment as soon as it could be occupied. They were nice two-story, two bedroom furnished apartments with a balcony. BFEC employees took up the remaining apartments.

Up the street a block or two was a park surrounded by a barber and butcher shop, several nice casas and a grocery owned by Miguel and Marie. Instead of going all the way downtown to the barber shop where one could get a manicure, pedicure and a razor cut, I decided to give the old guy some business at the butcher shop.

It was a simple little two room establishment. One room had a chair sitting in the middle for cutting hair and the other had a sink and rabbits and sides of pork hanging from the ceiling. The first thing that hits your senses is that he hasn't yet bathed for the week...or month. Next you learn there isn't any hot water to shave you with. Only cold water and there were times when you wondered if his razor had been sharpened after cutting meat. But to his credit, he was a good barber and cheap. One just had to get used to the occasional dull razor, the cold water and the smell of meat in the next room.

Before the year was out we found a nice penthouse apartment to rent atop the landlord's home. Kathie happened to be buying groceries one day in December and the conversation turned to rabbits since Marie's husband was planning a hunting trip and rabbits were their quarry. When Kathie mentioned that I missed hunting that time of year, they invited me to with them.

It turns out our Landlord owned the big mansion that sat alone way up above Tafira Alta at the highest point on the mountain. On the morning we planned to hunt, he and I stopped at a Pan factory and bought a whole bag of fresh bread to take with us. After all the other hunters – about 8 men – had gathered we had breakfast and planned the day. Of course I didn't speak much Spanish so those that could speak English translated.

Then the owner came out of the backroom with a shotgun and asked me if I could handle it. It was a JC Higgins 12ga. Of course I could. As it turned out I didn't shoot very often and may have only shot one or two rabbits because this was their day. Something they looked forward to every year.

Canary Islands are not named after Canaries but named after big dogs. There is some that think the "dogs" were actually the large seals that inhabited the islands which had dog-like heads. Much is written about the so-called dogs but the truth is that the islands were not named after birds. The dogs we were hunting over were prized animals and could cost a lot of money. They were long-limbed, stream lined much like a Greyhound and they were fast. They would chase rabbits into tunnels if they could fit and would fight to see which one could get the downed rabbit and take it to its owner no matter who shot it.

The mountain was volcanic so there were plenty of holes and tunnels. The men had a solution for that, a Ferret. It had a muzzle but when it was turned loose in a tunnel, the mountain shook with rabbits running everywhere. When they came out, bang, one dead rabbit and the dogs went after it. At the end of the day, the hunters divided the day's kill among them. I took one rabbit since there was only Kathie and me to eat it.

To add to this story, store owner Marie gave instructions to Kathie on how to cook the rabbit. To make a long story short, I made the mistake of taking the lid off the pot that had been marinating for a week or so and it damned near caused us to look for another apartment. The smell was so rancid that it would almost make you puke. Of course a Heineken would change all that.

On another front we missed Randy one afternoon about dinner time. We didn't get too concerned at first because he was generally good about returning home at that hour and usually found playing with the neighborhood kids until dinner time.

On this day he was late so I began looking for him. We didn't have a car at that time so I walked to the park and around the village without finding him. Just about the time we were going to report him missing, he staggered in looking bedraggled. We learned that he had seen some men all dressed in black walking in a group so he joined them and down the mountain they went. It turns out it was a funeral procession.

Just before some of us BFEC employees arrived, the Count who owned the south end of the island, had given NASA orders to move their tracking station which at the time was right on the beach. The count had plans to build a big development for tourists that included a golf course. We had only a few days to move everything up the hill to a new location that NASA has surveyed in the beginning. Anything left would stay and go to the Count. Our new S-band building was just about complete so that equipment could be moved up on pickup trucks. As the Antenna Servo Engineer I helped the Collins team that did the new X-Y 9 Meter antenna installation, 110ft collimation tower and all the inside S-band RF equipment. This experience was invaluable and served me for all the subsequent years of my career.

My job was to position the antenna to the correct position on the horizon where the spacecraft was expected to ascend and then select the auto track mode after acquisition of signal (AOS). The problem was that NASA had not yet refined its computer generated predictions so we didn't accurately know where or when the spacecraft would be coming over the hill.

At that time the Apollo Tracking Network or Manned Space Flight Network (MSFN) as it was named, consisted of Antigua (ANT), Ascension Island (ACN), Bermuda, (BDA), Canberra, (HSK), Canary Island, (CYI), Carnarvon, (CRO), Corpus Christi, and (TEX). Goldstone, (GDS), Grand Bahamas (GBM), Guam, (GWM), Guaymas, Mexico (GYM), Hawaii, (HAW), Madrid, (MAD), Merritt Island, (MIL), USNS Huntsville (HTV), USNS Mercury (MER), USNS Redstone (RED) and USNS Vanguard (VAN).

Our first mission was Apollo 4 (Saturn V rocket, AS-501) launched 9 Nov 1967 to demonstrate the S-IVB ability to restart and to test the heat shield at re-entry speeds.

Next was Apollo 5, a 1B AS-204 Saturn rocket, launched 22 Jan 1968, the first flight of the LM and to test fire the descent engine and demonstrate the landing abort test.

NASA enlisted author Sunny Tsiao to write the story of NASA's Spaceflight Tracking and Data Network (STDN), titled "READ YOU LOUD AND CLEAR." The book was published in 2007. This voice communication was the response heard around the world as Houston called each tracking station to get a radio check. In his book Sunny included this photo that shows me and part of the CYI crew.



The staff at Canary Island about 1967. Standing: John Adams, Chuck Rouillier (Station Director), Tom White, Percy Montoya, Matt Harris, Ed Bender, Ed Crough. Sitting: Clay Krugman, Dick Kelly, Roger Lee, Glenn Smith, Russ Lutz. (Photograph courtesy of Gary Schulz)

As with most remote tracking stations transportation was provided by the site. In some cases it may have been a van driven by one of us employees and in others such as CYI, it was a fleet of station wagons driven by local Spaniards. We rode five to a vehicle and no one wanted to ride in what we called the suicide seat, the front passenger with the driver who may or may not speak or understand English. And our Spanish was so good...yeah right. Sign language was the only way to go.

There are a lot of good stories about our stay in Las Palmas and Tafira Alta but they are too numerous to include all in this story. One example is when I purchased a 1962 MGA-1600 and parked it in front of the apartment. It was a black beauty with four-on-the-floor, a beige top which we rarely put up and maroon seats. Evening after evening I would come home and the car would still be sitting in the same place because Kathie hadn't driven a stick shift. However, one day I came home and the car was gone. Did she sell it? No, she got up the nerve that day and took off shopping.

Now the reason I'm telling this is because you have to imagine living in the mountains with narrow winding roads and no guard rails to prevent falling a couple thousand feet and no experience driving a 4-shift stick. But she was gone. I was really relieved when I heard the roar of the car pull up in front of the house.



There is one experience with this car that I feel compelled to relate and involved a very scary trip down the mountain to Las Palmas. As usual we had the top down and were enjoying the evening as we barreled down the mountain as fast as we could safely go when suddenly we rounded this curve and were shocked to see a jeep with a machine gun blocking the road and a Guardia Civil holding up his hand signaling me to stop. I slammed on the brakes and downshifted as fast as I could and did everything to avoid running into the man. When we came to a screeching stop just a couple feet from the officer, it was then that we noted a man above us on a rock with a machine gun pointing at us. No doubt had we hit the officer, we would have been riddled by the man above us or the one on the jeep. I was so relieved when the brakes worked well enough to stop. It would have been a good time to wet our pants but we had shopping to do. We learned later they were looking for a prisoner who escaped the Guardia Civil when the ship made a temporary stop in Las Palmas because it was the prisoner's home. They combed the island looking for him and found him visiting his family.

The story about the MGA reminds me of a car story involving one of the engineers that had been on the island since the Mercury program. He owned an Austin Healy and only drove it when he was drunk. And he only had wrecks when he drove it. Now most of the local police knew all of us Americans but especially Russ because he had been there a good while and had wrecked his car often. So it was that it happened so frequently, that when the police spotted his car in town, they would have it towed to his house then mail a bill to him. One mechanic said they had rebuilt his car so many times that they could do it blindfolded.

A typical practice at many of the overseas sites was for the site personnel to throw a “going away” party for an employee transferring out. Not long after our arrival in Canaries I was asked to attend one of these events and it was on this occasion that I got to see my first bull fight. Actually I should say that I got to participate by fighting a bull. Two actually. I'm not sure how it started other than it may have been at the bar where we had all the beer and tapas we could drink and eat. There were plenty of both to go around so it should be said that we were slightly inebriated when a small group of us found ourselves at a bull arena.

I'm still not sure how I was encouraged to get into the arena with a cape and sword but that is exactly what happened but I'm sure that my friend Clay daring me to go and maybe the group of young people that kept offering me wine from a goat skin bota had something to do with it. All one had to do was tip it up and let it rip but apparently the wine and the beer didn't mix too well. I might add that I had just days before bought a new watch and I had it on at the time.



Wine Bota

First I was very much surprised at the weight of the cape and sword because they were much heavier than they seemed when a matador was swinging them around. The cape is wrapped around the sword to make it easier to swing when the bull makes a pass. But to my surprise and that of the crowd of people in the arena, I handled the cape well when the first bull came out and made a pass. One pass...then two and then a second bull entered the arena.

I don't know how it got in and it doesn't matter because while my attention was on it, the first bull ran me over like a freight train. Both of these young bulls were heifers and had horns and weighed between 800-1000 lbs. Like I said, it was like getting run over by a car or train. Fortunately I haven't been run over by either but I sure as hell was run over by a bull. The second bull wanted a piece of me too but I was scurrying as fast as I could towards a gate while a picador attempted to corral the bulls. Clay had come down from the stands and joined me as I ran into the entrance corridor and we were both running when one of the bulls escaped before they could shut the gate behind me. Now we were in a closed corridor with a bull and a picador and his horse chasing the bull. As we ran for the stairs to go up to the street, I recall Clay hollering Stampede!

If you can imagine a set of stairs that start wide at the bottom and continue to get narrower as you get near the top which is what these were like coming out of the arena. Clay was ahead of me and as I watched him climb I noticed that he was stepping closer and closer to the edge of the stairs. Finally he missed a step and fell with his chin hitting a step above. Blood went everywhere. To make matters worse, as the taxi slowly wound its way around this one sharp curve, Clay decided to open the door to puke. I kid you not, he fell out. But like I said, the car was going really slow as the road was narrow and this one curve almost doubled back on itself.

When we got home I could hear Clay's wife in the apartment next door raising hell wanting to know where he had been. It was about that time that Kathie wanted to know why I smelled like cow shit. And to make matters worse, I discovered the next morning that my brand new watch was gone. The next day I was pleasantly surprised when my supervisor brought my new watch in minus the cow shit. Some local Spaniard had found the watch in the arena and brought it to the site to give to me. What a wonderful deed. Besides, I had become somewhat of a local hero. Yeah, right.

Since our transportation to and from the site along with a driver was provided by the site, there could be 4 or 5 people in a car. Peugeot station wagons were the most common. We would pile into the car after a long day of working in the sun and heat when performing the installation of the new 9M S-band system and a stop on the way home for a beer was most refreshing. Unfortunately, too often it turned into what we called a wayward taxi because we might make too many stops along the route home. Since we mostly drank Heineken, there was a slogan, "Keep Spain Green" uttered when empty Heineken bottles were thrown into the same gully along the highway home. Believe it or not but there was so much glass in the gully that it truly was green.

After a few months in Grand Canary, Randy flew back to Homestead and rejoined his mother. It was about this time that we learned that Kathie's mother was pregnant. There were twenty plus years between Kathie and this soon to be her youngest sibling. So it was decided that she return home to Jacksonville to assist her mother and I would transfer to NASA's tracking station in Ascension, an island in the middle of the Atlantic so as to protect our overseas Tax status.

We flew back to the states via United which took us through Madrid to New York then down to Jacksonville. There was plenty of room on the plane so that we could find us a seat, move the arm rest and get a nap. As we approached New York, we were surprised to see two USAF jets pull up alongside the plane and fly with us for a few miles.

When we got to the airport instead of stacking us, our plane was directed straight in to the runway and then we were quickly deplaned and zipped through customs. It was rumored that we may have had a Spanish dignitary flying with us. No matter who it was, we could use more of that.

On the way to Jacksonville we hit one of those bad east coast T-storms that tried its damndest to blow us out of the sky. We dropped and then bounced back up just as fast and to keep things in perspective, a Navy Chaplin and I kept the Wild Turkeys coming. Poor Kathie tightened her seat belt and rode it out. By now she was a real flying trooper. After visiting her family for a few days, she and I got on another airplane and flew to Fayetteville via St Louis, MO. That was another good ride.

Because we had flown so much in the past couple days, I called Frontier Airlines and decided to upgrade to First Class but was told that all Frontier Airlines were First Class. That should have been a clue. Every mountain between St. Lo and Fayetteville had a runway and we stopped at each one. Sometimes they were nice runways and sometimes one would have thought we were landing on dirt roads with potholes and maybe we did but since we never got off the plane, we couldn't verify that.

The currents over the mountain would cause the plane to fly sideways to the left for a while then shift and do the same for the right. Then it would drop 25-30 feet before bouncing back up to its previous altitude. Everyone was sick but me, Kathie and the Stewardess who was busy handing out Wild Turkey to me and barf bags to others.



1968 California Buick Grand Sport

While in Arkansas we decided that we would drive back to Florida instead of fly. It was an easy decision so we went car shopping and bought a new 1968 California Grand Sport.

We were winging our way to Florida – actually we were driving - when we met a lumber truck going in the opposite direction.

When our two vehicles were approaching one another, about 100 yards before we met, a tie strap broke loose and a long 2X4 came hurling at us like a spear. You can imagine its speed as he was doing at least 55mph and I the same which would make it about 110 MPH.

Anyway, both Kathie and I ducked knowing that it was going to take out our windshield and God only knows what. I can still recall what it looked like coming at us. It was if a big fluttering arrow was shot straight towards our car.

As it turned out, the lumber hit the corner post just in front of the driver's seat. It did a good bit of damage, yet it didn't break the windshield. Had it been two or three inches to the right, it would have come straight through the windshield and through me if I was unable to move in time. As it were we got it repaired when we returned to Florida and after a couple years I traded for a new Ford truck.

After a short visit in Jacksonville with Kathie's family, I made all the preparations to depart for Ascension Island with Kathie driving me down to Patrick Air Force Base (PAFB) in our brand new car. She dropped me off at the hangar where I eventually boarded a C-141 jet that I would fly to Ascension Island.

24 - Ascension Island, United Kingdom 1968

At PAFB I boarded a Lockheed Starlifter, The US Air Force (C-141) for a 3 hour flight to Antigua. I chose to sit in the last row of seats which in an Air Force plane is the front row with your back towards the cockpit. I thought it was a good choice where I could put my feet up on the cargo pallet that was tightly wrapped in canvas. It wasn't until takeoff that I began to question my choice of seats because when the engines hit full bore the cargo moved about 6 inches towards the back of the plane causing my feet to hit the floor.



US Air Force C-141

To say the least that much movement got my attention because now I'm questioning if the Cargo Master properly secured the pallet. But after a few hours of flying I forgot all about the cargo until we landed in Antigua. This time the cargo moved in the forward direction pushing my knees up towards my chest. Now I'm wondering if this was a good idea. I mentioned this to the Flight Sargent but as we took off for a second time, there was still movement of cargo and the same could be said of our landing in Recife, Brazil. By the time we took off the next morning I was pretty much convinced that the cargo wasn't going anywhere but when we got to Ascension, I was glad that I didn't have to fly any further with that load. I learned later that part of the cargo was a spare engine for the plane.



Ascension Island Tracking Station

In the old days, Ascension was used by mariners to obtain wood and restock their burners. The British also established a garrison to prevent the island from being used as a staging point for Napoleon supporters that might like to free him from his prison on St Helena Island, some 800 miles away.

Over the years it has been a strategic island for the British in WWII and in later years as a staging point during the Falklands War. And for NASA and the Air Force, it was an important location for their tracking stations during rocket launches.

It is still serving the US with a Meter Class Autonomous Telescope (MCAT) which is used to track potentially hazardous orbital debris that could damage spacecraft and harm our astronauts.

During the time I was there, there were two barracks that NASA had built but only one was being used by BFEC. The other NASA had permitted the base contractor RCA to use for their employees. However, the convenient location of the NASA barracks was right across the street from the Volcano Club. We could walk out of our barracks, cross a narrow street and walk into the small grill for a sandwich or go next door to the bar. Both were a favorite hangout for the NASA troops. If you didn't find a BFEC employee in the Grill, then he would be in the bar.

If you recall I mentioned going to school back in Maryland with Don Wolfe. After school was complete, Don went to Ascension Island at same time we went to Grand Canary Island.

We renewed our friendship and from him I learned where all the clubs were that served beer and darts. He seemed to have spent a good bit of time in an English Pub in Two Boats. The members welcomed us into their fold but since we weren't members, we couldn't buy a drink. So the only way we could pay them back is to invite them to the Volcano Club and buy their drinks. There came a time however that we were invited to join the Two Boats Club which allowed Don and I to buy drinks so we hosted the bar for about a month each as pay back for all the drinks they had bought us.

Don and I were invited also to join the Plumbers Club which was made up of men mostly from the Cable and Wireless Communications Company that pretty much ruled the island. The rules were no women. They were permitted to serve food and drinks but couldn't join in the conversation, which probably was about women. We each were given a stainless steel Plumbers Emblem for mounting on a car's bumper but I have yet to install mine.

Don wrote to Budweiser and explained the absence of a suitable representative on the island though there were plenty who drank their beer. So Bud acknowledged his letter by sending a care package that contained straw-like hats, buttons and other paraphernalia that advertised Budweiser and we wore it proudly and promoted Bud every chance we could get which was often. To assist in this effort, when buying a case of beer from the Volcano Club at \$3 a case, all we had to do was give the club the names of eight members which constituted a party of members and the second case was free. FREE. Needless to say most rooms in the barracks of BFEC employees were stacked with beer since we received \$9 a day per diem and we made sure that everyone at the site joined the club. That made it easy to list eight names when buying beer. Where else can you get two cases of beer for three dollars?

It was during one of our promotional outings when we BFEC men were playing the English wives in softball. Don and I had a couple 55 gallon drums iced down with beer. One was Bud and the other was Heineken. When it came time for me to bat, I only recall a crack and blue flashing lights. I was told the first crack was when I hit the ball and the second crack was my left knee that had refused to turn with the rest of my body. It hurt tremendously for the first 5 days but Heineken cures a lot of ails. Eventually, 50 years later I had to have my left knee replaced.

Before that Don and I used to run from the base down to Georgetown and then around the coastline to where we reached a point below the barracks and had to climb the cliff to get back up. It was a good workout. At other times we would drive to the BBC hut and throw darts with some of the English that were on the island. Another favorite was the Bachelor's Tent where a large number of workers lived and of course drank beer and threw darts. One could find a good dart board and some good dart players most anywhere on the island. If not, then it was lacking. I'm pretty sure that Don and I were welcomed at about every place that served beer and had a dart board.

My task at Ascension was to prepare the antenna and associated hydraulics and electronic control equipment to a state of readiness to support the Apollo 6 mission. Once the system was in top operational status, we supported a few training satellite orbital passes to sharpen our skills for acquiring spacecraft but especially the Apollo capsule.

At this point I have to mention Don again. All but Don had ridden down to the base to each lunch when Goddard called ACN up for a pass. Don answered the call and began preparing the site for support. Just as we returned and entered the building we heard Don say, "Ascension has AOS!" Single handedly he had configured the site to support the TETR satellite.

Our next mission was Apollo 6 (AS-205) which was a Saturn 5 rocket launched 4 April 1968. It experienced some engine problems and only lasted about 10 hours. This mission was part of the testing for the trans-lunar injection that is needed to send a spaceship to the moon.

After about six months on the island I had some vacation time so I made a quick trip to Florida where Kathie met me at PAFB. We stayed the night in Cocoa Beach before going on to Jacksonville to see her parents Jim and Martha. It was on this trip that Gregory was conceived.

The return flight to Ascension was on the US Air Force C-141 but when we departed Antigua, we went straight to Ascension instead of going through Brazil. It wasn't the best flights sitting in the web seats especially when carrying spare engines and other large cargo but the cargo didn't move.

Some years later a C-141 jet was ferrying passengers from Wake Island when the pressure door failed causing both petal doors to separate from the aircraft. Baggage, aircraft equipment and loose debris were blown out and fell into the ocean below. The pilot immediately began a rapid descent and within four minutes they had dropped 10,000 feet before dropping to a lower altitude to assess the damage and check on the crew.

Some of the old "Island Rats" as we called them who had worked downrange for many years had friends in Recife and in some cases, families. It seems that some were supporting prostitutes and their families and when they went back for R&R, they had a nice apartment and housekeeper for the duration. A lot of these men had no other families in the states or anywhere else but Recife and no doubt they enabled a lot of families to have better living conditions.

Not long after I got back, Rex another BFEC technician who worked on the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) equipment that was co-located with the Apollo operations informed me that Snoopy, our site mascot was in jail. The Sheriff of Nottingham had arrested him for killing a sheep. Nothing new here, Rex just had to go down and pay a fine to bail Snoopy out. There was much speculation as to how much bail money that Rex and other BFEC employees had paid to get Snoopy out of jail.

Ascension was an example of a simple Eco system. In the early 1900's when ships stopped for wood, rats infested the island. Cats were brought in to kill the rats but they eventually overran the island so dogs were brought in to kill the rats and tend to the sheep. The problem was Snoopy and his brother liked sheep better than they did cats. I never knew how many times Rex bailed Snoopy out but I'm sure it dipped into his daily per Diem. And it wasn't his dog. If the truth be known, Snoopy belonged to everyone and could be found sleeping in any room but he seemed to prefer Rex's room most of the time. It might be because Rex was the one that was always bailing him out of Sheriff Nottingham's jail.

Another site mascot was a donkey that we named “JJ” which stood for the teletype header that we used to direct the TTY traffic to the correct destination. JJ liked almost any fruit and cigarettes. It didn’t matter what kind of cigarettes. One or two of the employees would have fruit for her when we arrived on the bus and this one guy would have a cigarette. This was repeated every morning.

There was one employee however, Marsden, who she would bite without hesitation and she looked for him to get off the bus every morning. As soon as she espied him, her ears went back and she went on the attack and would go up into the bus looking for him if the door didn't get closed in time. The first stop was the Generator Bldg. where Marsden would normally get off but he would hide and ride up to the Ops Bldg. and she would race up there and wait for him to get off. Instead, he would hide and ride back down to the Generator Bldg. He teased her and in return she bit him. It was a game for both of them.

As our mission preparedness moved along, Goddard was scheduling stations to support a Test & Training Satellite that was orbiting the earth which would sites to sharpen their acquisition skills. Part of this training consisted of a NASA Super Connie airplane loaded with electronic equipment to simulate the electronics that would be on an Apollo spacecraft.

The training aircraft was manned by BFEC employees who formed a Test and Training Simulations team. They would fly circles over and around a station to simulate orbiting spacecraft while the station would conduct two-way ranging and communications with the airplane just as if it was a real orbiting spacecraft. The NASA aircraft came to Ascension shortly after I returned from R&R. After we did our 2-3 day of exercises, the night before the team was to depart for Canary Islands, we all gathered at the Volcano Club.

On this occasion the BFEC team from the site and the men from the NASA aircraft drank all the cold beer from the club. In particular the first to run out were Bud and Bud Light beer. Then the group started on Heineken. The club closed so the group moved to the patio where existed two vending machines full of 25 cents beer. It so happened that Don and I each had a Crown Royal bag that contained a stash of quarters which was the coin required for the beer machines on the patio so he and I broke out our quarters and at daybreak a good bit of our money was gone and both machines were empty.

We carried the team down to the Super Connie and waited until they had engines running and eventually took off down the runway. Wideawake runway has a dip so the aircraft disappears momentarily so you hold your breath hoping the plane will reappear climbing in altitude. This one did but not without some difficulty.

We learned later that once they were at flight altitude, the pilot put on the autopilot and he and the copilot stretched out in the aisle telling the Test team to wake them up at the sign of any trouble. I was told none of the BFEC team slept until they reached Canary Islands.

In 1982 Ascension Island was a very active as it was a strategic airfield during the Falkland War which was an undeclared war between Argentina and the British over the Falkland Islands. The Brits expanded Wideawake's runway to accommodate heavy bombers that were used to bomb Argentina who surrendered 14 June 1982.

25 - Kennedy Space Center 1968

After our successful support of Apollo 6 at Ascension, I conducted a training class for the Antenna/Servo and RF Optics in which Marsden and two other employees attended. When the school was complete, he showed the most promise to replace me so I went to the Site Manager and said that I had found my replacement in Marsden and I wanted a transfer. My thinking at the time was to transfer to Corpus Christi, Texas but when the NASA Station Director heard this, he advised me to go instead to the Merritt Island tracking station.

The Merritt Island Launch Annex (MILA) is a Goddard owned tracking station that was situated on property of the Kennedy Space Center (KSC). Built in 1965, its primary support was to rockets launched from Cape Canaveral. When KSC pads 39A and 39B were completed so the huge Saturn V rockets could be launched, Apollo missions became the primary role for MILA. The site was staffed with sufficient personnel to provide pre-launch, launch, orbital and trans-lunar operations to the Apollo moon shots.

September 1968, Kathie drove down from Jacksonville and met me in Titusville where we began to look for a place to stay. In the meantime I reported to MILA to work as an Antenna/Servo/RF & Optics Engineer. I was one of two Antenna operators authorized to support the Apollo launches. While both of us were good, I think my skill level was a little better because of my experience with tracking operations at CYI and ACN sites. As time progressed, it became obvious that I was the preferred antenna operator during launch operations as far as the NASA Station Director was concerned. But the introduction of a Union changed that.

Three events in 1969 were big changes in our lives. The first was a small house we purchased at 440 Eloise Ave in Titusville. The second was the birth of Gregory and later on the third was the birth of Douglas in 1974 and on a sad note, before we could close on the house we had to make a trip to Arkansas to attend the funeral of my youngest sibling, Keith Alan who died at age 10 from a birth defect.

At work things changed drastically when the IBEW Local 2088 was voted in and the contract required an equal amount of job distribution so each of the three shifts had a man for each position. That also meant fewer people and it prohibited management from making arbitrary changes to staffing.

As it were, there was talk of a strike but while it was only talk, the station supported a Count Down Demonstration Test (CDDT) for an Apollo launch. Then at shift change one evening, a couple hot heads decided that they would walk out and within hours the workers were on strike. It was the first strike that this Local had ever had so the Business Agent was inexperienced and not sure what they should do.

For whatever reason only the Business Agent knew, I was named the Strike Captain, something I had trained for my whole life. Yeah, right. Not knowing what I should do and not having someone to guide me, I placed pickets at each of the three KSC gates and one at the entrance to Cape Canaveral Air Force Base which was another entry to KSC. I quickly learned that no one at KSC or at the Air Base was happy with our picketers.

This strike was ill timed and of course ill planned. We had just completed the CDDT for this launch which meant the rocket and the rest of the support facilities were ready to support the mission. In the meantime we dummies were losing pay and lots of sleep and in one or two cases, employees. Some technicians had enough and appealed to BFEC to transfer them to another station.

Another issue is when the NASA Bargaining Guru came to me and said I couldn't post pickets at all gates. I reminded him that I had done so. That gave me a clue that our pickets were doing what we had hoped, interrupt the work flow at KSC. It wasn't long before BFEC sent down technicians to augment the salaried employees, staffing that was sufficient to run the site and support the launch.

One night a picketer was accused of spray painting a car when it crossed the picket line. Tempers and frustration were manifesting themselves when another incident involved a picketer who was accused of hitting another employee on the arm when he crossed the picket line. If my memory is correct, the striker was charged and had to appear in court. He had been a POW during the Korean War and had a short temper so I was very relieved that it didn't escalate into anything more.

Finally I agreed to reduce the picketers to the Main Gate and to the main entry road to MILA. Before the strike, those living in Merritt Island could drive to the site on Ransom Road which was at the rear of the site. Now they had to drive the long way around to get to the main entrance. In subsequent meetings with the NASA Representative – who I learned to like and respect – I agreed to pull all pickets at outer gates and station them only at the entrance to MILA.

This move allowed the KSC employees to resume their normal traffic patterns. One day it was all over. We were back to work. We had lost a lot of pay and some of our workmates. The Company and the Union negotiated a contract and subsequently I was named the first Chief Tech, a person that was certified to operate and maintain four or more systems. .

Besides the Manned Space Flight Network (MSFN), there was another network, the Satellite Tracking and Data Acquisition Network (STADAN), which tracked scientific satellites. One such tracking station was located in Fort Myers, Florida which was built when Fidel Castro gained control over Cuba. It was sort of an unofficial training site before NTTF was built. In 1972, NASA decided to combine the two networks into one and called it the Satellite Tracking and Data Network (STDN).

Not all STADAN sites remained open or they were moved to other locations. That was the case of the Fort Myers station. It was moved to MILA to continue its tracking operations of unmanned satellites like the Interplanetary Monitoring Platforms (IMP-7 and IMP 8) and the Orbiting Solar Observatory (OSO-6, OSO-7 and OSO-8) Satellites. It was then that once more I became a salaried employee when promoted to Shift Supervisor to support the operations of the STADAN site. Now I was once more an exempt salaried employee. Salaried employee to Union and back to salaried employee in the matter of weeks. Go figure. We were a small crew but it necessitated that we train techs to operate and maintain new receiver, transmitter, recorder and communications equipment. And we all had to learn the vernacular language of unmanned satellite operations.

Eventually all satellite tracking operations at MILA and elsewhere were consolidated into STDN which conducted command, data, ranging and tracking operations with the same S-Band systems that were designed for manned spaceflight. The STDN was now supporting both manned spaceflight and launch and orbital support to unmanned scientific spacecraft.

During an Apollo launch my job was to track a small rocket mounted on the nose of the larger Saturn V rocket. This small rocket was called the Launch Escape System (LES) and in an emergency, it was designed to lift the Command Service Module away from the Saturn V rocket to safety. Fortunately, it was never used. At MILA I supported most if not all the Apollo launches and remember supporting a couple missions that garnered headlines but not the likes of Apollo 11 moon landing. The first dicey launch was Apollo 12 launched from KSC on Nov. 14, 1969, into a cloudy, rain-swept sky.

Launch controllers lost telemetry contact at 36 seconds, and again at 52 seconds, when the Saturn V launch vehicle was struck by lightning, twice. While the astronauts were having severe problems with warning lights and horns going off in the capsule, I was struggling to keep the antenna tracking the vehicle through all the fog and clouds that was obscuring the rocket. Additionally their loss of power had killed the downlink and without a signal for the receivers to lock on, I was unable to select the auto track mode.

On most launches we received tracking angles from radar at KSC as a backup but they were having their problems too. Our own Antenna Position Programmer (APP) operator shouted in my ear not to select him as an input and the Mark 51 Gun site tracker on the roof said he couldn't see the vehicle either so don't use him as a source. Fortunately, by staying calm and relying on my years of experience, I successfully manually tracked the vehicle through the clouds.

I couldn't absolutely say that I was tracking the vehicle because I was unable to see it in my TV monitor but I continued the manual rate. Then suddenly the crew restored power to the Command Module giving us a signal that allowed me to select the auto track mode. Just as I hit auto track a hole opened in the clouds and there was the vehicle. Phew! Such relief.

My next dicey mission was about six months later with Apollo 13. It was launched April 11, 1970 and has been called a "successful failure," because the crew never landed on the Moon, but they made it home safely after an explosion crippled their ship.

An oxygen tank exploded when a faulty switch ignited and depleted almost all of the power from the command module. The crew was forced to use the lunar module as a lifeboat but they came home safely thanks to the teamwork of many individuals and mission control. At MILA we spent many days tracking the vehicle's path to the moon and the slingshot return to earth. It was a thankful ending to this mission. The subsequent Apollo missions didn't get the same press coverage as Apollo 11 but they all completed their mission successfully.

One summer I was tasked to go to the Bahamas and remove an S-Band transmitter and have it shipped back to MILA for use in the installation of a second S-Band system at MILA. A last minute decision to accompany me was made by one of the shift leaders. Of course I didn't expect much help out of him but it wasn't my decision that he go with me. Besides, there was another engineer coming down from Maryland to assist me as well as get some equipment that was needed elsewhere.

I will identify them merely as Tom and Dave. Tom flew down to Bahamas from Columbia and Dave and I flew over together and had booked rooms in the same hotel. When I walked up to the desk and identified myself, the young lady apologized and said the room I reserved wasn't yet ready but she would put me in a room temporarily until a room was ready. I told her that I understood and would it would be perfectly okay with me and took the key she offered me.

Dave's turn came next and she gave him the same pitch but he wasn't having it. Again she apologized to both of us and said that it was only temporarily but she would be unable to give him us the rooms we had reserved because of plumbing problems or some such malady. Dave wasn't happy and after mumbling something that neither of us could hear, he took the key she offered. It was later that we learned she had given Dave the room right next to the elevator.

When I opened my room, I discovered a very nice King that faced east with a balcony providing a beautiful view overlooking the pool and the beach. At night it was spectacular with lights in the palm trees and a beautiful moon coming up over the ocean. It was all that you would expect to enjoy on a tropical island.

The next morning Tom and I were waiting on Dave to come down from his room when we noticed he was accompanied by a young black man. Dave wanted me to drive to the guy's home and drop him off and when he was about to get out of the car, he asked Dave for the money he owed him. Dave denied owing the guy any money but the man insisted that he was owed money for paying Dave's bar bill and at a nightclub. Dave refused and the guy slammed the door.

Tom and I started on Dave wanting to know the whole story and it seems Dave went to one of the big nightclubs frequented predominately by blacks. Most were locals and tourist. This guy drove Dave home after he had too much to drink and alleges that he saved Dave's life and paid his bar bill. All of which Dave denies except for the guy sleeping over in the 2nd bed in Dave's room. In the end, the guy got pissed, slammed the car door and said something threatening.

That gave me and Tom an opportunity to screw with Dave's mind a little but first we had to learn more. As the story unfolds, Dave went to the club, had a few drinks, exchanged some words with someone in the club and this guy came along and intervened. Dave denies that the guy paid his bar bill but did admit the guy drove him home and he let him stay over in the extra bed. Suddenly Dave reached for his pocket and said that man stole his wallet. Tom said why would he ask you to reimburse you for the bar bill if he stole your wallet? I added that if he got your wallet, he probably has a key to your room also.

By the time we got to the work site Dave was really anxious and it didn't help that he was still hungover from the night before. He wanted the keys to the car because he had to go to the hotel and see if the guy was robbing him. We learned later that Dave found his wallet stuck between the mattress and the wall. But Tom and I never let up.

Between the hotel where Dave and I were staying and a little nicer more expensive hotel, there was a large vacant lot along which a path led from one hotel to the other. It was basically a dirt sidewalk and it was dark. We often walked to the other hotel for dinner and of course it would be dark.

Anyway, Tom and I were still working this caper as much as possible when I asked Dave if he had seen the guy again. He hadn't. In fact, he said that he had been staying close to the hotel except for walking up to the other one for dinner. I reminded him that it was a dark walk at night and that everyone on the island knows we are here and where we are staying, particularly the guy you owe money to. Tom and I could see that our perceived threats were beginning to work on Dave's head.

It wasn't long before we learned that he wasn't going out for dinner anymore, especially to the other hotel. In fact, he was eating a lot out of machines in the hotel or room service.

Trust me, it made for a more pleasant working environment for Tom and me because Dave finally decided to return to MILA sooner than planned. When comparing our notes to what we heard from Dave, we believe the guy was correct in saving Dave's ass and paying his bar tab.

Back at MILA a decision had been made to install a second S-band 9M system to provide redundancy to launch operations. Since I had gained considerable experience in Canary Islands working with the Collins crew that installed the S-band 9M system, I was assigned to assist two Collins employees who were sent to MILA to install the second antenna. Eventually this second antenna was moved directly east of the 9M-1 and rotated 90 degrees so that its Key Hole (Y-axis mechanical limit) was East-West vice the North-South orientation of 9M-1. This posture would provide support to any angle of the spacecraft's trajectory over MILA.

During the early '70s Kathie's dad had taken a job with Owing-Illinois (O-I) glass company as chief mechanic on Andros Island in the Bahamas. His job along with other mechanics was to keep the logging trucks, large forklifts and other equipment working. O-I furnished the Oliver family and some of the other employees a nice house on Morgan's Bluff.

We were fortunate that we could fly out of West Palm Beach on the company plane over to the island and spend a long weekend. The cost was a day or two of comp time or vacation and \$3.00 per head when we went through the Bahamas Custom. I shouldn't forget the cigars it cost me when the customs guy went through our luggage. He would dig through all our stuff until he found my stash and take 3 or 4. I began putting the bulk in my tackle box and leaving some out where he could find them easier but not too easy so he wouldn't continue to look further.

Soon after I had said my hellos and hugged everyone in the family, I would go down to the dock with my fishing equipment where I spent almost all of the weekend. It was absolutely beautiful. Father-in-law Jim would come check on me after he got off work and would sometimes bring me something to eat. Eventually he began taking more interest in fishing and would come down and stay with me and the other men fishing from the pier.

On one of those nights Jim and I were fishing when one of the men caught something on a hand-line that was quite large. The water was clear so we could see that whatever it was it was a big fish. I had asked earlier what size line he was using and he said that it was 200 lb mono-filament. When it became evident that he and his friend needed help pulling the fish in, Jim stepped up and grabbed the line and I followed. He was on the front with me behind and as we four men pulled to bring it in closer we could see that it was a big shark. When we got it up next to the pilings which were 12 feet apart we could see that this shark was that long but then the unexpected happened.

One of the men had a homemade gaff and reached over and struck the shark while the other three of us were holding it up next to the pier. When hit with the gaff, the shark dove straight down breaking the line which came back like a rifle shot and hit Jim in the face knocking him out momentarily. I felt him falling forward and grabbed him to keep him from falling in the water. When we got him under the light we could see that his face was a bloody mess where the line had coiled back cutting his face and eyes. In the weeks that followed Jim suffered double vision making it necessary to the return to the states to see an eye doctor because the damage to his eyes was pretty severe. He was very fortunate not to have lost an eye. While he continued to go down to the pier to fish or visit, he never volunteered to help pull in any big fish after that.

Some of the perks of the in-laws living in the Bahamas was Kathie's mom picking up recipes from a local islander that included land crabs and conch salad. She also cooked fried turtle. We ate like a king when on the island and when they visited the states they brought all the lobster we could eat.

It was at MILA that I worked with Chuck Bounds and Don Mason and became good friends for life and our families grew close. Chuck and I hunted and fished together and I went on many fishing trips with him and his boys. Don has been and still is like a brother with whom I've fished, played pool, gone drag racing and spent a good part of 40 years doing things with him and his family.

There are too many stories about either Chuck or Don to relate here but it was a well known fact that a fishing trip with Chuck was an experience of a life time. In fact, to say the least it could even be life threatening. I daresay that anyone who has ever gone fishing with Chuck has their own unique story to tell. What is so wonderful about all this is that they all have lived to tell. And if there were more than one person, then each has a slightly different tale.

One trip in particular began in Mims when one evening after several of us friends had all gone out to dinner and gathered afterwards at our house. At some point the stories came around to fishing and especially trips with Chuck. It was decided then that some among this group did not have a Bounds story so they planned to go out the next morning to the big pond.

The story goes that they went out of Port Canaveral in Chuck's boat and at some point on the return home the motor broke. By now there had been a beer or two consumed and Chuck figured he could fix it so over the side he went with tool in hand. In the meantime his son Greg is fishing for shark with cut up fish. I don't recall if it was a part or tool that Chuck dropped but whatever it was, the motor was inoperable and they didn't have a spare. So they called a fellow employee that worked at MILA who had a big boat who could tow them back to the Port. The only problem is that it was getting near dark and this fellow learned that the locks were closed and he couldn't get out of Banana River into the Port. So he called to let Chuck know and suggested he might call the Coast Guard.

After some deliberation it was decided that it was necessary to call the Coast Guard and have them rescue them. As they were on the radio with the Coast Guard and giving them their position, the Coast Guard said whatever you do, DON'T SHOOT A FLARE! Unfortunately, just as this order was being delivered, his son Greg pulled the trigger on a flare. This caused everyone that lives on the Atlantic Seaboard from Daytona Beach to Fort Pierce to call the Coast Guard and report the flare. The Coast Guard's switchboard was wiped out so it was a very unhappy crew that arrived to rescue Chuck.

Yep. They each have a story though some differ from others and it would depend on where they were sitting in the boat or it might be how much beer they had drank. Who knows the truth but it is obvious that they all had a good time and now they each have a survival story with Bounds.

Like any good friend, there were times when I would try to help improve Chuck's fishing by creating drawings of local fish so that he could recognize a shark from a Blue Gill and mail him detailed written instructions on the kind of bait to buy for each fish, where to go and how to operate his outboard to get the most efficient gas mileage. I would then place these instructions in the mail because back then we didn't have email so we had to use the Postal service. It was the least I could do for a friend who liked to fish. I've always felt bad that I didn't give him examples on how to handle lures because it may have prevented some trips to the Emergency Room to remove big ugly lures from his hands. There was never enough beer for him to remove it by himself.

During winter months I did a lot of hunting in St Johns County. On weekends we would go to Jax to visit her family and I would take one or both of her brothers with me and we would go to a farm out west of St Augustine to hunt with a small party. These were the same folks that I hunted with when I worked for Welex Electronics in St Augustine.

Over time, the hunting party grew smaller as members dropped out for different reasons. On one morning when I was to meet another member, his wife called and said he died while putting on his boots that morning. That was the last straw for me so I returned home and sold all my hunting equipment and concentrated on fishing.

At MILA the work environment was good. As a Shift Supervisor I was responsible for the operations support and had a Link Controller to assist me. With two of us in the Ops Room we could handle two operations at the same time. In order to provide continuous operations around the clock, the Ops Room went to a 12-hour shift. It was designed to work three days one week and four the next. I opted to work the latter part of the week on day shift. One week we would work Thursday – Sunday and the next Friday – Sunday. While it interfered with me continuing school at the University of Florida (UCF), this schedule gave me a lot of time to hunt and fish.

The long hours of shift work gave rise to creative ideas designed to entertain and keep us awake. One idea was to create a Christmas gift list for each employee. Another was to place a soap box in the Ops Room so that when employees came in to discuss their problems, they had to step up on the Soap Box and we were required to give them our undivided attention. Comm protocol didn't permit curse words over the loop so we generated a list identified by a number. For example, if we wanted to tell someone we didn't care, we would say, "That's an 827." What we really meant is, "Obviously you have mistaken me for someone who gives a shit." It is like what I wrote earlier about Mr. Ski at NTT, I don't remember the numbers.

When the creative juices were really flowing, I would either write a short story for my own amazement and hopefully entertain others. I wrote about the small house that Kathie and I purchased and the days our air handler indoors ran twenty-four seven causing the electric bill to go up but not moving the thermostat down. Then I discovered the wiring to the outside unit had never been hooked up. Some technician I was. I learned a little about air conditioning. There was the story about me crawling in the attic and falling through the ceiling. I learned a little about dry wall. Another time I was about to sit on the commode and lost my balance. I fell back and broke the commode and ruptured the water line. I learned a little about plumbing and a whole lot about shit. And it Dang near flooded the house.

Our bicentennial in 1976 was celebrated big time on the Space Coast. All the surrounding cities had parties and events galore. KSC had special events and exhibits while Titusville was to make the news with a big bang called Fat Man II. It was the world's largest firecracker at 40-1/2" round, 36" tall and 100 lbs of burst charge. It was taken out on a barge to a spoil island that sits south of the bridge and just off the city's shore. For days we heard the local radio station give us a blow by blow of the event and the countdown that would take place. Fat Man II would be placed on the island where a man would light the fuse and then run to the water where a speeding boat would pick him up and carry him to safety. Finally the night came and everyone lined the shore that beautiful night and the countdown began...but nothing happened. It was scrubbed.

I can't remember if it was a bad fuse or the weather that caused a scrub but after a few days the launch of Fay Man II was rescheduled and again the radio broadcast rehearsal countdowns. The barge would take it to the island, a man would light the fuse and run like hell to a speeding boat that would pick him and take him to safety. And again the shoreline was crowded with onlookers and again the countdown started. 10, 9, ..3..2..1. Fuse is lit..BOOM! The bomb cleared its launch tube and rose about 50ft or so before exploding into a huge fireball that lit up Titusville. It was so powerful that we felt the effects of the explosion on our chest and chaff was falling on us and there was the acute smell of black powder in the air. The radio was silent. We never learned whatever happened to the man that lit the fuse but it was reported that too much burst charge was used.

One evening when things were quiet at work, in the spirit of the bicentennial I wrote this poem as a tribute to America.

LOOK BACK AMERICA

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA!
FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS YOU'VE SURVIVED IT ALL.
REVOLUTION WORLD WARS
AND THE STOCK MARKET FALL.

ONCE TRANQUIL AND SERENE,
A MIGHTY NATION YOU'VE BECAME.
A SWORD OF DEMOCRACY,
MANY NATIONS RESPECT THY NAME.

YES AMERICA YOU'VE GROWN OLDER
BUT YOU'VE SURVIVED IT TOO.
OH SO MUCH WISER YOU ARE
TO HAVE EXPERIENCED MORE THAN MANY NATIONS DO.

IT'S TIME TO LOOK BACK AMERICA
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AND SEE WHAT YOU WERE THEN.
TO KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING
YOU MUST KNOW WHERE YOU'VE BEEN.

YOU HAVE HORSEDRAWN CARRIAGES, COTTEN GINS, STEAM ENGINES TO JUMBO JETS
AND CHROME LADEN AUTOMOBILES, ELECTRIC TRAINS, DISNEY WORLD AND MOON ROCKETS.
AND LOG CABINS, FIREWOOD, FIREPLACES AND CANDLES BY WHICH TO READ AND EAT.
AND ELECTRIC LAMPS, TALL SKYSCRAPERS, AIR CONDITIONING AND SOLAR HEAT.

YOU'VE GOT POPCORN, BASKETBALL, BASEBALL AND THE NEW YORK METS.
AND HOTDOGS, APPLE PIE, GOLF, FOOTBALL AND THE NEW YORK JETS.
AND YOU'VE HAD REDCOATS, INDIANS, ITALIANS, JEWS AND PEOPLE GALORE.
AND EXPERIENCED REVOLUTION, POLITICS, RELIGION AND MANY A WAR!

YOU'VE HAD ABRAHAM LINCOLN, JOHN KENNEDY, ROBERT KENNEDY AND MARTIN LUTHER KING.
AND BLUE-GREY, NORTH-SOUTH, KOREAN CONFLICT, VIETNAM AND THE NATIONAL ANTHEM YOU SING!
AND WHERE SCHOONERS AND FRIGATES ONCE SPREAD SAILS TO PLY YOUR SHINING SHORES
NOW SAIL CARRIERS, DESTROYERS AND SUBMARINES THAT WERE CONCEIVED BY UGLY WARS.

YOU'VE HAD BEATNICKS, HIPPIES, JESUS FREAKS AND COLLEGES WITH STUDENT UNREST.
AND SMOG-FILLED AIR, POLLUTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION. AMERICA YOU NEED A REST!

CORRUPT CONGRESS, WATERGATE, ELECTIONS AND SCANDALS ABOUND.
LOOK BACK AMERICA AND BE PROUD! YOUR PRINCIPLES ARE SOUND.
YES AMERICA YOU HAVE SURVIVED THIS GENERATION SO FAR.
LET'S NOT WAIT ANOTHER TWO HUNDRED YEARS TO SEE WHERE WE ARE.

GLENN SMITH

When September 1978 rolled in, I now had been at MILA for 10 years with a very contentious relationship with Rulee over Randy and child support. The real root of the differences is that she wanted more money than what I could afford to pay. And maybe if that had been the only differences, we might have worked something out but she was also claiming back pay that I didn't owe and I had canceled checks to show it.

As we sparred back and forth, it was mostly a meeting with a General Master that Dade County or the State had authorized to hear arguments. Unfortunately, he wasn't hearing mine nor did he want to see whatever evidence I had to the contrary, and each time he ruled in her favor. I know several of my friends have seen some of the letters that I wrote the General Master and may have wondered why I wasn't in jail.

I had been driving my 1972 Gran Prix to and from Miami and while it was the most pleasant car to drive, it was really tough on front tires. Despite having the front end worked on and multiple alignments, it continued to be an expensive proposition to keep tires on the front. Finally I decided to sell it and purchase a 1970 Datsun pickup truck with a camper shell on it. It was a patriotic truck with white paint and red and blue stripes with a topper to match. Additionally I sold the big '72 Mercury Station Wagon to a friend I worked with because the truck was so much cheaper to drive and we decided we could reduce our expenses by having only one vehicle.

Our first trip in the truck was a visit to Kathie's parents in Lafayette, Georgia. We were sitting around the dinner table when I surprised her and the boys by asking if they wanted to go to Georgia. It wasn't long before we were packed and on the I-95 heading north.

After crossing over to I-75 the boys had fallen asleep and things seemed normal until I began to smell antifreeze and noticed the temperature had gone up. A quick check of the hood revealed a busted radiator hose. I had lost a good bit of water so to be on the safe side, I made a call on my CB radio and soon was given a lift by a semi up to the next exit where there was a gas station. Just as I walked across the highway to the station, the lights on the pumps went off.

I saw a man behind the desk and knocked on the door to get his attention and told him what I needed but he refused to unlock the door or turn the pumps back on. No amount of pleading would he give me any help. When I walked back to the island, I saw a can used to wash windshields so I filled it up and started back to the truck. I was in a hurry because I could hear truckers going north talking to southbound truckers about me having a wife and 2 boys stranded back down the highway. That made the south bound truckers start looking for me. Suddenly I realized that in my haste I had taken the frontage road instead of the I-95 ramp south.

The fence was too tall to climb with a bucket of water so I had to run back up the frontage road and around to the ramp to get on I-75. By this time I was really huffing and puffing but a kind driver stopped and gave me a ride to the truck. After a temporary fix of the hose and a couple gallons of water we were north bound again.

It was on this trip that we first learned of the backfire the Datsun would emit when loaded down going up a hill. In this case a long incline over a Georgia mountain. We had been riding all night and the boys had gone back to sleep and Kathie may have been in the back with them when near the top of the mountain I shifted gears. There was a sudden blue flash and a loud shotgun blast that woke me and the rest of the crew up. Never had we heard anything so loud.

I think it being dark and on a small one-lane road made it even more impressive and I can tell you, no one was asleep the rest of the trip. When dawn broke we were pulling into driveway of Kathie's parents where breakfast was waiting.

Soon after our return from the Georgia trip I heard from down south again and it was the final straw. I received a letter from the General Master threatening me because I hadn't shown up for an appearance before him. I hadn't received a notice nor had my lawyer received anything from her attorney or from the General Master.

It turned out that her lawyer was tasked to send out the notice to appear but didn't do so. My lawyer gave me the best advice ever. He said get out of the state. So we did. I accepted a transfer to the Goldstone (GDS) tracking station to fill the position of Staff Engineer. The GDS site is located a few miles from Barstow, California out in the desert near the Army's Fort Erwin.

Before our trip I removed the back glass and fitted some padding so that we could communicate with the boys in the back. It was not quite as nice as a camper would be but it was economical to drive and the longer we owned it, it provided us with a good deal of driving pleasure. As it turned out, this modification worked out well when we relocated to California. Plus the boys learned that their bean bags were ideal for sitting and lying in the back of the truck. Kathie and I learned that too as we traveled a lot of miles in that little truck and one of us would ride back there while the other one drove. It was a long trip from Titusville to Lafayette, Georgia to Barstow, California.

One memory that we four will likely remember for a long time was on that journey to California, we had crossed the Mississippi River on I-40 and ran up behind a long convoy of trucks heading west. I had the CB radio on when one trucker announced to everyone listening that he had written a love song and would become famous. He asked if anyone wanted to hear it and quickly received affirmatives. So he started singing and for more than 40 miles he sang "O Baby." He sang the same words over and over for 40 miles. He obviously had an amplifier on his radio because it was so strong that other CB's were unable to talk over him. About the only thing that could be heard above his voice were squeals from too many carriers trying to get a word in edgewise. He provided us entertainment for the afternoon as we headed west to Hwy 71 where we made a side trip to Fayetteville to visit my parents before continuing on to California.

It was an adventurous ride across the USA. We all were seeing things for the first time and were recording as much as our memory would permit. On some occasions we were driving on the famous Route 66 when I-40 gave out and we had to drive a few miles before getting back on the Interstate.

We drove on through Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico to about 18 miles west of Flagstaff, Arizona where we stopped at a rest area just as it was getting dark. When Kathie returned to the truck she said wasn't feeling well so I decided to get us a room for the night then drive up to the Grand Canyon in the morning.

I don't recall the name of the hotel but it was a nice Mountain Lodge on the south side of I-40 before you get to Hwy 64. Like the rest area, it may be gone by now. It was nice and friendly with a huge fireplace in the suite we rented. I was concerned about her but she said she would be okay but needed to get warm and lie down. So I got the boys to bed and we all crashed looking forward to our visit to the Grand Canyon in the morning.

The next morning we were on Hwy 64 headed to the Grand Canyon. Kathie was still sick but the boys and I were in good shape looking forward to seeing the canyon. But first, we had to stop for lunch in the park where two things happened. The late Chuck Andrews might chuckle to learn the first use of the knife he had made especially for me was to spread mayonnaise on our sandwiches. The second was seeing the largest Ravens ever. Those birds were huge. They didn't seem to fear humans either as they would walk up to our picnic table and beg for scraps. Never more. Never more or something like that.

While Greg, Doug and I took in the Canyon, Kathie did not feel well and remained in the truck unable to enjoy the visit. However, a year or so later on a trip back to the east coast, we stopped again so Kathie could see the Canyon.

Our next road experience was arriving in Needles, CA and crossing the Colorado River and entering the Mojave Desert. We could see nothing but miles and miles of cactus, sand and heat and mountains ahead of us. I guess I failed to mention that the little truck did not have air condition. Ah... but the see-through window did help with all the windows open in the topper. Besides, it was only about 150 miles or so to Barstow and about 150 degrees outside.



1978 Greg & Doug at Grand Canyon



Kathie & Datsun

It was a smart move driving into Barstow while it was dark so we weren't able to see anything until the next morning. Oh what a surprise my family got when they opened the curtains. It was not quite like Titusville, but. I reminded them that they had ridden on the famous Route 66 through Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and to California and not everyone would have the good fortune to have that experience.



Route 66 Needles, CA

26 - Barstow, California 1978

The nearest city to the Goldstone (GDS) tracking station was in Barstow, CA. We rented a house in Irwin Estates at 36828 Almaden Avenue, a nice neighborhood built on the opposite side of the Mojave River from Barstow. It was a nice neighborhood and at our elevation we didn't get the sand that many of the valley residents got from frequent high winds. Frequently we could look south across the Mojave River valley towards Barstow and all we could see was a wall of sand blowing west to east. We joked and said there goes Lenwood which was 6 miles west of Barstow.

After we got settled in the new home and at work, Kathie's sister Julie flew in to Los Angeles to visit us in Barstow and at the same time my cousins Beverly and Rawlin flew into Ontario from NW Arkansas. Now not only did we have a truck full of kids but a house full.

While they were all there together, I decided to take them up to Big Bear in the little Datsun truck and use the winding road that took us up the back of the mountain. When we began climbing around the 2,000 ft level up the winding road, it was just a little more than the little truck could handle and I had it in first gear with my foot to the floor. The little truck was laboring and was so slow that the kids could get out and walk as fast as the truck could go. We were near 7,000 Ft when we reached the city and the reward was the sight of beautiful Big Bear Lake.

My cousins flew back to Arkansas and a short time later we were on our way back east to visit Kathie's parents and take Julie home. I forgot to mention that the truck would make a tremendous backfire when the engine was loaded up. My attempts to correct it failed and visits to the Datsun dealers also failed. It was something that was never fixed. I mention this because Kathie was driving at this particular time with Julie up front with her. We were going up the long hill in Albuquerque, New Mexico and passing an old man who was about to blow his nose. When Kathie was even with his car, she shifted gears and the loud bang that followed almost caused the old man to run off the road and certainly interrupted his nose blowing. Their story has it that he wiped snot all over his face. The dangerous part was Kathie and Julie laughing so hard that it was difficult for her to stay in control.

Not long after that incident we got caught in a bad dust storm that rolled in behind us. Those two up front were still giggling which woke me up then I looked out the back door and saw the headlights of a semi right on our bumper. I put my head back down and tried to go back to sleep.

A project that was especially exciting was working with Dryden Research Facility located inside Edwards Air force Base in preparations for Shuttle's first test flights on a modified Boeing 747. It was exciting times and exciting work. My part of the task was to provide input to two young Air Force Engineers as to how the Launch Trajectory Acquisition System (LTAS) was used at MILA as a backup system so that it could be adopted at Dryden during the 747/Shuttle flights and during the real landings that the Shuttle Orbiters would be making at the end of flight.



Shuttle's First Test Flight



Goldstone 9M & 26M antennas

As Staff Engineer I pretty much could select the tasks that I wanted to do and for the most part there were things that needed to be done to improve operations.. One task was to train the Link Controllers on how to configure the station in a contingency as well as other procedures to improve operations. Since I had come from MILA which was viewed around the network as the benchmark for Operations, it helped me gain the support of M&O personnel, the Operations Manager and the NASA Station Director as well. It was true that we at MILA had established a lot of the protocol that would be used around the Network by Link Controllers. This need was arose when I discovered that the Wire Room had refused to cross patch equipment to replace a failed Unit because their supervisor had given instructions to never reconfigure the equipment.

This is basically the same as hard wiring the equipment which prevents flexibility in the Station's operations. Needless to say, me and the Comm Supervisor had words. In the end I won and proceeded to provide instructions to the Comm room, Link Controllers and the rest of the technical personnel involved in the operations support.

Another perk of my position was being able to schedule and enroll myself in schools back at Goddard's Network Test and Training Facility (NTTF). That fact enabled me to plan our visit back east to visit my family and leave Kathie and the boys with her family while I attended school. During the 10 years at MILA I attended several schools and now I had an opportunity to attend a school on equipment that we either used or would be using at Goldstone.

The NASA tracking station was located in the desert near the Army's Fort Irwin and was situated just above the dry lake bed Goldstone from whence the site was named. Strategically situated in and around the mountains were other tracking complexes owned and operated by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL). Transportation to and from these sites were by minivans that were driven by employees. It was always a tough 1-hour drive coming off mid shift with a van full of sleepy employees including a sleepy driver.

I recall one ride home riding in the front passenger seat when I was awakened by a stomping noise. It was the driver who had fallen asleep and was stomping on the gas pedal. We were rocketing down Ft Irwin road on a roller coaster road that ran straight alongside a large dry lake bed. The hills were such that the road could sometimes hide a full convoy of military vehicles that wouldn't be seen until you came over the rise and dropped down with them. In this case we were very lucky that the road was straight and that his stomping woke me up.

Another Datsun story comes to mind when Kathie had to go to San Bernadino to have a skin cancer removed from her forehead. She was a long time in surgery but the boys and I managed to stay occupied while all this was going on. When she was finally released and came out of the doctor's office, her head was encased all in white in a manner that it looked like a football helmet. The boys wasn't quite sure what to make of it. We loaded the truck, Kathie and I upfront and the two boys in the back and headed back to Barstow. Now mind you, we had 25 miles of incline on I-15 just to get us up and through Cahon Pass and another 60 plus miles to Barstow.

I mention this because just as we got on to I-15 the truck faltered. This wasn't the first time that this had happened and despite all that I did to make the truck go faster, it just poked along. We learned that if you let the truck sit for a few minutes, it would crank up and go as though it had never happened. I had a similar problem years earlier with a fuel filter in our 72 Mercury station wagon but couldn't find anything like that with the truck.

Of course at our speed it was dangerous to stay on the highway with everyone honking their horns and blowing past us so I pulled over to the side of the road and parked at the first wide spot. We had only 24 miles to go up this incline then it would be downhill from Cahon pass. A nice thought. Kathie was hurting and the boys were still enamored with the headgear so I tried starting the truck and fortunately it ran fine and got us back to Barstow. However, at some point I recall her saying that she would burn the truck up at first opportunity. I remembered too there was a time when Kathie and one of the boys had driven to the store at night and it quit when she was down in the Mojave valley along the railroad where it was dark. I mean really dark. After it sat for a few minutes, she started it and the truck ran okay. I decided I better do something with the truck.

The next day I purchased a carburetor kit for the truck and sat about overhauling it on a Sunday. It was a typical sunny but cool day so I spread out a large white sheet and placed all the parts on it in the order of removal so I could reassemble the carburetor. Small parts were put in a cigar box. As evening fell the temperature had dropped to 10 degrees above zero and it was miserably cold but I managed to get everything back together around midnight. I cranked up the truck and it started quickly but it flooded and gas could be smelled everywhere. I had to work the next morning so gave it up for the night.

Monday after getting home from work I went through everything again and discovered two things in the cigar box. One was the jet that I had failed to put back in and the second item was a small black piece of rubber. That is when I realized that it was the cause of all the problems in the past. Evidently when the fuel filter was replaced and the short rubber hose that came with the filter was cut to fit to the carburetor, a small piece of the hose got inserted in the intake fuel line. When it clogged the line, a few minutes of settling and a decrease in fuel line pressure, the truck would get fuel and run normally. I once made the mistake of telling this story to a good friend and anytime anything went awry, he would suggest that it may have been a small piece of rubber.



Calico host Town Miner

We used the weekends as an opportunity to explore some of the interesting tourist attractions such as Calico Ghost Town and Rainbow Basin. On other days we just drove out in the desert or as I mentioned earlier we would drive up CA 18 to the back side of Big Bear. On one trip up we stopped at about the 3,000 ft level and let the boys explore the woods. One thing I noticed was the extreme amount of pine sap hanging from the limbs which explains the fires that California experiences.

Living so close to Las Vegas we were tempted to visit so the family loaded up with more “stuff” than we had money but we were looking for a fun drive across the desert and interested in seeing what Vegas looked like.

I think we can all agree that it was a beautiful site to drop off the hill on I-15 and see the night lights of Las Vegas after dark. But I'm reminded that was back in 1979 and we know that the skyline has changed drastically with all the new hotels. Still it was a nice visit with our first stop to fill up the truck with gas and then get a motel. That way all would be paid up should we not have any money left. Then we headed for Circus Circus. Casino downstairs and games for kids on 2nd floor. I would win, give some to boys to play games and some to Kathie to gamble which she would promptly lose. In the end, we lost our money but it was a fun family outing.

There was another occasion that took me to Las Vegas when flying out to BWI to visit our Corporate office. I was told by friends at work where a good motel was to stay and if I chose to do so, it was also a place to gamble before my flight. As it turned out my gambling ran into most of the night because I was winning at the dollar slots. Around 3 AM I felt it was time to get a couple hours sleep before heading to the airport so I put in a wake-up call at the desk and retired to my room. When the alarm went off it was most difficult to get awake and get dressed but I had a plane to catch.

When I had time to count my winnings I discovered that I had won a little more than \$400 so I decided to go shopping once I got to Columbia, MD. One thing that Kathie needed badly that we hadn't found in Barstow was a nice winter coat. The desert might get well above a hundred degrees in the daytime but at night it can get bitter cold. So I went coast shopping and used the winnings to buy her a beautiful long coat. I mention all this because I still had a few dollars left from my previous stay in Vegas so I decided to gamble some before making my way back to Barstow. The first big hotel I came to was the Flamingo so in I went and straight to the dollar slots. I walked to the nearest cage and asked the young lady working inside if she would point me one ready to pay. She did and I played the max dollar play and hit three limes that paid \$60. A few more wins and I had over \$300 so I cashed in and tipped the young lady handsomely and started towards the exit.

I was almost at the door when I felt that I still had a few coins that I hadn't played so I stuck them in a machine nearest to the entrance. A bunch of sevens came up but not straight across as I had hoped, yet there was a buzzing sound coming from the machine. While I was trying to figure out what the buzzer meant and if I had won anything, suddenly my arm was grabbed from behind. I'll admit that it startled me when I saw it was a security guard. However, he was just making sure that it was me that started all this and also holding me secure until 2 or 3 other guys came up to join us. One man leaned over and looked at this small counter on the right side of the machine and read off the numbers and apparently I had just won \$1800 dollars. They did some calculations on a note pad, discussed it amongst them and then went to cashier. Meantime we just stood there. Me and the guard. A man came back and paid me eighteen one-hundred dollar bills. Wow! So now I have about \$2100 in my pocket and I felt that everyone in the casino now knows that I'm loaded.

Now I'm hungry. I recall these same men that told me about the hotel also told me about gambling and eating at the Silver Slipper. It was supposed to have one of the better buffet dinners in town. It also advertised 97% payback on slots. So I stopped. When I walked into the place there was an elevated cage right when you walk in with dollar slots. My hands were still dirty from the coins at the Flamingo so I asked where the restrooms and restaurant were located. She pointed one way for the men's room and the opposite for the dining room. So I said give me \$100 in coins and asked the cashier in the cage to point me to a machine. She did and before I quit, I had won another \$300.

That is when I decided I had enough of Las Vegas so I quickly exited, got in my rental car and headed for Barstow. I was hungry so I stopped at service station at the state line and got a sandwich. When you come into that amount of money in such a short time and in such a busy place with so many walks of people everywhere you look, it makes you nervous and even paranoid. You imagine that everyone in Vegas knows you won and how much and where you are keeping it on your person. I did the unexpected. I stuffed many hundred dollar bills all throughout the pockets of Kathie's new coat.

Before making a trip back to Maryland, I sold the little Datsun truck to an employee at the site and purchased a Pontiac Bonneville from a DLM worker. We had a good ride until just before dark as we were about to cross the river into Wheeling, WV, I was passing a car when the engine emitted a loud bang. I looked up in time to see a Holiday Inn sign so I immediately took the exit and drove up the hill into the parking lot. As far as I know, that was the last time the car ran.

The next day I sat about finding a car salesman and this one gentleman from a local car dealer responded. I explained our situation and he sat about trying to find us a used car to no avail. In the end, he agreed to take me in to Wheeling, WV where I could rent a car.

While we were having lunch a bad T-storm blew up and a lightning strike hit the hotel switchboard. The clerks were in a state of shock so I jumped over the counter and put out a fire in the switchboard where the lightning apparently hit. My problem grew larger because I had made all these calls out and left the hotel's number but we soon learned that damage to the switchboard would permit calls going out but not incoming.

Fortunately I had made an appointment with the car salesman who was kind enough to take me to a service station that had car rentals and he even waited on me until I had a car. That wait became hours vice a few minutes because the owner of the Service Station was waiting for the car to be delivered.

When it came time to sign for the car and make a deposit, he declined and took only a copy of my license and handed me the keys. Only in West Virginia because anywhere else would want a credit card, which I didn't have. In return for his assistance, I gave the salesman my keys and the title to the Pontiac. We departed for Greenbelt, MD where I put Kathie and the boys on a bus. When she got to Georgia, she purchased a '79 Mercury Marquis ("The Pickle.") from her cousin's dealership.

On one such trip from Barstow back to Goddard to attend a school on a Shuttle TV system that was going to be installed at Goldstone, I visited several of the people I knew in Building 12. During one of those visits I spent a few minutes visiting with Phil Johnson who was managing a project that would later become BFEC's Space Network. The Space Network (SN) would eventually be the support network for the Tracking Data and Relay Satellite (TDRS) program. Most of the SN operations were going to take place out in White Sands, New Mexico.

At some point before my technical class was due to finish, Kathie and the boys drove up to Maryland in the new car she had just purchased in LaFayette, GA from her cousin's dealership. It was a new 1959 Mercury Marquis which was later named "The Pickle."

On the morning we departed Greenbelt the "new" car failed to shift out of 2nd gear. I eventually got it to shift up to higher gear. It was scary for a moment. From Greenbelt we headed across country back to Barstow but stopped on the way to visit my parents in North West Arkansas before driving on to California. This was our second trek across the states within 2 months.

The first was going across on a northern route through Nevada to Denver and across to Wheeling, WV where the mishap occurred with the old Pontiac. Now we were driving back via I-40 and Route 66 and we arrived in Barstow not long before school was to start the Monday after Labor Day, 1980. Soon after our arrival home, I got a call from John Gale, Manager of State-side Tracking Stations and wanted to know if I was going to go to work for Phil Johnson. I informed him that I had not heard anything like that and I hadn't been offered a job with that group. So John asked me if I would be interested in going to Alaska as Operations Manager. You bet I would so I flew up to Fairbanks and visited the Alaska (ULA) station for a week before flying back to Barstow and telling the family to pack. Soon we were on our way to Fairbanks via the Alcan Highway. We had several days to get there so we made a leisurely trip driving the old '59 Pickle.

We drove up through the San Joaquin Valley where all the roses and other flowers are grown and on up to San Francisco where we visited the shops of Pier 39, had lunch then drove over the Golden Gate Bridge and stopped at the H. Dana Bowers Memorial Vista Point to look back over San Fran. The night was closing in so we continued on north to Sacramento where I had planned to spend the night. It had been a really good drive from Barstow to this point so it was safe to get a motel and get off the road. Our next destination was Seattle, Washington where we were meeting my nephew Jim and his family. After meeting with my nephew Jim Martin and his family, I purchased a Milestone Magazine which describes in detail the Alaska-Canadian (ALCAN) Highway and we started our 15 hour drive to Dawson Creek, British Columbia where the long journey to Fairbanks begins via the Alcan Highway.

The Milepost documents the Alcan Highway from Dawson Creek to Fairbanks. We spent one night in Dawson Creek and planned our trip to arrive at the next city before the sun went down. The next day it was about 5 hours to Fort Nelson, then about 7 hours to Watson Lake, Yukon Territory, next a 13 hour drive to Whitehorse, YT and another 8 hours to Tok, AK and another 4 hours to Fairbanks. Of course these times are estimated likely were longer between towns because we were traveling in September and many of the small stores, gas stations and such were closed for the winter.

Contrary to what we heard during the three years in Fairbanks, the ALCAN was not "almost paved all the way." In fact, most of it was a dusty gravel road. There were places where permafrost had melted and turned the road to mud and in one place at the bottom of a hill, it was so bad that a dump truck was almost buried in mud. All we could do is wait but the work crew finally decided to bury the truck all the way so that we could drive over it. We were the lead car going north and there were other cars stacking up on the other hill that were coming our way but since we had been there first, the work crew waved us on. I'll admit that I was a little tense because the mud was deep and I wasn't confident that the Mercury would pull its way up the hill. But despite the mud being deep enough to reach the bottom of the doors, the old Pickle pulled its way through. Our next hazardous encounters were tractor trailers that owned the road.

One truck in particular came roaring off a hill coming directly at us at 50mph or more and throwing rocks everywhere. We could see an aura of rocks around each tire and what we feared most, happened. A large rock came shooting straight at us causing Kathie and I to duck down below the dash and it made a terrible noise when it hit the car. Amazingly it didn't hit the windshield or a hit a headlight nor could we find any place on the car where it hit.

But we do know for certain that it hit the car. I should include another hazard which were large potholes large enough for a tire to drop all the way to the frame. I know because we experienced it. I was on a stretch of road that wasn't quite gravel or mud but more of a marl so my speed was a little higher than usual when I suddenly hit a pothole.

The car framed out on the right front tire and the hubcap flew off into the blue yonder. I stopped and went after the hubcap though it was down in a small valley. I found two other hubcaps which I brought up to the side of the road. I put my hubcap in the truck but my mistake was not taking the others off and putting them in the trunk because when we got to Fairbanks, we only had the one hubcap in the trunk.

Almost every bend of the road there was beauty and we continued to point out all the wonderful sights to Greg and Doug but after a few hundred miles, they rarely looked up from whatever they were doing. For a while I could get their attention when I mentioned that we might see a moose as we rounded a corner but even that begin to fall on deaf ears. Suddenly there it was. Our first moose but it was dead however. Several hunters were gathered around a truck to watch a big moose being winched into the bed of a pickup truck.

The next wildlife we happened upon was about five bears. We were about to cross an iron bridge when we saw a family of bears walking across the bridge. They didn't seem to be too disturbed by our car so we sat and waited on them to exit the bridge. They weren't in a hurry nor were we. In fact, I made a decision not to harass them.

But then there he was. A big monster of a bull moose was standing in the middle of the road. I did everything I knew to do to avoid hitting the moose. Brakes were on, the Pickle was sliding almost sideways with horn blowing and we all were staring through the windshield. Suddenly, the moose glided into the woods with ease which were as thick as a fence but he moved through the trees like a shadow despite the big rack of horns. We could only set and watch with awe at how easily he went through the trees without getting hung up.

Surprisingly the "Pickle" transversed the ALCAN quite well. Despite some of the hazards we had encountered the Mercury got us to Fairbanks with little or no damage. Not even a busted headlight, only the missing hubcaps.

We recommend anyone who may wish to travel to Alaska on the Alcan, buy a Mile Post Magazine. It is updated almost every year and has everything that a traveler needs to know about the road to Alaska.

27 – Fairbanks, Alaska 1980

The Milepost documents the Alcan Highway from Dawson Creek to Fairbanks. We spent one night in Dawson Creek and planned our trip to arrive at the next city before the sun went down. The next day it was about 5 hours to Fort Nelson, then about 7 hours to Watson Lake, Yukon Territory, next a 13 hour drive to Whitehorse, YT and another 8 hours to Tok, AK and another 4 hours to Fairbanks. Of course these times are estimated and likely were longer between towns because we were traveling in September and many of the small stores, gas stations and such were closed for the winter.

Contrary to what we heard during the three years in Fairbanks, the ALCAN was not “almost paved all the way.” In fact, most of it was a dusty gravel road. There were places where permafrost had melted and turned the road to mud and in one place at the bottom of a hill it was so bad that a dump truck was almost buried in mud. All we could do is wait but the work crew finally decided to bury the truck all the way so that we could drive over it. We were the lead car going north and there were other cars stacking up on the other hill that were coming our way but since we had been there first, the work crew waved us on. I’ll admit that I was a little tense because the mud was deep and I wasn’t confident that the Mercury would pull its way up the hill. But despite the mud being deep enough to reach the bottom of the doors, the old Pickle pulled its way through.

Our next hazardous encounters were tractor trailers that owned the road. One truck in particular came roaring off a hill coming directly at us at 50mph or more and throwing rocks everywhere. We could see an aurora of rocks around each tire and what we feared most, happened. A large rock came shooting straight at us causing Kathie and I to duck down below the dash and it made a terrible noise when it hit the car. Amazingly it didn’t hit the windshield or a hit a headlight nor could we find any place on the car where it hit. But we do know for certain that it hit the car.

I should include another hazard which was potholes large enough for a tire to drop all the way to the frame. I know because we experienced it. I was on a stretch of road that wasn’t quite gravel or mud but more of a marl so my speed was a little higher than usual when I suddenly hit a pothole. The car framed out on the right front tire and the hubcap flew off into the blue yonder. I stopped and went after the hubcap though it was down in a small valley. I found two other hubcaps which I brought up to the side of the road. I put my hubcap in the truck but my mistake was not taking the others off and putting them in the trunk because when we got to Fairbanks, we only had the one hubcap in the trunk.

Almost every bend of the road there was beauty and we continued to point out all the wonderful sights to Greg and Doug but after a few hundred miles, they rarely looked up from whatever they were doing. For a while I could get their attention when I mentioned that we might see a moose as we rounded a corner but even that began to fall on deaf ears. Suddenly there it was. Our first moose but it was dead however. Several hunters were gathered around a truck to watch a big moose being winched into the bed of a pickup truck. The next wildlife we happened upon was about five bears. We were about to cross an iron bridge when we saw a family of bears walking across the bridge. They didn’t seem to be too disturbed by our car so we sat and waited on them to exit the bridge. They weren’t in a hurry nor were we. In fact, I made a decision not to harass them.

But then there he was. A big monster of a bull moose was standing in the middle of the road. I did everything I knew to do to avoid hitting the moose. Brakes were on, the Pickle was sliding almost sideways with horn blowing and we all were staring through the windshield. Suddenly, the moose glided into the woods with ease which was as thick as a fence but he moved through the trees like a shadow despite the big rack of horns. We could only set and watch with awe at how easily he went through the trees without getting hung up.

Surprisingly the “Pickle” tackled the ALCAN quite well. Despite some of the hazards we had encountered the Mercury got us to Fairbanks with little or no damage. Not even a busted headlight, only the missing hubcaps.

We recommend anyone who may wish to travel to Alaska on the Alcan, buy a Mile Post Magazine. It is updated almost every year and has everything that a traveler needs to know about the road to Alaska. Upon our arrival in Fairbanks we checked into the Maranatha Inn which used to be a Whore House. It housed a swimming pool indoors and all rooms were red velvet with gold trim on rails and everything metal had a gold look. I’ve heard some doozy stories about that place before it became the Maranatha which means Born Again. Apparently the hotel is no more as it looks as though the building has been torn down. Soon we found a place to rent temporarily in Wedgewood Apartments where we could use as a base of operations while searching for a house to rent. We were officially what Alaskan sourdoughs called cheechakoes, or new comers.

In the meantime I reported to the site on 15 October 1980. It was the largest complex that NASA operated at the time because it consisted of the Alaska (ULA) station and a separate tracking station belonging to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Our BFEC employees operated both stations.

The station’s 160 employees were comprised of nonexempt administrative employees, salaried engineers and supervisors and union members of the Teamsters and several other unions. The latter were unions organized under a single contract called The Joint Crafts that represented members from the Operating Engineers, Carpenters, Electricians, Mechanics, Janitors and one token Teamster. That way we had only to negotiate two bargaining contracts, one with the Teamsters and one with the Fairbanks Joint Crafts.

Soon after my arrival I received my promotion to Senior Manager with the responsibility to oversee the maintenance and operation (M&O) of both NASA and NOAA stations. I also inherited the remnants of 2,000 grievances, possibly a record. When thinking of grievances, I am reminded of the morning when the bodies of two men (Not Management but Teamsters) who went missing 3 or 4 years earlier suddenly surfaced. Spring breakup had released the bodies from the ice. There was some story about the two being disgruntled with the union or some such tale.

We found a house to rent at 1625 Washington Dr which was shared with a young lady named Ramona who rented the smaller lower floor of the house. This house was fairly new and was owned by a man named Oscar. I believe he was from some place in South America. The house also came with a trophy he had mounted on the living room wall. It was a huge rack of a caribou. It was a monster and took up much of the wall and was little use except serve as a conversation starter. But since I didn't shoot it and knew very little about it and wasn't able to contribute much except to point and say, yeah it's really big.

It was in this house that I almost found out what freeze up means. I had come home and was reading the paper while Kathie cooked dinner and it seem to me that it was getting colder in the living room so I turned the thermostat down. Eventually Kathie agreed with me that it was not getting any warmer so I went down to the basement and discovered the furnace was not working. When I tried to call a heating technician for a service call, they were all busy. After calling every fuel oil and heating company in the phone book my last call was answered by a man who was in the business but was laid up with a broken leg. It seems that they refinery had given the fuel oil companies the wrong fuel for that late in the winter.

This guy owned Paul's Burner service and guided me through the steps to get the furnace back on the air and promised that when he got back on his feet, he would come and perform a service call. It seems that I had already done all the necessary steps but it was comforting to learn what caused the problem and that I had taken all the correct steps to get heat back on in the house. And boy did we get heat. All the fuel that had gathered in the furnace was now burning and it was a long time before things got back to normal. We hadn't got naked yet but it was really getting hot in the house.

Later on we moved into a duplex at 2133 McCullam Ave that had a basement with a heated garage. The garage was a bonus during winter but it was dicey driving down into it as you had to be perfectly aligned when you started down the driveway or you hit the edge of the door. . It didn't take much to slip sideways enough to leave a scar. Of course the important thing was to be straight enough to enter the garage.

Over time the Pickle left its mark on the garage. Both sides of the garage door had chips taken out from errant descents into the basement. On the other side of the basement was our pool table which gave us plenty of enjoyment in all kinds of weather, rain or shine. Of course the objective of the game was to beat Dad. There came a time when Greg did finally win a game but not many. Even so he became a pretty good shot. Now if one Googles the address, one can see that the apartment on the right where we lived is now painted Grey and the basement garage has been closed in.

Our next door neighbor Merlin planted a garden in the back on his side of the duplex and the almost overnight growth of the vegetables was amazing. The 24 hour sun caused the garden to grow overnight. Cabbages were huge and likely weighed close to a hundred pounds. The size of turnips, onions and marijuana – yes marijuana – plants were extraordinary. The latter had grown so high that the plant was pushing on the eaves of the house. One morning I happened to mention to him that the kids had spotted the marijuana plant so by the afternoon it was harvested. It was legal in Alaska to have a small amount of the drug.

One of the best stories I have of the duplex was when I came home one evening during the winter and it was dark and cold. Just as I arrived at the top of the driveway, Merlin had just gotten out of his truck and started towards his door when he heard me honk the horn. It was a signal to Kathie to open the garage door for me but he thought it was me signaling him so he walked back to my car.

Just as Melvin got to the car I rolled the window down and said that I was merely waiting for the garage door to open. When I said that he got all excited because the landlord hadn't given him one and wanted to know when I got my automatic door opener. I told him December 1966 and about that time Kathie became visible pushing up the garage door.

I decided another vehicle would be handy to have so that Kathie and the boys would have the Pickle so I purchased a 1970 Datsun King Cab. I put an 80lb bag of sand in the bed over each wheel well which provided me a good bit of traction that I would not have otherwise. It had a topper but no air which wasn't all that important in Alaska.

Anyway, about six months earlier I had promoted a shift supervisor to fill my old position of Operations Manager. The entire site was happy about the promotion except three or four months later it became obvious that he wasn't performing well and my NASA customer wasn't all that pleased either. So I replaced him with another employee who had worked at Alaska a long time too except he was known by the operations personnel as "Ricochet Roger" because he injected himself in every situation that arose. He was respected but the crew thought he bounced from one issue to the next. Quite frankly, the Teamsters thought I was out of my mind to promote him.

A couple months later I was approached by a couple of the union stewards and asked if I would join them after work for a drink at a local roadhouse. I agreed but called Kathie before leaving the site and told her I was going to meet the stewards. Of course this bit about the two teamsters that had surfaced was on both of our minds. After a few beers and small talk, the Chief Steward stood up and toasted me to thank me for promoting Roger. The stewards said they were wrong and I had made a good decision to promote Roger. My customer thought so too.

After settling in the job I learned that our so-called "Carpenter" was drawing big bucks from our insurance plan when he asked the Workers Compensation Board for more money. His alleged injury and subsequent claim was before my time but he was supposed to have injured his back while doing work at the tracking station. When the board contacted me for approval, I sent our Health and Safety Engineer down to the Carpenter's farm with instruction to verify his prolonged injury. The result was several candid photos showing the Carpenter lifting 100 pound bags of feed into his truck and other photos where he was lifting heavy objects seemingly without a struggle. These photos along with my disapproval were given to the presiding Board and his request was denied. Further, all future requests for money were denied with the threat that he may be prosecuted for a fraudulent claim. He was never heard from again. There were instances where it appeared that a couple of employees may have been considering a workers compensation claim but after the incident with the Carpenter, word got around and we never had any more complaints of injury. The station was in fact a safe place to work.



26M Counter Weight Replacement

We experienced a lot of "firsts" in Alaska. One example was the glacier control the Facilities crew devised to prevent Gilmore Creek from building a glacier that would damage the NOAA Operations Building if not push it off its foundation. It involved designing and building a torch that could be fed by diesel fuel and laid out on the ice where it would burn a hole for the water to go under the ice instead of building up on the surface and creating a glacier.

Another example of BFEC ingenuity was when a counter weight broke loose in the 85ft antenna. To repair it would require nothing short of a DLM task but the Hydro Mechanics developed a plan that met the approval of me and Ed Eisele, the NASA Station Director. But to accomplish this task, the antenna would have to be tied down substantially to prevent it from tipping off its axis. In short, the mechanics succeeded in their repair effort thus saving NASA tens of thousands of dollars.

The competence of the Alaska employees was aptly demonstrated again in the removal of the Range Rate Antenna having two wheel houses weighing many tons like the 9 meter S-band antennas that Collins built for the Manned Space Flight Program. The cost to NASA to have a crew travel Fairbanks to accomplish the work would have been considerable. The efforts of the men in Alaska earned the station a lot of kudos and for me it was greater recognition and ultimately a promotion to Manager Ground Spaceflight Tracking and Data Network (GSTDN).



Goddard Range and Range Rate Antenna

Alaska was a great place to raise our boys who loved to fish, cross country ski, snow machines and the outdoors in general. While hunting and fishing were very good, we didn't do any hunting while there but concentrated on fishing for anything that we could catch. Grayling was most abundant. A month after we arrived Doug couldn't go fishing until he had his tonsils removed.

Greg was goalie on a Soccer team and played very well. He was tall for his age and as long as he could keep his glasses from fogging up and clean from the mud, he did a good job of defending. Doug too played on a soccer team. What is remarkable is that no matter the age, the kids on the soccer teams played in T-shirts and shorts while we parents and onlookers were wearing parkas. Or in my case I learned to wear my snowsuit to keep the mosquitoes from biting.



Greg is No. 16 - In the upper left corner is the Alaska State Bird

Fairbanks Soccer - Greg #16 was Goalie

During the summer months we went through a case of Off Mosquito Spray as quickly as someone with a dose of salts. About everyone you encountered smelled like Off. Unless of course you used Avon Skin So Soft which we often did.



Soccer Boy Doug

The use of Skin So Soft came about after I read where an old Cajun was asked what he used for mosquito repellent. He said he used Avon Skin So Soft “because it smelt good and didn't ruin the blue'n on his gun.” That was good enough for me. Now I think Avon makes a bug repellent.

Contrary to what some people think, Fairbanks had a temperature swing of 150 degrees or more. In the winter it might be minus 60 whereas the summer could reach as high as 90 degrees or more. This made it tough on equipment and especially electronic equipment that was exposed to the elements. One thing that I never heard from any of the employees was that it was too cold to work.

I never heard any complaints of that sort and there were times when the weather was neither fit for man nor beast but if operations were dependent on making repairs out in the cold, so be it. The work got done which is something I admired in the Alaska crew and don't know if I can say that about other stations that I worked at.

On one hot night with temperatures in the 90's neither Kathie nor I or the boys were able to sleep so I dressed and went downtown to JC Penney that was having a moonlight madness sale on fans. While there I also purchased a 5 man inflatable rubber raft and a half-inch ratchet with a spark plug socket.

I might add that the beautiful Chena River ran through the city of Fairbanks. So one day we took the Pickle down to the west end of the city then carried the raft in my Nissan truck I had purchased to the east end of the city. We inflated the raft and we four piled in. Ouch! The water was cold but it wasn't long before our butts became numb enough not to notice. A couple hours later we had drifted down to the middle of the city where a Boatel was situated at point that was easy for us to pull in and get a drink. Afterwards we drifted down the river and came upon a sandbar where Kathie threatened to get out but the boys wouldn't let her. I was surprised that Greg and Doug lasted as long as they did because it took hours to drift to the car.

There were just too many good things that occurred in Fairbanks to address them all so I will touch only a few that were important to me and the family. It was a great place for the boys to go outside and play and not too far from the Chena River where Doug and his buddy like to fish for Grayling and all they needed was an ultra-light rod and a fly that looked like a mosquito. Often I would drop them off on the banks of the Chena River with their fishing gear and a sandwich or something to eat and they would spend the day walking the banks of the river fishing for Grayling or whatever they could catch. I seem to recall that it was catch and release.

Those two boys were so quiet that they could fish all day and not say much more than a dozen words to one another. They didn't need to. I wonder at how they could stand the mosquitos that lay over the water like a 2 ft. blanket. The only thing that disturbed them was when a Grayling came up to grab one or when the boys line cut through them to get to the water. They were so thick.

An exciting big event in Alaska is the great Iditarod 964 mile dog race from Anchorage to Nome and another is the Fairbanks Great North American Sled Dog Race is known as the “Grand Daddy of them all.” It is the longest running consecutive dog race and would have marked its 75th race this year but for COVID-19.

Kathie and Doug attended the 1981 North American Sled Dog race and got to see the legendary race champion George Attla. He won ten Fur Rendezvous Championships and eight North American Open Championships.



Books have been written and movies (Spirit of the Wind) made about George Attla's career. He was eight when he got bone tuberculosis and underwent several surgeries that left him with a limp. George died in February 2015. He may have been the greatest sled dog racer in history and his record is not likely to be repeated.

Another great race is the 1000 mile Yukon Quest that runs from Fairbanks to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. And finally the Yukon 800 Marathon which is a River Boat Race that runs from Fairbanks to Galena and back. There are three crew members in a 24ft or longer river boat powered by a stock 50 HP outboard. Prizes vary but there used to be silver for the first to reach Galena and gold for the winners when they reach Fairbanks. Current rules and information can be found on the Internet.

One of the early contestants and a winner worked at the site. His name was Jerry Evans and was always glad to assist new racers with their boats, engines and whatever else to make them competitive. He helped one new employee of the site get outfitted and he placed 5th in his first race.

Interesting enough, the top five boats all came in within 5 minutes of one another. We learned that whatever the Alaskans set their mind to doing something, they did it in a big way.

Evans was an Athabaskan Indian and like many of his ethnicity, he was soft spoken and measured his speech. One day during the winter he and several other employees were taking a lunch break and were remarking about the sun. There was a notch in the hill behind the station through which the sun could barely be seen as it passed through. The conversation was about this being the last day the sun would be seen until spring. Jerry was well liked and respected by all of the employees and he was a good story teller that could command the attention of anyone in earshot because of his soft quiet voice, characteristic of many Indians.

When the lunch hour rolled around and employees going in and out, they were fortunate to be in the room when Jerry was there. One day when the lunch room was mostly full of employees eating their lunch, someone asked him what kind of winter was in store for us.

Jerry looked around to see if he had everyone's attention and in a soft voice said this.

“This weekend I visited my old grandpa and asked him what kind of winter we would have. He looked at me, took a puff on his pipe and said, Grandson we are going to have a long hard winter. I said Grandpa, how do you know that? He took another puff and said Grandson, I have been reading the signs. So I asked what kind of signs Grandpa. He took another puff off his pipe and looked up at the sky and said...” By now each of us was hanging on every word and syllable when Jerry said, *“...Grandson, the White Man is laying in a lot of wood!”*

We began thinking about a picnic and how to have one where all three shifts could participate. Another issue that had to be resolved was location because at the time the Teamsters were boycotting all products related to Odom Distributors a company based in Seattle. In fact, that is where it all began when Odom Distributors and the Treasurer Jesse Carr, Local 959, couldn't agree on a contract that involved one Teamster. As a result Jesse directed all of Alaska Teamsters to picket the shopping centers and any place that sold Odom products, which basically were all brands of alcohol. This meant grocery stores too. The station Teamsters protested but eventually things were worked out. I should make it clear that Jesse Carr was one of the most powerful men in the Western United States. As Treasurer of Local 959, he had control and lots of power that he exercised from time to time.

An agreement was made to allow the station Teamsters to pay someone to picket in their place. A big reason is that the lost hourly wages was far more than paying someone to take your turn on the picket line. One big product that Odom distributed in Fairbanks was Miller Light and when I started planning the picnic the strike was still on so I went to see one of the technicians that owned a bar. I asked if he could furnish at least 5 kegs of beer, preferably Miller Light. He said he could and he did.

The first ever Bendix Picnic was held in Pioneer Park and ran for 4 days beginning Friday and running into Monday to make sure that all three shifts had an opportunity to attend. At the same time I had Mom and Dad fly up from Arkansas to spend a few days to celebrate their anniversary. Dad had retired from the Air Force in Anchorage and they had never made the trip to Fairbanks all the time they were in Alaska.

We were having 24 hours of sunshine so the picnic was great. Shift after shift were able to participate and my dad found a partner, John Slone, to play horseshoes with. The two took over the horseshoes pits and were almost impossible to beat.

As the winter approached, it was becoming more difficult for the Teamsters to shop for Christmas gifts because they were not supposed to visit the shopping centers. Finally an agreement was made to permit the Teamsters to shop at one shopping center and those stores only. I don't know if they were permitted to shop in Anchorage or not but that was an all-day drive and 360 miles to the south.

That winter we made the long drive to Anchorage. Not to shop but to visit friends who were fellow BFEC employees, the Krugman's that we first met in Canary Island and last saw in Merritt Island, Florida. The last that we heard of Clay and Monica was that their home had burned and they had left for Alaska. Of course I would never have guessed that we too would one day be in Alaska. But here we were. I looked Clay up in the telephone directory and sure enough he was living in Anchorage. We learned that he was working in logistics for a big communications company while Monica was driving a forklift for another. They invited us to visit during the long weekend.

Kathie and I and the two boys left Fairbanks in the Pickle with a minus 50 degree temperature and snow on the road but we had all our warm clothes inside and snacks to keep us on the road for the 360 miles to Anchorage. The drive was uneventful except once Greg happened to notice the temperature was going up on the car. The outside temperature was too. But then I remembered that I still had cardboard between the radiator and the grill. Problem solved.

It was a great visit and we had no problems with our trip either direction. There is an old Alaska saying, "*There are two kinds of driver; those who've been in a ditch and those who are going in a ditch.*" And before the year is out, I was one of those that had been in a ditch. I ran into some black ice and zip, I was immediately in the ditch running through snow that was 2ft higher than the Pickle. What really concerned me was somewhere along there the Alaska Pipe Line crossed that ditch I was in so I turned the wheel and shot out onto the road. Unbelievable but the Pickle pulled right out of the ditch.

Later I heard employees talking about someone leaving a tunnel in the snow. The one surprising thing is that the Pickle endured three Alaskan winters without serious damage to the interior. When purchasing a nice car like the Mercury one would never think that it might one day be driven in Alaska so Naugahyde seats wasn't a concern. But minus 60 degrees was hard on plastic seats and interior. It could make them feel like glass.

As recommended by the Milepost and others, I had taken all the precautions such as engine block heaters and battery blankets but the one thing that served its purpose was the 1200 watt heater that I had on the inside of the car. When we plugged into the electric hitching post all the heaters went to work. Years later the effects of the cold temperatures could be seen on the edge of the drivers seat where the Naugahyde was cracked.

Sitting outside in the cold for 8 to 10 hours did a number on the tires. Most of us ran radial tires which held up in the cold and gave us good traction. For the most part Fairbanks and the surrounding boroughs used gravel on the road in lieu of salt. Studs were legal for a short period but a good radial was almost as effective.

There was a day when my left rear tire lost air. It wasn't noticeable because the cold caused the ground side of the tires to be slightly flat and they didn't become fully circular until you had driven them a few miles and warmed them up. So the rough ride to town wasn't cause for concern as it was more normal than not but I made a quick stop at the drug store. When I came out, the flat tire was obvious. What a pleasure it is to have to change a tire in minus 50 degrees with all your foul weather gear on. You do what you have to do.

During the summer of 1983 I made an administrative visit back to Corporate HQ in Columbia, Maryland to discuss preparations for a new bargaining contracts with the Teamsters and Joint Crafts. Our president of BFEC at that time was Murray Weingarten who had been looking at the wages we were paying the union employees who were averaging a 56 hour work week.

He saw a disparity in the wages of our salaried employees and mine in particular. He expressed his appreciation for the work that I had been doing and said I should get a pay raise. He also said he had never gone to Alaska and he made it clear that he never would. Not long after I returned to Fairbanks, I learned that I was to receive a promotion to Manager, Tracking Stations and a 40% raise and it meant a move back to Maryland. Initially it was believed that I would move to Columbia where the Tracking Station Office was located.

I prepared the Pickle by putting a tow package on the rear so that the truck could be towed if we decided it was necessary. As it turned out there came a time when I was pleased that I had done so because Kathie fell ill and wasn't able to drive. So we hooked up the Datsun behind the Pickle and I towed the truck until we stopped for the evening. The next day she was feeling better and we restored things back to the way they were. While hooked up like that and it raining, we ran into roadwork that had a muddy road and a deep ditch on the right side and no guard rail. It was scary but we made it.

In all of the 5,000 miles I lost sight of her only twice. Once was when we were approaching a curve on the gravel road and dust was flying when around the curve came a large tractor trailer blowing dust high into the air. It was so bad that even with the Pickle's' headlights, I could not see her behind me nor could I see the road ahead. I made my best guess as to how the road curved and proceeded on in hopes she was still behind me and hadn't hit the truck or the ditch but when the dust allowed us to see, she was right behind me.

The next time I lost sight of her was in Calgary when a Red light caught her. Fortunately I had CB radios in the vehicles so we kept in touch and met up at a Pizza restaurant. That was the last time I lost sight of her in all those thousands of miles because she stuck to me like glue.

We went through Mitchell ,South Dakota and visited the Corn Palace then on to Mount Rushmore where we ran into a large crowd of bikers who likely were in the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. An event that is held in Sturgis each August and attended by motorcycle riders from all over the United States and from other countries. We were right in the middle of the tail end of the rally.

When we arrived and pulled into the parking lot, many of the participants were visiting the Mount Rushmore park along with us. There appeared to be thousands of motorcyclist at the park and all but two or three parking spaces were full of bikes. Since the parking spaces were closer to the entrance and there were no cars to see anywhere around, I pulled into an empty space and Kathie followed with the Pickle. One of the bikers got up and said something but another man said something about us being from Alaska and said to leave us alone. From there we had a good 100 yards to walk through hundreds of bikes to get to the entrance.

One giant biker in particular looked like a man that we've seen in movies where bikers are part of the cast. I remember the look on Greg's face when he said he was going to the bathroom and turned around to find himself staring into this giant's belt buckle. The guy had a 100 lbs of chains hanging all around his neck and shoulders like they were jewelry. Greg changed his mind. I don't blame him cause I didn't want to go to the bathroom either.



Mt Rushmore, Sturgis, South Dakota

We made a stop in Rockford, Illinois and made a short visit to my sister Carla and her husband Bill. It had been a long time since Carla and I had seen one another but soon we were on the road again as I had plans to report to work earlier than scheduled.

When visiting the corporate offices a few weeks earlier, it was expected that I would occupy the office of tracking stations that was located in Columbia HQ, but upon my return to the states I was pleased to learn that my office had moved to 10210 Greenbelt Rd not far from the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) and even more pleased that my Assistant and my secretary had already moved the office to the 8th floor of the Bendix Building. Now all I had to do was complete the hiring of my

Photo courtesy of Richard Bartels



The vintage of the cars dates the photo

28 – Goddard Space Flight Center, Maryland 1983

As Manager of the GSTDN, my responsibilities were to manage a \$60 million dollar contract with more than 700 employees operating ten tracking stations around the world. These stations were located in Alaska, Ascension Island, Bermuda, Botswana, Dakar, California, Guam, Hawaii, Maryland, Merritt Island and Ponce De Leon, Florida.

My office was comprised of an Assistant, a Secretary, Business Administrator and two or three other men that needed temporary work. There were times when we shared space with other BFEC employees who may have been in between contracts or needed to charge their time to my accounts temporarily. One such man once managed the NASCOM contract that BFEC had recently lost. There was a saying in the company that if assigned to marketing, it meant you didn't have a contract.

In August 1983, we enlisted a real estate sales person to show us houses in the eastern part of Maryland. We had decided that anything from Bowie to Annapolis would be satisfactory and a decent drive to my work. We found a beautiful 3-story house in Edgewater that sat on the South River. At night we could see the lights of Annapolis off in the distance.

Dan owned a big boat and had asked me to go fishing. It was not quite a yacht though one could live on it comfortably if necessary. This one day I decided to take him up on the invitation when he invited me to a fishing trip on the Bay and I took my younger son Doug who loved to fish as much as I did. The water was rough on the Bay that day and the longer we stayed out the higher the swells. In the meantime Doug was tending the lines while Dan and I sat up on the upper deck listening to country music.



Doug and Blue Fish he caught in Chesapeake Bay

Despite the large swells, Doug was pulling in the Blues. One minute he would be way down in the trough and the next minute above us as the swells lifted the boat up and down. Finally it got too rough and we had to give it up but the results are in the photo. No doubt Doug's arms were about to fall off. He was tired. We never went out with Dan again but Doug spent a lot of time on one of the docks fishing and crabbing.

The plan for my office was to pay an annual management visit to each tracking station but that soon became obvious the objective wasn't going to be met. I did however make trips to Alaska, Ascension, Dakar, Guam, Hawaii, Goldstone and Merritt Island, FL. Once there was a need to visit Bermuda but I already had a trip planned to Guam and Hawaii so my boss decided he would go in my stead. In the 3 years I was Network Manager, I never made it to Bermuda.

I made two trips to Dakar, Senegal, the first was a regular management visit and the second was to install a new manager who had been to Dakar before and needed no introduction. It was not a pleasant visit because I was replacing the current Site Manager because he was overwhelmed by Dakar and its culture. I'm sure it was a drastic change for him since he had grown up in Hawaii. I don't know how I would adjust to Dakar or if I would have lasted long in that environment.



Dakar, Senegal Tracking Station

When I arrived the first time, the station had already made hotel reservations and there was a person to pick me up and drive me to the hotel. We hadn't driven very far when we came upon a group of men in khaki uniforms standing in the shade of a big tree. An armed soldier stepped out in the road and ordered us to stop. He checked our papers then had us open the trunk where I had brought several Christmas presents intended for the children of the station employees. He poked around until he espied the gifts but left them alone.

I learned that he and his group were Custom officers and that this was a frequent occurrence. They stopped almost all cars coming from the airport and extracted some kind of toll. A few CFA francs would get you on your way. While it may have only been customs officials, it is a little intimidating to have armed men stop you on the road in a country that you are unfamiliar with. However this was Dakar and a scene that site employees were familiar with.

The Admin guy who had made hotel reservations for me said that he had booked the special NASA room for me. At first I didn't see anything special until I opened the curtains and saw several French beauties that were bare chested sitting around the swimming pool. Later that night, however, I learned it wasn't all that special when the bed bugs woke me up. Far-ra-do. Even with a change in rooms, I still felt those damn things biting me. It was all my imagination but still, my imagination was pretty realistic.

I failed to mention that on the connecting flight from BWI to JFK the ATR-42 aircraft had a smell like that given off by electrical wiring. Since I had a career in electronics and could recognize the smell of burnt electrical wire, I mentioned this to the stewardess but she pooh pooed the suggestion and said the coffee pot smelled like that when brewing. I chose not to say anymore.

From Dakar to JFK I was to fly Pan Am airlines with the flight leaving at 3am. The hotel desk said they would wake me in time and would drive me to the airport. I woke that morning at 5 am and was upset that they didn't wake me so I ran to the desk and had to wake the clerk up. He informed me that I hadn't missed the plane because it had problems and would be delayed.

I went down mid-morning to get coffee and a bite to eat where I met some Pan Am workers having breakfast also. I can't remember the other man's name but the one I do recall was named Gene Autry. I introduced myself as Roy Rogers. That really was his name. I learned also that the Pan Am flight was delayed because of a problem with an oil sensor. It was discovered many hours later to be a faulty sensor so we didn't depart until about 3 pm which made us 12 hours late.

Gene Autry – that was his real name – was part of the Pan Am crew that supported the Trans-Atlantic Landing (TAL) Site at Dakar in the event of an emergency that prevented the Shuttle from achieving orbit. There were other TAL sites in other parts of the world but it would depend on the launch trajectory for any one of them to come into play.

After having provided a little background on one another, it was time to retire to my room and get ready to go to the airport but as I was about to get up from my chair, Gene Autry said he would like me to take a message to one of the stewardess on that flight. I agreed then he told me to go to the baggage area and tell this guy that he had sent me. When I got to the airport and was able to find the baggage area, the man instructed me to step over the counter and the two of us went through a series of backrooms until we were in the Pan Am private club. A few snacks and a couple stiff drinks and I was ready to board. As soon as I stepped into the plane, a big 747, I sought out the stewardess and gave her Gene Autry's message. She grabbed me by the arm and steered me to First Class and sat me down in one of the seats. On those long flights I had been flying business class which was pretty nice but this was First Class, a nice change. Thanks Gene...and Roy and all the other cowboys.

As we neared JFK, the pilot announced that the airport was socked in with fog so thick that we were going to divert to an airport in New Jersey. This was met by a lot of groans but minutes later the pilot came on and directed everyone to fasten their seat belts because we were going in at JFK. Instead of seeing an airport and runway, we could see nothing but white. Suddenly a hole opened up and we dropped 50 ft. or so and hit the runway with a solid bang hitting the tarmac so hard that we thought we heard a tire blow. Whatever the noise, we were on the ground racing towards whatever was ahead of us that we couldn't see. Nice flight.

As soon as we taxied up to a gate, we Americans were zipped through customs while the poor Senegalese and South Africans who had already spent hours in Dakar waiting on this flight to depart, were now being processed slowly by customs.

I didn't stop to call Kathie at that hour but rushed to the gate of the connecting flight because it was due to take off any minute. It was waiting for the fog to lift enough to fly. Again we are waiting. After an hour of sitting on the plane they finally announced that they were going to try and take off. A crew came out with a generator to start the engine but it was dead and they had to go and find another. It must have been another half hour before they came back and started the engine and when it did start, a loud bang and 6 ft. of fire shot up from the cowling. I think folks were thinking that maybe they should take another flight but we managed to fly to Baltimore without another incident.

My next trip to Dakar was uneventful from BWI to JFK and to Dakar and back. However on the connecting flight we were on the same ATR-42 aircraft that had the electrical smell and as usual I sat in the back near the stewardess. Having been flying for several hours, I was a little tired and was about to fall asleep after reaching flight altitude. But as I leaned against the window, I began to feel the window pulsating and raised my head to check the cabin and noticed the people up front looking out of the port window. The vibration became more pronounced and the pilot came on the intercom and apologized and said that we had lost the left engine and all hydraulics. We were about to make an emergency landing.

He brought us in for a landing but in the absence of one engine and no hydraulics, we went flying through a field with very little control. When the plane stopped we were 2 or 3 miles from anywhere but by the time we all deplaned a van arrived to take us to the airport terminal. This was no time to worry about our luggage which was later delivered at home. When we arrived at the terminal, we were at the Atlantic City, NJ Airport.

Of course the airlines did not have any operations here so it was a few hours before arrangements were made to get us, the crew and our luggage home. We felt lucky to have avoided a disastrous crash. I called Kathie to let her know that once again I would be home late. Also, it was an opportune time to thank the crew and the pilot for getting us down safely. I happened to be near the door when an 11 passenger van drove up. The driver got out looked around the inside of the terminal and then got on the phone. I couldn't hear what he was saying but he obviously wasn't happy. I think he was learning that he didn't have a large enough vehicle for us passengers and our luggage.

I saw a Limo arrive and a tall attractive blonde stepped out of the driver's seat. I'm not sure why but I asked if she was there on behalf of the airlines and she said she was. I then asked if the car was locked. Seconds later I was in the passenger seat after telling her that she was driving me to BWI. A very large black lady overheard our conversation so she grabbed her son and they too piled into the Limo. All of us were going to Baltimore. A couple more entered the car and we were soon southbound to BWI. The driver was happier getting a bigger fee for taking us to BWI but thinking more about this caper, I believe the Limo was sent to pick up the crew – not us passengers.

My return from Dakar was just as the Network was preparing for the Shuttle launch of 51-L. At Goddard we managers had a special room for viewing the launch as well as the status of the tracking stations which were all reporting Green. But all was not well as we quickly learned two minutes into the launch when the Shuttle exploded sending the astronaut crew to their deaths.

Following the launch mishap, NASA launched an investigation into the cause of the failed launch and began a review of the program. This caused a two year shutdown of operations. Some stations continued to track satellites but no shuttle activity was being performed in the network. Still I was busy visiting the tracking stations and presenting service awards. This generally involved recognizing employees that were celebrating 20, 25 and 30 years of service by taking them, their wives and their supervisors including the station managers to dinner.



Presenting 25 year pin to Site Manager

Months before the January 1986 tragedy I visited the Hawaii tracking station to present service awards to the site manager and to several of his staff. It was always my intent to have the site's Business Administrator select the restaurant and invite the appropriate employees and guest in accordance with our company policy. That particular evening I was directed to this large hotel and upon entering the dining room I was hailed by a group at one large table. Then another table said Aloha, then another. I began to think that the entire station that wasn't working was invited. It was a special occasion however.

I might add that my expense report for the evening was a whopper so I decided to slip it under several other files on my Vice President's desk. Even now he remembers having to eat the cost of that dinner but I'm thankful that he did. Good employee relations.

Over the years I hosted many such award dinners but nothing that cost as much as that dinner. One of my favorite things to do at these dinners was to see how many employees still had the original ID card that was issued by BFEC when they hired on. Most of them did. Was it because we had hair then?

One of my early tasks in the new office was to fill the position I had vacated at Alaska. I selected one John Lacewell who had bumped around the network for several years. I selected him because of his experience but if that wasn't enough, his swagger and genuine confidence was enough to get him through most situations.

There were a number of stories surrounding John and one I liked in particular as that was when he was selected to manage the Ascension Island station. Ascension did not have a wharf or docks of any kind so when a ship came in, a smaller craft had to ferry people and freight onto the island. It was said that when John arrived by boat he was seen standing with one foot on the bow and a large white scarf wrapped around his neck blowing in the wind and looking like a conquering hero.

As it were I have my own story about John. Married to a beautiful girl from India he was much the persona as described in the Ascension story.

When it came time for me to escort him and his wife Jean to Fairbanks to introduce him as the new Senior Manager, I suggested he rent the car and pick me up at home in Edgewater. John said he would make the flight arrangements to Alaska and pick up a rental car. I agreed and was willing to let him take care of these arrangements for the three of us.

When he and his wife picked me up on Sunday morning and started all the way across Washington DC, I questioned his sense of direction expecting to fly out of BWI where most all of our flights originated or ended. No, he had made flight arrangements at Dulles Airport which was way over on the other side of the District and in Virginia. It was a half day's ride and when we got to the airport he was hungry so we stopped at a hotel which was the only place to eat at the time. It happens that it being Sunday, all they had was Brunch and a very expensive one at that.

After leaving most of our wallet at the hotel, we entered the airport, checked our luggage and went to the waiting area where we waited...and waited...and waited. Finally at our scheduled flight time and no sign of anyone taking tickets at the gate, we learned the plane had been delayed at BWI. Six O'clock came and went and still no plane but it is now time for John's medication of some sort. His Meds were in the luggage however. So his wife slides down the baggage chute, climbs over luggage until she finds theirs, retrieves his Meds and returns to the gate disheveled. Then to add insult to injury, the security folks tell us that we have to leave so they can lock up the gate. Why??? It's their dinner time and besides the plane had been delayed until 8 pm.

When the plane did arrive it became apparent that this trip from hell wasn't over with yet because we were about to miss our flight from Seattle to Fairbanks. And we did. John and I started in on the young lady that was still at the now closed gate since the plane had been long gone. We explained our situation tried to arrange another flight to Fairbanks but to no avail as nothing was available until early the next morning. So we requested that we be given some kind of compensation such as a meal ticket and a hotel room. That fell on deaf ears so we asked for her supervisor. When she showed up John and I double-teamed her but again our efforts were futile. We either had to sleep in the lobby or get a motel.

We finally gave up and called for a ride to the Red Lion Hotel and while eating an early breakfast, the waitress overheard us and said so and so airlines gives out a \$100 meal ticket and a room. My first instruction to John when we arrived in Fairbanks was to never book that airline again.

After the Dakar debacle, I had to make a second trip to Fairbanks but this was to present as well as jointly accept the Bendix Larry Jochen Award for Outstanding Performance. The award was earned while I was the Senior Manager at Alaska and was presented to the site for exceptional performance for the Quarter. We earned it through our operations performance and the counter weight repairs.

In addition to my travel to the tracking stations to conduct management visits or to present service awards to employees who were enjoying long careers with BFEC, and there were visits that may have involved staffing. It could have been a promotion or at other times to address unsatisfactory performance.

But the ones I enjoyed most were the visits where I would conduct Employee-Management Communications Meetings or Comm Meetings for short. For me this was always a great time to have informal talks with employees while communicating changes with the organization or future company plans. For me it was easy because I was once in the positions of those employees.

There were many other such management visits to tracking stations to present awards and to celebrate the service of employees, especially those with 20 years or more of employment with BFEC.

Not long after we had relocated to Maryland and got settled, John Gale and I planned a trip to Alaska during the winter. It was bitter cold and the rental car's tires were almost square when we set out to go anywhere. I don't think John had ever been to Fairbanks when it was that cold so it was a new experience for him. When it was over he said that he didn't plan on ever going back up there.



John Gale and I present the Station with the Larry Jocken Award

The above photo and award presentation to the Alaska station was both an awkward but proud moment for me and the ULA staff. John Gale is presenting the Larry Jocken Outstanding Performance award to John Lacewell who I selected to replace me as the Senior Manager. The performance award was earned while I was still managing the station. Behind me kneeling is our customers the NOAA Station Director Greg White and standing above him with glasses is the NASA Station Director Ed Eisele.

A big part of my job as Network Manager was to boost morale be it through the Comm Meetings or by visits to the tracking stations accompanied by an astronaut. One visit was to NASA's Network Test and Training Facility (NT&TF) located just outside Goddard Space Flight Center. On this visit me and astronaut Robert Parker, a Mission Specialist on STS-9 and STS-35 paid a surprise visit to NT&TF.



John Jobes, Astronaut Parker and yours truly



ASTRONAUT VISIT AT BLT/NTTF---NASA Astronaut Robert A. Parker (second from left) with (from left) Glen D. Smith, BFEC tracking stations manager, Ground Spaceflight Tracking and Data Network (GSTDN); C. H. Shaddeau, Jr., Greenbelt (BLT) NASA tracking station/Network Test and Tracking Facility (NTTF) NASA station director; John L. Michalik, Jr., BLT/NTTF BFEC facilities supervisor; and John J. Jobes, BLT/NTTF BFEC station manager. Parker visited the station recently as part of NASA's Manned Flight Awareness Program which seeks to increase interest and motivation of employees involved in NASA's space program. Astronaut Parker flew on the mission of Space Shuttle STS-9. BLT/NTTF was one of the prime tracking stations involved in the STS-9 mission in November 1983.



Presenting Alaska Engineer John Sloan with 20 yr. pin as Site Manager looks on



Presenting an award to Alaska Employee

In October 1984, STS-41 G with Jon McBride as pilot, the Shuttle Orbiter was passing over our Guam tracking station and the Orbiter acknowledged the station as it passed overhead. The station responded and during the short communication McBride was invited to visit the Guam station at any time. He accepted the invitation and the very next month he and his wife flew to Guam. The whole island of Guam from the Governor on down turned out to welcome Mr. and Mrs. McBride to the island with BFEC contributing food and drink. It was a memorable time that Guam and the site personnel won't soon forget.



I have great memories of Guam and a memento as seen on the left to remind me of my visit. Pretty Chamorros dancing in coconut bras. Oops. Mine were only photos on the plaque but I understand these were the dancers for McBride's visit.

There was another interesting tidbit about my visit to Guam that I shouldn't forget. When Mom learned of my planned trip she said my cousin Bill, known as "WL" lived there. He was the cousin that I wrote of earlier that joined the Air Force with Dad and stayed in Guam after he retired. If I recall correctly, his first wife had died and he later married a lady who lived on the island.

I telephoned him and was picked up at the hotel by him and his daughter who took me to dinner where we tried our best to catch one another up on family in the brief time we had. I got to have breakfast with him a couple times on the way to the site and years later saw much more of him and his wife here in Florida until he died.

I heard a story that during their flight over to the island one of the stewardesses recognized McBride and immediately informed the Captain who turned the controls over to the copilot and walked back to where Jon and wife were sitting. It was immediate recognition as the Captain had been one of Jon's instructors. He moved them to them to the first class cabin and invited Jon to fly in the cockpit with them to Guam.

An update to the Jon McBride story is in April 2012 I held my ship's reunion in Melbourne Beach, FL and one of the tours I planned was Kennedy Space Center (KSC). I had planned two big tours as was customary for all my reunions. One tour was a day cruise on the Victory Gambling ship out of Port Canaveral and the second was a VIP tour of KSC. I included a program that included lunch where you dine with an astronaut. It just so happens that astronaut was Jon McBride who gave us a speech about spaceflight, answered questions and after lunch he permitted photo ops. He and I had a brief moment to talk about his visit to Guam.

Earlier I mentioned that our home at 1633 Midland Road, Edgewater, MD was a beautiful 3-story house. The bedrooms were on top floor, living and dining area on second floor and an almost 3 car garage, laundry and study on bottom floor. It had a large deck on second floor looking out over the South River. At night we could sit on the rear deck and see across the river at the lights of Annapolis. Perfect.

It was nice to be home again but it was also time to catch up on events while I was absent. It seems Greg who was basically a new driver went off a slippery road and put the Monte Carlo in a ditch.

I had traded the Datsun truck for the Monte Carlo thinking it might be a better car for him to drive. I was beginning to wonder if that had been a wise choice which led us to believe that we should keep him out of the Pickle.

Within hours of telling me about that incident he came home to tell us that a lady hit him in the left front fender as he was pulling out of a parking lot. It didn't look good but it was drive-able. Since it was in a parking lot, there wasn't much to do but accept the woman's insurance card however we never filed a claim. Chiefly because only minutes from him telling us about that accident, he left the house to go pick up a friend and as he was passing the Fire Department on the next street, someone backed out into the right front fender.

Now we had a set of matching fenders. Actually, it was difficult to find blame on either party but it became clear that Greg was ready to give up the Monte Carlo. In fact, he wanted to drive the Pickle because it was much cheaper to drive but we said no. In the months ahead when cars were mentioned, I threatened to buy him another Monte Carlo.

One morning I was awakened early when I heard footsteps running over to the corner right above my closet. About that time an old raccoon decided to take up residence in the attic. After I discovered what it was and that it was getting in through the attic fan, I was very cautious sticking my head through the attic door because the fan was right above my head. I just didn't want to surprise him coming in or going out.

After several phone calls to different agencies, we were basically told that there wasn't anything that they would do so I set about removing the homesteader. One solution I offered was to shoot him with my .44 magnum but none of the agencies liked that remedy. I was only kidding. One suggestion was to sprinkle a certain type of mothball around the attic and the base of the house. I did that and it almost drove the four of us out of the house. Since we didn't know if it was a male or female, I was concerned that it might be the latter and have a litter of little ones. Fortunately, that wasn't the case.

After the mothballs and spraying bleach and everything else over in the attic corner, I just happened to catch it easing down the gutter on the back porch. I slipped around to the kitchen and saw him on the outer rail of the deck and jerked open the door and yelled. I scared it so bad that it latterly jumped off the deck onto the concrete pad below. It sounded like a ripe watermelon. That sucker was big as a dog. Stunned it sat there and stared at me for the longest time with a forlorn look. Afterwards I climbed up in the attic and covered the hole so it couldn't get back in.

That dang raccoon may have gone but it seemed like months before the mothballs eventually dissolved to where we didn't smell them anymore. Or maybe we had just got used to the smell. I'm not sure that they were all that effective against the raccoon but we decided let our house become the Wild Kingdom before we would put down any mothballs.

It was during this period that the MILA Senior Manager signaled his intent to retire which meant I should be looking for a person to replace him. I had a good candidate in mind who had worked for Bendix for a number of years and many of them in management. When offered the job, he eventually declined because his wife had a good job and did not wish to retire at that time. So when asked by my boss, VP Space Division who I was going to send to replace the retiring manager, I told him that I would go back to Florida and manage the station. I was surprised that he had no objections so I took the matter home to my family.

I will be the first to admit that it was a very tough move for Greg and he resented it for months afterwards. But it was the correct move for us as things were changing in the GSTDN because we had plans to close stations around the globe. MILA and PDL would be the only two left because they were critical for launch.

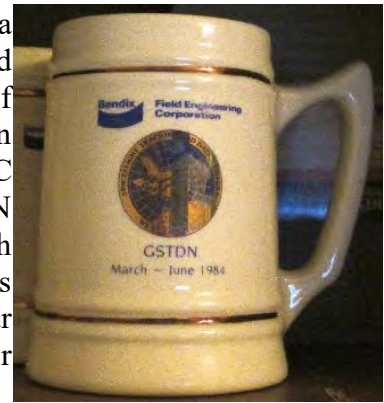
BFEC was tasked to develop a plan to phase down the GSTDN which meant several hundred employees would be affected. The plan was to shutdown Alaska, Ascension, Bermuda, Botswana, Dakar, Goldstone, Guam and Hawaii. It was to be a slow and orderly phasedown and our job was to insure that employees were offered jobs elsewhere with BFEC. We were known throughout NASA and the technical world as a people company and we did what was necessary to earn that reputation. I am pleased to say that we offered jobs to each and every employee that wished to remain with the company.

Botswana was an interesting caper because NASA planned to remove the equipment and ship it back to the states but the country's government wanted to retain the equipment and have it operational for visitors to observe. Eventually we came up with an argument that both NASA and the Botswana government would be liable if the antenna fell off its pedestal and injured a visitor. It was agreed that NASA would leave the antenna but have it rendered inoperative by welding it down. Additionally, we provided copies of the mission audio between the Botswana station and the spacecraft during orbital support so they could play it for their visitors. It provided the tourist a more realistic demonstration of Botswana's support to the Space Shuttle Project.



Botswana (BOTS) Tracking Station

During my tenure as Manager, NASA Ground Tracking and Data Network (GSTDN), the program earned the first ever One Hundred Percent Award Fee. In recognition of this outstanding performance, all of the men and women in the GSTDN program received a special stein personalized with their name and accompanying letter from the BFEC President, Murray Weingarten. What is remarkable is that my GSTDN program followed that performance with a second Quarter in which NASA awarded us a second 100% award fee. Two consecutive quarters with 100% award fees. This was never done before on any of our programs and I'm not aware of any subsequent awards this high on other programs.



100% Award Fee Recognition



Field Engineering Corporation

One Bendix Road
Columbia, Maryland 21045
Tel (301) 964-7001

A Subsidiary of
The Bendix Corporation

M Weingarten
President

January 14, 1985

TO: GSTDN Personnel

As you know, the GSTDN contract is a cost plus award fee contract. Every four months the NASA evaluates our performance and determines the appropriate fee to be awarded to BFEC.

The period from March 1 through June 30, 1984, was of special significance in that we were awarded the maximum possible fee for our performance on the GSTDN contract. Some of you may recall that BFEC pioneered the award fee concept with NASA in 1962. Since that time, we have continued on the same basis, but never before have we received a "100% award fee" for one of our STDN contracts.

The real incentive on an award fee contract is to become the follow-on contractor, which we remain after numerous competitive procurements over the past quarter century. The 100% award is, nonetheless, a milestone event and a tribute to the efforts of all of you working on the network.

This commemorative mug was prepared for you as both a memento of the occasion and an expression of appreciation from the company, myself, and STDN program management. We do not intend to forget that it's the players and not the coaches who win the ballgame. Thank you so much for your efforts.

Sincerely,

I, along with many other men and women who supported the Mars Rover mission have our names etched on a microchip that was sent to outer space on the spacecraft.



I seem to think that they did something similar to another spacecraft, possibly the Pioneer mission where they put our names on a disk. Over the years there were many forms of recognition and there is no way I can recall them all.

29 – MILA/PDL Tracking Stations. Florida 1986

Before leaving for Florida I sold the Monte Carlo and purchased a new 1986 Ford F-151 truck. It was a very nice ride with a small V8 and was the last year that Ford would make this model truck. I drove it down to Titusville, Florida to conduct a 2-week handover with the outgoing manager before going back to Maryland to help Kathie make preparations to sell the house and move when school was out. It's a shame that I didn't keep that truck because it was the last of that model to be produced.

Eight years circulating the globe I'm now back in Florida where it all started except Kathie and boys have not yet joined me. I began looking for a house to purchase in the Mims area so the boys would be attending Astronaut High School. Little did I know at the time that they could have gone to Titusville High providing they arranged their own transportation. As it were we purchased a new house at 4155 Arlington Ave and lived there for the next 31 years.

MILA was a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) Tracking Station located on Kennedy Space Center (KSC) in Merritt Island Florida. The name "MILA" is an acronym derived from the Merritt Island Launch Annex to Cape Canaveral, which was the previous name of the area that eventually became Kennedy Space Center.



Merritt Island Launch Annex (MILA) Tracking Station

Built in 1966, MILA was part of the Manned Space Flight Network (MSFN). Its role was to provide pre-launch, launch and orbital support to the Apollo program. It was a critical element during pre-launch and launch operations because all commands from Houston to and from the Apollo capsule went through MILA. If unable to support during launch operations it would cause a delay in the countdown or a scrub altogether if unable to repair before the launch window expired. The history shows that MILA was always Green and Go for all Apollo, Shuttle and scientific spacecraft launches.

MILA's first mission was in July 1966 when receiving television via its S-Band system from the Apollo-Saturn (AS-203) mission. Shortly afterwards the station was equipped with remote-site flight controller consoles in order to train Johnson Space Center engineers during pre-launch testing of the Apollo Command and Service Module (CSM) and Lunar Module (LM). These consoles were used until the end of the Apollo Program in December, 1972. Software was written for the Univac 642-B computers which were controlled by the Station's Operations Personnel to support Skylab, Apollo-Soyuz and Shuttle missions. When S-band transmitters were added to NASA's Delta and Atlas/Centaur Expendable Launch Vehicles, MILA began to support those programs as well as continuing support for Apollo/Skylab and Apollo/Soyuz Test Project.

MILA inherited also the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) Deep Space Network Compatibility Station (DSS-71) at Cape Canaveral when it closed in 1974. The equipment was relocated to the MILA station and renamed MIL-71. Its mission was to support planetary and deep space missions conducted by the Pasadena Mission Control Center. The first mission supported by MIL-71 was the Helios-1 sun probe launched December 10, 1974.



Ponce De Leon (PDL) Tracking Station

When it became apparent to NASA that to provide S-band communications around the Space Shuttle solid rocket booster plume (which contains aluminum perchlorate, and strongly attenuates high frequency S-band signals), a "wing site" tracking station was constructed in 1979 some 40 miles north of MILA at New Smyrna Beach's Ponce DeLeon Inlet (PDL). The PDL wing site communicates with the MILA base station via a three-hop microwave system with towers at Shiloh and North Wilson. Eventually the Tracking and Data Relay Satellite (TDRS) replaced all the ground stations except for the MILA and PDL stations.

In 1986, we had a number of resources to support NASA programs. A second S-Band antenna and complete RF system was installed when I worked at MILA ten years earlier. Now with two redundant 9 meter S-Band systems, MIL-71, MILA Relay, Teltrac and a 4.3 meter S-Band system staffed by 142 exempt, nonexempt and bargaining employees, we provided twenty-four seven operations.

It was a nice homecoming because most of the staff were the same men that I had worked with in the 70's. Many of whom had tracked my career after I left for Goldstone and some even had photos and articles in which I had appeared while in Maryland as Manager, GSTDN. It was good for my ego.

Though we had our grievances, all but one was settled to the satisfaction of the employee. Having worked with bargaining units in Alaska, California and Maryland, I was intimately familiar with the process of negotiations and grievance resolution including arbitration when necessary.

Then in 1982 Bill Agee, president of Bendix, launched a hostile takeover of Martin Marietta but in turn Martin Marietta tried to take over Bendix. This was called the Pac-Man defense which was a popular electronic game at the time. Then United Technologies stepped in and joined Martin Marietta in a hostile bid to takeover Bendix but a white knight, Allied Corporation stepped in and rescued Bendix. Allied now owned Bendix. Next Agee was fired and the company purchased the Signal Company which made connectors and electronic cables and other devices and then Allied changed its name to AlliedSignal Corporation.

Yep. That is the correct name despite what your spell checker says. Most will try to separate or hyphenate the two words. We often joked about how much money AlliedSignal may have paid someone to come up with this new name. This name change generated some interesting conversation about paying someone to come up with the idea to simply join the two names without a hyphen. What they didn't think of was the spell checker on computers.

I, along with many others, had to notify my customers at KSC and all the area contractors of the new name change. Invariably, any correspondence that we received from those folks spelled the company's name as Allied-Signal or Allied Signal but never did they marry the two together. One can only guess how much money it cost to change the name on all the Bendix and Allied stationary, logos and all the products that carried the Bendix name. Then the company purchased Honeywell and was smart enough to keep the Honeywell name. Again, there was the expense to change the letterhead.

Over the years there were many engineers, technicians, safety, security, logistics, auditors, Bendix VIPs and later Allied-Signal Presidents, Vice Presidents and a host of corporate personnel to visit the Space Center but MILA was the nexus for those visits. The site entertained.

Some of the bigger events were the Manned Flight Awareness (MFA) Program that NASA established to recognize personnel that did something extraordinary in support of space flight. The accomplishment could be anything from a technical design to improve equipment or some other feat that was above and beyond the norm.



Launch Director Bob Sieck visiting MILA



Manned Flight Awareness Event

When NASA designated a Shuttle Flight an MFA event, facilities around the network would nominate a candidate and once the MFA Board selected an honoree, we would bring them and their families down to KSC to wine and dine as VIPs for the launch. It was a fun thing with plenty of good food. It was even better when the launch went off without a hitch.

During MFA events my staff and I were called upon to arrange dinners and other accommodations for VIPs, the BFEC Honoree and his or her family.



It generally involved a hotel suite with open bar, dinners at local restaurants and attending special affairs to include black tie receptions, banquets, meetings with astronauts, visits to MILA and other arrangements intended to make the honoree feel special. On one of these occasions I invited two young attractive astronauts, both had doctorate degrees but had not yet flown on a shuttle mission at that time. They had been told that it was an informal dinner at the Cocoa Beach Pier so they showed up in blue jeans and here we were in suits or sport jackets. No matter, we took off ties and sport jackets and dressed down and they quickly assimilated.

It was a special treat for us and our Space Flight Awareness Honorees and their families. Below are the short Bios of our two astronaut guests, Cady Coleman and Mary Ellen Weber.

CATHERINE "CADY" COLEMAN, PH.D. (COLONEL, USAF, RET.)

NASA ASTRONAUT

Pronunciation: KATH-rin "CAY-dee" COAL-men



[Follow Cady on Twitter](#)



[Video Q&A with Cady](#)

PERSONAL DATA: Born December 14, 1960, in Charleston, South Carolina. Married to glass artist Josh Simpson. She enjoys flying, scuba diving, sports and music. As an undergraduate, she competed in intercollegiate athletics on MIT's crew team. Her mother, Ann L. Doty, resides in Dayton, Ohio. Her father's family resides in Vancouver, Washington.

EDUCATION: Graduated from W.T. Woodson High School, Fairfax, Virginia, in 1978; received a bachelor of science degree in chemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1983 and a doctorate in polymer science and engineering from the University of Massachusetts in 1991.



MARY ELLEN WEBER, PH.D.

NASA ASTRONAUT (FORMER)

PERSONAL DATA: Dr. Weber was born in 1962 in Cleveland, Ohio. Bedford Heights, Ohio, is her hometown. She is married to Dr. Jerome Elkind, who is originally from Bayonne, New Jersey. She is an avid skydiver and golfer, and also enjoys scuba diving. Her mother, Joan Weber, currently resides in Mentor, Ohio. Her father, Andrew Weber, Jr., is deceased.

EDUCATION: Graduated from Bedford High School in 1980; received a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering (with honors) from Purdue University in 1984; received a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from the University of California at Berkeley in 1988; and received a Master of Business Administration degree from Southern Methodist University in 2002.



There came a time when our support was requiring greater security and when the Government declared the Space Shuttle, JSC, KSC and MILA as National Assets, it became necessary to lock the site down. I began by hiring as our security officer a young lady that had been performing security audits for KSC. The second act was to install a security fence, a key operated turnstile and a security ops building to monitor the ins and outs and issue badges to authorized visitors. Then we set up interviews for security monitors and hired four so that each shift had a monitor. Now that we had the site fenced in with razor ribbon and security monitors on duty 24 hours a day, it eliminated the outside traffic that we suspected were coming in during evening hours and using our break room that was in our engineering building.

There were many firsts and numerous other important accomplishments that boosted the Station's morale and I won't try to list them all. However there are a few stories that should be recorded for posterity. In particular is our company picnics at KARS Park on Merritt Island. I enlisted some of the employees to help me plan the event which involved cooking some BBQ and of course, a keg or two.

Employees were asked to bring their family and kin and anything extra they would need. We had beer, horseshoes, volley ball, swimming, and games for the kids and one of those tubs where a person could be dunked by hitting a target with a softball. I think every employee wanted to dunk me before the day was over.

One employee's wife was a practicing psychiatrist who happened on my brother and me drawing a beer. She wanted to know if we two were brothers. I spoke up and said, "We are now." She asked what that meant and Jerry picked it right up and said in a slightly feminine voice something like this, "Well...you know I had a sex change but I'm getting used to being a boy..." Obviously she wasn't taking us too serious but had she seen the photo of us too she may have wanted us to schedule and appointment.



Me, Darryl and my other brother Darryl

Then there was the time I became a television star when Yvonne Martinez of Orlando's Channel 9 came to MILA October 22, 1992 to interview me during launch of STS-52.



MILA was an attraction to many, especially to our astronauts who unlike most space workers, were very aware that voice, data and commands to and from Johnson Space Center (JSC) to the Orbiter came only through MILA.

I'm sure it was for this reason that we drew a lot of interest from the astronauts and NASA VIPs who frequently visited the Station. Almost every KSC Center Director has visited MILA at one time or another. The photo on the right was taken when astronaut and KSC Center Director Bob Crippen visited MILA. He and other astronauts seem to always want to see the Air-to-Ground system that was used for voice communications to the Orbiter.



Glenn Smith Bob Crippen Tony Ippolito

Other important visitors to MILA were former astronaut and NASA Administrator Charles Bolden and Astronaut Mario Runco. When one of our MILA employees earned a Silver Snoopy, Mario Ronco, having flown on STS-44, STS-54 and STS-77 came to MILA to present the Silver Snoopy Award and silver pin to the employee. When BFEC celebrated our 40th anniversary, I invited Mario to join us as a special guest. He gave a fantastic presentation from one of his STS missions that showed the destruction of the rain forest in Africa.

In 1994 I was introduced to Flat Stanley, an imaginary fellow that was visiting elementary schools around the country and it so happens that Flat Stanley visited my niece Toni's young daughter Tracee. It was Tracee who stuffed Flat Stanley in the mail and sent him to me with a request for him to return to Oklahoma and report on his travels to Florida and the Space Center. Here is his report to Tracee.

November 9, 1994

Well, here I am in Oklahoma again. I'm back from an exciting journey to Florida where I visited with Tracee Martin's Uncle Glenn with whom I watched the Space Shuttle Atlantis blast off into space. Before I get into the story about the space shuttle, I must tell you that it was a long and harrowing ride to get from Oklahoma to Florida. Tracee folded me up in a letter that explains how I have managed to turn my accident that caused me to be flat into a positive thing. While it was a long trip to be folded up like that, who else can fly around the world for a mere 29 cents it cost to buy a postage stamp?

After arriving in Orlando, by mistake I was sent to a place called Disney World. Has anyone ever heard of such a place? Never have I seen animals like this before. In Oklahoma we have horses, cows, chickens and all kinds of animals, but this place had the oddest collection of animals I have ever seen. There was a mouse with big ears that answered to the name Mickey and he could talk. Can you imagine? And he had a girl friend, Minnie, and lots of other animal friends that could talk as well.

After taking a few rides on the Merry-Go-Round, I was finally placed in a truck where I bumped around until they delivered me to a place in the country called Mims, Florida. Theta where Tracee's Uncle Glenn lives with Aunt Kathie, Cousin Doug and their dog Misty. Their house has lots of trees and an acre of land. Lots of grass to mow. And Cousin Doug has a lot of surfboards sitting around. He is a surfer and spends hours and hours at the beach surfing and saying things like, "Narley Dude, Nada" and "like hang ten."

Uncle Glenn works at the Space Center and for recreation, he likes to shoot pool and use his Macintosh computer. Its on his computer that I have been allowed to write this letter. He has a lot of trophies sitting in his computer room that are from shooting pool. In fact, ho won a 9-ball tournament the same day that I arrived in Mims. Ho is a member of CompuServe and American Online computer services which allow you to get any kind of news or information that you want. You can buy games, toys or look up information on any subject. One day you might be able to read about me, Flat Stanley, and my travels on American Online.

Uncle Glenn manages the NASA Merritt Island (MILA) Tracking Station located at the Kennedy Space Center where all the apace shuttle orbiters, Atlantis, Challenger, Discovery and Endeavor are kept and prepared for launch. The tracking station is called "MILA" for short and if you Listen closely during the launch countdown you will hear the announcer mention MILA several times.

MILA's job is to aim their antennas at the Shuttle Orbiter while its sitting on the launch pad and transmit voice and commands from the Johnston Space Center (JSC) in Houston, TX and to capture the Astronauts voice and data from the Orbiters computer and send it back to the Johnson Space Center. Its like a relay team. JSC sends the voice and data to MILA, it goes from there to the Shuttle and when the Astronauts talk, their voice goes to MILA and from there to Houston. MILA also measures how far the shuttle is from earth at all times.

So you can see MILA is very important to the space shuttle program. Without MILA to provide communications between the Space Shuttle Orbiter at the Kennedy Space Center and Johnson Space Center, the astronauts could not talk to the ground and NASA could not talk to them so the shuttle would not launch.

So it was that I arrived just in time to travel out to the Space Center and MILA to witness my first Shuttle launch, STS-66. Early morning, Nov. 3, the day of the launch, Uncle Glenn placed me in his briefcase so that he could slip me past the guard checking badges to keep out unauthorized visitors.

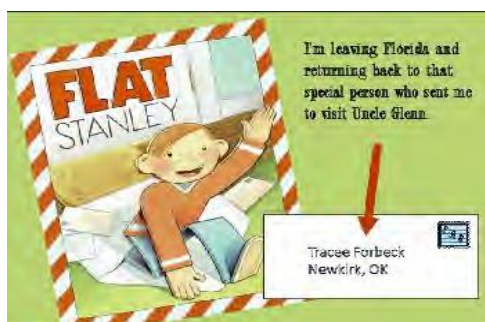
After we got inside the Space Center, he arranged me so that I could see all the sights of Kennedy Space Center (KSC). First, we drove to the KSC Press Dome where Uncle Glenn had to again present a special badge to get in. The Press area is where all the television network news people work when televising and reporting on a launch. We visited the Joint Integrated Press Center which they like to call by the first letters -JIPC - and is pronounced 'Gypsy.' At the JIPC we met some friends of Uncle Glenn and checked on the status of the countdown and the weather which was threatening to delay the launch. As we departed from the JIPC and reached the main road near the Vertical Assembly Building (VAB), the largest building on the Kennedy Space Center, we were stopped by guards holding up traffic to allow a special convoy of vehicles to pass. This was the astronauts on their way to the launch pad where they would enter the Shuttle Orbiter Atlantis and prepare for launch. This always happens about 3 hours before launch.

Finally, we arrived at the MILA Tracking Station where everyone was hard at work. Many men and women were at antenna controls, computer consoles, some were running large tape recorders and talking on headsets and telephones. Since Uncle Glenn is boss of MILA, he didn't operate the computers or any of the equipment, but walked around and checked to see if everything was working properly. Then the time for launch drew nearer.

While the countdown clock was counting the seconds down to the launch time, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6,...you could tell by everyone's face that the time for lift was here. When the clock got to zero, Uncle Glenn and some other people watched the engines ignite on a TV set just like you would watch at home. Then when all the engines were lit and the exhaust turned to blue flames, the mission announcer said, "we have ignition" and you could see the top of the shuttle move a little. This movement is called the "Tang" and is caused by all three shuttle engines trying to lift off the pad while it is still bolted down. Then just as quickly as the shuttle rocks back, the two large boosters ignite and now there is no way to stop the shuttle orbiter from lifting off the pad.

Lift off is a tremendous amount of noise and smoke. The ground vibrates and the shock waves travel across the wetlands and rattle windows in all the buildings around. And then there is a deafening roar of the 2 solid rocket boosters and the 3 shuttle main engines all burning together as the space shuttle hurtles into space. If one word could describe a shuttle launch

About 8 minutes later it was all over for KSC and MILA. The shuttle orbiter was in space and orbiting around the earth. The Tracking Data Relay Satellite was relaying the data and voice from the shuttle to the ground station in New Mexico and on to Johnston Space Center. It was a long but important 2 days of launch countdown for Uncle Glenn and MILA, but now they had to turn their attention to the next space shuttle orbiter getting readied for the next launch.



So with my souvenirs, I was packed and mailed back to Tracee in Oklahoma. I had a FANTASTIC trip and now I'm dreaming about the trip I may take one day aboard the space shuttle itself.

*Yours Truly,
Flat Stanley*

Another event that I'm really proud to have been involved with was the implementation of ISO-9000 at MILA and PDL. Two years earlier AlliedSignal decided to implement ISO-9000 but realized later that their program would require MILA and BDA to participate in the program. Although we were two years late, we hit the ground running. I decided that whatever we learned and/or developed, we would share with Bermuda.

I won't bore you with the details but after one year of difficult work and long hours, the end result was MILA/PDL were the first at Kenned Space Center to be fully certified as an ISO-9000 facility. What we learned, we shared with Bermuda. It was a proud moment to hoist the long banner on the front of the Operations Building signaling to everyone visiting the site that we were ISO-9000 Certified.

As NASA's budget for the Shuttle program got smaller, it was being felt by AlliedSignal and we were being squeezed to come up with cost reductions. Unfortunately, the most cost that could be achieved always involves reducing the labor force. Our problem was that there was a direct correlation of staffing to the equipment that needed to be operated simultaneously when supporting a shuttle mission. The best way to achieve that was thorough cross-training and designing new equipment that required fewer people to operate. Over time we managed to achieve both of these feats but it wasn't easy. First AlliedSignal wanted all employees to attend Total Quality Awareness (TQA) training while managers and supervisors were expected to attend Total Quality Management (TQM) training. All were part of preparations for the soon to come staffing reductions. In short, when I arrived at MILA in 1986, we were at 160 and numerous changes made over a 10 year period had reduced our numbers to 72 but our mission requirements had to change accordingly.

Without question, I had a fantastic and very successful career with Bendix Field Engineering Corporation working with the NASA Tracking Stations. It gave us opportunities of travel that we might not have had otherwise and the work was extremely rewarding. When Kathie and I signed on to this program we obtained passports and became pin cushions for about every shot and vaccination that mankind had developed and couldn't predict that we would leave Florida for Maryland before returning to pickup young Randy to travel with overseas to Canary Islands, Spain. Our next move was when Kathie came back to Florida to be with her mother who was pregnant with Kathie's little sister and me transferring to Ascension. Soon we were moving to Titusville where I worked at MILA for 10 years before transferring to Goldstone (Barstow, CA). Next we moved to Fairbanks and after Alaska it was Maryland again before we finally returned to Florida and MILA. It was an 8-year circuitous route to get us back to Florida and my retirement.

It was a bitter sweet event when I was asked to attend the closure of MILA on July 28, 2011. Dignitaries from NASA Headquarters, Goddard and KSC were present along with me, Ken Slattery and prior NASA Station Directors to witness the closing ceremonies. It became apparent that the NASA HQ representative had done his homework because he remarked that MILA and PDL were classified as a National Resource and were launch and landing critical. This classification meant that the ability of MILA and PDL to support the launch was absolutely necessary or the launch could not proceed. The man also pointed out that in all of MILA's remarkable 45-year history the station had not had a single failure or any problem to cause a launch delay or scrub.

30 – Retirement 1997

I decided that after 31 years in the business I had enough and signaled my intent to retire in 1997. We interviewed a number of candidates then decided that MILA's closure was soon to come with the end of the Space Shuttle program so we opted not to replace me. Before leaving I left a staffing plan that would reduce the current level of 72 down to 52 provided the new equipment would operate as designed with fewer technicians. This was a big change from my arrival in 1986 where there were 162 positions to operate MILA, PDL and MIL-71.

In 1998 I was asked to take a job as a consultant and go to Alaska where I was to observe the implementation of an automated tracking station at University of Alaska's Poker Flat and mentor a young man that might be promoted to manage the facility.

It was great to be visiting Fairbanks again after being away for 15 years and it was nice to learn that some of my old employees were still living there after retiring when we closed the site down in 1986. Driving by the old site, I saw that NOAA had taken over the old NASA complex and built several new antennas on what we used to call Command Hill.



New automated Poker Flat Tracking Station

Before my job was complete, we experienced our first snow. It was enough to make the work a little more difficult and the roads treacherous. Snow at this elevation also meant the road would be slippery going over and down Cleary Summit so I decided to return to Fairbanks early and quickly learned that the rental car I was in wasn't the best vehicle to be driving in these conditions. As I cleared the top of Cleary Summit and started down the mountain, the little car began sliding even after downshifting to a lower gear. It became clear that brakes and lower gears were not enough to keep the car from sliding so my only recourse was to shift to a higher gear that prevented the tires from sliding and steer it downhill like a luge. There is a sharp curve half way down the mountain and I thought this was going to be wipe out but fortunately the gravel on the edge of the road caused the little car to straighten up and rocket down the highway without hitting the guard rail. Muzzygeezy.

I returned home for Thanksgiving and was soon asked to go to MILA to assist in the transition of a new contractor that had caused a stir by offering jobs to people with less seniority. After educating the new company on the bargaining contract, and resolving the dispute, I retired from consultant work...again.

About a year after retirement I began thinking of my days in the Navy and the time I spent on the icebreaker USS Edisto (AGB-2). As stated earlier I had a short but great career in the Navy and was very fortunate to have taken three Arctic cruises and two Antarctic cruises. All but one cruise was on the Edisto whereas my last cruise was an Antarctic cruise on the USS Glacier (AGB-4).

I discovered the USS Glacier (AGB-4) had a website and was planning a reunion but we were unable to attend. It was this discovery however that caused me to look for my first ship, the icebreaker USS Edisto (AGB-2) to see if there was any information on the Internet. Wallah! I found a website so new the ink was not yet dry. The URL was www.USSEdistoAGB2.com. I signed on and learned that a handful of men had been looking for me for the past couple years. They knew that I was from Florida but there are many Glen or Glenn Smiths...so I'm told.

I soon learned that three or four shipmates from that dastardly Deep Freeze '60/61 cruise were looking for the 234 men that were onboard at that time. Having good computer skills I offered to help locate all shipmates but it seemed the group's interest was focused on only the men in our crew. Therefore I backed off, wished them luck and offered to help if they decided to use my services.

A couple weeks later I received an email inviting me to help with the intent to find as many men that ever sailed on the Edisto. It was this '61 crew that was paying for the website and other services needed to find shipmates. We decided to order all 19 reels of film the Navy had stored rosters of all the auxiliary ships which included the icebreaker Edisto. From those reels I scanned the Edisto rosters into my computer and then studying each one I built a roster of several hundred crewmen who were onboard beginning with her commissioning in 1937 to 1965 when she was transferred to the USS Coast Guard.

As my database grew in size we began calling likely candidates until we had located a number of them. For many it was an emotional event and we were often asked when the next reunion would be held and eventually I got tired of answering in the negative and selected Charleston, SC, home of the Edisto Island for which our ship was named.

The first reunion was held September 2004 at the Airport Radisson Hotel and was planned for a 4-night, 5-day event that included a welcome dinner, election of officers, a visit to the Citadel Military College, a river tour with dinner and dancing and a visit to Patriots Point which housed the aircraft carrier, the York Town, a submarine, a destroyer and Navy aircraft. 145 shipmates, wives and guest were in attendance. I suspect it was because of my frequent contact with the shipmates that influenced them to elect me as the first president of the USS Edisto Association.



Aircraft Carrier York Town (CV-5) at Patriots Point

In the evening when we took a river cruise for dinner and dancing, I was reminded of the early years when we lived in Charleston. Especially as we approached the Cooper River Bridge. I don't recall ever going across the bridge but for some strange reason it has a place in memory when I think of Charleston. As we were lined up to board the river boat one of our shipmates accidentally dropped his digital camera into the water below. Fortunately it could be seen and easily retrieved providing he climbed down the rocks to the water. He did and we learned later that he was able to salvage his photos from the SD card.

As president, I was given the task of incorporating our association which I did upon my return to Florida. In May 2005 we incorporated as a nonprofit organization in the State of Florida and subsequently I filed with the IRS and obtained tax exempt status from Federal Income Tax under section 501 (c) (19) of the Internal Revenue Code.

From this point on I was expected to plan more reunions which I did with Kathie's help. Our next reunion was planned for Biloxi, Mississippi but as we were examining the proposals I had received from the Biloxi hotels, we were watching hurricane Katrina move up the gulf towards the Mississippi and Louisiana coast. We watched as Katrina moved into the coast line from Biloxi to New Orleans destroying houses, causing the levies to break and flooding most of the city. It was devastation.

We changed our plans and held the 2006 reunion in Chattanooga, TN. I selected the Chattanooga Choo Choo as our host hotel. Built in the old rail station the hotel had beautiful gardens, train cars, restaurants, shops, banquet facilities and entertainment. The Station House restaurant Wait staff were all talented singers and would sing after serving your meal. Many of them had voices that were of professional quality.



Chattanooga Choo Choo

Another interesting feature of Chattanooga was the electric buses that departed from their depot at the Choo Choo every 15 minutes and made a large circuit around the city. No matter where you were in the city's main streets a bus would come along every 15 minutes and the ride was free.

Our group toured all the famous attractions such as Look Out Mountain, Rock City and Ruby Falls. The latter was an interesting tour where an elevator takes you down about a quarter mile into the mountain, then another mile walk through a cave to the falls. Every few minutes the lights come on so you can see the Ruby Falls pouring out of the mountain. Then it is another long walk back through the cave to the gift shop before getting on the elevator and going back up to civilization.

It is difficult to imagine the founder Leo Lambert crawling through this cave and later taking his wife spelunking that far back into the mountain to show her the falls that he named after her. That visit the couple made to the Falls was long before the passageway was widened to permit visitors to walk without hitting their head on a stalactite or tripping over a stalagmite. Even now there are still places along the path where visitors have to walk around stalagmites.



Oyster Point, Newport News, VA

Our third reunion was held in 2008 at Oyster Point, Newport News, Virginia which enabled us to tour Norfolk and visit the Nauticus and the Battleship Wisconsin (BB-64), tour the USS Monitor museum and the village of Williamsburg, VA where one can step back into the colonial days. A river boat tour gave us all the information on the Navy's fleet that was docked at the Norfolk Naval Base which was much more than what can be obtained from a bus tour of the base.

The 2009 Baton Rouge, Louisiana reunion was a good memory of my time living in Lake Charles with all the good Cajun food and music. Here we toured the USS Kidd (DD-661), a Fletcher-class destroyer anchored right down town. The hospitality of the museum's director the late Mr. Maury Drummond and staff were outstanding. We toured the beautiful Nottoway Plantation before going to the Bayview on the Bayou where we dined on alligator, toured the swamp and danced until exhaustion.



Destroyer USS Kidd (DD-661)

Our 2010 reunion took us to Warwick, Rhode Island, the nearest I could get to Boston and keep our room rates reasonable. Before contracting with the Crowne Plaza, Kathie and I visited the hotels in Salem and surround areas of Boston but most of the hotels were either too expensive, too congested or undesirable for other reasons. Of course not all hotels are appropriate for our type of event and some don't want our business anyway. We were able to bus to Boston, tour downtown, visit Old Ironsides museum. One day we toured Battleship Cove and had lunch and memorial service on the Battleship Massachusetts.

The 2012 reunion was closer to home in Melbourne Beach, Florida with the hotel right on the ocean. Our tours consisted of a visit to the Kennedy Space Center and the next day we took a ride on the Victory Casino out of Port Canaveral where I won \$300 on slot machines.

The 2013 reunion was held in Nashville where we saw the Grand Ole Opry. When Kathie and I first visited Nashville to check it out, we were lucky to have been at the Opry the very night that Vince Gill was celebrating his 20th anniversary at the Opry. It was that night that he introduced his daughter to sing on the Opry for her first time.

Much like Boston, Washington DC room rates were too high so I selected a hotel in Reston, Virginia near Dulles Airport for our 2015 reunion. Our tours consisted of a tour of Arlington Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Museum which houses about every type of aircraft known to man including a SR-71 Blackbird and the Space Shuttle Discovery.



Old Iron Sides





**The 2015 Icebreaker Reunion
April 25, 2015
Arlington National Cemetery ~ Arlington, Virginia**



San Antonio Riverwalk



President Lyndon B. Johnson's Plane

Our next reunion was 2016 in San Antonio, Texas where I contracted with the Holiday Inn Riverwalk. Our tours consisted of a nightly river cruise the entire length of the Riverwalk and a stop at a wild seed farm then a visit to former President Lyndon B. Johnson's ranch.

I received a surprise presentation of the Quilt of Valor at the San Antonio reunion from a shipmate's widow, Marie Mac Dermid whose late husband was on the USS Edisto. The following is her letter.

To Glenn D. Smith,

This Quilt of Valor comes to you with prayers and a sincere thank you for your years of service with the United States Navy from 1959 through 1963. You received your basic training in San Diego, CA and at the electronic school in San Francisco, CA. You served on the USS Edisto from 1960 - 1962 and on the USS Glacier from 1962 - 1963. When you were honorably discharged, you retired with the rank of ETR2, [E5].

Today we also recognize your initiative in taking the helm for all the USS Edisto Reunions:

2004 Charleston, SC

2006 Chattanooga, TN

2008 Newport News, VA

2009 Baton Rouge, LA

2010 Warwick, RI [Boston]

2012 Melbourne, FL

2013 Nashville, TN

2015 Reston, VA [Wash. DC]

2016 San Antonio, TX

2017 Charleston, SC

2019 New Orleans, LA

Your authorship of 'The Story of an Icebreaker' was a remarkable achievement.

The USS Edisto Association, Inc. has honored you as a Permanent Life-Time Member of the Board of Directors

This quilt pattern and the blue colors represent the oceans of our world, Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Arctic and Antarctic. Marie Mac Dermid pieced this together in her sewing room in Plymouth, CT. The flag-backing was donated by Bill Heering from his campaign offices. The machine quilting of stars was done by Cindy Lewis of Hamden, CT. This quilt then had the binding and label sewn on by Marie. The quilt and the batting are all cotton.



Sandra & Val Patarini present me the quilt as Kathie looks on

Quilts of Valor (QOV.org) is a foundation established in 2003 by Catherine Roberts, formerly of Delaware. Her hope was to be able to cover those touched by war with a Quilt of Valor. Since 2003 over 141,000 quilts have been made and presented; some through the major treatment centers such as Walter Reed and Brook Army Medical, through smaller or more local VA centers and facilities or through personal contact.

We are hoping to someday cover all our service people who have been physically or emotionally touched by this war on terror and prior conflicts. Also, we hope to honor all veterans for their service. It is our way to thank those who receive QOVs for their service and the sacrifices that they have made. We hope that wrapped in their quilt, each recipient will know that they are thanked and kept in the thoughts and prayers of 611 of us.

We hope your QOV will be passed on to another generation and be a part of your family history. Peace, Blessings and Love!
Marie Mac Dermid of Plymouth, CT

Presented at the USS Edisto Association Reunion in San Antonio, Texas September 2016. With appreciation to Valentino and Sandra Patarini for delivering and presenting the quilt as proxies for Marie Mac Dermid.



Nashville Performers the Dave & Daphne Show

In 2017, we were back in Charleston, SC which was to be our final reunion. However, hurricane Irma changed all that. I had planned to have the Dave & Daphne show come down from Nashville and play for us but had to cut the event short because the storm was expected to come into Charleston. They were a big hit with our group when playing for us in Nashville. Dave was lead guitarist for singer Barbara Mandrell when she toured. We got a bonus when a member of our group, Howell Purvis brought his trumpet and Dave played backup for Howell. Outstanding entertainment!

Since hurricane Irma had disrupted our 2017 event, I reluctantly began planning one more reunion to be the final event for Kathie and me. In 2019 it was held at the Four Points By Sheraton French Quarter in New Orleans, LA. The hotel is located on the corner of Toulouse and Bourbon Streets where all the action is. Earlier that week there was an LGBT parade and after that a naked bicycle parade but none of my shipmates wanted to participate. The highlight of this reunion was a visit to the World War II Museum. Kathie was able find information where her dad Jim Oliver's ship was during the war. The museum is a fantastic place and a must for all to see when in NOLA.



Four Points By Sheraton French Quarter, New Orleans

I closed the event by donating all the books and reunion related materials to the late James Jensen's daughter Michell Cichi who volunteered to hold future reunions. I hope she does but I'm doubtful that will happen.

In the meantime while planning these reunions I continued to work at different jobs. My first job after quitting the consultant work involved a contract to perform what is called a Reset in the Home Depot stores. It was presented by the owner of the contract that he was looking for people with supervisory experience to manage resets in multiple stores throughout Florida. For training I was assigned to a crew that was doing a reset in an Orlando store. The job was to perform a reset of crown molding and it was back breaking work. The “supervisor” was a young man that hadn’t performed the job before and he kept the floor design and drawings close to his chest and didn’t share with the rest of us what and how it was to be accomplished. Had any of us on the team been given information as to what the reset would like when finished, it would have helped immensely and sped up the job. It was a hard 14 hours of steady work. When I got home I was so tired that I just fell in the door onto the floor exhausted.

My next job was in an embroidery shop. I went in to have some hats embroidered for our ships store to sell at an upcoming reunion and walked out with a job. My biggest task was to embroider 3000 hats for a car dealer to give away.

Then I took a temporary job working at the local hospital Parrish Medical Center where I worked for about 18 months in Patient Transport. I worked evenings and most of the work was rewarding and generally involved transferring patients from the Emergency Room to Diagnostics or to a room. The daytime work was generally the other way around.

During the day patients were moved from their room to diagnostics and back. I met a lot of nice people and found my own work to be rewarding but I couldn't let the work interfere with my reunion planning activities. Our manager knew that I would not be coming back and I am pleased to know that he acted on my recommendation to hire employees who were working in housekeeping and the cafeteria. After all I was temporary whereas these people were fulltime employees and were seeking a better job and more pay.

In the meantime I had taken up shooting pool again at the Senior Center here in Titusville. About 14 of us seniors were shooting pool twice a week. A couple of these players talked me into joining them to work for the Brevard County Elections Supervisor at the Elections Support Center (ESC). I was hired as a driver and assigned the North Brevard area which consisted of 132 precincts to which me and my helpers would deliver supplies.

One man in particular was fellow pool player, a good friend and an established artist whose works were in galleries from Key West to all points north. His favorite subjects were Key West and Black Point Drive located on Merritt Island near Titusville. His art is unique and outstanding.

Another pool player who worked at the ESC was a gentleman and good friend, the late Richard Moon. Richard became one of my helpers and the longer we worked together the closer we became as friends. Our work ethic was such that when it came to the period between elections, the other workers were discharged and Richard and I were retained to work on preparations for the next election.

Richard had Parkinson's disease but still managed to shoot a good game of pool. He was also a Vietnam Vet who had been exposed to Agent Orange so the VA approved corrective surgery. After an evaluation and weeks of deliberation he decided to have the surgery performed. It was done in Gainesville and though the surgery was deemed a success, he developed post surgery complications that eventually led to his death. He was loved by many.

31 – Hobbies

In our early years of marriage after coming back to Florida to work at MILA, we purchased our first house at 440 Eloise Avenue, Titusville, FL. It was a small house that sat near I-95 without any structures to hinder my plans to put a kennel runway for the hunting dogs I planned to acquire. Of course those plans never materialized since I didn't get any dogs. I'm not exactly sure why I didn't follow through on that plan since I was hunting almost every weekend in St Johns County. I would take Kathie to visit her parents in Jacksonville while I would hunt with this small party.

When I worked at Welex Electronics I became friends with a younger boy that worked there who invited me to join a small party that hunted west of Saint Augustine out near the St Johns River. I began taking one or two of Kathie's younger brothers with me and began hunting with them almost every weekend.

The youngest brother Mark was with me most often and it was us two that experienced some unusual events that we won't easily forget. One was when we left Jacksonville early one morning at our usual hour of 4 am and were driving down I-95 in a Volkswagen that I had at the time. We were approaching Hwy 16 and were about 2 miles from the intersection when the car stopped suddenly. I checked the lights and saw nothing wrong so popped the hood and saw the fan belt was still on and nothing looked out of place. Then I checked the oil and it was dry as a bone. At first I thought I had not properly inserted the dip stick but a second and third check confirmed there wasn't any oil on the stick.

I explained to Mark what I had found and we were puzzled that something like this could happen because the many times I had checked the oil in the past, it was always good and never burned any oil. We could see the lights of the gas station so I offered him money and suggested he walk down to the intersection and get some oil. No way Jose! He wasn't about to walk down there. So I said you stay with the car and I will walk down and get some oil. No way Jose! We sat there for another 10-15 minutes and in frustration I tried to start the car. The little VW cranked right up and I drove down to the gas station and put in FOUR QUARTS of oil while it was sitting at the pumps. I couldn't believe it.

We drove the car the rest of the day without any problems and the first thing we did when we got home that evening was to park in a different spot and check for oil where I normally parked. None present. To this day we haven't a clue as to how it happened to lose the oil or how it was able to crank and run 2 miles to take on 4 quarts of oil. It just added another notch in my affection for the VW.

In another incident, Mark and I were motoring through the neighborhood early in the morning on our normal route when we rounded a corner and ran smack into a whole lot of police cars and armed cops pointing rifles at us. When they saw it was just a small VW and one was a teenager, they relaxed until a cop walked up to the door of the car and saw our shotguns in the back. It wasn't long before they considered us harmless so we were turned around and had to go the long way out to the highway. We learned later that two guys broke into a service station and the owner was waiting for them but they were armed and managed to kill him before he could do them harm.

There was another time in the VW when Kathie and I were on our way to Jacksonville and I pulled off I-95 and drove into the woods where we hunted. She was about 18 months pregnant with Greg so there wasn't a lot of room between her belly and the dash and even less room between her and the steering wheel. However, I got the VW hung up on a berm from a plowed fire trail and it required her to get behind the wheel and drive it out while I pushed from the rear. We managed. It was one of those things I admired about the bug. We drove through mud that 4-wheel vehicles got stuck in and we crossed flooded branches that almost put us under. The current was too swift and water blew up in the air vents causing the side glasses to fog and the inside of the windshield to be completely immersed. Just when we thought we were a goner then the car suddenly lurched forward and we found ourselves on the other bank. A couple guys had heard us hit the water and came back to help by pulling us in.

This hunting arrangement continued for a number of years until Larry, who had invited me to join in the beginning, started missing a lot of the weekends. Then his stepdad quit driving down from Jacksonville and finally there were only 2 or 3 of us still hunting. One fine morning I was to meet a member of the party but when he didn't show, I called his house and learned that while he was putting on his boots to join me, he fell out of the chair and died. I went back to Titusville and never went back to hunt again. Instead, I went home and basically sold all my hunting stuff and concentrated on fishing. We did however make one more trip to the farm and that was to take Kathie's dog Captain, a large German Shepard, to live with the family that owned the farm.

Afterwards I purchased a small Jon boat from Sears with a 3.5 hp motor which made an ideal fishing rig to fish in South Lake which was located a few blocks from the house. I learned there was a narrowing of the channel from Fox Lake to South Lake where I could catch my limit of bass before the sun was up good. By then we had two mouths to feed. Greg and Doug. I think the first solid food they had was fish. I always took pains to de-bone and filet the bass, Blue Gill or any of the edible fish and Kathie would go through the filets carefully before cooking. They both learned to eat and catch fish at a young age.

Eventually I moved up from the Jon Boat to something larger and began fishing more in the brackish water of Indian River. I have caught a lot of big fish out of the Indian River, Haulover Canal and Mosquito Lagoon but there were some lessons to be learned. The photo above is an example. The quandary was what to do with such big fish. It was decided to make the long drive out to Port Canaveral where a man smoked the catch for half the meat. There was plenty of meat to go around but I decided then that it wasn't worth catching fish that big without letting them go back into the river. Something I have done ever since and I'm glad that now there are limits on what size Red fish can be kept.

On the other hand, Bass, Blue Gill and Crappie are to be put on the table. Or maybe some Speckled trout which we ate plenty of. We also ate Blue fish when they made their journey south to the warmer climate of Florida. On those occasions one could hardly find a place to fish on the banks of Port Canaveral because there would be so many fishermen throwing silver spoons. On one occasion back in the spring of 1987, Mom, Dad and younger brother Mike visited us in Florida. We were still living at 440 Eloise Ave and I had a Plymouth Duster at the time and I decided to take Dad, Mike and son Greg to Port Canaveral to fish for Blues.

At that time there were numerous feral cats that ran around the Port and in and out of the rocks and one of them drew Greg's interest. I had warned him several times to be cautious around the anglers who were casting large silver crocodile spoons into the channel. Despite all the caution, the little fellow jumped down into the rocks in pursuit of one of the cats just as I was in a back swing about to throw my lure forward when it caught the little guy in the head. It was such force that the 20lb monofilament line broke.

For me it was absolute terror. I grabbed him and began running to the car while Dad and Mike hurriedly picked up our fishing gear. We tore out of Jetty Park and headed for Titusville via SR-528 which was a toll road at the time. Dad was holding Greg who wasn't making the slightest whimper and Mike was sitting in the back with his head stuck between the front seats (before seat belts). He was giving me speed updates which exceeded 100 mph down 528 and I barely slowed going through the Toll Booths without paying or stopping. One would think that we would encounter a sheriff's car or at a minimum a Titusville Police car but we didn't. I blew through Titusville like it wasn't even there. At Parrish Emergency Room the doctor removed the lure and said that it appeared to have hit him on the side of the head first then went forward and caught the corner of the little fellow's eye socket. We were so lucky. In the meantime, Greg barely whimpered and didn't complain at all. Phew! What a relief that the little guy wasn't more seriously injured.



Three Red Fish 16, 18 & 40 lbs. caught at Haulover Canal

One can see in my list of vehicles at the end of this autobiography that I've had numerous cars and boats and I know that I can't remember several of the latter. I know there were many but like my cars, there are some that were special and made memories that won't be forgotten. The first was a 12ft fiberglass open fisherman, center console with a 25 HP Johnson with electric controls. A beauty to look at and a beauty to fish out of.

The second special boat was Da Blue Bote. A small 12 ft boat that I bought from my brother Jerry to keep it in the family. It was very comfortable to ride in and fish out of and many large fish of all species were caught from that small Blue Bote. I have no idea how many years Jerry had the boat before I purchased it from him but I added another 16 years or so and sold it only after I didn't have a place to store it properly after we moved into an apartment.



Da Blu Bote



Just a sample of some of the fish we caught in Da Blue Bote

I've had no greater pleasure than fishing with my dad, my two brothers Jerry and Mike and dear friends and fishing buddies, Chuck Bounds and Don Mason. Having fished with the two men separately and together many times, I have fished with Don the most and consider him a brother. Some of the best times have been when the three of us, Jerry, Don and me, have gone out on Indian River for trout or to Lake Harney for Speckled perch.

There is one more boat I should mention that gave us great pleasure and that was a 19 ft. Sportscraft powered by a 125HP Mercury Outboard. It had tall gunnels making especially safe for young kids, an inside toilet and full canvas to protect from the elements. We were living in an apartment at the Royal Oak Country club and one of our favorite pastimes was to load up the boat with lawn chairs, kids and a picnic basket and motor out to one of the spoil islands in the Indian River. Once on the island the kids could be turned loose to swim and play as they pleased without fear. We built some good memories.



19 ft. Sportscraft



Jim Oliver - Kathie's Dad



Jerry - Red



Me - Red



Don - Red



Dejah - Lady Fish



Katy - Da Blu Bote



Aaron - Gator Trout



Don Mason and Jerry with Crappie

The memories are treasured. Aaron caught his first big trout in the Da Blue Bote. Granddaughter Katy overcame her fear of boat riding when I let her drive my boat for the first time. Granddaughter Dejah went out on a boat for the first time and caught her first fish, a fighting Lady Fish. Grandson Aaron caught a lunker trout.



Dejah



Katy



Aaron



Wife Kathie with catfish - Son Greg with Jack - Son Doug with Red

Kathie has gone out many times in my boats and fished. Greg and Doug have fished from my boats. Relatives, grandkids and friends have all gone out on my boats at one time or another. The list is long.

My belief is that if you teach a kid to fish, he will always be a fisherman...or a fisherwoman. If only our country, state and local governments will continue to protect the waterways and the marine habitats.

I may have mentioned it before but another pastime before and after retirement was shrimping. For more than 45 years I have fished the waters of Florida, most of which have been in Brevard and neighboring counties like St Johns River and associated lakes. I've also fished the big pond and spent many days in Port Canaveral fishing for Blues and whatever else I could catch. Our boys were fish eaters and which may have been the first solid food they ate as a child but something else we all like and that was shrimp. I did a lot of shrimping in both the Indian and Banana Rivers.

It was a matter of charging the boat batteries, fixing something to eat and drink and driving to Oak Hill and launching our boats at Indian Mound. Most of the shrimpers went south in the Intercoastal Waterway towards the mouth of Mosquito Lagoon but I shrimped both north and south and can't say which was better. My luck seemed to be good in either direction.

After a night out on the water it was a sleepy trip home but we had to remain alert going through Oak Hill because they were infamous at writing tickets to shrimpers who may have exceeded the posted speed limit. Once home I would hit the sack in preparations for work while Kathie would count and take the heads off the shrimp before freezing the catch. Shrimping was one of our favorite activities. I think I must have shrimped from about every boat you can imagine including a friend's sail boat. Indian Mound in Oak Hill, FL was the preferred shrimping site but there were others such as the Titusville Pier, Haulover Canal and the bridges over the Banana River between Merritt Island and Cocoa Beach. My first shrimping was done at these bridges when a fellow employee talked me into joining him in Merritt Island. Later I used my boat and went north to Oak Hill to shrimp.

All one needed was a couple lamps – we used Coleman lanterns in the beginning – and a dip net or two. Plenty of coffee and something to eat. We would anchor out in the channel and hang the lights where the Intercoastal waterway was illuminated and watch for the shrimp as they swam north to the Ponce De Leon Inlet. On most nights there would be so many shrimpers the waterway would be lit up like Broadway. I caught a lot of shrimp in Oak Hill as Kathie can attest because she would do the cleaning after I got home not long after daylight. I would put battery on charge just in case, take a shower and go to bed so that I would be ready to go to work that afternoon. In the meantime, Kathie would behead the shrimp, count them and freeze them in water. The Oak Hill Reds were on the small side but sweet and tasty when fried. Although I had planned to, I never got up there with the Blue Bote which would have been perfect for all night shrimping.

The last time I attempted to go shrimping it was son Doug and I with Chuck Bounds. He had a large boat and it was our intent to put in at Indian Mound. We had no sooner finished launching the boat and putting in our \$2 for the ramp when a lady came running out and said we couldn't launch a drive on boat. Hmmm. We had just done so. No matter, she gave us our money back and said we had to go. Since I had been the one to drop the boat in the water and park the truck, it was me that backed it up so Chuck could drive it back on the trailer.

After getting the boat loaded I placed the truck in granny gear to pull it out but when I went to take it out of gear, it would not budge. It would only stay in granny so Chuck took over because it was his truck and he knew how to operate it. No joy. It just wouldn't disengage granny gear despite how rough he was trying to shift gears. It became clear that we were going to drive all the way to my house in low gear. Chuck would wind the RPMs up so high it would almost hurt your ears then push in the clutch and let it coast. We rode like that for 15 miles before pulling into the back of our house.

However, we had forgot to lower the top so when he turned into the yard under our oak trees, they took the top off. He wasn't done yet, as he pulled it into the back yard I saw that he was too close to the well head on our pump and yelled for him to stop. The boat's trailer tire was right up against the pipe coming out of the ground and with the truck locked in gear, he could go backwards or forwards so we dropped the boat trailer right there. The next day I used the tractor to pull the boat away from the pump but the damage was done. I had to repair a leak by replacing the pipe and check valve. The next day he and I dropped the tranny on the truck and replaced a worn part. That was Doug's one and only time to go shrimping.

Boating always had unexpected events such as the time Don and I were in South Lake in his boat and as we were motoring across the lake at warp speed, we hit something hard enough to bend the blades on the prop. Don said we hit a log. Not so I said. Sure enough a big 10-12 ft. gator finally came to the surface. Another time was when we were coming in to the marina at warp speed and unlike so many other times when the throttle is pulled back, the wake picks up the boat and it slowly settles into the boat ramp. But not this time. I could see the dock pilings coming at us at 60 mph so I quickly sat back down just as the boat hit the ramp, Don went flying through the gap in the windshield and over the bow with his body trying to keep up with his head. He kept running straight to his truck while all the onlookers at the marina were staring at this remarkable landing. With no hesitation Don backed the truck down and we loaded the boat and headed out of the marina with folks still gawking. Then just as we were about to go onto the bridge and bang, the boat came off the trailer. One would have to admit that we looked pretty foolish but we had looked good up until that time. Oh, there were other exciting times and some were unique as watching and listening to an alligator eat a blowfish. It sounded like someone rubbing a balloon until it popped. Never again will we likely see or hear that but it gives a new appreciation of the gator.

As for Da Blue Bote, I can recall only one fishing trip where we had a dicey boating experience. It was in Largo when the girls had taken a road trip to Tallahassee while Jerry and I stayed home and fished. On this particular day he and I had motored up north of the Clearwater Memorial Causeway and fished the waters above the bridge until it night fell. It was just after a Red Tide outbreak so fishing was slow and with it being dark we decided to head home. Just as we went under the bridge and entered the rough water coming in from Clearwater Pass, a wave literally filled the 5 gal bucket that was sitting up front between my legs. The water coming in from the Gulf through the pass was extremely rough so Jerry quickly turned the boat around and we went back to the safety of the waters on the north side of the causeway.

We went over to the west side of the causeway where it was calm and anchored. It was clear that it was too rough to try and attempt the 5 miles back to Belleair Marina so we prepared to spend the night. Only those fisherman that have been in Da Blue Bote can appreciate what it was like for two six footers to sleep in the boat. Or we attempted to sleep. All night long there was a constant loud clang clang of turnbuckles hitting the metal post where the strong winds were blowing a flag. I believe it is called the Horizon House that sits on that point. In concert with the clang clang of the flag, all night long vehicles with loud boom boxes would cross the causeway going to and from the beach. Then to add to the cacophony sirens from ambulances and other emergency vehicles ran back and forth across the causeway all night. It wasn't until Jeannie and Kathie returned home that we learned that a tornado had gone across us while we were sleeping.

I mentioned earlier that I sold the da Blu Bote after we moved into an apartment. It was a sad day when I put a For Sale sign on the boat. I sold the boat to a young couple with a 3 yr. old son who they took fishing with them. The new owner said he was going to enter it in the Merritt Island Christmas Parade of boats and sent me a photo of the boat all dressed up with a Christmas tree and lights. Only recently I learned that he has never titled the boat so Florida still has me as the registered owner. Who knows where they may have taken it but there is a good chance it is not still in Florida.

In retrospect, I've had a wonderful life that included fishing, hunting, and shrimping and the best part of it was fishing with Kathie, my father-in-law Jim Oliver, her two brothers Mark and Chuck, her nephew Jared, my Dad and brothers Jerry and Mike, my two sons Greg and Doug, grandson Aaron, granddaughter Dejah and two very good friends Don and Chuck. I'm sure I missed someone but these are the people that I fished with most.



Father and Son Tournament Winners



Team Sparky's 2nd Place

Billiards was still a passion of mine and some years earlier when Sparky's Family Billiards was open, Greg and I entered a Father and Son tournament and would have won it all except he scratched on the 8-ball to lose the tournament.

That scratch beat him up for a few years until we once more entered another Father and Son tournament giving him a second chance to redeem himself. He did and we took first place. I've won a lot of trophies but that one is maybe the most important.

At one time we had a Bendix team at Sparky's Family Billiards that was made up chiefly of employees and spouses and we ended up 2nd place in league play



Bendix Team: Don Mason - Me - Keith Goodwin



Randy Troubleshooting a PC

Both Randy and Greg have taken a liking to pool and both seem to have a pretty competitive game. Randy is a pool player, a gun smith and was employed by Sony as a technical expert in computers, networking and customer service. That was where he met his second wife who worked at Sony also. I've had the great pleasure of shooting pool with both of them and nothing pleases me more than being able to shoot with them as a partner in a doubles match. I've been fortunate enough to be able to give them each a nice case with quality McDermott cues.

My son Doug on the other hand hasn't shown as much interest in pool but he is an excellent surfer and accomplished fisherman among other things. He is recognized as one of the best painters in the automotive industry in North Florida.

Individual tournaments I did fairly well and won a few dollars with a lot of 1st and 2nd place finishes. In fact I once played Tommy Kennedy, a Pro. It was a race to three and I was ahead by 2 games and needed only to make an easy nine ball to win the match. The room was full of players rooting for me and I was eating it up. I might say hamming it up and delaying my last shot. But then I bent down to put the nine ball in the pocket and in it went...along with the cue ball. I scratched on the nine! Muzzygeezy. The rest is history. He beat me the next three games to win and gave me this article from the local newspaper that he signed.

Tommy Kennedy vs GLEN SMITH "SCRATCH ON THE NINE" Smith Tommy Kennedy

Wednesday, April 21, 1993 Star-Advocate 1E

MORE LOCAL NEWS INSIDE

- Bus to carry youth to THS events, 5B.
- EG&G honors two KSC workers, 5B.

ts

U.S. Open billiards champ to play at Sparky's

By TIM HIPPS
Star-Advocate Correspondent

U.S. Open billiards champion Tommy Kennedy has earned about \$25,000 during the past two years — by playing pool.

"I don't work at all," said Kennedy, 28, who says he was "born again" six years ago. "Just play pool. I've been playing so long, it's all I really know how to do."

Warning: Please don't delve into this alternative lifestyle at your local pool hall or juke joint. You could go broke in a hurry. But if you think you're ready...

Tonight, April 21, Kennedy will showcase his hustling techniques, take on all comers and sign autographs during an exhibition at Sparky's Family Billiards, 1528 Harrison St. in Titusville.

Cue time is 8 p.m.

out at Royal Oak," said Steve Gaughran of Sparky's.

Kennedy, the Florida 9-ball champion in 1989, '90, '92 and '93, is ranked 21st in the world.

His high run in straight pool is 109 balls. And his high run of continuous 9-ball racks is seven.

Last year, Kennedy won the U.S. Open 9-Ball Championship with a 9-1 victory over Johnny Archer, ranked No. 1 in the world, at Chesapeake, Va.

ESPN televised the stunning upset, which has opened many doors for Kennedy, the only unranked, unseeded player ever to win the U.S. Open.

In February, Kennedy captured the Steve Mizerak Open at Lake Worth. He defeated Mizerak 11-9 in the quarterfinals before blasting Jose Parica 13-3 in the finale.

His most memorable match came in 1989 against Buddy Hall in Jacksonville.

Hall was leading 8 games to 1 before Kennedy reeled off nine consecutive victories, only to lose 11-10.

Then there was the night in one of his Pine Hills neighborhood parlors that Kennedy broke a rack of 9 Ball and one of the pellets shattered into about 20 pieces.



TOMMY KENNEDY

FLORIDA TODAY, Saturday, May 22, 1993 3C

Kennedy has another shot with nine-ball

By Paul Enriquez
FLORIDA TODAY

Tom Kennedy recently was putting on an exhibition for a few fascinated spectators in a Titusville billiards hall.

For hours, the reigning U.S. Nine-ball champion from Orlando played against any and all challengers in a race to three. It was a dream of a lifetime for most amateurs — the chance to play against one of the best.

"(Kennedy) was great," said Steve Gaughran of Sparky's Family Billiards. "I think two guys beat him all night — but that was after he had been at the table a few hours."

Kennedy — one of the top rising young pros — will join approximately 30 other pool players today and Sunday in a \$3,000 pro event at Players Billiards. It is one of a series of events that will be held periodically at the Melbourne pool hall.

Several well-known shooters — including Steve Mizerak and David Hironaka — played in past events in Brevard County.

The two-day tournament uses a double elimination format. Each player is given three chances to the next round. The top 16 players move on to Sunday's schedule, with the finals expected to begin about 4 p.m.

Melbourne's Dave Feyer will be one of the local favorites

hauling for the \$2,000 top prize. Boosted by a win against Mizerak in the prelims, Feyer finished fifth March 7 in the Sanctioned Florida Open 9-Ball Tournament at Players Billiards. It is one of several top-10 pro finishes for Feyer, considered one of the best and most accomplished billiard boys from Melbourne, also finished fifth and ninth, respectively, last March.

Howard was the overall champion in that tournament, which makes him one of the favorites in this weekend's event. But the same could be said for Kennedy.

Kennedy, 28, is a four-time Florida champion (1989, 1990, 1992 and 1993). But he is most well-known for his 1992 appearance on ESPN, when he upset the world's top player, only to become an unseeded player in history to win the U.S. Open Nine-Ball title.

At a glance

- Who: Between 30 and 60 pro pool players, including Melbourne's Dave Feyer and Pete Ohman.
- What: \$3,000, pro-level, 9-ball pool tournament.
- When: Today, Sunday.
- Where: Players Billiards in Melbourne.

Over the years I have purchased and shot with McDermott cues because I like the workmanship, the balance and the overall designs that McDermott makes. My first cue was in the early 90's which was to replace a cue that I had stolen in a robbery at Sparky's Family Billiards. A year or so later I was in a pawn shop shopping for a used cue and came across the Rose made by McDermott. It had an extra shaft that had rarely been used and all of it was encased in an "It's George" Ostrich case which was a case sought after by collectors and professionals. Randy had always admired it so I gave it to him. Of course there were other nice McDermott cues and cases that I gave to Greg and there is one for Doug should he want it.

When I discovered that McDermott has a cue giveaway each month I began entering daily or as often as I could remember to do so. In the meantime I had taken up shooting pool again at the Senior Center here in Titusville. About 14 of us seniors were shooting pool twice a week. One man in particular is Henry Peter, a pool player, good friend and an established artist whose works are in galleries from Key West to all points north and rumored to be overseas as well. His favorite subjects are Key West and Black Point Drive located on Merritt Island near Titusville. Kathie and I are very proud to possess two pieces of his art. It is recommended that should one want to see his work, all one needs to do is go to the internet. <https://www.henrypeterart.com/gallery-2.html>.

There came a time when we were devoting more time to playing pool at the Senior Center. However, the more often we played pool the more we began to feel less wanted. First it was a board member who complained about an exit door being unlocked – a responsibility of the Operations Manager who gets paid for that job.

Then what followed was the door was alarmed to prevent us from using it so we had to exit through the rest of the Center. The Bridge players complained when we had to go through their tables to get to an exit and the Bingo players complained when we exited through their tables to get to the exit. Then the Bridge players complained that we were using their parking lot. The last straw was when we struck an agreement with the Board of Directors in which we pool players would pay up to \$500 to recover one of the two tables if the Center paid for the 2nd table. It was agreed so we collected money and arranged to have the tables covered and the job turned out to be approximately \$750 for the two tables.

We pool players paid our \$500 as agreed which left the center paying about \$250. We had about \$275 left over which we planned to buy supplies if needed, however, some members of the Board and staff began hounding the guy who was holding the money to hand it over to the Center. Eventually he capitulated and handed over our money to the Center so we quit going there, dropped our membership and started playing at another Brevard County Recreation center where we felt really welcome by the employees that work there. Plus it was free.

One day I got a surprise email from McDermott informing me that my daily entry had paid off. In June 2013 I won that month's cue, a G205C. It turned out to be a hot pink design. When I told the other seniors that I had won a pink cue and would buy some pink gloves and maybe some shoes to match, they suggested I might find another place to play pool. I told McDermott how the pool players had reacted and asked if I could pay the difference and get a more manlier cue stick. Of course, I just had to pay the difference which was about \$175. So I did and got a very nice stick with the McDermott logo of a clover leaf carved in the butt of the stick.



In retrospect, I should have bought those pink gloves and maybe some pink shoes and taken them to Key West and sold it all for good money. Sadly, we only think of these things too late.

After many years of working together and playing cards most every Friday night with the Slatterys, on one of Ken's birthdays I gave him a case with a McDermott cue and a Sneaky Pete and invited him to join us seniors in pool. He did and has been shooting since. Or at least up to the beginning of Covid-19 quarantine. The Senior Center staff attempted to lure our group back but we didn't want anything more to do with the Center, besides we were getting spoiled by the staff at the Sandrift Recreation Center. Plus they have four tables vice two.



Hustler Ken Slattery

Professional Artist Henry Peter



The gang is all here. Note there is not one of us under the age of 50. Hopefully we will be able to resume playing once a vaccine is developed. In the meantime it appears that we are locked down in this quarantine until COVID-19 is whipped.

32 – Milestones

This bio was initiated when I was asked a dozen times or more where was I born and where did I grow up and what school did I attend. Unlike most, I attended a dozen or more schools before graduating high school in Lake Charles, LA. The cities and states I lived in were just as numerous as the schools because my dad was in the Air Force.

In the order of my attendance, this is a list of 14 schools by city and state commencing in September 1942.

ACADEMIC EDUCATION

1st grade first half was in Fayetteville, AR.
1st grade second half was in Wheeler, AR.
2nd grade first half was in Wheeler, AR
2nd grade second half was in Mt Comfort, AR
3rd grade first half was in Wheeler, AR
3rd grade second half was in Charleston, SC
4th grade was in Clarksville, TN
5th grade was in Fort Campbell, KY
6th & 7th grades were in New Providence, TN
8th grade was in Cumberland, TN
9th grade first half in Clarksville High
9th grade second half in South Christian, KY
10th grade was in South Christian High, KY
11th grade was Marion High, Lake Charles, LA
12th grade was Marion High, Lake Charles, LA Graduated
13-14th 1973-75 BCC Cocoa, FL Graduated
15-16th 1974-76 Florida Technological University (FTU) / University of Central Florida (UCF) 120 hours BSET

TECHNICAL EDUCATION

1959 Graduated US Navy Electronics A School
1960 Graduated US Navy Radar School
1960 Graduated US Navy Submarine Radar School
1967 Graduated Solid State and Digital Devices, NASA Network Test & Training Facility
1967 Graduated Unified S-band Antenna/Servo System, NASA Network Test & Training Facility
1969 Graduated Unified S-band Power Amplifier System, NASA Network Test & Training Facility
1970 Graduated Apollo Receiver/Exciter System, NASA Network Test & Training Facility
1971 Graduated Telemetry Data Concepts, NASA Network Test & Training Facility
1971 Graduated RF Telemetry Technician School, NASA Network Test & Training Facility
1975 Graduated Supervisor Training Course, NASA Network Test & Training Facility
1979 Graduated NASA Hand Soldering, Goldstone Tracking Station, California
1979 Graduated LSI-II Micro-processor Computer and Peripherals, NASA Network Test & Training Facility
1979 Graduated PCM Data Generator System, NASA Network Test & Training Facility
1979 Graduated Shuttle Delta Modulation System, NASA Network Test & Training Facility

A List of the Cities and States and the year of relocation

1937	Wheeler, Arkansas
1942	Fayette, Alabama
1942	Birmingham, Alabama
1943	Fayette, Alabama
1943	Wheeler, Arkansas
1947	Charleston, South Carolina
1948	Clarksville, Tennessee
1949	Fort Campbell, Kentucky
1950	New Providence, Tennessee
1952	Cunningham, Tennessee
1953	New Providence, Tennessee
1954	Fort Campbell, Tennessee
1955	Lake Charles, Louisiana
1956	Homestead, Florida
1958	Jacksonville, Florida
1958	Homestead, Florida
1959	San Diego, California
1959	San Francisco, California
1960	New London, Connecticut
1960	USS Edisto (AGB-2) Boston, MA – Arctic cruise - Newfoundland, Labrador, Greenland
1961	USS Edisto (AGB-2) Antarctic cruise - Norfolk, VA, Panama, New Zealand and McMurdo
1963	USS Glacier (AGB-4) Boston ,MA– Antarctic – Panama, Bora Bora, New Zealand and Hawaii
1963	Jacksonville, Florida
1966	Landover, Maryland
1967	Las Palmas, Canary Islands, Spain
1968	Ascension, Island, United Kingdom
1968	Titusville, Florida
1978	Barstow, California
1980	Fairbanks, Alaska
1983	Edgewater, Maryland
1986	Mims, Florida
2017	Titusville, Florida

Another question that was frequently asked of me and Kathie was about the states we had lived in. While we generally answered the questions to the extent it satisfied our questioner, it wasn't until we happened to see a chart that asked listed the 50 states and ask that you mark the ones you have visited or lived in. We were surprised to learn how many we have visited during our 32 years working on the space program. Here are the results.

US STATES	Glenn	Kathie	Boys	Montana	Visited	Visited	Visited
Alabama	Lived	Visited	Visited	Nebraska			
Alaska	Lived	Lived	Lived	Nevada	Visited	Visited	Visited
Arizona	Visited	Visited	Visited	New Hampshire			
Arkansas	Lived	Visited	Visited	New Jersey	Visited	Visited	
California	Lived	Lived	Lived	New Mexico	Visited	Visited	Visited
Colorado	Visited	Visited	Visited	New York	Visited	Visited	
Connecticut	Lived			North Carolina	Lived	Visited	Visited
Delaware				North Dakota			
Florida	Lived	Lived	Lived	Ohio	Visited	Visited	Visited
Georgia	Visited	Lived	Visited	Oklahoma	Visited	Visited	Visited
Hawaii	Visited			Oregon	Visited	Visited	Visited
Idaho				Pennsylvania	Visited	Visited	Visited
Illinois	Visited	Visited	Visited	Rhode Island	Visited	Visited	
Indiana	Visited	Visited	Visited	South Carolina	Lived	Visited	Visited
Iowa	Visited	Visited	Visited	South Dakota	Visited	Visited	Visited
Kansas	Visited	Visited	Visited	Tennessee	Lived	Visited	Visited
Kentucky	Lived	Visited	Visited	Texas	Visited	Visited	Visited
Louisiana	Lived	Visited	Visited	Utah	Visited	Visited	Visited
Maine	Visited			Vermont			
Maryland	Lived	Lived	Lived	Virginia	Visited	Visited	Visited
Massachusetts	Lived	Visited		Washington	Visited	Visited	Visited
Michigan				West Virginia	Visited	Visited	Visited
Minnesota	Visited	Visited	Visited	Wisconsin	Visited	Visited	Visited
Mississippi	Visited	Visited	Visited	Wisconsin	Visited	Visited	Visited
Missouri	Visited	Visited	Visited	Wyoming			

I have lived in 13 States and visited the other 30 states.

My Vehicles

1. 1935 Ford Sedan
2. 1950's International Station Wagon Grey?
3. 1952 Chevy Belair
4. 1955 Chevy Belair
5. 1955 Olds Convertible Blue/White
6. 1959 VW Beetle Black
7. 1959 Triumph TR3
8. 1960 Vintage VW, Blue
9. 1960 Vintage VW, Rusty
10. 1960 Chevy Corvair white
11. 1962 Pontiac Bonneville
12. 1964 Falcon Station Wagon
13. 1965 Nash Rambler black
14. 1969 Ford Truck yellow
15. 1969 New Ford Truck green
16. 1970 Mercury Wagon Yellow
17. 1970 Datsun King Cab, Alaska
18. 1970 Datsun Truck, w/Topper
19. 1972 Pontiac Gran Prix Coral
20. 1972 New VW Coral
21. 1972 New Pinto Woody Wagon
22. 1972 New Plymouth Duster
23. 1972 Mercury Woody Station Wagon
24. 1976 Monte Carlo White
25. 1979 New Mercury Marquis
26. 1980 Town Car from Jerry
27. 1986 New F151 Ford Truck
28. 1987 Datsun Truck Blue
29. 1987 New Ford Taurus Grey
30. 1991 Ford Ranger, Maroon
31. 1994 New Mustang Blue
32. 1997 New Dodge Van Taupe
33. 2001 Ford F150 Black
34. 2004 New Nissan Truck Green
35. 2005 VW Super Beetle Red
36. 2005 F150 Ford Truck Black
37. 2006 New Santa Fe Black
38. 2009 New Santa Fe Blue
39. 2016 New Chrysler T&C Van
 1. 10ft Jon Boat
 2. 12ft Aluminum Boat
 3. 12ft Gheenoe
 4. 12ft Fiber glass Center Console
 5. 14ft Cottage Craft Blue Boat
 6. 16ft Green boat
 7. 16ft Center Console
 8. 19ft Sport Craft35 – My Vehicles

Milestones

The this is a list of the highlights and milestones of my life by date.

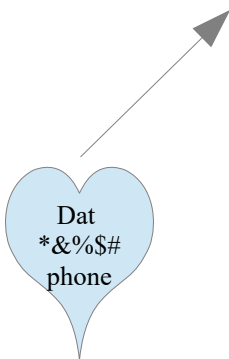
- 1937-Apr 23 **My birth** in Wheeler, AR
- 1938-Oct 12 **Sister Sue** was born in Steele, AR
- 1942-Mar 22 **Brother Jerry** was born in Fayette, AL
- 1949-Dec 29 **Sister Carla** was born in Fort Campbell, KY
- 1957-Aug 08 **Brother Michael** was born in Homestead AFB, Homestead, FL
- 1958-Sep 08 Marriage to Rulee Thieneman, Homestead, FL
- 1959-Apr 23 Navy Boot Camp San Diego, CA
- 1959-Jul 06 Boot Camp Graduation
- 1959-Jul 21 Electronics School, Treasure Island, San Francisco, CA
- 1960-Mar 19 Submarine School, New London, CT
- 1960-Apr 07 Son Randall was born in Homestead, FL
- 1960-May 14 Assigned to icebreaker USS Edisto (AGB-2), Boston, MA
- 1960-Nov 10 **Brother Keith** was born in Homestead AFB, Homestead, FL
- 1962-Sep 62 Assigned to icebreaker USS Glacier (AGB-4), Boston, MA
- 1963-Apr 22 Discharged from Navy
- 1963-Apr 22 Final Divorce Decree
- 1966-Jan 03 Civil Service NAS Jax, Jacksonville, FL
- 1966-Dec 23 Marriage to Katherine Oliver, Jacksonville, FL
- 1966-Dec 30 Hired on with Bendix Field Engineering Corp (BFEC), Columbia, MD
- 1966-April Antenna Engineer NASA Tracking Station at Canary Islands, Spain
- 1968-April Antenna Engineer NASA Tracking Station at Ascension Island, UK
- 1968-Sept Shift Supvr NASA Tracking Station (MILA) at Kennedy Space Center, FL
- 1969-Apr 8 Son Gregory was born, Titusville, FL
- 1974-Feb 2 Son Douglas was born, Titusville, FL
- 1978- Sept Staff Engineer NASA Tracking Station (GDS) at Goldstone, CA
- 1980-Sept Promoted to Senior Manager NASA /NOAA Tracking Stations, Fairbanks, AK
- 1981-Sept 27 Grandson Roarke born to son Randy and Sylvia, Fort Myers, FL
- 1983-Aug Promoted to Manager, NASA World Wide Tracking Network
- 1985-Jul 26 Granddaughter Dejah born to Randy and Sylvia, Fort Myers, FL
- 1986-May Took Senior Manager position NASA Tracking Stations(MILA/PDL) at KSC, FL
- 1992-May 31 Granddaughter Katlyn born to son Greg and Tina, Merritt Island, FL
- 1997-Feb 27 Grandson Aaron born to son Greg and Tina, Merritt Island, FL
- 1997-Oct Retired from Allied-Signal (Bendix) with 31 years service, Titusville, FL
- 1998-Aug Consultant to Poker Flat, Alaska
- 1998-Dec Consultant to NASA Tracking Station MILA, Kennedy Space Center, FL
- 2004-Apr Founded USS Edisto Association, Charleston, SC – Planned 11 reunions ending 2019
- 2016-Feb 19 The book I authored & published, *The Story of an Icebreaker* was delivered by Semi & Trailer
- 2016-Nov 27 Great Grandson Oliver born to granddaughter Katlyn and Dean Renwick. Manchester, UK
- 2016-Dec 23 50th Anniversary - Kathie and I were given a surprise party by friends and family.
- 2017-Jul 7 Great Grandson Damian born to granddaughter Dejah and Luis Malla.

An addendum to this story is on our 50th wedding anniversary our good friends the Slatterys, Judy Girard and family members planned a party to celebrate our milestone. Nieces and nephews came from as far away as NW Arkansas, my boss a Bendix Vice President and NASA Customers, my brothers Mike and Jerry were all present as well as our three sons Randy, Greg and Doug.



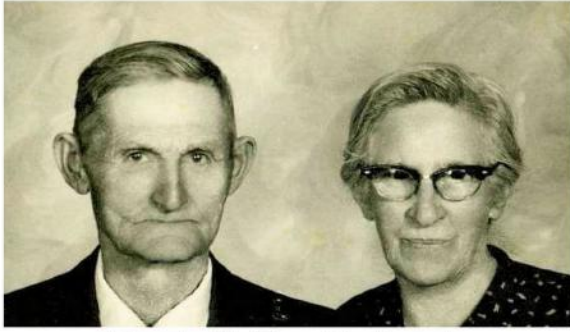
Family – Aaron, Tina, Jeannie. Morgan, Wendy, Linda, Jerry, Kimberly, Kathie, Glenn, Mike, Randy, Doug, Greg, Aaron, Sandy, Jim, Cathy

When it came time to open presents, we opened the one from Brother Jerry in front of all the guests and inside was that same damn telephone. Far-ray-do!

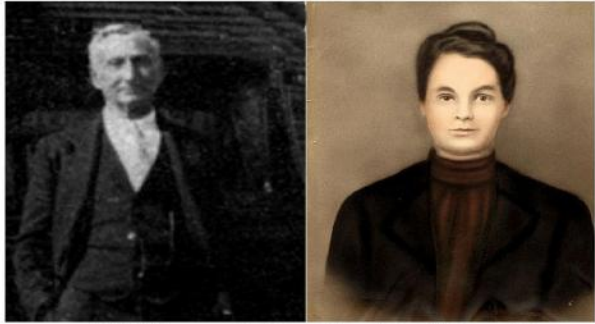


Brother Jerry & Jeannie's gift

GLENN'S FAIMLY TREE



Hugh & Ora Holland



William & Hattie Bell Smith



Josielee, Jerry & Glenn



Glenn & Rulee



Glenn & Kathie



Randy



Doug & Greg



Glenn & Rulee

Randy & Sylvia



↓ Roarke & Dejah ↓

Luis & Dejah Malla



ROARKE & NEPHEW



Damian Malla



Randy & Sylvia



Roarke & Randy



Dejah & Randy



Luis & Dejah Malla



Mother & Son



Damian Malla



1966 Glenn & Kathie

Tina - Greg
Aaron, Katlyn



Douglas Kyle



Dean & Kattlyn



Aaron & friend Reagan



Before



2018



Oliver Renwick

Grandchildren

Greg & Tina



Katlyn



Aaron



Great Grandsons



Damian Malla



Oliver Renwick

In the latter part of 2019, China was experiencing outbreaks and subsequent deaths from the COVID-19 virus. While China was trying to contain the spread of the virus they failed to tell the rest of the world. The virus spread rapidly throughout the world and began showing up in the U.S. as early as January and eventually all states were affected.

March 2020, Florida shutdown restaurants and other businesses except for essential workers and initially seemed to be doing okay but for concentrations in Dade and Broward which may have had more travelers from New York and other highly infected areas. The rest of the state was having fewer cases than those two counties but when the State entered phase two which allowed Bars to open back up, the cases shot up to new highs.

We essential seniors were shooting pool a couple hours each morning Monday - Saturday until March 14th and have remained in quarantine since then. It is a whole new ballgame. People have clustered on Facelift, Snapchick and Zoomba and now there is a new app called Tick Tock which is reportedly made by the Chinese. Why not? They make everything else that we consume. Iphones, drugs, computers, apps, clothes, dinner ware, trinkets and for the person who has everything, Covid-19. In short, just about anything you buy at a Wal-Mart store. The Chinese bought Jack Daniels Distillery (sacrilegious) and Smithfield Hams. SMITHFIELD is the city that our great granddad donated the property on which the city is built. Sacrilegious! I just can't drink Jack Daniels and eat pork at the same time without getting sick.

Thanks to China we now wear mask with our names on them so we know who we are talking to. We have to resort to new barbers like our spouses or self-administered haircuts. Cars are getting 3 months to a gallon. Crackers, Spam and Beanie Weenies are back in the menu. Socializing is out. We are no longer able to have grandkids and great grandkids visit. No more Friday night dinner and cards with friends. Did you ever think that having plastic bags, rubber gloves, masks and bleach in the trunk of your car would not be considered suspicious.

This period of sequestering has given rise to new pursuits. For many it is trying to find fame by posting on Facelift and getting hundreds of views or it could be a well-known artist like Henry Peter painting a whole new series called Pandemic. For authors such as myself, I decided to redo some of the book and republish my book *The Story of an Icebreaker*. I decided also this would be a good time to write my autobiography in which this chapter is included. I am amused at my own amazement.

Amazon.com has never seen such a banner year as 2020. The A to Z slogan is apt with purchases from Alcohol wipes to Ziploc bags. One can buy almost anything but masks. The latter has to come from China. It seems that no matter who you order from, weeks later when they arrive, they are in the same blue bundle, look the same and stink to high heaven. If COVID-19 doesn't get you, the mask will. I might also add that these mask are supposed to be one-time use and they live up to their design because the string usually breaks on one side when trying to use it the second time.

Our experience with these masks is all of the above but what is interesting is that I made 4 separate orders to 4 different sources and after 4 weeks with no delivery, my money was refunded. Two of the remaining three sources came in at different times and each was in a similar bag, the mask looked exactly alike, had the same stinky smell and each had a tag written in Chinese. The third order has not yet arrived though it has been months now.

We are living in an extremely divided country when it comes to politics. Actually that isn't quite true. We are divided between Trump Haters and Deplorables. Never in the history of our country has there been more vitriolic hatred towards anyone in our history as that shown against our current sitting president. Like the man or not, there is absolutely no respect towards the most prestigious office in the free world but if you have lasted this long and read this far, then I am much obliged.

I haven't covered every aspect of my former life with my siblings Sue, Jerry, Carla, Mike and Candy – ah ha, that was just to see if you are paying attention. There isn't a *Candy* in our family. Nor have I written much about my years with Rulee and Randy, nor mine and Kathie's time together with Greg and Doug but I do hope that there is sufficient content to stir the gray cells and bring forth some good memories.

Rest assured there is something I hope the reader can remember and that is I loved. I loved my career. I loved the women I knew and married two of them. I love my three sons and their wives and my grandchildren and great grandchildren that they have given me. And lest I not forget, I love my siblings though I don't get to see them as often as I would like.

I've often said that I believe the definition of Life is the choices we make during the period between birth and death. Our life is defined by the decisions we make every moment of every day. Sometimes we make bad ones but overall our lives are rich and filled with the good decisions we've made. I won't deny the fact that there are things that I should have done better. I should've been a better husband, a better father and a better friend.

For me, my family, my siblings and the truly great friends that I've made over the years are where my most important decisions were made. It is these relationships that gives my life a wholeness and I can truly say that I love the life I've lived and I thank you for being part of it.

All good things will eventually end so I will close for now but I will leave room at the bottom of this page for my obituary...should I ever need one.



The end