

The Watchman

Chapter Two

Mike went back to the bench and sat once again in the dim light cast by the light near the entrance of the airport office. With a few sips of coffee from his thermos, his shivering ceased and a kind of peace washed over him in the darkness of the silent airport. He looked at his watch. It was now a few minutes before midnight.



It was during a cold November like this that he had learned to fly and received his pilot's license at the Hammond airport. His first few years as a pilot were spent flying skydivers using multiple sorts of airplanes over the airport. He would go on to fly many, many kinds of different airplanes and log thousands of flight hours performing missions that ranged from flying air cargo to crop dusting to even skywriting and all sorts of other aerial tasks. In recent years, his age had slowed down his flying time, but the question that had brought here him tonight had never become a fascination, had not been at the forefront of his consciousness, in the years since he had first soloed at Hammond. But over the last few years, the question had slowly developed a power over him, and he had spent exhaustive time exploring any possible answer that made sense to him. But so far, a plausible explanation had eluded him.

Seeking the answer, now here he was. He had always felt that the airport at Hammond was a home to him. The peace he was feeling, he thought, had to be because in his time here, events in the outside world did not exist. Time then was marked only by the rising and the setting sun. Training first-time skydivers, and being a jump pilot along with doing the associated chores his boss asked of him was a dream come true to a young twenty year old ex-soldier.

His entire world, where he slept, in the hangar on a surplus cot, taking his meals in the airport diner, drinking beer with his friends in the empty hangar in the evenings after the airplanes were tied down for the night, and the duties he conducted as an instructor and pilot was his universe. He had little need to ever leave the airport most days. And he was perfectly happy here. Blissfully happy. Even during the times that the weather did not cooperate.

The days and events outside his world, in fact, in the world at large, were tumultuous then, filled with a war in the Far East, racial strife on the nearby streets, political upheaval and assassinations. But he only knew or cared that when the sun did rise, he would swing his feet to the floor and then into his jump boots, and blurry-eyed, he would draw his first cup of coffee for the day, and he would walk out into the sunshine and across the same expansive ramp he now looked over in the cold silence, and the twenty year old would check the sky for clouds.

Those clouds, or lack thereof, would tell him what would happen that day. Would the jumpers come, would the airplanes fly today? If not, no matter, there were parachutes to pack and repair, floors to sweep, a drink machine to fill, and before long, the skies would clear, and then the jumpers would jump, and the airplanes would carry them. It was this way day-after-day, month-after-month for four years. During his first year at Hammond, jumping from airplanes was the only thing he cared about. Airplanes were a background fixture, only necessary to get into the sky above. He wasn't a pilot then.



But there came a day, while nursing a broken leg and wearing a heavy cast, that he sat behind a desk - in the very office behind him, now closed, locked and dark - answering the phone as the only way he could be of any use whatsoever, when one day as he recuperated, the boss approached him.

“Mike, we really need a second pilot. Do you want to learn to fly?”

Mike had never contemplated becoming a pilot, not once. The boss was the pilot and that was that. Until that moment, his only care in the world was doing whatever it took to be a skydiver. He trained first jump students, he filled airplanes with gas, he swept floors, he slept in a chilly hangar with only an olive drab, Army surplus, wool blanket as his warmth. It mattered not what he had to do as long as whatever it was that he did resulted in the next parachute jump. And another jump and so-on.

Flying? Become a pilot? Becoming a pilot had never crossed his mind in the past.

The boss went on to say, “I’ll pay all the bills, hire the instructor, pay for the airplane rental and gas, if you learn to fly. Look! I even brought along a book you can study so you can take your written exams.”

Mike felt no real emotion about it just then.

“What do you say? Okay?”

Mike shrugged his shoulders and said, “Okay.” And he took the book and he opened it. It was full of words about weather and aerodynamics and navigation, and he began to read. None of it seemed hard to learn. So, with his leg propped up in a chair, he buried himself in the pages of the book and he studied and learned the knowledge required of a fledgling pilot. And he did so, quickly.

Soon, the cast was cut away, and Mike, still a bit game, was continuing to mind the phone when, one day, a thick built, balding man carrying a small leather briefcase walked through the front door. He looked around briefly and seeing Mike, he approached the service desk and extended his hand. Mike raised his eyes to him as the man said, “I take it from your boss out there that you’re my

student. I'm Barney Kelly, your flight instructor."



Mike had never laid eyes on Barney Kelly before, but he immediately trusted him, and he took everything Barney said about flying the small, two-seat trainer they would fly as the gospel. Barney began as all instructors do with their students: a slow walk around the airplane explaining the function of the flight surfaces and moving parts, what to check about the engine before starting, what to expect in performance from the airplane, an orientation of all the basic flight instruments and their function, what they indicated and then taking a first orientation flight, a gentle take-off and landing and letting Mike put his hands and feet on the controls to follow Barney through simple banked turns and gentle stalls. The first hour of instruction came to an end as Mike followed Barney through to a smooth landing.

And this is where the question for Mike would began fifty-one years after that first time at the controls.

Over the next six hours of flight instruction with Barney, Mike would fly the stalls and recoveries, the turns-about-a-point, the touch-and-goes, the steep banked coordinated turns, the figure eights, all of the basic flight maneuvers.

Then on the seventh hour of instruction, with Mike in the left seat and Barney in the right, Mike did as he was instructed and he taxied the little airplane to the active runway, and he prepared to take-off. He dutifully did his final engine and control surface checks, and as he was about to taxi onto the runway to take-off, Barney said, "Stop! Let me out. You take it around by yourself."

To Mike, it was if Barney had just said, "Take the airplane and run down to the corner and buy me a loaf of bread." It was that every day to Mike. Without hesitation, as Barney's foot had barely touched the ground exiting the cabin, Mike pushed the throttle for-

ward and nearly hitting Barney with the tail, he taxied onto the runway and he took off.

His first solo flight, a few circuits around the airport by himself, and a few touch-and-go landings was as normal to him that day as the flight he made to come back to the old airport tonight.

In his fortieth hour of flight, after performing the requirements of a student pilot, he took his final check ride, and he received his pilot's license; and on his forty-second hour as a new pilot, he was carrying three jumpers up to their exit altitude. Two years hence, he was dropping jumpers during his two thousandth hour as a pilot.

Try as he might, Mike could attach no memory of any real excitement, beyond some minor nervousness, to his first solo. From that day forward, with few exceptions, getting behind the controls of an airplane, almost any airplane, was as common and normal to him as slipping on a pair of shoes. But he paid that no mind. Flying was just something he did. But then, as he grew older, the questions began.



He thought about those days learning to fly as he sat on the bench. But suddenly, he had to chuckle to himself again as the cold, hard bench caused him to shift the weight from one thin buttock onto the other to relieve the pressure. He looked down at the empty space on the bench next to him as he rolled slightly to one side and he gently patted its surface, once slowly, then again slowly, and his thoughts returned to the days when the bench was a sort of gathering place, a "ready" bench where jumpers laden with parachute gear sat ready to take their turn in the sky.

On some summer days, sitting on the bench, underneath the office door portico, in the shade, was relief from the boiling sun and it was where jumpers and pilots alike might gather and swap tales and drink sodas. On stormy days, sitting on the bench under the

portico was cover from the soaking rains.

As he thought of those times gathered around the bench, his mind filled with the young faces of the jumpers he had known, so many of them now permanently gone. The faces, the smiles, the laughter, the antics ran through his thoughts, a film strip that flickered from image-to-image in halting snap shots. And he patted the bench again. And he ran his hand slowly across its weathered surface. Remembering.

He had run that strip of memories through his mind many, many times, and he had written and published many words about those days. But he was here for a different reason now.



Then came the muffled thud of car door closing in the darkness behind him, and he stiffened some. But he did not move. In an another moment, he watched as a weak beam of pale light began to cast itself around the darkened ramp, stopping here for a second or two, then resting there on an airplane tied down in the distance and briefly illuminating the mustard colored crop duster and its companion loader truck. Then the light disappeared quickly and he heard the metallic clang of a chain link gate opening behind him. That was quickly followed by the sound of shuffling steps. He remained still.

From around the corner of the building, a clear voice, with a slight southern drawl, said, "That your airplane out there?" And a figure, a bent and thin figure appeared at the edge of the building a few feet away from where Mike sat. Mike stood, saying, "Yes, sir, it is."

And the figure stepped into the dim light of the portico. The figure's face was bright and smiling, crinkled like used wax paper in places. The faint hint of silver beard stubble covered the man's face. He was short, about five-and-a-half feet tall and stooped at the

shoulders. His eyes were dark but sparkled when the light hit them just right.

“Howdy!” said the old man brightly.

“Hello, there!” Mike said.

“Is your plane broke?”

“No, sir, I landed just a while ago. On purpose. Mike rose to shake the man’s hand.

As they shook each other’s hand, the old man said, “Nice to meet you. I’m Charles. Please don’t call me “Charlie.” I like to get that straight right off the bat with folks. That’s what my mama named me and I like it.”

Mike couldn’t help but laugh, and he said, “Well...*Charles*. I’m, Mike. My mother named me, “Michael.” But you can call me anything you want.”

And they both laughed easily.

“I know,” said Charles, “I’ve been expecting you.”

“Really!?” Mike said, surprised. “Really? Me?”

“Wait!” said Mike excitedly! “I remember you!”

“Yep.” said Charles.

“You owned the little Luscomb we flew here. You ran a small engine shop downtown, didn’t you?!”

“Yep!”

“Damn, I’d have figured that...”

“That I’d be dead by now?”

“Well...”

“I should’a been by now. But the city gave me a job. So, I decided to hang around a little longer.” He laughed softly at his own joke and then said, “I’m the watchman now.”

“Watchman?”

“Yes, sir! I keep an eye on the airport.”

“But!” said Mike

And Charles cut him off, saying,

“How old am I?”

Mike nodded yes.

“Nearly one hundred.” And the old man grinned widely.

Mike was a bit flummoxed, and he sat back down and retrieved his coffee cup, the thermos cup with a few sips of now ice cold coffee left in it.

Charles said, “Don’t be so surprised. People live longer now and watching over the airport, even though they don’t really pay me much to do it, it gives something to do.”

Then Charles asked, “Can I sit down there next to you. My feet are killing me.”

“Be my guest.” said Mike.

“Like a little of this to warm that coffee up a bit?” asked Charles as he pulled a small bronze flask from his heavy wool coat pocket and he raised it towards Mike.

“What is it?” asked Mike

“Aviation fuel mixed with some whiskey to give it a little kick.” said Charles dead-pan.

Mike laughed out loud and said, “Just a spot, for the chill.”

Just for the chill, mind you.”

“Yeah, the chill.” said Charles, and he unscrewed the flask’s top and dribbled a dash into Mike’s outstretched small thermos cup. Mike had not had so much as a drop of alcohol in many years, but he thought to himself that a warming sip or two couldn’t hurt. Not tonight.

Charles said, “Here’s to the chills.” And he tipped his flask up and took a short swallow following that with a brief shudder saying, “B-r-r-r!” And he screwed the cap back on the flask, and then he slid it back into his coat pocket.

And together, quietly, they sat on the bench for the next few minutes feeling the alcohol’s burn slowly warming their throats.

“Glad I wore the big coat tonight.” said Charles breaking the silence between them.

“You were expecting me?” said Mike softly breaking the silence.

“Well, said Charles, “I do seem to know when one of you will come back. It’s really the reason that I’m the watchman. To be here to answer the questions.”

That response, *“It’s really the reason that I’m the watchman. To be here to answer the questions.”* threw Mike into a brief and awkward silence for a moment.

Then Charles said, “You are not the first and I doubt that you’ll be the last. Although time is getting short for me.” Mike said nothing in response to that.

“See. I have a kind of mission.” said Charles. “It began a number of years back. After I closed the engine shop and retired, I had little else to do. The wife had passed...”

“Oh! I’m sorry to hear that.” interrupted Mike.

“Well, she was fine woman. But I’m over it now.”

Mike shook his head in understanding.

“Anyway, as I was saying...” continued Charles, “...with her gone, I started looking for something to do, and then I remembered what a certain pilot who trained here during the war had asked me to do.”

“What was that?” asked Mike.

“Well, I’ll tell you the short answer *then* I’ll tell you the whole tale. I know you’ll be interested.”

Mike took a sip from his cup waiting to hear what was next.

“See, Mike, that pilot had asked me to answer the questions of those he knew would return here in one way or another. He felt that the war would make such an impression on folks that what was happening here would become an important part of people’s memories. He knew that I would probably stay here, live here, and he asked me to become a sort of historical custodian. I took that as an honor.

When I retired from the shop, I began just hanging out here. The airport operator then, and this was well after you had moved on, needed someone to do simple chores, sweeping, emptying trash cans, helping with gassing up airplanes, stuff like that. He was an airplane mechanic and ran the place by himself and having somebody to lend a hand that didn’t need to be paid a lot was a big help to him.

As time passed, I saw chances to fill that soldier pilot’s request. See, now and then, as I puttered around here, I would look out the office window and watch someone pull up to the fence out there along the flight line. They’d park their car and get out and just stand at the fence looking out across the airfield. Sometimes, they would get out of the car and amble around, looking.

Sometimes, it was a young guy, or maybe it might be someone in their fifties, or maybe sixties. A number of the older ones had come through here as pilots or ground crew and even cooks. I've sort of lost track of how many did this over the years.

I instinctively knew what they were doing and why they had come, like you."

"You know why I've come?" said Mike.

"In your case. Exactly."

"But..."

"In a bit, let me finish." said Charles, a tad curtly. "I knew why they were here. I could sense it. They were the sons, daughters, widows, sisters, brothers, buddies, wingmen, veterans. I watched them.

They would stand at the fence staring out across the airfield. Some cried. Some laughed out loud. Most just stood silently. Maybe their imaginations filled with the images of cadets climbing down from bi-wing cockpits. Maybe they remembered a young soldier they married just before he left here for the war, pilots ready to kill the Hun with his bomber or his fighter. Maybe they were just trying to imagine or remember what had taken place here in that time.

I would wander by and strike up conversations with them. They would ask me what I knew about the place, the wartime. Once in a great while, I might have actually known the somebody that they came here to remember. Often, they were here to commemorate a birthday or an anniversary. A few just wanted to try to experience what someone important to them had.

I'd tell them everything I could to help them understand or maybe to fill in a blank about a granddaddy or a father who trained here. Once in a while, there might be a family, grandkids, uncles and so-on, who wanted to see where a relative had spent his days

before being taken prisoner or being shot down.

I'd paint the pictures for them. Tell them in detail what life was like for the person they knew or had heard about during his time here. I even had a widower come looking once for the place that his young bride served as a nurse. He showed me a yellowed photo of her standing near a dispensary door. I didn't remember her, but told him that I did. I also told him that her friends loved her. Yeah, it was little white lie, but the tears in his eyes were worth it. I'm sure God will give me a pass on that one." And Charles chuckled softly.

By this time, Mike had been stricken completely mesmerized, and silent, wide awake and completely absorbed with Charles's every word.

"After a time..." Charles continued, "...I began to feel like just being here to answer the questions and help folks find what they were looking for was the most important thing I had ever done. I got very good at describing how pilots were trained, what they flew, where they slept, even what they ate. I took a lot of pride in giving "tours" of sorts.

Sometimes it was hard. Often, I could feel the pain of loss. Other times, I could sense their pride and that made me very happy."

Mike shook his head vigorously.

Then Charles said, "But of all the folks that ever came looking, wanting answers, there were a few, a very few special ones that I had always kept an eye out for, because I knew that one day..."

And Charles paused while looking thoughtfully into the dark night beyond as if some important thought had interrupted him.

"One day..." said Mike, "...what?"

Charles turned and looked at Mike evidently trying to regain his train of thought.

“I’ll explain it with a little story.” And Charles pulled the flask out of his pocket and took a long draw from it before thrusting it in Mike’s direction. “A little more?”

“*Why not?*” thought Mike as he nodded in the affirmative and held his cup up. Charles poured a bit into the cup and Mike quietly said, “Thanks.” nearly in a hush.



“We first heard them in ’42. I was on my bike over the near the freight yard not far from here. We lived just behind the tracks. The L&N railroad ran through here between Baton Rouge and Mobile in those days.”

“You lived near the airport?”

“Well...,” said Charles, “...not the airport it is today, or what it would become by the end of ’42.”

“Wait.” said Mike. “I knew you when you were, what, fiftyish, maybe?”

“Maybe.” said Charles. “You were twenty-two when you got your pilot’s license here. So, yeah, maybe.” And Charles grinned. Mike took a short sip of the whiskey and thought to himself, “*How did he know how old I was?*” Mike slightly shrugged his shoulders, nearly imperceptibly, and he thought to himself, “*Maybe I told him then.*”

“I don’t really remember how old I was when I met you here back then. But let me tell my little story and let’s see if your answer might in there somewhere.

Mike thought, “*How the hell does he know what my question is.*”

Charles went on. “Anyway, we lived back there behind the airport near the tracks, and one day I was riding my bike when I first heard the rumble, not like a train rumbles, more like a low far-a-way growl, really, like a swarm of really big bees. It was off in the east and coming nearer.”

“What was it?” asked Mike.

“Just listen, Charlie said, “...I’ll tell you. It was six A-20’s. You remember what an A-20 was don’t you?”

Mike just looked at Charles blankly. The word flashed through his thoughts, “*Remember!?*”

“Son, you got a lot to be reminded of.” And Charles laughed a small laugh at the irony of Mike not remembering.

Mike said, “I’m sorry.” And he didn’t know why he was apologizing. Mike wanted to know what it was that he was supposed to be reminded of, but as he began to ask, “What...,” Charles interrupted him and continued with his story.

“I stopped pedaling and slid to a stop and looked at the six airplanes growing bigger out there on the horizon, getting closer, and I listened to the whine of their engines get louder as they broke formation and began to circle the airport one behind the other.”

“A “Havoc!” right?” said Mike brightly.

“Right!” said Charles, “The A-20 ‘Havoc.’ What made you remember that?” And Charles thought to himself, “*As if I needed to ask.*”

“I’m not sure. I just got a picture in my head of a light twin-engine bomber like they flew during the war and I guessed.”

“That wasn’t a guess.” Charles said matter-of-factly.

“Maybe I shouldn’t drink anymore of this...” said Mike.

Charles laughed.

“Anyway, you’re welcome.” said Charles. “Sometimes, I need to draw some folks a little mental picture before they recall.”

Before Mike could respond, Charles went on. “We didn’t know it then, the people around here, but it was just weeks after Pearl and life was about to change and get a whole lot more interesting.”

Charles continued his story.

“Pretty soon, dump trucks started hauling load after load of crushed stone in here and bulldozers, graders and steamrollers by the dozen came through town on flatbed trucks and construction people were camped out in six man tents and quickly erected tar paper shacks all over the place. Chuck wagon trucks with smoking chimneys sticking out through the roof were feeding the workmen. There were people in suits and hard hats and military big shots in brown cars with big white stars painted on them zipping all around.”

“What was happening?” asked Mike.

“The War Department, the Engineer Corps, was building us this, well, they were building the Army this airfield.”

Mike said, “I remember the first day that I set foot here. Everything seemed so familiar. I wonder...”

Broken images were beginning to fill Mike’s mind. As Charles began to speak again, the deep growl of many airplane engines and fractured images of old fighters taxing out to the runways and ground crews pulling parking blocks away from the wheels of idling airplanes and “Follow Me” jeeps with red-and-white checkered flags fluttering in the wind began to fill his mind. He shook that off and tried to concentrate on what Charles was saying.

“We’ll get to that.” injected Charles. Then he picked up where

he left off.

“Those first six Havocs landed on our little asphalt airstrip, some of them nearly running off of the end of our short runway that day, and the next day, it seemed, but really more like several months, there were medium bombers, trainers and fighters circling everywhere and dropping fake bombs in the woods and then landing on those three big concrete runways you see out there now.

Down south at Lake Ponchartrain, they closed off everything in the air over the lake for aerial gunnery training. The whole lake was off-limits to civilians. Nobody could fish or crab or nothing. That pissed a few people off, let me tell you. They did a lot of strafing up at the range. A lot of chickens died of fright in those days.” And Charles chuckled softly.

“Christ!” said Mike, “I had no idea.”

“Yes, you did.” said Charles, “But we’ll get back around to that.

“Jesus. All I was ever told about the war days was that B-24s trained out of here. That’s what I was told when I was last here in the Sixties.” Mike said.

“Who told you that?”

“I don’t remember. My old boss here, maybe.”

“Well, Mike, whoever it was, they didn’t know their ass from a hole in the ground.” Then Charles said, “B-24s were one airplane that never flew here.”

“You hung around out here a lot when I was here then...” said Mike, “...I don’t remember you ever talking about any of this then.”

“Nobody ever asked.” said Charles. “Nobody. Besides, when you were here, I only occasionally came out here. And you barely noticed me in those days.”

“Sorry.” said Mike.

“Don’t be. You were having the time of your life then. Even then, I knew that it wasn’t time to tell you any of this. You would have thought I was an old man reliving his past just to hear himself talk. You had to be ready to hear it, like now.”

“Anyway,” Charles said, “For me, during the war, it was like Christmas every day, just to ride my bike over here, or sneak through the woods after they put up the main gate and the guards and watch the goings on.

There were pilots, instructors, check pilots, navigators and bombardiers everywhere, and hundreds of ground crew and mechanics, everybody running or marching somewhere.

Behind us, back behind the control tower, they paved streets and made dirt roads and built low barracks and mess halls and offices.”

“None of that was here when I got here.” Mike said.

“Ha!” laughed Charles and he said, “Yes, it wa...” and he caught himself, not finishing his response, and then he continued his tale.

“Why, there didn’t seem to be a single day, except for some Sundays maybe, that you didn’t hear the sounds of the big airplane engines or machine guns. Even the thuds of practice bombs out on the practice range were a constant presence. My favorite sound was the banshee whistle of the Mustangs gun ports as they entered the landing pattern. It still is now.”

Mike nodded enthusiastically at that. The high scream of a passing Mustang thrilled him to the bone every time he heard it. But, oddly, the thought struck him just then was that you can’t hear a Mustang’s high whistling scream when you’re flying one. “*How did I know that?!*” he thought to himself, and thinking it made

him feel strange, slightly uncomfortable. So, he said aloud, as if saying it would somehow blunt his unease, "I'd sure like to fly one."

Trying to change the subject, Mike asked, "Where was the bombing range?"

"It was over there." said Charles as he pointed northeast. And then for a moment he fell silent as he looked Mike squarely in the face. "Never flew a Mustang, huh?" said Charles and he chuckled slightly.

Mike looked back at him quizzically, not understanding what might have been amusing and he studied Charles's face momentarily, and then he looked then far off into the star lit northeast as if in study. Charles said nothing. Then Mike softly said, "Why did I know *"to the northeast"* was what you were going to say?"

Charles shrugged his shoulders and said, "I wonder?" and he chuckled low to himself and he thought, *"He's remembering now."*

"Anyway...", said Charles, as Mike continued to stare far off into the dark sky, "...it was great fun to lie on my belly at the edge of the woods and watch the airfield and all the things that were happening. Even as I went to bed at night and tried to sleep, I fell asleep listening the sound of airplanes taking off and returning all during the night."

"How old were you then?" asked Mike.

"Sixteen or so." said Charles. Then he continued his tale.

"I got to know a lot of the guys here when I took a job driving a commissary supply truck in the afternoons after school. I'd pick up sacks and sacks of potatoes and sides of beef at the railhead and deliver them around to the various mess halls. I betcha I delivered a thousand ton of spuds during the war."

Charles threw his head back some and laughed out loud.

“The pilots were almost all Second Lieutenants, young guys, in their early twenties. A few were in their late teens, a few were Captains. Most of the instructors and check pilots were older Captains and Majors.

After I’d drop my stuff at the mess halls and shoot the breeze with the cooks and K.P.s a bit, I’d park my truck for a few minutes over behind a hangar and go into the flight line grill for a donut and coffee. Did that most every day.

The guys liked to talk shop with me and I was always full of questions about airplanes and flying, especially for the guys that had flown combat missions and were back here as instructors.”

Mike interrupted Charles saying, “Charles...”

Charles turned towards Mike and said, “Patience, your answer’s here. Let me finish. Time is short.”

Mike looked at the luminous dial on his watch. The pale green numbers read, 1:30 a.m. He nodded okay.

Charles continued, “In ‘43, I remember of those guys, Major Kelly, especially well. And more importantly, I remember this kid that never came back, Mitchell St. Clair. St. Clair was a young Lieutenant that trained here on the Mustangs. Once they got to Germany, St. Clair was flying top cover for Kelly at the Bulge in ‘44 when the he bought it. Kelly was St. Clair’s instructor here and his squadron commander over there.

Charles stopped talking for a brief second, and he sighed wistfully. Then he smiled and looked skyward for another second, before he said, “Kelly was the one.”



Mike felt every hair on his neck stand erect just then and he asked Charles if he might have just little more of what was in the

flask.

St. Clair would have been Mike's last name had his mother never remarried. The name Kelly had not registered just yet.