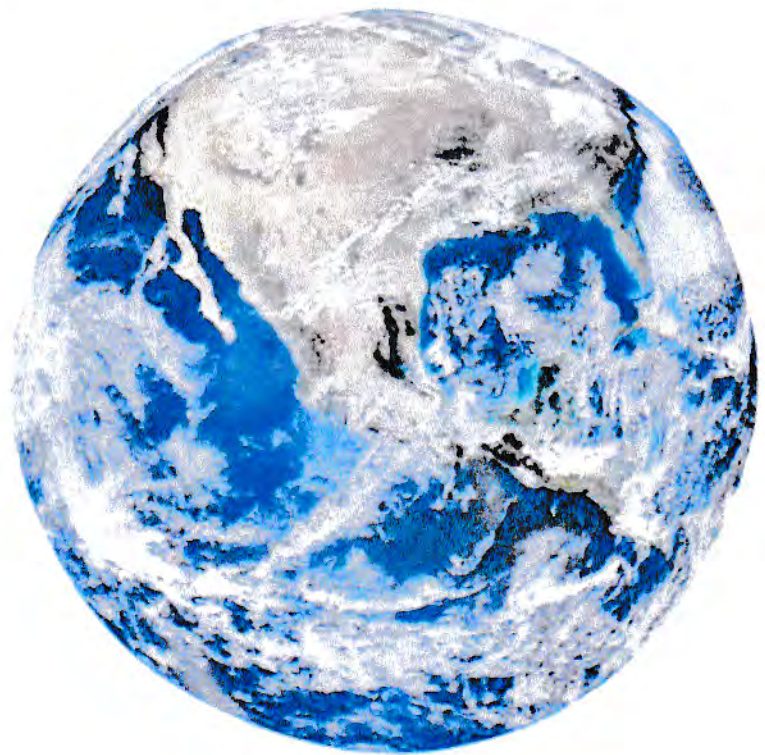


# Bunky's Worldline



An Autobiography by Bob Aldridge

# **Bunky's Worldline**

*An Autobiography by Bob Aldridge*

I dedicate this story of my life to  
Janet Alfreda Balvin Aldridge,  
my wife and companion  
for 66 of my 87 years.

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I must explain why I chose *Bunky' Worldline* for the title of my autobiography. Bunky was a popular comic strip character of the late 1920s and 1930s. I can't remember much about him other than he always managed to get himself into deep trouble and then, somehow, extricate himself. Perhaps I was that same way in grade school. One day at Amesti School (in the country near Freedom, California) my 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Miss Mahoney, was scolding me about something. Then, out of exasperation, she said "You remind me of Bunky." The name stuck for the rest of grade school, into high school and beyond when I was among my old Amesti classmates. I hated it and I have continued to hate it until recently. Then, for some reason, it started to mean more to me. Now I have named this collection of memories after a sweet childhood memory – *Bunky* – the street name I acquired in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and by which all my Amesti homies called me from then on.

"Worldline" is a term from Albert Einstein's theory of General Relativity. Any object can be located in four-dimensional spacetime (3 dimensions of space at 1 instant of time). As that object moves, each location can be plotted in the same manner. A line connecting all of the spacetime locations of that object throughout its lifetime is called the worldline of that object. This saga is my worldline from a point in space somewhere east of Watsonville on 15 April 1926 to another point in space near the south end of San Francisco Bay on 3 February 1973.

Bob Aldridge  
Santa Clara, CA  
December 2013





# Contents

## Part 1 My Growing Up Years

- Chapter 1      Getting Started in Life
- Chapter 2      My Grade School Years
- Chapter 3      My Grammar School Days
- Chapter 4      Maluhia Ranch
- Chapter 5      More on Maluhia

## Part 2 Green Valley

- Chapter 6      Green Valley Ranch
- Chapter 7      Green Valley – 1940-1942
- Chapter 8      My Senior Year at Watsonville High
- Chapter 9      My First Post High School Year
- Chapter 10     Highlights of Arroyo Seco

## Part 3 My Little Piece of the War

- Chapter 11     Welcome to the Army
- Chapter 12     Basic Training
- Chapter 13     Off to the Pacific
- Chapter 14     Tropic Lightning
- Chapter 15     Yamashita's Defeat
- Chapter 16     Sweating it Out
- Chapter 17     Nostalgic Memories

## Part 4 Resuming Life: San Luis Obispo and Watsonville

- Chapter 18     Readjusting
- Chapter 19     Flying
- Chapter 20     Beginning Married Life
- Chapter 21     Back to Watsonville

- Chapter 22    77 Arthur Road
- Chapter 23    Forestry Adventures

Part 5   Settling in Santa Clara

- Chapter 24    631 Kiely Boulevard
- Chapter 25    Lockheed: Underwater Launch
- Chapter 26    Lockheed: Reentry Systems
- Chapter 27    Diana Moon's Deadly Dust
- Chapter 28    Changing Our Lifestyle
- Conclusion/Afterword

# **PART 1**

## **My Growing Up Years**

## Chapter 1 – Getting Started in Life

Casserly Road lies three miles northeast of Watsonville (California) and extends in a northwesterly direction from Highway 152 (Hecker Pass Road). About  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from Highway 152, and setting back a little on the right side of the road, there once stood a small bungalow where, at 8 AM on April 15, 1926, I was born. I was delivered by Dr. F.H. Koepke assisted by my paternal grandmother. My mom was Irma Rose Oksen Aldridge and my dad Creston Ernest Aldridge. My paternal grandparents were Isabelle and Ernest Aldridge. My maternal grandparents were Jim and Emma Oksen, but Grandpa Jim died two years before I was born. I never called Grandma Oksen by that name – it was always Nana, and that is the way I will refer to her in this story.

In later years I saw this house many times as I drove by on Casserly Road. But during the 1990s, when I wanted to take a picture of it, I could not find it. It was either demolished or rebuilt to such an extent as to be unrecognizable. At the time of my birth the area was considered part of Green Valley. Now it is known as the Casserly District.

Some time during my first year we moved to a house on the corner of First Street and Rodriguez Streets. A picture I have of my dad holding me while sitting on the porch – a picture that has been on my bedroom chest of drawers since I can't remember when – was taken at this house.

A vision has been lodged in my head, which I don't know is memory or a dream, also took place here. I was sitting in a breakfast nook across the table from Dad. Mom was cooking at the stove. Dad was eating fried potatoes, and smacking his lips because they were so yummy. I have tried to verify if this actually happened but have never been able to do that satisfactorily.

My grandparents Aldridge were farmers and lived in the country. On one visit I got into big trouble. Being curious and adventurous as little boys are (although I can't remember the event) I toddled off when the grown folks weren't paying attention. Grandma often took in boarders and a barber was renting an upstairs room. I crawled up the stairs and ventured into his room. There was a bottle of something that looked appealing so I took a drink.

Meanwhile my parents, having discovered I was missing, were searching in panic. I am told they heard some groaning upstairs and rushed up to find me sprawled on the bed with the bottle alongside. The bottle had contained formaldehyde, a toxic solution used as a disinfectant and as a preservative (also for embalming). The barber used it to sterilize his instruments.

Dad grabbed me and rushed for the car with Mom in close pursuit. They sped to the Watsonville Hospital which at that time was on East Third Street. By chance, Dr. Eiskamp, who had just started practice in Watsonville, was coming out. My folks gave him the details. The doctor grabbed me and rushed inside. He pumped out my stomach and I survived. From then on, Dr. Eiskamp was our family doctor.

Shortly after the formaldehyde episode, I swallowed a buffalo nickel. Mom called Dr. Eiskamp for advice. He said to do nothing – just watch my stools and in a couple days we'll get the nickel back. We did but it was terribly tarnished. Mom kept it for a keepsake. As I grew older I was always amazed at that nickel that went through me. We kept that nickel for many years but it has now disappeared.

Another accident in my pre-memory life was a fall I had. There is nothing to spectacular about falls at that age but I happened to be carrying a stick. When I fell the hand with the stick spontaneously reached in front to break the fall. All would have been well but I didn't drop the stick and it was in my hand pointing straight up. I fell on it and it dug a hole in the corner of my eye. I still have the scar to prove it. I came very close to having an eye poked out and maybe even having the stick jabbed into my brain.

Mom liked to relate another event which I don't remember. A lady came to visit and while they were talking I came into the room carrying a glass of water. I offered it to the lady and she graciously accepted and drank. The lady seemed amused that someone so small would offer such hospitality. Mom was a little perplexed because I wasn't big enough to reach the sink faucet, but she didn't pursue the issue at the time. However, after the lady left Mom wanted to know how I filled the glass with water. I led her into the bathroom and pointed to the toilet bowl with the lid up.

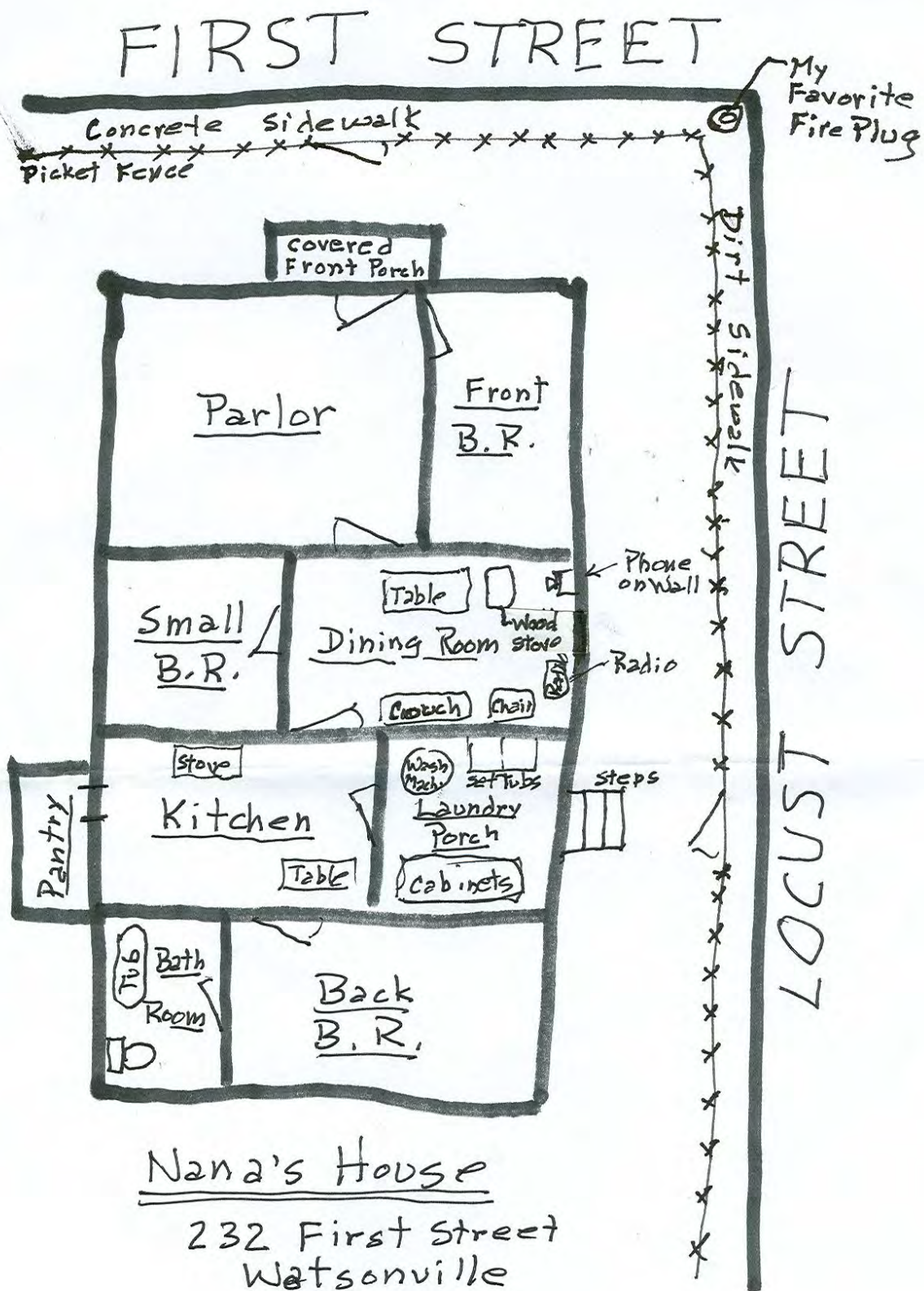
The Fourth of July was a big celebration time in Watsonville. Along with other festivities – such as a hoosegow in City Plaza where the “beard patrol” captured and locked up males with hairless faces – there was always a big parade. One year my parents dressed me up as Uncle Sam and I guess I marched in the parade for a short distance – at least past the judges' stand. I was awarded a prize in some category. I still have a picture of me in that costume holding the trophy cup. I also still have the trophy.

As I was approaching my second birthday Mom and Dad bought property at 545 Oregon Street, where they built a two-bedroom house with a detached garage. I don't remember living there at that time but shortly after moving in, catastrophe struck. Dad was killed.

Nana was in San Francisco for a thyroid operation and Mom was with her. I, of course, was with Mom. One night, back in Watsonville, Dad bought an open-top Nash roadster with which he planned to surprise Mom. To try out the new car he and a friend, N.D. Sweeney, drove up Browns Valley Road to see his parents – my grandparents Aldridge. As I understand it, there was some road work taking place during the day and a berm of loose dirt was along the shoulder of the road. Dad accidentally hit the dirt and couldn't straighten the wheels. The roadster went over a 25-foot embankment and landed upside down in the creek bottom. Dad's neck was broken and Sweeney was knocked out. That was about 8:00 PM on July 20, 1928. I was 2¼ years old.

After that tragedy Grandma Aldridge planned a trip to visit her parents in Arizona – my great grandparents Watson. She took Mom along to get her away from Watsonville for a while. I don't remember everyone who went but we traveled by car. I seem to recall seeing a donkey in a field as we drove by. Perhaps it is in my mind because I was told about it so much.

I don't remember anything else about that trip. I don't remember getting car sick on a visit to the Grand Canyon, nor Great Granddad Watson carrying me on his shoulders up Sunset Mountain



and collecting different colored sand at various elevations. He layered this colorful sand in an old mayonnaise jar, which I still have. I don't remember my great grandparents on that trip although I did meet Great Grandma Watson later. And I don't remember playing with my cousin, Tootie.

## NANA'S HOUSE

After Dad's death, Mom and I moved to Nana's house (corner of First and Locust Streets – this house is now gone and Riverside Road passes over the property). It was at Nana's house that I have my earliest recollections. I was four years old when my future step-father, Ted Reaves, was courting Mom. Nana would take care of me "in the other room" while he and Mom visited in the parlor. Occasionally I would be allowed in with them for a few minutes.

Ted at that time had a black mustache. He would usually bring his trumpet and serenade Mom with love songs. He occasionally played a song while I watched. I remember him letting me blow on the trumpet but I couldn't get the sound out. Later I used that same trumpet in high school. My brother, Skip, used it after me. Many years later my grandson, Kyle, learned to play on it until it literally fell apart. But I am getting ahead of my story.

The parlor was seldom used, as I recall, except for entertaining guests and for special occasions such as Christmas or birthdays. I remember once when Mom was vacuuming the parlor and I was on the covered front porch watching through the screen door. It was an old Eureka vacuum and terribly noisy. I didn't want to be in the same room with it. When Mom got close to the front screen door I would run away.

Mom's piano (the one Teri now has) was in the parlor as well as the marble top table that belonged to Nana's grandmother. The latter is now in our front room at our home on Kiely Boulevard in Santa Clara. I also remember Christmas trees in Nana's parlor but the only birthday I recall celebrated there was my 9<sup>th</sup>. I received a set of Jack London books at that time. (I gave these books to my son, Mark, on his 9<sup>th</sup> birthday.)

Adjoining the parlor was the front bedroom. I recall that this was Mom's room before she remarried. My crib – a large one that I slept in through second grade – was also in a corner of this room. After Mom and Ted were married in October 1930, this became their bedroom. My crib was moved to Nana's room -- a small bedroom adjoining the dining room. The window in this bedroom had a pull-down shade. It was green and well-worn, with a tangle of cracks. I would lay in my crib and imagine a trove of figures formed by the light shining through those cracks.

Nana's dining room was used more like a family room than for eating. It had doors opening into the parlor, the small bedroom, and the kitchen. Against one wall was an oak table which could be pulled apart and expanded by adding leaves. There was also a wood-burning stove. And hanging on the wall next to the window was a black telephone. It was the type where you unhooked the receiver and talked into a stationary mouthpiece. I had to stand on a chair to reach the mouthpiece. It was a party line and Nana's number was 340J (three-four-oh-jay). Mrs. Christiansen, who lived directly across Locust Street, had 340W.



The couch along the wall opposite the dining room table was the old Roman type with a built-up headrest. It could be opened like a huge box to store things inside. I was told that my Grandad Oksen died on this couch in 1924. At the head on this couch was some sort of a lounge chair and along the wall by the window was a floor model radio. I can remember listening to Amos-n-Andy on that old Philco radio.

The kitchen was large. On the wall adjoining the small bedroom was an old fashioned range with overhead warming ovens. It was gas-fired but also had a wood-burning compartment on one end. I remember Nana cooking on this stove and making preserves. I also recall shaving soap chips into a large container to boil clothes. Along another wall was a large table where most meals were eaten.

In the corner behind the stove was a side-arm water heater. It can be described as an upright water tank similar to today's water heaters, but with a cast iron side compartment containing coils through which water can circulate from the bottom of the tank to the top. Below these coils is a gas burner which heats the water passing through. As the water heats it rises to enter the top of the tank and cold water comes in from the bottom. This circulation, called a thermo-siphon effect, continues until the water in the tank is the desired temperature for a bath. Side arm water heaters are dangerous because if forgotten, hot water will back up into the cold water pipes and, if left burning long enough, could cause a boiler explosion. I can remember turning on a faucet and getting nothing but steam, accompanied by a loud knocking of the pipes.

Off the kitchen on the same side of the house as the small bedroom was a pantry. In here was the sink and the dish cupboards – also a cooler for keeping food. Coolers look like a floor-to-ceiling cabinet on the outside. Inside, however the shelves are slatted so air can circulate vertically. The floor of the cooler had a large opening covered with a screen. The ceiling had a similar screened opening. This allowed cool air from under the house to rise through the slatted shelves of the cooler and exit into the attic. It was a scheme that did a good job of keeping food cold so it would not spoil too fast.

The kitchen could be exited through a screened-in utility porch to a side door facing Locust Street. On this porch was an old Thor washing machine with a roller wringer, and laundry set tubs. Along the opposite wall were cupboards for various things. Uncle Fred, Nana's brother, had a cow in the barn out in back which kept us well supplied with milk and cream (which was skimmed off the top of the milk after it sat undisturbed for a while). I also recall churning butter on this porch. After the butter was churned and strained out, the remaining buttermilk was bottled. Uncle Fred had a roll of cardboard milk bottle caps (packaged similar to rolls of coins at a bank) to seal off the bottles of milk and buttermilk. He used to keep me supplied with them for a game played with milk caps. I believe the modern game of Pog is a takeoff from the game played with milk caps.

Behind the kitchen was a large back bedroom. This is where Uncle Fred slept. There was also another bed or two which were sometimes used by my uncles (Mom's brothers) and their friends, or by visiting great uncles. In the back bedroom closet Uncle Fred kept a stereoscope with pictures of World War I. This instrument is a hooded viewer with a separate lens for each eye. On a rack extending out from the viewer can be mounted special photographs which are identical images side by side. Focus is adjusted by sliding the picture holder nearer or farther on the rack. Each eye looks at a separate image. This gives the effect of seeing a single image in a three-

dimensional illusion. I was fascinated with this device and the selection of pictures to view. One that particularly attracted me was of a huge canon which Uncle Fred said was “Big Bertha.”

The uncles who frequently lodged in the back bedroom thought a lot of me, and I of them. However, they were incessant teasers. Sometimes they would tickle me until I couldn’t catch my breath. At other times they would give me a “Dutch Rub” -- knuckles rubbed vigorously on my scalp. Their teasing was sometimes torture. My Uncles also looked out for me and gave me instructions, frequently conflicting. Mom used to get so frustrated with this habit that one day she laid down the law to her brothers – only she would give me orders.

Finally, way in the back corner of the house was the single bathroom with a four-footed tub and an overhead-tank toilet. After Mom remarried, my new step father made a partitioned bathroom cabinet from an old wooden box. He also made me a toy submarine I liked to play with in the bathtub.

Before proceeding I would like to explain the names I will use for my parents in this story. Although I always called my mother by the word “Mother” in my early years, I will simply refer to her as “Mom” here. Many years later, which I will explain in a later chapter, I and my future brother affectionately referred to my step dad as “Pap.” To simplify matters I will refer to him as “Pap” here, even though in my earlier years I called him “Daddy” and later “Dad.”

While living at Nana’s house Pap built me a sandbox next to the back of the house. We went to the beach, I believe, to get sand to fill it. I spent many hours playing in that sandbox. I had toy dump trucks and steam shovels to move the sand around and I exercised them to the fullest. Pap also built a swing for me in the back yard next to the cow and chicken pen. It was made of two vertical 4”x4” timbers buried in the ground with another across the top. The swing hung from the piece across the top.

## BILL

After Dad’s death, while Mom and I were living with Nana at 232 First Street, I met Billy Bottero who lived with his grandparents, Martha and Joe Romero, a little way down Locust Street. He had lived with his parents in Pacific Grove until at least 1930 and then for some reason moved in with his grandparents. I don’t remember our first meeting but Billy became one of my closest boyhood friends. Later we were in the same grade and attended Radcliff School together. We explored every packing house and cannery and back alley on the way to and from school. Later we went to the old Grammar School together, and then to E.A. Hall School and High School. For his senior year in high school Bill went to live with his mother in San Francisco and attended school there. Consequently we lost touch with each other for a while.

Bill was almost three months older than me and when war came he was drafted first. He went into the Infantry. I went into the field artillery. I’ll talk more about Bill in subsequent chapters.

## THE MOO COW EPISODE

Another of my earliest memories took place at the Moo Cow Creamery (ice cream and dairy products store) on Main Street in Watsonville. Mom was working there as manager. It was

closing time and I was waiting for her to get off work. I can't remember why I was there or who brought me, but I do remember being very impatient because I had to pee. I kept telling her I had to go "wee wee," as I called it then. She kept saying it would only be a few minutes and to be patient.

Finally I could wait no longer. As the old cliché goes: "when you gotta go, you gotta go." So I walked out the front door onto the Main Street sidewalk. I went to the curb and relieved myself in the gutter. I don't know what the passers by thought but I guess Mom was pretty embarrassed, but I always got a quick response after that when I told her nature was calling.

## MY BIG SURPRISE

I don't clearly remember Mom and my future step-dad leaving on their honeymoon. They went to Carson City, Nevada to get married. It was a double ceremony with Uncle Lloyd (Mom's brother) and his fiancé, Delia Belle Plaskett. What I do remember is Mom saying she would bring something nice home for me. Nana was taking care of me in their absence and I spent much time contemplating what Mom would bring me. I eagerly looked forward to that big surprise.

I believe I was in the back part of the house when I heard a big commotion in the parlor and someone saying "They are back." I ran to see.

I was really happy to see Mom and immediately asked what she brought for me. "Why, I brought you a new daddy," she replied. I have often heard described the look of disappointment that came over my face. I am told my response was: "But you said you would bring me something nice." Mom had a back-up plan. When she presented me with a spanking new water pistol I was happy again.

## OUR MODEL-A

It wasn't long after Mom and Pap were married that Pap went somewhere one evening. I can't remember all the details but he must have indicated that I'd be surprised when he returned. I recall sitting on the front steps of Nana's house until way after dark, waiting for him. I was really curious. I was a great one for surprises.

Eventually a pair of headlights approached and stopped in front of the house. I wondered who that could be. Then I recognized Pap's grin which was illuminated by the dash board lights (panel lights). His white teeth were unmistakable. He was driving a brand new Model-A Ford coupe with cowl lights and a rumble seat. This was his wedding present to Mom. Our family of three was very proud of this car. It was yellow with brown fenders and had a horn that I could tell from any other car. If I was at a friend's house and my parents came to pick me up, they just sounded the horn and I knew it was them.

Later, when we were living in the packing house, Mom and Pap had to give up our precious Model-A. During the depression they just couldn't keep up the payments. That was a sad day for all of us.

## MY PEACEMAKER

At one time I acquired an old, rusty .32 caliber pistol. The handle grips were gone and the mechanism did not work. Nevertheless, it was a welcome addition to my collection of “peacemakers.” I don’t remember clearly how this revolver came into my possession but I believe it belonged to Uncle Lloyd. I was about 4½ or 5 years old at the time.

One day my precious piece of hardware was missing. For the life of me I couldn’t remember where I had left it. I retraced my steps over the last couple of days. I crawled all around under Nana’s house thinking it might have slipped out of my holster during one of my escapades under there. I searched all around Joe Cruz’s house across the street. My treasured pistol never did show up.

It was not until many years later that the mystery was solved. A few years later, when we were living in the packing house on Amesti Road, Pap had two pistols. One was a .38 caliber police special and the other was a .32 on which Pap had put new hard rubber hand grips. One day when I was an adult my parents told me the .32 was the old one I had “lost.” Pap had reconditioned it and put new grips on the handle.

Years later when Pap was giving away his things I told him that when he gets rid of the .32 pistol it should go to me because I was its rightful owner. He did give it to me and a few years ago I passed it on to my son, Cres.

## BIRTHDAY PARTIES

I celebrated several birthdays at Nana’s house. One lurks in the early, dim years of my memory. It was my fourth. I received a policeman’s suit as a present, complete with holsters, handcuffs, and billy club (baton).

Many kids from the neighborhood were invited to this party, including the Japanese children from the Sakata family who lived kitty corner across the street from Nana. Mom wanted to take our pictures so she grouped us along the side of Nana’s house. There was a ladder leaning against the house so a few of us stepped up a rung or two while the others moved in front and below us. I remember looking down at a Japanese boy’s head right below me. I had never used a billy club and I had an urge to try it out. The temptation must have moved to compulsion because I remember being unable to resist. WHACK!!

All I recall after that was the Japanese boy crying and that I was in big trouble. I did feel bad at having hurt him but I also felt satisfied. My billy club worked very well.

On another birthday – one that was proceeding in a very dull fashion – Pap asked me to go up in the hayloft of Nana’s barn for something. To get there I had to go up a ladder and through a trap door. As I was just emerging onto the dark second floor the lights went on. Seated on boxes all around the sides of the loft were all my friends and neighborhood kids. My parents had organized all kinds of games for this surprise party and we had lots of fun. I’ve always remembered it as my best birthday party – upstairs in the old barn.

I was a little peeved at my old buddy, Billy Bottero, though. He knew about the surprise and didn’t give me a hint. And he was supposed to be my best friend.

#### FOURTH OF JULY

As I said above, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July was a big celebration in Watsonville. To me it equaled Christmas as my favorite holiday. I loved fireworks. Fireworks were not banned in those days and there were temporary stands all over that sold a wide assortment. The best assortment and cheapest prices were across the river in Pajaro – better known at that time as Chinatown because of the large Chinese population. I saved my money for months to purchase firecrackers and an assortment of pinwheels, sparklers, torpedoes, Roman candles, skyrockets, and more. We also bought punks to light the fireworks with. They were a thin stick coated with a pulpy material that smoldered for five or ten minutes. My favorite place for setting them off was in the street by Nana's – either First or Locust.

There were many sizes of firecrackers from ladyfingers (very small) through the regular size to giant firecrackers. Some of the giants were disappointing because they had a small amount of powder wrapped in a lot of paper to give them size. The really powerful and dangerous ones had the fuse coming out of the side – I believe they were called cherry bombs. When I was very little I wasn't allowed to set them off by myself. Pap said they could blow a finger off or hurt an eye. The regular sizes were bad enough. There were times when I didn't throw them away fast enough and they went off while I was holding them. It really makes the fingers throb. Mom and Pap always urged me to lay them on the ground, light them, and then get away fast. I still liked to throw them. Once I lit a cracker and brought my hand back to give it a good toss like you would a ball. It went off in my fingers right alongside my ear. I'll never forget the agony and my ears rang for hours.

The regular firecrackers came in two types. Those with black powder were good but the more expensive ones with silver powder (actual color) gave a bigger bang. They were tied together by their fuses in bundles of about fifty, and wrapped in paper covered with Chinese writing. Sometimes we would light an entire pack at once for a sensational display, but I preferred to do it one at a time to get the most fun out of them. If for some reason they didn't go off, or the fuse got pulled out, we would make sizzlers by bending them to break their sides open. We would then light the exposed powder and they would shoot out flames while spinning around on the ground and fizzing for a couple seconds. If you stomped on the silver powered sizzlers while they were burning they would explode with a bang. The black powdered ones did nothing. Sometimes we would put two sizzlers facing each other, light one which would then ignite the other. They would hiss and fizzle and sizzle at each other. We called that a "cat fight."

Nana's house was right on the edge of town and open fields were less than a block away. At night Mom and Pap would take me out to one of them to set off skyrockets and Roman candles. They would be aimed out toward open country so any sparks falling would be on cultivated land. The skyrockets were mounted on a stick which would be stuck in the ground and slanted slightly in the desired direction. I would light the fuse with a punk and then step back. The rocket would take off with a whoosh and a whistle, and a trail of sparks. When it got up high it would explode with a shower of colored sparks.

I was allowed to hold the Roman candles in my hand but was strongly cautioned not to wave them around. One of my parents was always close by to make sure I kept them pointed in the

proper direction. Roman candles were a strong cardboard tube that contained several charges. The handle end was plugged so the charges would only be sent out the muzzle. After being lit these devices shot out a charge that exploded high in the sky in a dazzling array of colored sparks. A few seconds later another charge would shoot out, and then a third and a fourth. I don't remember how many there were but you can see why they had to be kept pointed in the right direction. After all these thrilling experiences during my childhood I always had a jaded attitude toward the public fireworks displays we must be satisfied with today. I miss the do-it-yourself fireworks on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July but I can see why they now have to be outlawed.

## UNCLE FRED

Uncle Fred was someone special in my early years. He was really my great uncle – Nana's younger brother. He was a very timid soul but he would do anything for me. I was his constant shadow in everything he did. He once drove a one-horse ice cream wagon for Buckhart's Creamery. A harness of sleigh bells announced his coming so all the children could have their nickel ready. It cost 5-cents for a single-scoop cone and 10 for a double. I often rode with him on his route and, of course, had all the ice cream cones I could eat. He always wore striped bib overalls.

Nana's house was on the edge of town. On the back of Nana's property there was a cowshed, a barn with a hayloft, and a garage attached to the barn. The horse had its stall in the barn and Uncle Fred kept a Jersey cow in the shed. She was named Boss and more than supplied us with milk, cream, butter, and buttermilk. Frequently Uncle Fred would lead Boss several blocks to a vacant lot and stake her there for the day so she could graze on the grass and weeds. I went with him occasionally and often got to ride on Boss's back.

I recall that once there was also a calf. When Uncle Fred led Boss down Locust street to the lot for grazing, I got to lead the calf. That was not difficult because the calf would follow its mother even without a lead rope. One day we were bringing the calf and cow home for the evening milking and for some reason I lagged a little behind. When the calf looked up and saw its mother half a block away it let out a bawl and took off. I tried to hold it back and was pulled off my feet. The calf was dragging me down the street and I could feel its hooves pounding my side. I finally let go while I still had some hide left on me and was left lying in the street. Uncle Fred was really worried but I got up and was not hurt too badly.

Uncle Fred kept chickens in the cow corral and rabbits in a long cage alongside the garage that was as long as the garage. I later used it as a clubhouse but it was too low to stand up in. One day Uncle Fred made a new set of hutches with separate compartments to keep the rabbits separated. I asked him if I could have some rabbits so he said one of the compartments would be for mine. He was very generous and never refused me anything. We needed some wood to make feeding trays. A friend of the family, Buster Groves, who was currently boarding with Nana worked at California Pine Box Company on the northeast corner of First and Walker Streets. (The railroad tracks ran down Walker Street and were only a block from Nana's.) Men were lined up at benches nailing together boxes from pieces of wood cut to the prescribed sizes. Uncle Fred knew the sizes and made a list of the wood pieces we would need to make the rabbit feeders. I went down to where Buster was working and he gave me the necessary materials.

Then I had my own rabbits in the compartment assigned to me. I'm sure it was just a gesture on the part of Uncle Fred but I guess I did help take care of them under his supervision. We would also pick greens for the rabbits to eat. Uncle Fred would take me out of the city down First Street to the lettuce fields, or down Locust Street to several vacant lots where we picked a broad, roundish leafed plant which I called rabbit weed. I don't remember any more about the rabbits.

As I mentioned before, Nana's house was at the corner of First and Locust streets. On the corner was a fireplug which I used to climb all over and sit on the top. Directly in front of the First Street gate, and at the edge of the curb, was a hitching post. It was last used, as best I can recall, to tie up the horse when it was hitched to Uncle Fred's ice cream wagon. The hitching post had an iron loop at the top which I liked the clang up and down to sound like a bell. Only the sidewalk on the First Street side was concrete there was only a dirt sidewalk on the Locust Street side. I liked the concrete sidewalk best for my trike (tricycle). Later I learned to roller skate on it.

Uncle Fred gave me a bright red pedal racing car for Christmas one year. Along with my trike it was my prized possession. I pedaled it up and down the concrete sidewalk on First street. One day I noticed the hood on real cars was straight up on the sides and rounded to go over the top, but they had a more gentle curve over the top that made them look flatter. The hood on my pedal car was rounded all the way over the top. I thought it would look better if it were more flat so I got a hammer and did some body work. Uncle Fred seemed a little taken back when he saw my handiwork, and probably a little hurt, but I thought it looked great. Years later as my legs got too long to fit inside and pedal, Pap lengthened the car for me. He cut it in two just behind the steering wheel where the only metal was on the sides. Then he took two pieces of 2"x2" wood, cut from props used to support tree limbs heavy with fruit, and attached the car halves to each end leaving a space between them. Now there was more distance between the seat and the pedals. This modification also provided a door on each side which made it easier to get in and out. I was really proud of my new stretch model.

Uncle Fred's mode of transportation was an old, rusty bicycle which he rode all around Watsonville. Sometimes he would give me a ride on the handlebars. When Uncle Fred died I inherited this bicycle. It was my first bike and the one on which I learned to ride. That was a risky experience going all over the street but traffic was a lot thinner in those years.

Sometimes Uncle Fred took me to the firehouse on the corner of Second and Rodriguez Streets where my Uncle Jim (Mom's brother) worked as a fireman. I was thrilled at the fire engines and being able to sit on them. Uncle Jim took me upstairs where the crew slept and prepared meals. He opened a closet door and when I looked inside there was no floor. There was just a big, round hole with a brass pole going down the middle. Uncle Jim picked me up and held me with one arm as we slid down the pole like firemen do when they have to get downstairs quickly to go to a fire. He was very careful not to touch the pole with his bare hands as that would smudge the immaculate polish job. He also cautioned me not to get fingerprints on it. Firemen are very fussy about their polished brass.

I never wanted to be around the fire house when the fire horn blew. It could be heard all over town to signal firemen to come to a fire. There was a coded signal of long and short blasts to denote the location. Periodically in the local paper – the morning *Register* or evening *Pajaronian*, later published only once a day as the *Register Pajaronian* – the coding for the fire

horn was published. That way everyone could determine where the fire was. The fire horn also blew as a time signal at 8 AM, 12 Noon, 1 PM and 5PM. I always tried to be far away from the fire house at those times.

Uncle Jim was a real big tease. He told me that another fireman named Dutch liked to cut off little boy's ears. That scared the daylights out of me and I tried to stay clear of Dutch. Once when I walked near him he made believe he was reaching in his pocket for his pocket knife. I ran away screaming. Years later both Uncle Jim and Dutch became fire captains – one for each of the two alternating 24-hour shift. Uncle Jim eventually became Watsonville's fire chief.

In those days the circus came to town on a train. It arrived early in the morning. Uncle Fred would get me up early and take me to Walker Street to watch the animals unload. That was a great experience and a big thrill. Then we went to the circus grounds to watch them set up the huge tents. The tent poles were as big as telephone poles but higher. The elephants were used for much of the heavy work in pushing up the poles and pulling the canvas into place with large ropes. It was all very interesting and every bit as entertaining as the circus itself.

My last memories of Uncle Fred were not cheerful ones and have remained with me ever since. I loved him very much. He and Nana were such gentle people and I knew they loved me too. A few years after we moved from Nana's place it became too much for her to keep house. She had to come to live with us. That left Uncle Fred all alone at First and Locust. He had the cow and a calf to take care of but he had a very delicate personality. The loneliness must have become too much for him. From conversations I overheard – reports from my uncles I believe – he was doing things uncharacteristic of him. He sold the cow and calf which meant a whole lot to him. I don't know all the details but he must have done some things that put his life in danger. The decision was apparently made that he should be in an institution. Agnews at that time was a state mental hospital and that is where he was to go.

I think it was another of Nana's brothers, Julius, who engineered the decision and made the arrangements. Uncle Julie, as we called him, was a somewhat strong-willed and self-centered person – nothing like Uncle Fred and Nana who were so easy going. We were living at the Herbert ranch on Amesti Road at the time, and I believe I was about ten or eleven years old. On his way to Agnews, Julius stopped at the ranch so we could all say goodbye to Uncle Fred. I don't remember who else was with them. Somehow I got the notion that Uncle Fred was suicidal and I was really worried about him. I stayed with him all the time to take care of him.

The Herbert Ranch had a huge building and large lawns with much landscaping. There was an embankment next to the front lawn which we used to play in and call the jungle. I thought it was a pretty wild place. Some of us were walking on the front lawn and Uncle Fred apparently wanted to look over the embankment – he wasn't talking to anyone that day so he didn't articulate his intentions. But when he walked nearer the embankment I was very worried he might jump over – it wouldn't have resulted in any serious injuries but I didn't seem to understand that. I grabbed his hand to pull him back. He resisted a little but then gave in and went with me. He was much stronger than a little kid like me but it was typical that he would give in to my wishes.



I don't remember ever seeing Uncle Fred angry before but he must have been real mad that day. He wouldn't speak to anyone. When he sat in a lawn chair peeling an orange he threw each peeling out on the lawn in a furious gesture. I was astounded at this unnatural behavior.

I can't remember the details but somehow Uncle Fred disappeared. I believe the cook in the kitchen (the Herberts had servants and gardeners) told someone that Uncle Fred had been there and had taken a kitchen knife. I overheard that and I panicked. Everyone started looking for him. I ran through the pantry and out the service entrance, and found him in a lawn area adjoining the driveway. I ran up to him and grabbed the knife. He held on at first but then let it slip from his hand. I think he couldn't resist letting me do what I wanted to do. It was just like him. But when I pulled the knife away it cut his hand a little. I really felt bad about that.

When it came time for Uncle Fred to get in the car to leave, he was awfully distraught and resisted. He just didn't want to go. The last time I saw him Pap was struggling with him to force him into the car. That day was very traumatic for me and I have never been able to forget.

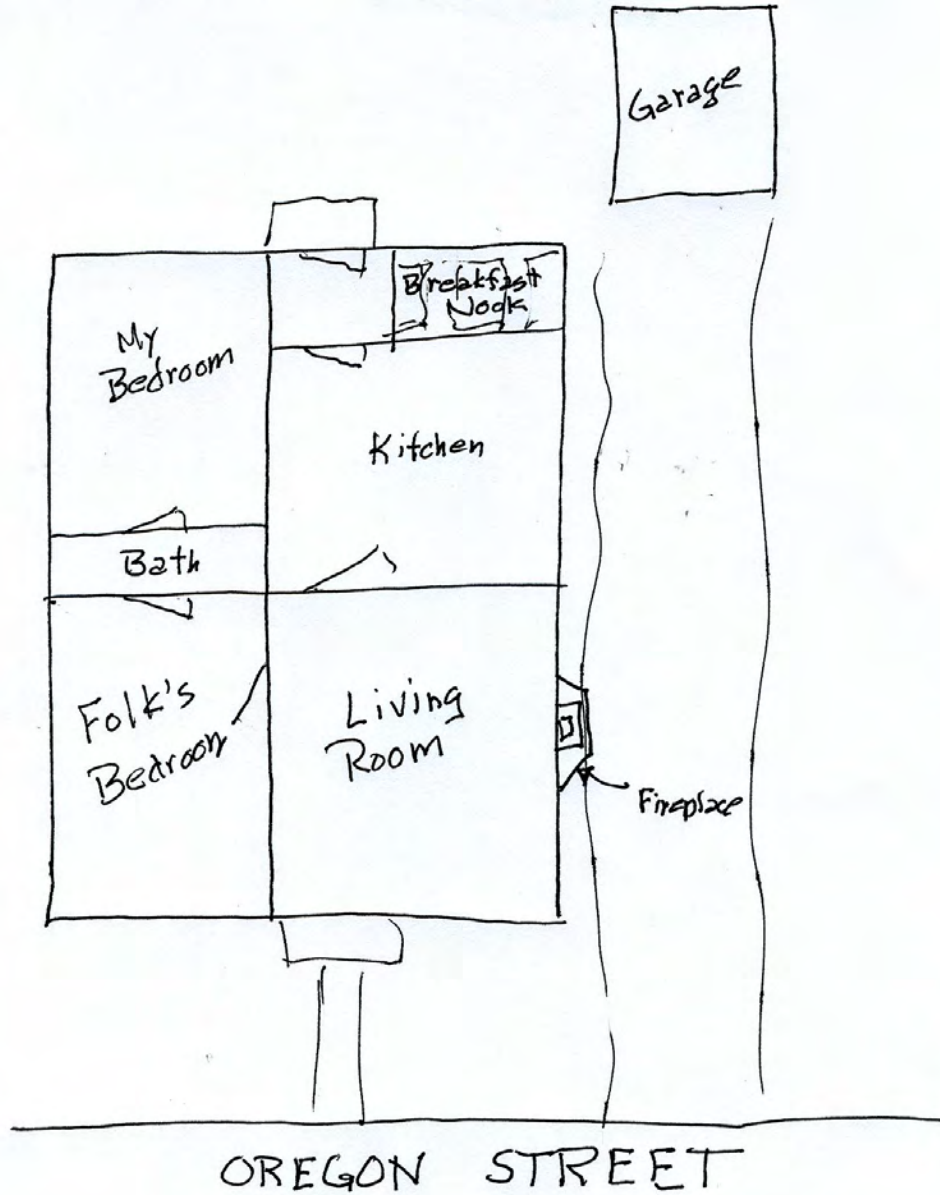
I don't remember how much later it was when I was alone at home with Nana one night. I believe Mom and Pap had gone to a movie. Uncle Julie came by to see Nana. She sent me to my room while they talked. Then he left. Nana would not tell me what they discussed. The next morning I learned that Uncle Fred had died. I don't recall hearing the cause of death but Mom was furious at the way Julius broke the news to Nana. I didn't know why and no one ever told me.

## MOVING TO OREGON STREET

Sometime when I was about five years old we moved back to Mom's house at 545 Oregon Street. This is the house Mom and Dad (Creston) bought shortly before his death, and the house we were living in when he was killed in an auto accident.

I used to pray every night for my Daddy Creston. All through my growing up years I felt his presence. Sometimes I asked him for advice, or to help me in some particular situation. I believe he, or the thought of him, did help to guide me in the right path at times. Anyway, back to the move. I don't remember much about moving to Oregon Street but I have memories of a few incidents that must have happened shortly after the move. I recall gathering in the kitchen at night to feed our dog, a German Shepherd named Queenie. Pap taught her tricks to perform before she had her food. Her feet and toe nails used to slip and slide on the kitchen linoleum. However, we didn't have a fence around our property yet and Queenie bothered the neighbors and got into fights with other dogs. We gave her to the Harmon family who lived nearby. Some time later Mom and I met the Harmon kids at my school and Queenie was with them. Boy was she happy to see us. She immediately jumped into the rumble seat of our Model-A, which happened to be open. That is where she always rode when she lived with us. It was heartbreaking having to take her out and part from her again. In the 1940s Evelyn Harmon married Uncle Lloyd and became my aunt.

On another occasion I was playing with my bow and arrow while Pap was building a fence. My arrow flew into the vacant lot next door and was lost in the weeds. I tended to give up easily when searching for lost things but Pap made me stick to it. He showed me how to walk in ever



Our House  
345 Oregon Street.

widening circles to look for the arrow. I followed him as he demonstrated. I know now that he saw the arrow as he passed by but left it there for me to find.

It was on Oregon Street that I experienced my first earthquake. It was pretty scary. I was dumfounded and didn't know what was happening. Mom and Pap later explained to me as best I could understand. They said the safest place to go is in a doorway. For days afterwards I discussed earthquakes with my friends. For some reason I acquired the notion that an earthquake bird, which looked similar to a stork, was responsible for earthquakes.

It was also on Oregon Street that I got into my first fistfight. The area around us was largely undeveloped and in front of our house was the only sidewalk on the block. I was very possessive of it. Some boys from around the corner on Hill Avenue, including the McMaster brothers, came by and stepped on the sidewalk. I told them to get off. That led to fisticuffs and I came out the worse with a black eye. I found out later that Mom and Pap were watching from inside the house. Mom wanted to run out and rescue me but Pap said it would be a good lesson for me. We went on a picnic that day but I didn't enjoy it much with all the comments about my "shiner."

Several years later the McMaster brothers lived near us in the country and went to Amesti School with me. Since fighting at school was severely punished, settlement of grievances was planned after school while walking home. On one occasion I got in a fight with Danny McMaster, the younger brother who was my age. I made a better showing of myself that time – until others joined in to help him. But by eighth grade we finally became friends.

## THE HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET

Although the properties around us on Oregon Street were mostly undeveloped, there was a house being built across the street. I was five at the time. I don't remember the foundations being poured but I do remember the two carpenters when the framing commenced. They came to know me pretty well because I was under their feet all the time. My curiosity drove me to investigate everything they did. I must have been a real pest because at times they said they thought my mother was calling me.

Sometimes I pulled my wagon to the construction site and loaded it with scrap lumber. This was mostly short pieces of 2"x4" material which were cut-offs from the framing. I tried to construct all sorts of things from this wood after I carted it home.

Pap saw my interest so he built a little workbench for me. The top was a piece of 2"x12" lumber about two feet long. The legs were two pieces of 2"x12" upright with diagonal braces between. On one end he nailed a leather belt with loops sticking up in which I could insert my tools. On one corner was a small vice.

I spent many hours nailing pieces of wood together on top of that workbench. I not only practiced nailing the pieces of wood but also into the top of the workbench itself. Pap tried to make me understand that the workbench was to work on, not nail things to. But it seemed easier to pound nails into the workbench because it didn't move around as much. Soon the top was covered with half driven nails all bent over.

After the walls were up on the house across the street, the carpenters started working on the roof. I was intrigued by the skill of one carpenter at nailing on the shingles. He could change the spacing between the rows and bunch the shingles up in such a manner that it looked like waves in the roofing – the shingles were so artistically attached that it gave the impression of swells like you see in the ocean. I have never since seen shingles laid in such a unique fashion.

After the house was completed a family moved in. They had a boy a couple years younger than me but I enjoyed playing with him. I couldn't understand, though, why he had to take a nap in the afternoons when I wanted to play. His mother explained that her son wasn't a big boy like me and had to rest more often.

## SLICES OF MEMORY FROM OREGON STREET

I have other pre-school memories from Oregon Street. My toy box was a old wooden trunk with an arched top, painted sort of a cream color. I kept it in the garage (detached) where there was more room. One Halloween I became so attached to my jack-o-lanterns that I saved them in my toy box.

Weeks or perhaps months later Pap was doing something in the garage and noticed a peculiar foul smell. He opened my toy box and there were the rotted pumpkins all covered with a fuzzy, green mold. He called me and had me clean them out.

Pap built a fancy lattice fence around our back yard. Mom helped him and I guess I made my contribution. The lattice slats were not close together but were arranged in a fancy pattern, that was repeated in each span between posts. The only problem was when I broke several of the slats by climbing on them or hitting them with various objects.

After the fence was made, Mom wanted a rock garden. Pap built up a mound of dirt and covered it with rocks about the size of a softball. I didn't understand the whole arrangement – I never heard of growing rocks in a garden. I guess Mom planted something amongst the rocks but I don't remember what.

We lived only a couple houses from Hill Avenue to the east. A couple of blocks south on Hill was a little corner grocery. I used to walk there to buy candy and ice cream. I learned to skip on that route. At first I could only skip on one foot but eventually I learned to double skip. Most of the time when I bought treats I would carry them home to share with Mom before eating any. There was one kind of candy that looked like a double sucker – candy on each end of the stick. It was a hard candy coated with chocolate. I used to lick off the chocolate and throw the rest away. That was because the hard candy was the same color as the stick and I thought it was wood. It was quite a while before I learned there was hard candy underneath the chocolate.

One night Mom let me go to the store after dark. Maybe she sent me for something, I can't remember. Anyway, I went skipping off to the store and back. On my way home I heard giggling and snickering behind me. Mom and Pap had followed me and were apparently amused at how I skipped to the store. Skipping – particularly double skipping, after I learned how – was a very serious and intriguing thing to me in those days.

It was on Oregon Street that I learned to tell time. I sat for hours in my bedroom studying the face of an alarm clock. The minute hand traveled one revolution in one hour – sixty minutes. But the hour hand only traveled between digits on the clock face every hour. It was a little confusing at first but it was logical. Learning to read a clock or watch with minute and hour hands gave me a concept of time throughout the day – a concept that cannot be grasped with the digital devices of today. For that reason I have made an old-fashioned desk clock for each of my grandchildren so they can experience a concept of time.

I also had some game I used to play involving stringing twine about the room like telephone lines. I can't remember the object of the game but I used various objects in the room to attach the twine to. One day I used Mom's favorite perfume atomizer – a fancy bottle with a spray nozzle and squeeze bulb for spraying. Something caused me to get tangled in the twine and Mom's atomizer was pulled off her dressing table and smashed to smithereens when it hit the floor. Boy was Mom mad! But she was also very sad at losing her favorite atomizer and that made me feel really bad.

Throughout my youth my parents frequently went fishing at various piers along the Monterey Bay (Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey, Moss Landing pier, the cement ship at Seacliff, Capitola pier, and Santa Cruz pier). My earliest memory of fishing was at Fisherman's Wharf. I guess Pap rigged me up with a pole and line but I wasn't catching anything and was getting frustrated as well as discouraged. Mom suggested that we take a walk somewhere. When we returned Pap was very excited and told me to reel in my line because there was a fish on it. I did so and I will never forget the image of that fish coming up out of the water to me on the wharf. Its mouth was wide open. Boy was I excited and proud. Mom says people could hear me yelling "I got one! I got one!" for the length of the pier. Years later I found out that, while Mom was taking me for a short walk, Pap had hooked an old bait fish to my line.

I have mostly happy memories of the Oregon Street stay, but tragedy struck again and we had to move. I'll tell about that in the next chapter.

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## Chapter 2 – My Grade School Years

Minte White School was new in early 1932 when I started school. Minte White was a former teacher that Mom had in grade school. Mom always spoke highly of her and I guess she must have been pretty good to have a school named after her.

I was 5¾ years old when I started the first grade in January 1932. I was allowed to start in January because town schools at that time had split grades – a “high” and “low” for each grade. I started Low first in January. After summer vacation I went into high first and the next January I was promoted to low second. The school is between California Street and Palm Avenue on Brewington Avenue – roughly two blocks from our Oregon Street home. Mom would help me cross Oregon Street; then I would walk down Oregon Street and then down Brewington Avenue until I got to the corner where crossing guards helped me cross to the school yard. If it rained I wore my yellow slicker and a rain hat that I liked because it looked like a fireman’s helmet.

My first grade teacher was Miss Cikuth (pronounced *see-kooth*). She was a nice teacher that I liked very much. (Later she married Bud Rowland – a high school teacher who I later had for American history. She lived to be over 100 years old and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.) We had milk time every day. A quarter-pint carton was delivered for each pupil. It was accompanied by a couple crackers which tasted very similar to the Wheat Thins available today.

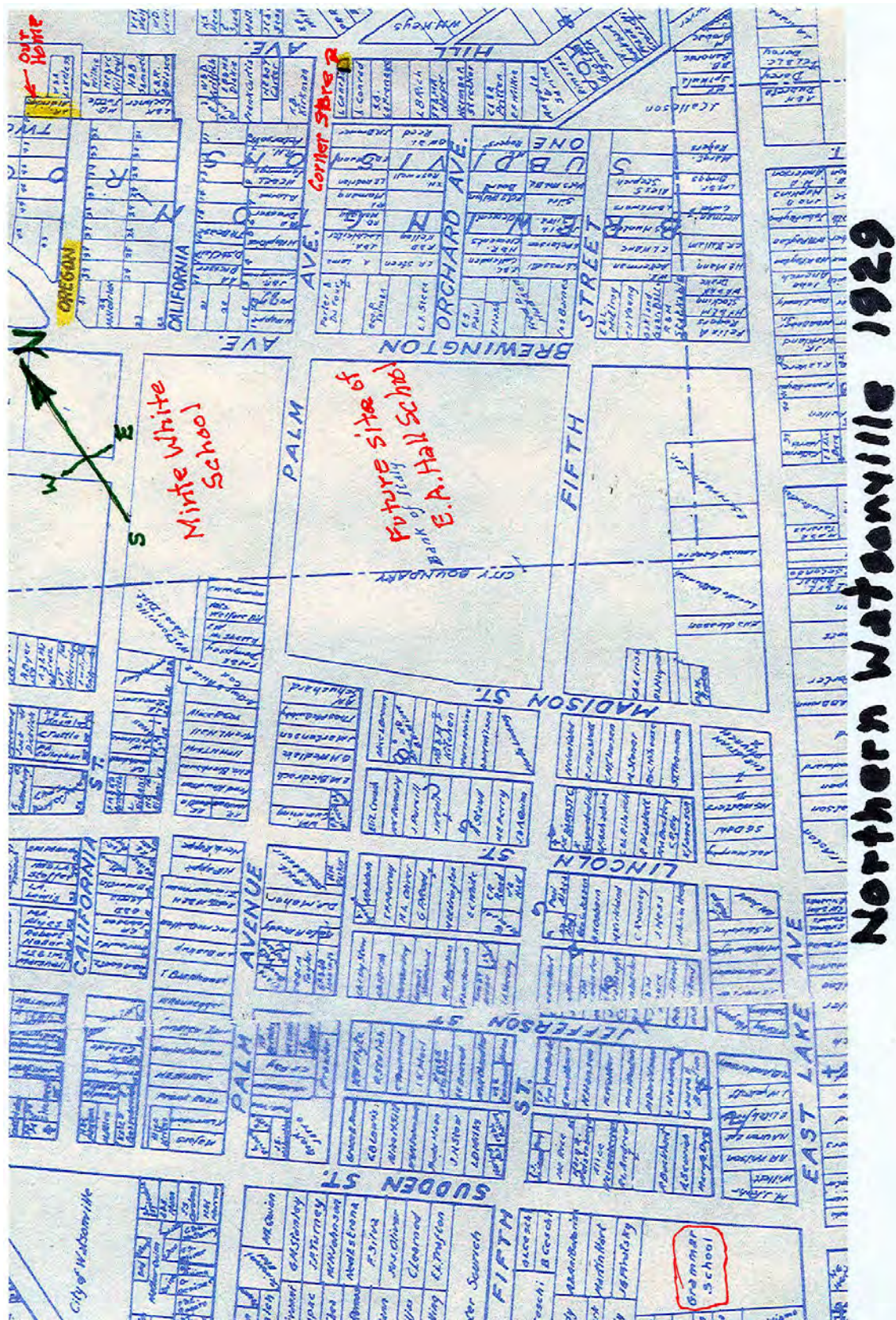
During milk time the teacher read a story about Don Rae Oh which was our daily lesson about healthy eating. It was a continuous story and involved a magic airplane in which, no matter how many people were in it, there was always room for one more. That’s all I remember of the story but we each got a membership card in Don Rae Oh’s club, which I carried in my wallet.

One time we had a butter-making project during milk time. The teacher poured a small carton of cream into a jar. Then we took turns shaking the jar until butter was formed. After that we passed the jar around and each of us put a small dab of our home-made (or is it school-made) butter on a cracker. That was a great experience to taste our own butter.

Recess time was always a lot of fun and I looked forward to it. We had the usual slides and rings and monkey bars only they were made of steel pipe, not plastic. The teacher also supervised some games such as Drop the Handkerchief and Farmer in the Dell. Later we played our own games such as Red Line and Capture the Flag. We also made up games such as air war, where we spread out our arms to look like wings and ran around the opponent as in a dogfight.

The kindergarten kids were more closely supervised and had a beautiful, huge sandbox which I envied. One day I strayed into their sandbox to play. I was having great fun





Northern Watonville 1929

when it was time for the kindergarteners to go inside. The bell hadn't rung for us so I just went on playing. Then the kindergarten teacher came to me and told me to get in line. I was a little confused but who was I, a six-year-old kid, to argue with a teacher. So I got in line and marched into the kindergarten room with the rest of them.

Inside, everyone got in line to ride on a small 4-seat merry-go-round. I was really thrilled and decided that our class was getting a special treat by visiting here. It never dawned on me that no one else from my class was present. Neither did the teacher seem to realize that I didn't belong in her class. I was just about ready to get my turn when the classroom door burst open and in came Miss Cikuth. Her eyes fell on me and she headed straight toward me. She seemed very disgusted and must have been quite worried about where I was. As for me, I thought I got gyped out of a nice ride.

At another time I almost got a chance to enjoy all the thrills of kindergarten. As I said, Minte White School was very new. The classroom floors were polished and the desks shined (shone?). One day during art session I drew a picture on a piece of construction paper. Then I decided to have some fun. The picture was of some figure and I proceeded to stab him with my sharp-point scissors. I was having a great time stabbing away when an arm reached over my shoulder and lifted the paper. There was the desktop all scarred up. I was grabbed by the shoulder and pulled from my seat. A common punishment for misbehavior in those days was to demote a pupil. Since I was in the low first there was only one place I could go. I was dragged down the hall toward the kindergarten room.

A demotion, particularly to kindergarten, was something I just could not tolerate. I screamed and hollered all the way down the hall. There was a double door leading to the kindergarten wing that had a door post in the middle. When we got to that point, just feet from the kindergarten door, I grabbed that post and held tight with both arms and screamed at the top of my voice. The teacher tugged and tugged while I howled and howled, but I would not let go. I eventually won out as the teacher said she'd give me one more chance – but this was definitely my last chance. Somehow I managed to behave for the rest of the term.

I don't remember anything else about the first grade. I was promoted to the low 2<sup>nd</sup> and had the one teacher whose name I cannot remember. What I do remember is that she was very strict. We thought she was a real meanie – nowadays we'd call her a bitch. One boy in the high 2<sup>nd</sup> did something that displeased her and she became infuriated. As punishment she summarily demoted him to the low 2<sup>nd</sup>. That simply involved moving him to the other side of the room and giving him a different desk. I still remember the despondent look on that boy's face. I thought to myself that I would never accept a demotion by her.

It was in this grade that I met my lifelong friend, Bud Daugherty. He was small but very fast and agile. I think he was the fastest runner in our class. During our recess games of Air War he could outdistance anyone and was never defeated in a "dogfight." We had great imaginations.

At Christmas that year I received a set of toy soldiers from Dr. and Mrs. Herbert. There were foot soldiers, soldiers on horses, horses pulling a caisson and cannon, soldiers laying down firing a rifle, and even a tent for the wounded. I still have the tent and a few pieces stored in a box of souvenirs. I loved that set and took it to school to show my



classmates. The teacher allowed me to set them up as a display on a small table. While we were playing outside during recess this small kid who I had never before noticed stopped me. He begged that we go back in the classroom and spend recess playing with the toy soldiers. He was entranced with them. That started a lifelong friendship and his name was Bud Daugherty.

## JERRY

I was in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade when Mom was pregnant with a new sibling for me. She would often ask whether I would like a baby brother or sister. I thought at that time it would be nice to have a little sister to look after. After all, I would be about 5½ years older and should be able to do a pretty good job at that. So I put in my order for a girl.

But God didn't agree. My little brother Jerry was born on November 28, 1931. His formal name was Gerald Theodore Reaves and was delivered by Dr. George Herbert in our Oregon Street home. I presume I was with Nana during his birth.

I remember being led into Mom's bedroom later, where I first saw Jerry. I don't think I was too disappointed but Mom asked if we should send him back for a girl. No way. It turned out that I was perfectly happy with a baby brother.

I think I spent a lot of time leaning over Jerry's crib or buggy, playing with him. He seemed to like it and so did I. Mrs. Herbert crocheted a many-colored yarn ball for him. He liked to watch it dangling above him on a string, especially when the string was twisted to make it spin. The kaleidoscope of colors was beautiful. One day I let the ball drop toward his face and he screamed terribly. I always felt really sorry for doing such a thing. (I still have the yarn ball.)

I was taking piano lessons at that time and had to practice half an hour each day. Jerry liked the sound of the piano. As I practiced the notes he would lie in his buggy and "coo" along with the tune. A picture I used to carry in my wallet was of me sitting on a box alongside the house holding Jerry. It is still around somewhere.

I started 1<sup>st</sup> grade a couple months after Jerry was born. One day I came home with a cough. It got worse and developed into whooping cough. I whooped and whooped for quite a while but finally got over it. But the germs had spread. Soon little Jerry began coughing, and then whooping. When I went to play at the neighbor kids' houses their parents would always ask how my little brother was. I had no idea of the seriousness and would flippantly reply: "He's OK. He won't die."

Again I was wrong. Jerry's coughing developed into pneumonia and he continued to get worse. The night of June 26, 1932 remains vivid in my memory. That night I was put to bed in my parents' room, which had a door opening into the living room, instead of my room at the back of the house. There was a lot of activity in the living room. Dr. and Mrs. Herbert and their son Charles were there. I believe Nana and Gram & Gramp Durr were also there. Perhaps there were others. I knew something serious was going on. Then Mom wheeled Jerry's buggy into the bedroom and asked if I would like a last look at my little brother. She tipped the buggy up at a steep angle so I could see him from in bed, a steeper angle than she had ever done before. I recall thinking that it was a little

reckless. Then I saw Jerry lying there peacefully. It was my last look at my little brother and it was in the same room where I first saw him.

The only thing I remember about the funeral was sitting in a small room at Mehls' Funeral Home in Watsonville with that very small casket in front of me. I was in some sort of trance. I recall hearing people in the background giving condolences to my parents but I was too stunned for anything else to register. Everything was too unreal. My baby brother was gone. And that is all I remember.

## MALUHIA RANCH

During the time we were living on Oregon Street, Pap was doing orchard work for the Herberts who owned Maluhia Ranch on Amesti Road. (Maluhia means "restful" or "place of peace" in Hawaiian) Dr. and Mrs. Herbert owned the ranch but their son, Charles, managed it for them. We called him Uncle Charlie at first and then Uncle Chuck, but later he was known to all of us as Chuck. Chuck was the commander of the Naval Reserve Unit Pap joined after being discharged from the Navy, and that is how they met. Later, before meeting Mom, Pap lived at Maluhia Ranch and worked there. Now he was commuting to work from Oregon Street. Sometimes Mom and I would walk out the Old Santa Cruz Highway (now Freedom Boulevard) to meet Pap as he was driving home from work. One time he was late getting off work and we walked and walked. We ended up walking all the way to Maluhia Ranch which was 5-6 miles. Pap was getting ready to get into our Model-A Ford as we walked up.

On Maluhia Ranch there was a "Packing house" where berries were once packed in special shipping crates. A couple that once worked there had closed in a living quarters at one end of the packing house. It consisted of a kitchen, a living room, and a bedroom. The bathroom was separate and way at the other end of the packing house.

Chuck, Dr. Herbert and Pap made some arrangement that we could rent the packing house since Pap worked on the ranch anyway. It was no longer used for packing berries as the land used to grow them had been replanted with apple trees. So in early 1933 we moved to the packing house. This was during the depression and the rent we paid to use the packing house was less than what we could rent out the house on Oregon Street, so the move provided a financial gain for my parents. I'm sure the trauma of living on Oregon Street also played a part. Mom and I were living there when my Dad was killed, and then Jerry died there.

In the packing house I first shared the bedroom with Mom and Pap. Later Nana came to live with us so Pap adapted the living room for her to sleep in. That was done by purchasing a studio couch that rolled out to form a double bed. Then I shared the living room with Nana. But soon Pap closed in a room-sized alcove in the packing house area that added a bedroom for me. He also built a clothes closet in my bedroom but next to their bedroom door so they could also have a place to hang their clothes.

Meanwhile I continued at Minte White School until the end of the school year – in June 1933. I was still in the second grade with the teacher I disliked. Each classroom at Minte White had a cloak room for hanging our coats and storing our lunches. It was a walk-through design that stretched the width of the classroom and had a door at each end. That

prevented congestion by allowing the students to walk in, hang up their coats, and continue to the door at the other end. Both doors connected to the classroom. Sometimes the teacher would punish a disorderly student by sending them to the cloak room. That happened to me one day and it made me steaming mad. I don't remember the cause but I felt misjudged and was infuriated. I took my pencil, grabbed it like a dagger, and scribbled in heavy circles on one wall. That didn't make me feel much better so I turned to the wall on the other side and did the same thing. But my satisfaction in revenge didn't last long. The teacher found the defaced walls and knew immediately who the culprit was. I was in big trouble.

The teacher must have sent a note home or called because Mom was summoned to the school for a talk with the teacher. Mom said she'd see that the scribbling was properly removed. I remember driving back to the packing house and filling a bottle with kerosene, which we used for cooking and kept in a 55-gallon drum next to the garage. This was the accepted cleaning fluid of those years. Anyway, I scrubbed the walls with kerosene until they were clean. I don't recall if I was punished any other way either at home or at school. But boy was I happy when the school year ended.

## AMESTI SCHOOL

When school started after the summer of 1933, I transferred to Amesti School. It was situated about a mile from Freedom on Green Valley Road, near the corner with Amesti Road. Here we were faced with a dilemma. Amesti School did not have split grades of "high" and "low." I would either have to start the second grade over again or skip the high 2<sup>nd</sup> and go directly into 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. I ended up going into the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. My teacher was Miss Hazel Twyman. She taught both 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The school had four rooms and four teachers. Each room contained two grades. The teacher who taught 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades – Miss Knudsen -- was the principal. The other two teachers were Miss Reese (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>) and Miss Mahoney (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>).

Each morning we would line up outside in front of the school to pledge allegiance to the flag. Then each class would file in to its respective room. All four rooms opened into a central hallway, or alcove. There was also an outside door from each classroom. A large bell, like a church bell, was in a belfry over the central hallway. A thick rope hung down so the assigned person could pull it to toll the bell. I walked 1½ miles to school each day along Amesti Road and then around the corner for a short distance along Green Valley Road. I would usually hear the school bell toll at 8:30 as I left home, and knew I had half an hour to get to school.

Before even getting onto Amesti Road I had to walk the long driveway leading into the ranch. If the weather was good I could cut through the apricot orchard and eucalyptus grove but if the orchard was muddy I had to stay on the long driveway. (See map in chapter 4.) Once coming home from school I cut across the orchard when it was wet. Several times I sank in above my ankles and Mom didn't appreciate the muddy shoes at all. Did I ever get in trouble! But even that wasn't as bad as on another occasion. During rainy weather Mom or Pap usually met me at school so I didn't have to get all wet. One day it was raining pretty heavily but no one was there to meet me. I decided to go ahead and walk. I had on a brand new suede jacket that got soaked and the stain never

came out. Mom was really burned up about that. It was a beautiful soft leather suede and it was ruined.

There was a small store with a gas pump that I passed on Green Valley Road. Sometimes I would buy some candy or chewing gum on the way to school. But we could only eat or chew it after lunch, and then only at recess time. Upon arriving at school we could play outside until the 9 o'clock bell tolled. Then we lined up in front of the school according to our grades. After the flag salute we would file in to our respective classrooms.

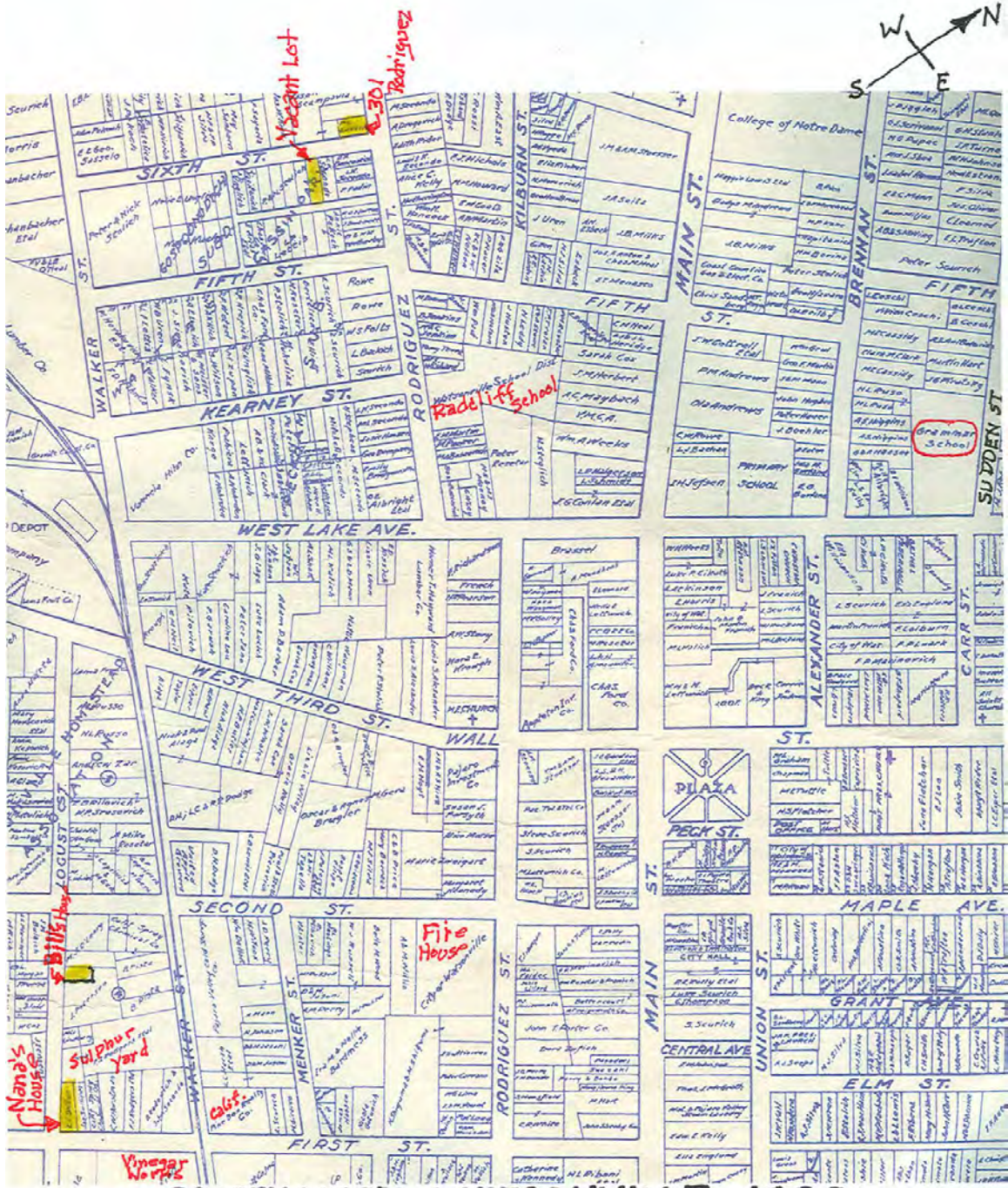
Since the classrooms for 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grades were on the western side of the school, our recess play area was also there. Recess was a lot of fun. There were two large pepper trees under which we loved to play and eat lunch, and there was a small athletic field beyond the trees. We made believe we were airplanes flying around and dog fighting with each others. We played several types of marble games and cut-the-pie with our pocket knives. We'd bring our favorite ball or bat or mitt to school and play baseball. We even played tackle football until one of the boys in my class broke his leg. He was a Japanese boy and was out for quite a while. Then one day he came back to school with his mother to say goodbye. They were leaving to return to Japan. I have always wondered what happened to my Japanese classmate during World War II.

Each class would put on a play for the parents every year. When I was in the third grade the play was about colonial times. During practice we had to learn the minuet dance. I was fortunate to have the prettiest girl in the class for a partner, although at that age I was embarrassed at having to dance with a girl. Miss Twyman scrounged up the material and sewed the colonial costume for every pupil in the class. That must have taken many hours of extra work at home. On the evening of the play our parents came to watch. It took place in the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom because it was larger when the desks were moved against the wall.

We had subjects that would not be allowed in school today. Our ancient history texts explored much of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. We learned about Abraham and how he was asked to sacrifice his son, Isaac, but was stopped at the last minute; and how Jacob (Israel) demonstrated how one stick could be broken easily but how a bundle of twelve – signifying his twelve sons – remained unbroken as long as they stayed together. Then we learned how Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers. That chapter was headed “The Coat of Many Colors” because Joseph’s bloody coat was shown to father Israel to indicate Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. Then came the seven years of plenty followed by the seven years of famine which caused Joseph’s brothers to journey to Egypt in search of food, where the family was reunited with Joseph. Studying the Passover and the parting of the Red Sea was scary. And the story of Samson and Delilah was sad. Anyway, we learned much about Old Testament history at Amesti School. We also learned much about Roman and Greek mythology.

Each year the students had to take what was called “The County Test.” It was some sort of achievement test. I was not too impressed by it until the results came back and I learned I had passed highest in the class.

I did not finish third grade at Amesti School. I don't know the exact reason but we moved back to Nana's house. I had to change schools again.



SOUTH WEST WATSONVILLE 1929



## BACK TO NANA'S HOUSE

I finished third grade at Radcliff School on Rodriguez Street in Watsonville. Miss Fayhee was my teacher. (Many years later she assisted Janie's kindergarten teacher at H.A. Hyde School in Watsonville during the 1950s.) But the best thing about this move was that I was re-united with my old friend, Billy Bottero. Bud Daugherty also transferred to Radcliff but I don't remember if that was while I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or later.

There were other boys that I sometimes played with but Bill was my closest friend. Along First Street there were some kids I used to skate with. First Street had a paved sidewalk while Locust Street was simply a dirt walk. We had the old four-wheel skates that had a strap around the ankle and required a "skate key" to tighten clamps on the forward part of our shoes. Of course we had to wear shoes that had a pronounced edge around the sole to clamp on to – tennis shoes wouldn't work.

The boys on First Street were very good skaters and I learned a lot from them. It was learning the hard way, however. I spent much of my time picking myself up from the sidewalk. Bill was definitely not a good skater. We once went to the roller rink which was merely the Civic Auditorium next to the fire house on Second Street. It had a wooden floor which was noisy and dusty. We had fun but Bill definitely spent more time getting up from the floor than I did. Perhaps that's because I had more instruction from the First Street boys.

Walker Street was just a block down First Street from Nana's house and it ran parallel to Locust Street. It was a wide street with many railroad tracks on which cars could be switched one from the other. There must have been six or seven pairs of tracks across the width of the street. Lining Walker Street on each side were packing sheds, warehouses, and other places of business that shipped by railroad. Switch engines were constantly busy shuttling boxcars back and forth to sidings in front of the various sheds. There was usually so much rail switching activity that a signal man was required at every intersection to periodically stop auto traffic. He had a small kiosk and lowered a crossing gate when necessary. He also had a hand sign to hold up to stop the cars.

Mom was always worried about me being around the railroad tracks. To discourage me from getting too close she told me that I might get sucked in and be run over. That scared me and I kept a very respectable distance from any engine. Then one day I was along the tracks with some of my friends as a switch engine was shuttling back and forth. The engineer frequently blew his whistle for us. Then my friends started running alongside the engine. That frightened me and I yelled for them to stay back, but they paid no attention. The engineer playfully squirted a little steam at them out a side valve on the engine. I was sure my friends were going to get mangled. But nothing happened. I learned a little more about life that day and from then on I joined in the fun. I also learned that grown ups can threaten unrealistic things to make children comply, and when children discover the truth they resent having been deceived.

In the Walker street area there were many huge cold storage sheds where apples and other produce were kept at a low temperature. This preserved them so they could be

enjoyed all during the winter and into the next spring. One night a cold storage shed caught fire. Mom and Pap took me to the area to watch a sight that is not very common. Many fire trucks were there and over a dozen large hoses were sending a stream into the blaze. It did no good. The fire was so hot it merely vaporized the water. At that point all the firemen could do was prevent the fire from spreading.

Across First Street from Nana's, and a little way down the street, was the Vinegar Works. It also had a shed and loading dock facing Walker Street. But behind the shed along First Street were huge wooden tanks of vinegar. They must have been 15 or 20 feet in diameter and 10 to 12 feet high. The tanks were enclosed with a lattice fence to keep out curious little kids like me. I often looked through the lattice at the maze between the tanks and wished I could explore the area. I liked the smell of vinegar but it got pretty powerful at times and some people complained.

Airplanes were not prevalent in those days and it was something special to see one fly over. The old Watsonville airport was a few miles south of Watsonville and our family once went there to see an air show. There were wing walkers and parachute jumpers which were a real thrill. There were also low altitude races in a route that used pylons for markers. However, the most interesting sight I had yet seen took place right outside Nana's house while I was playing along Locust Street. Flying overhead was an autogyro. It was an early experiment in stationary flight which eventually led to the helicopter. The autogyro I saw was simply a low-wing airplane with a large rotor overhead. The airplane took off like a regular plane but once in the air the pilot could throttle back on the propeller and increase the rotor speed. This allowed the plane to stand almost still in the air. It was quite an achievement in those days and I was very thrilled to see one in action over Watsonville.

Nana's house was right on the edge of town. If we went east on First street for half a block we would be out of the city limits and in the lettuce fields. Bill and I loved to play there when they were irrigating the lettuce. There were huge main ditches along the road sides of the lettuce fields which fed water to furrows between the rows of lettuce. A man usually attended to the irrigation by damming up the furrows as they were sufficiently irrigated and opening the flow to other furrows. It was fun to float boats in the main channels and we would play at that for hours. We ran into trouble, though, when we tried our hand at damming the flow in various places. The man in charge of irrigation said he thought he knew better where the dams were supposed to be placed.

From the lettuce fields along First Street we could see the willow trees lining the Pajaro River to the south. It was always a temptation to go there. Bill had been to the Pajaro River and tried to talk me into going there with him. Mom had explicitly forbidden me to do so because there were many tramps (now called homeless people) who had encampments there. I believe I did stray across the lettuce field to the edge of the trees once with Bill, but turned back before actually getting to the river.

The type of head lettuce grown in those days looked like Iceberg lettuce but was much different. It was really delicious. The lettuce trucks used to go past Nana's house along First Street to the packing houses lining the tracks on Walker Street. Heads of lettuce were always falling off and we would retrieve them. We also went to the packing houses when the trucks were being unloaded to ask for a head of lettuce. Then we would peel

off the loose outer leaves and eat the remainder like an apple. At times I would carve out a quarter of a head and douse it with salad dressing. That's all that was needed to make a delicious salad.

There was one trouble with the lettuce in those days – it needed a warm climate in which to grow. My Uncle Lloyd (Mom's brother) was a truck driver for Garin's Lettuce Company. Every winter he had to move south to El Centro for warmer climate in which to grow the lettuce. Now the experts have developed the Iceberg hybrid which can be grown in areas like Watsonville all year long. It is great for production and marketing but leaves a lot to be desired in quality – it is tasteless. I can't stand the stuff and opt instead for various types of loose-leaf lettuce.

Besides staying away from trains and the hobo encampments along the Pajaro River, there were other places I was forbidden to enter. Another was the sulfur yard. My Grandfather Oksen – Nana's husband who I never met because he died before I was born – owned a good share of the block on First and Locust Streets. He sold all of it except the corner lot with the house, which also held the barn and the cowshed. A chemical company bought a big piece which adjoined the back of this lot and reached from Locust Street to the packing houses along Walker Street. It had a high board fence along Locust Street which kept everything from view. Mom told me I was never, ever, under any circumstances to go onto the sulfur yard property. Of course that made me curious and one day Bill Bottero told me about things he saw in there. My curiosity combined with Bill's coaxing enticed me to do a little exploring. There was a loose board in the fence along Locust Street and we squeezed through the opening. The huge lot behind that fence was devoid of any vegetation and the soil was a yellow, sulfur color. The smell was pungent and strong. Bill showed me some little opening in the ground which I later learned were caps to underground tanks. At the time I thought they were sulfur wells. Bill opened one and we peeked down. As I recall it now, I saw a thick, dark, bubbly liquid. That was enough. My curiosity was satisfied and I saw nothing else that aroused my adventurous spirit. We left and I never went to that disgusting place again. Of course I never told Mom. Fortunately she never asked me because I could never lie to her. Many years later, toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a big uproar with lawsuits because of the extensive contamination that had spread from that sulfur yard.

Polio (we called it infantile paralysis then as it seemed to mainly afflict children) was uncontrolled when I was small, as was diphtheria and whooping cough. Sometimes Polio would become an epidemic and that is what happened while we were living at Nana's house. One day I was playing in the back yard of my First Street friends but only a couple of the kids were there. There were several children in the family and I asked about the others. I was told they were sick. For some reason my playmates and I went into their house. Sick people were lying on couches and cots. Mom was terrified when I told her. But even in her fear of me being possibly exposed to polio she felt sorry for the family and offered any help we could give. They said it would be real helpful if they could use our telephone because they didn't have one. Having contaminated people enter our house was the last thing Mom wanted but she couldn't refuse. It turned out that the family didn't have polio after all but it was a frightening experience for all of us.

Uncle Fred, Nana's younger brother, raised rabbits among other farm animals. One day he wanted to expand by building another rabbit hutch. I was out there "helping" him and,



seeing my enthusiasm, he said this new hutch could be for my rabbits. I was really thrilled but he, of course, would furnish the rabbits and oversee my caring for them. We found some tins to use for water but feed boxes were needed. They would be fun to make because I loved pounding nails. But we didn't have any lumber. Buster Groves, a friend of my Uncle Lloyd, worked at California Pine Box Company making shipping crates for produce. I was fascinated watching them turn out wooden crates in production line fashion. The nails were fed, point down, between little tracks so they could be grasped in the correct position for pounding. The wood was also in easy reach. The men placed the ends and sides of the box in position, grasp the nails one at a time, and with one whack apiece drive them into the wood. I marveled at that ability because it took me many whacks to drive a nail, and often I ended up with a smashed fingernail.

Uncle Fred made a list of the pieces of wood we needed by size and sent me down to talk to Buster who immediately filled my order. Then I had fun nailing the feed boxes together. I was very proud of my rabbits and, with Uncle Fred's help, became a good rabbit farmer.

Bill and I liked to play soldier. We had toy metal helmets (World War I type) and play rifles as well as rubber daggers. We scratched skull and crossbones on the front of our helmets and called ourselves Poison Army. The barn loft was our headquarters and we carried out our field operation along the lettuce fields on the First Street extension. With our extensive imagination we had a lot of make-believe fun.

At another time Bill and I got together with some of the Locust Street boys to go into business. We decided to make soap to peddle in the neighborhood. Bill lived with his Grandmother who was away for the afternoon so we congregated at his house. On the back porch his grandmother had many different boxes of soap powder. We proceeded to mix them together in different quantities and moisten them with water to make a paste. Then we measured out portions and wrapped them in paper. For some reason Bill and I had one of our periodic quarrels so we squeezed him out of the partnership. I only remember selling soap to one woman and she seemed to be humoring us. She mentioned that it was soft and not very much for the money. We explained that it was concentrated and didn't need much to do the job. She bought one package for a nickel (5¢) and that was our only sale.

That was not the end of the story, however. Later I went back to Bill's house but he wasn't there. His grandmother was. She was not too happy about the mess we made in her laundry porch but was gentle in her scolding. She said that what bothered her most was that we used the soap from her house and then shut Bill out. I realized then that I had not been a loyal friend and really felt sorry. She forgave me but that gentle scolding taught me a lesson I never forgot.

Bill and I were in the same grade at Radcliff and walked to and from school together. We took various routes and had many different adventures. We had fun at a cabinet shop that had a large plate glass window in front. One of us would stand in the doorway at the end of the window and raise one leg and one arm. The other of us would stand at the other end of the window. With the reflection in the window it looked like we were floating there with both arms and legs extended. This was an exercise we performed every time we passed that shop.

We finished third grade and after the summer 1934 we started 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Miss Myers was our teacher. She was a good but pretty strict on some things. She believed that students should get a good night's sleep so they would be alert for learning the next day. If she caught any of us yawning in class we had to stay after school. I was beginning to learn that each teacher had to have her little idiosyncrasy. Anyway, she never caught me.

At the beginning of each school year my parents always managed to get me some new clothes and shoes. That was not easy to afford during the Great depression. School supplies were furnished by the school in those days but for 4<sup>th</sup> grade Miss Myers wanted us to have binders. I recall shopping for one with Mom. There were binders with hard covers and some with flexible covers. I thought the flex covers had more class so that's what I got. I felt very grown up to have a loose-leaf binder rather than a bound composition book.

One of our favorite routes to school was along Walker Street where we scouted out the loading docks along the railroad tracks. Many treasures were found there. Once we found bundles of 1"x 1" pine sticks about a foot long, used for making lettuce crates. We had sword fights with them and would clash them together vigorously. The one who broke the other's "sword" first was the winner. This was very dangerous because the broken piece that flew off was jagged and very sharp. They could cause serious damage to unprotected eyes and other body parts. Also, when clashing these "swords" together our finger often got in the way. That was not as dangerous but, nevertheless, painful.

Another discovery on those loading docks was dried peas. We filled our pockets with them and they were useful for various nefarious purposes, one of which got me into deep trouble. In grade school we used pen holders into which pen points were inserted. Each of our desks had an ink well into which we dipped the pen to gather ink for writing. We had to dip it every three or four words. When the well was dry the teacher refilled it from a large bottle of ink. One morning I arrived at school trying to figure out what to do with my pocketful of dried peas. I noticed that the ink well opening was just about the same size as the peas so I slipped one in. That worked well so I inserted a few more. It amused me. Of course when the dried peas were immersed in the liquid for a while they swelled up.

This was in Miss Myers' 4<sup>th</sup> grade class. Sometimes we had exercises during which we exchanged desks. A girl named Shirley Christianson sat in my desk. We had to do some sort of ink penmanship lesson. I was working on mine when there was a loud shriek: "EEEEK! What is this?" I looked around and Shirley was holding up her pen with a dripping, swollen pea impaled on the end. I knew I was in for it then, and I was. Miss Myers wanted to know what was in my ink well and how it got there. Why do girls have to make such a big fuss over every little thing?

As I was getting started in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade my parents decided to move back to Maluhia Ranch. This time we would be living "up above" in the "big house." Pap found a Model-T Ford axle with wheels and built a wooden trailer to haul our furniture. We would later use this trailer to carry our camping things to Arroyo Seco. One dresser wasn't tied on well while moving and the mirror was broken when it fell off. From that day on whenever Pap loaded a trailer it was lashed on so nothing could possibly move – he was noted for the meticulous manner in which he tied down a load. We finished the

move and I was transferred back to Amesti School to be reunited with my other set of schoolmates,

## AMESTI SCHOOL AGAIN

Miss Twyman was my teacher again when I transferred back to Amesti School. It was just like old times except I was on the other side of the room in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. She gave me the usual set of supplies for the year – pencil, eraser, ruler, pen and points, ink, and the text books. Paper and paste were handed out as needed. The county test had already been given but I had to take a make-up test anyway – during recess time, what a drag. I aced out the boy who had been on top by again scoring the highest in my class.

Along with the programs the students put on for their parents, we also made puppets in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. I believe the teacher made the body from various cloth patterns. This included the arms and legs. We would go from there. The body was stuffed and wooden hands and feet were attached. We made the head by wrapping ribbon-like strips of newspaper, soaked in a mixture of flour and water, around a light bulb (today the kids use as balloon). Facial features were formed while the paper was still wet. When the paper mache dried we split it longitudinally in back with a razor blade so we could remove the light bulb. Then we painted the face and the hair and attached the head to the body. Strings were tied to the head and extremities, with the other ends tied to the control sticks. I guess we then prepared a puppet show but my memory is a little fuzzy there.

I finished 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Amesti School and started 5<sup>th</sup> grade there after summer vacation in 1935. Now I was in a classroom on the other side of the school. Miss Mahoney taught the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. She is the one who dubbed me Bunky after the comic strip character. I seemed to have a knack for getting into trouble and one day, in frustration, she said “You remind me of Bunky.” The name stuck and if I ever meet one of my old Amesti School classmates the name will come up.

I liked baseball during this time and had my own ball, bat, and mitt which I took to school. I wasn’t a very good player but I had fun. We played at recess and once had a game against the 4<sup>th</sup> grade during school time. (They won) It was also during this time that I started wearing baseball caps and polo shirts. Dizzy Dean was my favorite big league player and I had a cap sporting his name on the front.

One thing I liked about Miss Mahoney’s class is that every day after the afternoon recess she read aloud from a book to us. I recall one story about a cowboy from Wyoming named Pierre. Another was about a trapper and I learned that a wolverine was called a carcajou in French, and that a porcupine is the only animal that a wolverine fears. We looked forward to our daily story time. She read to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade together.

In this grade, instead of studying Old Testament stories we learned Roman and Greek mythology. That was interesting but I had a hard time keeping the two sorted out.

We also put on plays for our parents. One Thanksgiving we had a play about Pilgrims and Indians. We made the costumes and I recall making Indian blankets from burlap sacks. We pulled out strands of burlap to make designs and painted pictures on the

blankets. In another comedy performance we each portrayed various professions. I was a dentist and I used one of Pap's large wire nippers to show how to pull a tooth.

For these performances a large sliding door between two classrooms was opened and the desks moved against the wall. Sometimes we used a town school if a larger auditorium was needed. One such case was for an operetta called "The Inky Albatross" that we performed with other classes. The Inky Albatross was a pirate ship and the plot was about two brothers – one wanted to be a pirate and the other a baker. Somehow each got into the career the other wanted. They were not happy but during the play they somehow met again and changed places. There were several songs sung and the story ended with everyone happy.

I was never very aggressive with the other boys at school. Other boys were and sometimes picked on me. One boy, Danny McMaster, said he was going to "lay for me" after school. I hated fighting but was sometimes forced into it. Danny, coincidentally, was the younger brother of the one who gave me a black eye for defending "my" sidewalk many years earlier on Oregon Street. Anyway, the word got around that there was going to be a fight after school and a crowd gathered along Amesti Road where the event was to take place. Danny was a good fighter but he made one mistake – he asked me if I'd rather fist fight or wrestle. Bill Bottero and I used to wrestle. We tussled a lot and tried many holds and maneuvers. I was pretty good at it so that's what I chose. About then Mom and Pap drove by and asked if I wanted a ride home. I told them I couldn't because of the fight. Pap parked across the road so he could watch. Mom, of course, had a fit.

One of my friend's elder brother was to be the referee. Danny wasn't much of a match for me in wrestling and I soon had him pinned down. I easily won but Danny was real mad and started tearing at me when he got up. But the referee held him and stated emphatically that he had lost in a fair match. Pap then asked again if I wanted to ride home but I still declined. I wanted to bask in the glory with my friends. That was my mistake. Farther along the road when I was walking alone, Danny and several of his friends caught up with me and said they wanted to finish the fight. One of them, bigger than Danny, punched me a few times and that seemed to be enough to save face. I never told my parents about this sequel to my afternoon's excitement. Later in life, however, Danny and I became friends – not close friends, but friends.

I seem to have gone through the entire 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Amesti School. During the summer of 1936 I caught bronchial pneumonia at Arroyo Seco. I had a very painful cough when we came home to Maluhia Ranch. I guess the folks were pretty worried because Jerry had died of pneumonia just four years earlier. It took me six weeks to recover so I missed the beginning of school when I would have started the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Amesti. Miss Mahoney sent school work home with Mom and when I was feeling better I started working on it. As it turned out, when I finally did go back to school I was ahead in all the subjects, so I had it easy for a while.

When I did get back to school I had a seat near the coal burning stove used to heat the room. Certain ones of us were assigned the task of keeping the coal bucket filled. The coal was kept in a shed behind the school. We liked to eat our lunch in that shed while sitting on top of the coal pile.

Another recreation we indulged in during recess time was building huts along the back fence. We brought hay wire (used to bind bales of hay) from home to string from the fence to pegs in the ground, lean-to style. The wire was meshed in such a way that we could string grass through it to cover the hut. The teachers let us be, assuming that we couldn't hurt ourselves. But after the hut was covered we dug a hole to make the hut bigger. Then we decided to dig tunnels between the huts. That began an elaborate network until the word got back to the teachers. We could still keep the huts but tunnels were forbidden because they might cave in and smother us. We were pretty disappointed but it is probably a good thing that we were discovered.

There was a lot of excitement when we had a fire at school one day. It was the usual practice to burn the school's trash in a 55-gallon drum in the school yard. One day I saw one of my friends playing around the fire. He was using a stick to throw sparks up in the air. Some of the sparks landed in dry grass and soon our school yard was ablaze. I don't recall how it was organized but the teachers and older kids were quickly on the scene with wet gunny sacks to beat the fire out. I don't believe a fire department was called. I'm not sure if there was even a fire department to call for that rural location. Anyway, the fire was quickly extinguished but it was a real scary experience. I presume the gunny sack and buckets of water were kept available for such an emergency as this.

I was well into the 6<sup>th</sup> grade when we moved to town again. This time it was to a rented house on Rodriguez Street but now I would be reunited with my town school classmates – especially Bud Daugherty and Bill Bottero .

### RODRIGUEZ STREET

We moved to 301 Rodriguez Street which was on the corner of Rodriguez and Sixth Streets. (The street has since been renumbered.) I transferred to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Radcliff School which was now only two blocks away. Miss Jensen was our teacher. My former piano teacher also lived just across the street and about half a block away.

Miss Jensen seemed to be a fair teacher but she was strict and maintained a high standard of discipline in the classroom. Any deviance from the rules put her in a bad mood which sometimes lasted for days, and being in her classroom was miserable while the mood lasted. Consequently, the class put great effort into keeping things peaceful and the teacher happy. However, I always seemed to have a hard time behaving myself for any length of time. One day I did something that caught Miss Jensen's attention. I can't remember what the transgression was but I do remember the teacher's wrath. It seemed that I was the cause of the whole class suffering and they were quick to let me know about it. Talk about peer pressure. I recall the remark from one of my fellow students: "She has been in a good mood and you had to wreck it!" I was in deep trouble not only with the teacher, but with the whole class.

I was promoted to the seventh grade in June 1937. But Radcliff School only went to the sixth grade so I would go to the old Grammar School after summer vacation. That was across town on the other side on Main Street, on the corner of East Lake Avenue and Sudden Street (see map of Northern Watsonville above). I didn't know it at the time but I

would be attending the last year that ancient school would be open. I'll get into that in the next chapter.

# # # # #

## Chapter 3 – My Grammar School Days

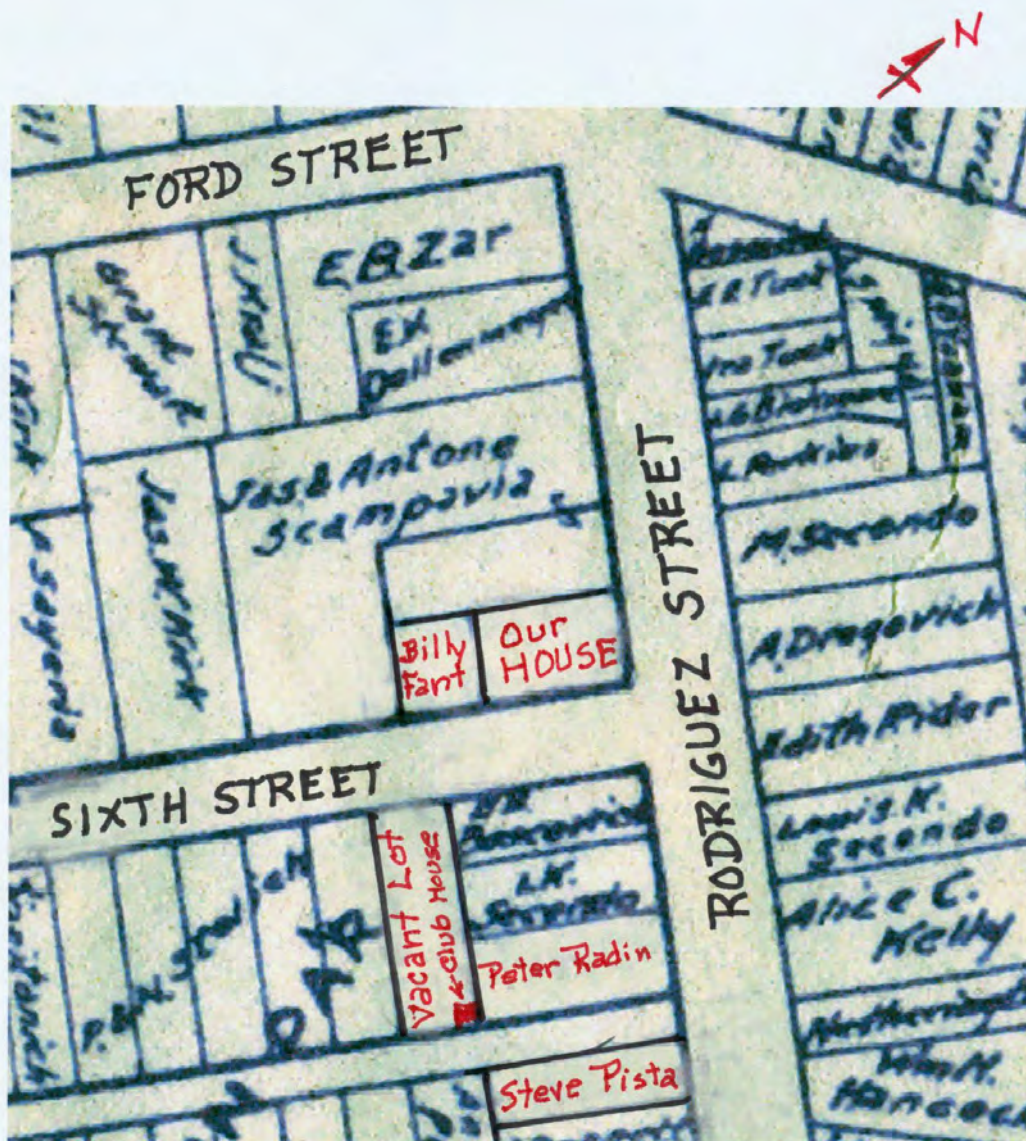
In September 1937 I started the seventh grade at the old Watsonville Grammar School on the corner of East Lake Avenue and Sudden Street. Radcliff was just a couple blocks down Rodriguez Street from my house but this school was way the other side of Main Street.

The Grammar School building was an ancient, two story, wooden structure. My classroom was on the second floor and there was an exterior stairway added to the rear of the building, presumable for fire safety. It is the route I usually followed to get to or from my classroom. I preferred it to the inside stairway because it was handier from the school yard and the bike rack. Miss Irene Strazich was my teacher. I didn't take to her too well at first but eventually I grew to like her. She lived just across Sudden Street from the school so that was very handy for her. It was from her that I first heard of Mahatma Gandhi in India. It wasn't that she was necessarily inclined toward Gandhian philosophy – I don't know whether she was or not. It was through our social studies or current events courses that his name came up. He was very active in India at that time.

I rode my bike to and from school when it wasn't raining, or when it wasn't laid up for repairs. There were several service stations (gas stations) along the way where I used to check the air in my tires. I also picked up free items like bike reflectors and other advertising gimmicks. Free road maps were also available. The Richfield stations (now Atlantic Richfield Co., or ARCO, which was absorbed by British Petroleum) also handed out packages of wildflower seeds in due season.

We continued to live on Rodriguez Street while I attended Grammar School. It was here on Rodriguez Street, although earlier while I was in the sixth grade, that I learned how to ride a bike. I inherited Uncle Fred's antique bicycle and that is what I learned to ride on. It was old and hard to pump. The handle bars were old fashioned and still looked odd in any position I adjusted them. But although I did learn to ride it, I desperately yearned for a new bike. This was in the mid-1930s and times were tough. Many of our neighbors, and my friends' parents, were on relief and stood hours in line for food to feed the family. Pap and Chuck were running an Associated Oil Co. service station across the bridge in Pajaro, but money was still tight. Nevertheless, my parents saw how humiliated I felt riding the old fashioned bike and how much I wanted a new one. They couldn't afford a brand new bicycle but found a pretty good used one. I used to hear them working up in the attic, from which I was temporarily banned. I found out what was going on up there when I got a beautifully reconditioned bike for my birthday that they had been cleaning up and painting.

Ironically, when I received the bike on my birthday I could not ride it right away. Earlier that day Bill Bottero and I had been playing in the vacant lot across Sixth Street. While we were pulling and yanking on some palm fronds I got stabbed in the ankle with one of



AREA AROUND  
301 RODRIGUEZ STREET



the sharp needle-pointed leaves. It went in deep and I didn't know if it had broken off in there. I went home yelling as my ankle continued to swell. By evening, when several of my friends were invited over for a party, my ankle was so painful and distorted so badly from the swelling that I couldn't walk. When my parents wheeled out the new bike I had to stay on the couch with my foot in a tub of hot water. I couldn't even get up to try it out.

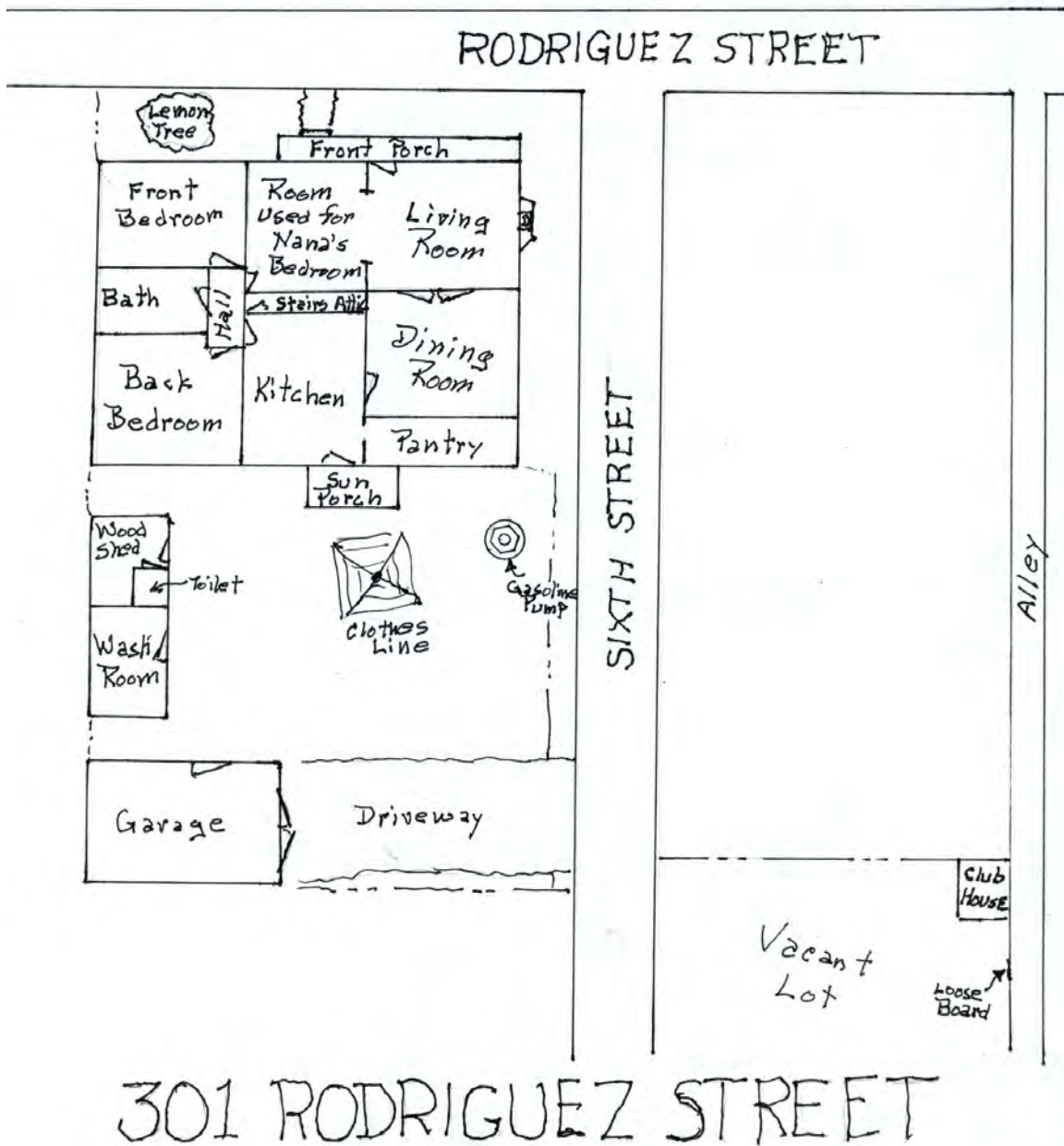
The doctor later probed in my ankle but couldn't find anything. Eventually my ankle healed and I could ride my new bike. I was real excited to finally ride it to school at Radcliff. We couldn't ride on the school grounds so I had to walk the bike from the street to the bike rack. After school hours we sometimes rode in the school yard. There was a small, inclined ramp the kids could walk up on to reach the rings or the monkey bars. I thought it would be great to go speeding up that ramp and sailing off into space to make a perfect landing. So, I tried it. Yeah! I came to the end of the ramp and the bike dropped. That resulted in a bent pedal and terrific pain in my testicular region. I had similar experience later when I wasn't watching where I was going and ran into the back of a parked car on Fifth Street.

In the late afternoons and early evenings a bunch of us used to ride our bikes up and down Rodriguez Street as well as on the side streets and alleys. I liked to skid to a stop by sliding my rear wheel around to face in the opposite direction. This was not good for the wheel rim which tended to bend. One day it bent so far that the wheel wouldn't turn. My parents were very disgusted with my frequent bike repairs and said they just couldn't afford any more. I watched how the man at the bike shop straightened rims by tightening and loosening spokes. I tried it and sometimes got the wheel to where it would at least turn, although it still rubbed on the frame. That would have to do until I could afford a professional job, or talk my parents into paying for one.

Many of the boys I played with were my classmates who lived along Rodriguez and Fifth Streets. We formed a club, or gang. Gangs did not have the connotation in those days as they do today. Many can recall the TV series called "Little Rascals." In my youth, before TV, they were a Saturday matinee movie comedy called "Our Gang." These movie strips were re-run as TV episodes under a new title which was politically correct for the times -- by that time the word "gang" had a bad connotation and the TV specials were renamed "Little Rascals."

Anyway, the gang I was in built a clubhouse along the back fence of the vacant lot across Sixth Street from our house. We used the corner of the fence for two walls and scrounged old lumber and sheets of tin to make the other two sides and roof. Sometimes we met at night and used a candle for light. There was a loose board in the back fence of the lot, a few feet from the clubhouse door, which we used as an exit to the alley. Some of the gang members were Billy Fant who lived on Sixth Street next door to us, Peter Radin and Steve Pista (a.k.a. Pee Wee) who lived a few doors down Rodriguez Street from us, and Lawrence Jacobsen who lived a little farther away.

One afternoon a bunch of us were riding our bikes and cutting up in the vacant lot. Bud Daugherty lived close and sometimes joined us bike riding although he was not in our gang. (Bill Bottero lived farther away and did not know how to ride a bike although I tried hard to teach him -- an endeavor that led to some harrowing experiences.) Bud was



with us that afternoon and he had a accident with his bike. His arm hurt like heck. I walked home with him and, since he couldn't ride his bike, I pushed it for him. His mother took him to a doctor to have his broken arm set and put in a cast. That ended his bike riding days for a while.

Halloween was an exciting time for our gang. It was a time we went out to pull tricks on the people living close by. Pap always warned me about "no vandalism" but he did show us how to make things with which to play tricks. One was a "rat-a-tat" made by cutting notches around the periphery of a wooden thread spool. Then we'd put a pencil through the hole in the spool to act as an axel. We'd then wrap a string around the spool and pull it to make it turn while holding the notched periphery against someone's window. It made a very disturbing noise. Ringing a doorbell and then hiding was a favorite trick, as was marking windows with soap or paraffin. There were other more damaging tricks that some kids pulled but we were sternly warned against destructive behavior.

It was about this time in the 1930s that "Trick or Treat" became popular – at least that is the first I heard of it. But in those days it meant what it said. We'd ring a doorbell and give the person a chance to treat. If they didn't, we'd pull a trick on them. Nowadays the treat is taken for granted and I doubt that any of the kids even think of tricking.

Some years, one of our parents would sponsor a party where we'd play various games like dunking for apples or eating an apple dangling from a string without using our hands. Often the party would be when we finished trick-or-treating.

I loved to experiment with chemistry. One year I received a chemistry set for Christmas. At first I would do the experiments outlined in the instruction manual – using the dining room table for a laboratory. Then I got more adventurous. I wanted to make a stink bomb. Using my ingenuity I put together some sort of mixture which included sulfur and potassium nitrate. It was a great success and I was very proud of myself when we had to evacuate the dining room. Mom wasn't happy at all! My chemistry set was moved to the outside washroom (laundry room) and I was absolutely forbidden from conducting any more experiments in the house.

I continued to be enchanted with my chemistry set. Lawrence Jacobsen, one of our gang members, had a more elaborate set than mine. I often went to his place to conduct various experiments. He taught me how to make a smoke bomb from old movie film. That was dangerous because the smoke was actually poisonous although we didn't know it at the time. It worked very efficiently and we had a lot of fun with them although, luckily, we apparently didn't inhale too much of the smoke. Later when I was in high school we set one of those smoke bombs off in the boys' bathroom. Boy, did that cause a commotion!

I also became very interested in making hydrogen gas. This interest was probably sparked by the Hindenburg disaster on 6 May 1937. The Hindenburg was a German lighter-than-air craft – a Zeppelin – which used hydrogen to lift it skyward. After that tragedy the Zeppelins and blimps used helium to buoy them up. Anyway, I found out that placing zinc in hydrochloric acid created hydrogen gas. I could obtain zinc easily from the shell of old dry cell batteries. Hydrochloric acid was another matter. But my friend Payson Gregory's father was a chemist and worked at the old "sulfur works" (which I discussed in an earlier chapter) next to Nana's old house on First Street. He

gave me a jug of hydrochloric acid. Mom didn't like that at all but Pap thought I should be given the freedom to experiment. They gave me cautious advice and stern warnings, and I had to keep the chemicals in the wash room and not take them in the house, but I did learn to make hydrogen gas.

Pap and Chuck had to give up the Associated Oil Company gas station in Pajaro but they then started work for Signal Oil Company. Pap worked in a service station in Watsonville and Chuck drove the delivery truck and worked in the station part time. Eventually they also had to close that business and Pap went to work driving a gasoline truck for Associated Oil Company. I believe it was at this time that Chuck got the job as juvenile probation officer for Santa Cruz County.

Pap seemed to enjoy delivering gas to customers in the country and was always telling us stories about his experiences. Besides bringing home stories he also occasionally brought home some animal. Once he found a possum that had been hit by a car and brought it home to nurse it back to health. I never managed to get on good terms with that animal because its teeth were too sharp. I don't remember the outcome but I believe the possum recovered and was returned to its habitat.

It was while driving truck for Associated that a customer gave Pap a hunting dog. I don't remember the exact breed but I believe it was part pointer and part ordinary hound. Pap fixed a bed for it in the woodshed and that hound howled and cried all night. Because of these nocturnal disturbances Mom facetiously remarked that the hound should be called Rip Van Winkle (the one who slept for 20 years). The name stuck and he was forever after called Rip. But he was definitely Pap's dog, not Skip's or mine. Nevertheless the nightly howling upset the neighbors and the fence wasn't high enough to keep him in, so Chuck offered to take care of Rip at Maluhia Ranch. He had an old dog named Brownie and the two hounds became good friends, although Rip was sometimes too rambunctious to suit Brownie.

I did acquire a pet dog while living on Rodriguez Street. His name was Toby III (I had two Tobys before him but they either died or disappeared while still pups). We just called him Toby. He was a cross between a Spitz and a wire-haired terrier. His tail forever curled up and around over his back. Toby grew fast but he was a small enough dog that the fence kept him in, most of the time. There were exceptions. Once he disappeared and I couldn't find him anywhere. Mom suggested that I try the city pound which was located at the extreme southern end of Walker Street just before the railroad tracks went over the Pajaro River.

Bud Daugherty and I rode our bikes down Sixth Street to Walker and then along the tracks on Walker. We actually rode over the tracks as they were recessed in the street and smooth with the surface. There were track switches however, and I got my front bike wheel stuck in a recess next to the moveable rail. That brought me to a stop and I tumbled over to the side. The bike went with me but the stuck front wheel bent as the bike went over. I had to walk with my damaged bike the rest of the way to the pound and then back home. Toby was there alright but they wouldn't release him until I paid a five dollar fine, which I didn't have. That was a large amount in the 1930s but Mom drove me back to the pound and we brought Toby home. It was decided that Toby should also

go to Maluhia Ranch, but I was very emphatic that he would still be my dog and would not be appropriated by Chuck.

My grandparents Aldridge were farmers and leased land for that purpose. Some of the locations were along San Andreas Road, on Buena Vista Drive, along the Old Santa Cruz Highway, off Elkhorn Road, and in the mountains off Browns Valley Road. I often went to visit them and had fun playing in the hayloft of the barn, eating Karo syrup on bread, watching Grandad shoot a chicken hawk and nail it to the barn, and many other adventures. Grandad Aldridge salvaged lumber and built many of their houses. I sometimes helped him tear down old barns for the lumber. These houses had no plumbing or wiring. They used kerosene lamps, a hand pump for water, an outside privy for a toilet, and a split-open gasoline drum to heat water over a bonfire for weekly bathing. It was always fun visiting them. My Aunt Margie was only 8 years older than me and more like an older sister than an aunt. We often played together making coasters out of old wagon wheels, playing “knock, knock, who’s there?”, and other games. At one time I found a pick and wanted to dig a hole. An older boy showed me a yellow jacket hole and said to dig there, and then he disappeared fast. I dug, I ran, and I howled. On that same visit I was swinging on a rope where people were cutting and drying apricots. During one swing my foot went through the tarpaper side of the hood that covered trays of apricots while burning sulfur cured them. My Uncle Spud was pretty mad about that and I added some words to me vocabulary when he saw the damage. Anyway, the point is that I loved my grandparents and visiting them was a treat I always looked forward to.

I was scheduled to visit them one weekend while we were living on Rodriguez Street. Bud Daugherty was going with me and I anticipated a super weekend showing him all the workings of the farm. First we played in the field where bailed hay was stacked. Grandma had a talk with Grandad and then he told us it would be better if we didn’t play on the stacked bales because one might fall and crush us. So we went to the barnyard where there were several calves. We had seen calf riding in rodeos so decided to try our luck. First we had to catch them – that was easy for some and more difficult for others. The more difficult ones were the biggest challenge. Sometimes we’d sneak up behind one lying down and climb on its back. It would jump up and away. We thought we were real tough cowpokes and started making plans to enter a rodeo contest. But as I heard Grandad explain it to Grandma: “They’d stay on for one or two jumps and then they were sitting flat on the ground.

Things went real well that first day until evening. Then Bud got homesick for his mom. (Bud’s parents were divorced and he lived with his mom.) He was getting teary eyed and I was trying to get him interested in what we would do the next day. It did no good. He just kept telling me about his mom and pretty soon he had me homesick too. Grandma had to eventually call Mom and Pap and they came out to get us. That was the only time I ever got homesick and my grandparent’s place but I did a good job of it then.

I have other flash memories of living on Rodriguez Street. Across the street and north a few houses lived some friends of mine who were very poor. One day Mom called me to the window and said this was a sight that I would rarely see. Their house was burning. It was the first time I had seen a house completely engulfed in flames – fire coming out the windows and through the roof. On another occasion I heard a loud crash. I ran out and a block away on the corner of Ford and Rodriguez Streets was a car lying on its side. It

was the first auto crash I had seen. Then several men proceeded to tip it back up on its wheels and drove it away. Cars were made sturdier in those days. Around the corner on Ford Street, towards Main Street, was a small grocery store that Mom would send me to for supplies. I remember bread loaves in two sizes – the smaller was ten cents and the larger was twelve. Milk was in bottles and if the bottle had raised dots around the edge it was worth a nickel redemption. Soda pop bottles could also be turned in for money.

While at the Old Grammar School I took a woodworking class called Manual Training. The school principle, Mr. DeAnna, taught the course. We had simple projects. I recall an oval cutting board being one. We first had to draw the plans for the project. For the cutting board the parallel sides were a specific distance apart and we laid that out on a piece of drawing paper. Then we had to lay out the centers for the round ends and draw them so they came out tangent to the sides. A small hole for hanging the board was then added. When the plans were just right and approved we could start on the actual construction from a piece of wood. We learned to use a coping saw, a brace-and-bit to drill the hole, wood files, and sandpaper. Mom was very happy when I presented her with the finished article.

We had a Halloween party at school one evening. It was held in the Manual Training room and Mr. DeAnna was the teacher in charge. There were various games we played but it was the costume contest that remains in my memory. I spent a lot of time designing a ghost costume – ghosts were always my favorite costume – for the party. I think the kids voted on who had the best costume. I was very disappointed when a boy with a skeleton costume won. There was nothing original about it. It was a store-bought outfit that was a simple jump suit with a skeleton painted on it – that along with a mask. I really felt cheated.

At the end of the school year when I finished the seventh grade, the old grammar school closed. We would attend the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in a brand new school across the street from Minte White School where I started first grade. The new school was called E.A. Hall School. It was only for seventh and eighth grades. I still had Miss Stazich for the main teacher but for some subjects we went to other rooms and had other teachers. For math we had Miss Zmudowski – an old battleaxe that Mom had while in school. She was great for giving strikes to the hand as punishment for misbehavior, or shaking a student against the blackboard. For music we had Miss Jasper and for social studies/current events I believe the teacher's name was Miss Flores. I still took manual training in a nice new shop with Mr. DeAnna, the principle, for an instructor.

I started playing the trumpet while at E.A. Hall School. It consisted of individual lessons for which we would be called out of class for half an hour. Mr. Thomas “Tommy” Starks was my instructor and the lessons took place in the band room. Just before I graduated from the eighth grade I was admitted to the band, but that came too late to actually play in the band. However, it allowed me to sign up for intermediate band in high school.

One day Bill Bottero and I decided to give a performance. I had learned to play a few simple pieces and Bill was pretty good on the violin. I think some of our other friends joined in to put on a skit or perform some other act. But Bill and I played a duet – of sorts. We made up tickets to sell and advertised around the neighborhood. I rode my bike around with a home-made megaphone to announce the upcoming performance. The

megaphone I made from a large amplifying horn from a cylindrical record player. I cut off the small end where it attached to the record player so I could put my mouth on it to make the announcements. This totally ruined the horn and Mom wasn't too happy about it. The record player belonged to my birth father. I still have that cylindrical record player – which is an antique – and I deeply regret that I so foolishly ruined the horn.

I turned twelve years old in 1938 while still living on Rodriguez Street. It was then that Pap started me in the scouts. Mr. Fred Flodberg – a teacher at Watsonville High School – was the scoutmaster. The Scout Hall was upstairs in the old Watsonville Civic Auditorium on Second Street, next to the fire station. Mr. Jensen, the committee chairman and brother of my sixth grade teacher, had property near the top of Mt. Madonna, just off Hecker Pass Road. My first camping trip was there and Bill Bottero was my buddy for the camp. (I had talked Bill into joining after I joined.) We had to plan a menu with the help of our parents. All I remember on the menu was that we cooked ham steaks. It was on this campout that I was initiated into the scout troop with a snipe hunt. In spite of being gullible I had a good time.

That summer I went with the troop to summer camp at the new Camp Esselin at Big Sur. (That camp is now a group camp for Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park and the buildings for scout headquarters still stand. In later years I attended Camp Esselin many times and hiked many of the trails around Big Sur. In 1942 I worked on the staff during the summer after I had become an Eagle Scout. I worked in health and safety and also trained boys to qualify for the Emergency Service Corps. – a program started during World War II to provide emergency service in our community. I was the first scout in the Monterey Bay Area Scout Council to qualify for the Corps. But I am digressing. Let me return to my eighth grade experiences.

The new E.A. Hall School had a real nice manual training room. On day while I was in that class Mr. DeAnna called me into his office. This was in 1939 and shortly before the school year ended and I was due to graduate. Our family had moved from Rodriguez Street back to Maluhia Ranch and my folks had reported the change of address to the school. When I arrived at Mr. DeAnna's office he explained pointed out that I was now living in the Amesti School district and, technically, should be attending that school. He understood that I would like to stay where I was until I graduated into High School so suggested that my parents get permission from the Amesti board of trustees to allow me to do that. I told Mom and Pap and they seemed a little miffed. They told me not to worry about it. The subject never came up again and I graduated in June 1939.

The house at 301 Rodriguez Street still stands on the corner of Sixth and Rodriguez although it has been renumbered. From the outside the house and buildings look pretty much as they did in the 1930s. The garage is a little worse for wear and the duplex washroom/woodshed building still stands. Even the old gasoline pump is still there. Of all the houses I have lived in this one has probably changed the least.

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## Chapter 4 – Maluhia Ranch

I have set a chapter aside to tell about my times at Maluhia Ranch because it played such an important part in my childhood years. I discussed it briefly in previous chapters but here I will go into greater detail. If I repeat some things already said please forgive me.

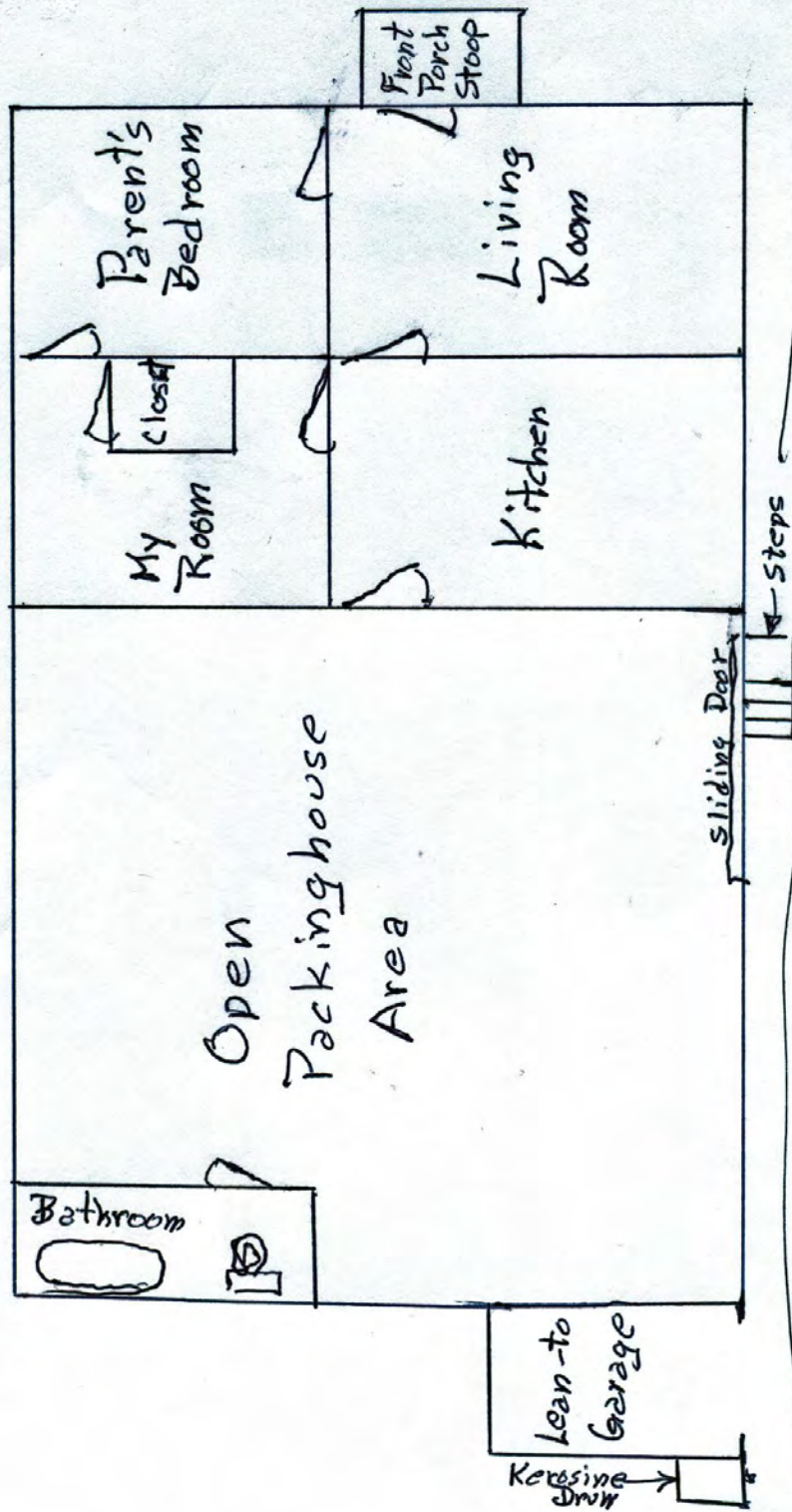
Maluhia is a Hawaiian word meaning peace, peacefulness, serenity, calmness, restful. I was told Maluhia Ranch was intended to mean haven of the angels. It is located on Amesti Road about a mile from the intersection of Amesti and Green Valley Roads. It was once a huge ranch with about a quarter mile of frontage on Amesti Road and extending all the way back to Corralitos Creek. Portions have been stripped off and sold at various times and today the parcel on which the house sits is very much smaller with only a strip of driveway leading to it. Also, under a different owner, it has a new name – Casa Amada. Perhaps a Spanish title is more appropriate in California but I will always remember the “old ranch” as Maluhia.

My family lived at Maluhia on three different occasions. First we lived in what was called the packing house and that will be described in this chapter. Then on two other spans of time we lived in the “big house” up on the hill. That will be the subject of the next chapter.

We moved to the “packing house” in 1933 while I was still in the low-second grade at Minte White School. We had been living on Oregon Street but after losing my dad and then my brother while living there Mom wanted to move. She must have been pregnant with Skip (my brother, Ron) at that time and didn’t want to have another baby there. In addition, the Herberts agreed to rent the living quarters of the packing house for a lower price than what the Oregon Street house could be rented for. This provided some additional income during these grueling depression years.

This packing house was where the berries grown on Maluhia Ranch were once packed into special crates for shipping to various destinations. It was not being used for that purpose anymore because most of the land had been planted into orchards. Now it was used as a warehouse for various items. There was a large sliding door on the driveway side of the building where trucks once drove up to unload berries from the field or load the packed crates for distribution. There had been an elderly couple employed, that I never met, who built three rooms for living quarters in one end of the packing house – a kitchen, a living room, and a bedroom. There was a front door into the living room on the end of the packing house and a back door from the kitchen into the open area of the packing house. We used to leave the sliding door slightly open so we could enter through this back door. That is the one we used the most. At the far end from the living quarters





Roadway **PACKING HOUSE - 1930s**

was a bathroom – not real handy but not as inconvenient as an outside privy. It also had the luxury of hot and cold water as did a sink in the kitchen. Outside on the bathroom end was an open lean-to shelter for a garage. Another inconvenience was that we didn't have a telephone. To make a call we had to hike up the hill to use the Herbert's phone at the big house.

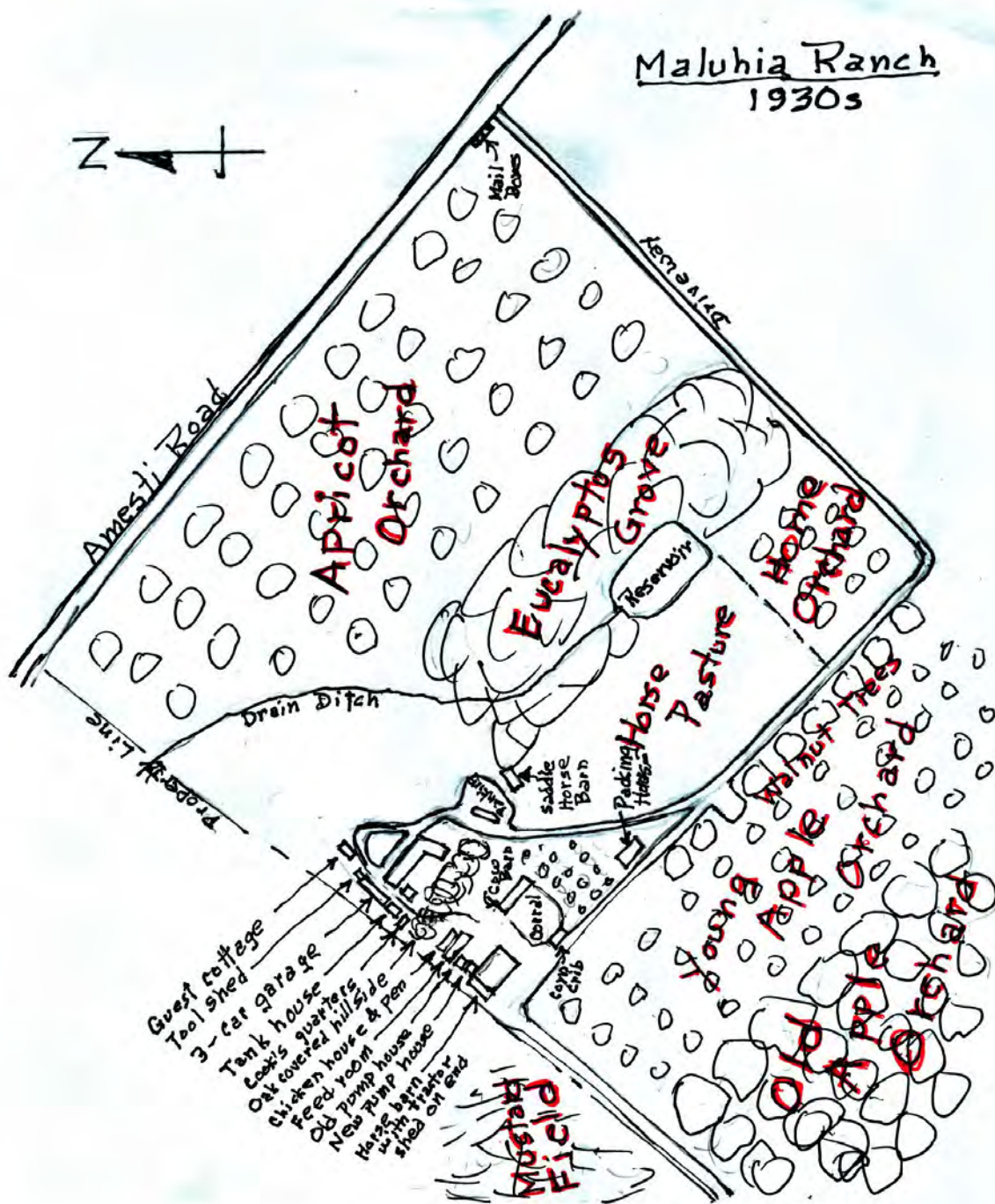
I always felt a little frightened when I had to take a flashlight to get to the bathroom at night. Walking through that huge open area of the packing house in the dark was pretty spooky. One time a skunk got into the packing house. Pap stalked it with a rifle. He said he could hit it in the backbone and it wouldn't be able to spray its scent. Did he find it? Yes. Did he get a shot at it? Yes. Did he hit the backbone? No. We had to put up with that horrible skunk odor for I don't remember how long.

We had a wood burning stove for heat and a kerosene stove for cooking. We also had portable kerosene heaters for warmth. My daily chores after getting home from school and changing my clothes was to fill the wood box and fill the tanks of the heaters and cooking stove with kerosene. The kerosene drum was located alongside the lean-to garage and the wood pile was behind that.

Sometimes Pap would use a little kerosene to get the wood burning stove started. That was easier but much more dangerous than using wadded up papers to start the fire. That used to drive Mom crazy and she usually told him so. Pap also had a penchant for putting lots of wood in the stove. One day he stoked the stove with wood and lit it. The practice usually is to open the stove pipe damper (a type of valve to restrict the flow of air and heat up the stove pipe) for maximum air flow until the fire got to burning good. Then the damper would be closed part way so the fire would burn slower. On this particular time Pap forgot about closing the damper. When it was discovered the fire was roaring, the stove was red hot, and the stove pipe was also aglow with red heat.

When we first moved into the packing house I slept in Mom and Pap's bedroom in a large crib. Later when Nana came to live with us I shared a studio couch with her in the living room. Gram and Gramp Durr -- Pap's mother and step-father -- stayed with us for a while and I believe that was when Pap enclosed another area for my bedroom and a closet. (Note: after Gramp Durr died in 1955 Gram Durr remarried and was known to our children as Grandma Rex.)

Although these were financially-tough years for my parents they went to great effort to keep me free from worry. I have real happy memories of those days in the packing house. I didn't care much for mustard green salads but they were no worse than spinach. On the other hand, I was overjoyed with the evening hunts for rabbits to put meat on the table. I took along my BB-gun for target practice along the way. Occasionally we would hike through acres of orchards to Corralitos Creek to fish for bullheads. We nailed them to a board and used pliers to pull the tough skin off but once cooked and fried they were mighty tasty. These were all survival efforts which were made into joyful occasions for me.



Another move to austerity was to sell our beloved Model-A roadster because the payments were too much. That really hurt Mom and Pap to do that and I missed it too. First we bought an old Essex sedan which turned out to be a lemon. Something was always going wrong. Pap finally got rid of it and got a Buick sedan which worked better. I believe that is the car we had until 1936 when Pap bought the brand new 1936 Ford sedan which we affectionately name "Betsy." It cost \$600 new at that time. It eventually became the family car for Janet and me which we kept until Jim was born.

The driveway at Maluhia was very long. It began from Amesti Road at the end toward Green Valley Road and Watsonville. It went straight back along the property line – along the apricot orchard, past the eucalyptus grove, and past the home orchard – for about a quarter mile, where it made a 90-degree turn to the right. (See map below.) Then it went a ways with walnut trees on the left and came to a fork. The right fork went up the hill to the big house and the left stayed level to the packing house and then the barns and corrals. At the fork was a wide spot along the road between the walnut trees called the "turn around place." That allowed cars to drive down from the big house, turn around, and then proceed to the packing house and Barn area or vice versa.

Those years were prohibition years. There was a fellow that Pap and Chuck knew who had a truck-mounted mobile home which he made from wood. He also had a home-made still. He used to park his vehicle in the orchard area between the packing house and the barn area. He would be there for a week or so making apple jack from the windfalls in the orchards. When he had a good supply distilled and bottled he would drive down to Los Angeles to sell the bootleg booze. The mobile home was built so he could remove the interior wall panels and hide his contraband liquor in the walls. I heard Pap relate one story on how this friend of his was making a delivery in LA and was struck on the side by another vehicle at an intersection. The wooden side caved in but, luckily for him, he had just emptied that panel of merchandise. The depression years were times when people did extreme things to make some money. They were not always legal but often driven by necessity.

Another event perhaps triggered by depression austerity was the robbery. We came home one night to discover our packing house home had been burglarized. It was found out later that the perpetrators were a gang that my Uncle Spellman (Uncle Spud) hung around with but he was not with them on this particular night. I don't recall what was taken but the robbers didn't find the real valuables. Being wise to the extremes sparked by the depression, Mom had hidden them in a shoe box in the bottom of her piano (the same piano Teri now has). I believe Pap's .38 police special revolver was taken but eventually most of the stolen items were returned when the thieves were caught, including the pistol. The folks had to make several trips to Santa Cruz, however, to testify in court.

We may have surprised the robbers when we came home, I don't know. But after that experience Pap used extreme caution when entering our home at night. He would draw his .38 and edge in the door quietly. When sure that it was safe he would allow Mom and me to enter. I can remember so clearly how he would have the revolver ready as he cautiously entered the kitchen door.



Pap had to get a permit to carry his gun when we left home. I was entranced by that. I wanted the same for my play guns. Pap helped me draft the first play permit I had. If I lost it I printed another one. Or if I lost or broke one of my guns, which happened very frequently, I would have to make another permit for the new one. I would use Pap's roll top desk (which Jim now has) for this purpose. I may have lost my play guns frequently but Pap had his problems too. He was always locking his desk key inside the roll top. Then he'd have to take a board loose from the knee hole underneath to manipulate the lock and open the roll top. I often watched him and was attracted to the knee hole. I frequently crawled under there for my secret hiding place.

Once when I lost my play gun Mom and Pap were exasperated. They flatly stated that I'd have to do without for a while as they just couldn't afford to keep me supplied with firearms. I was disappointed but, what could I do? Nevertheless, I looked around for a substitute. And I found one. Down by the barn, in a mud puddle composted with fresh horse manure, I found a soaked stick that with my overactive imagination I saw as a perfect replica for a pistol. I was proud of it and showed Mom and Pap what an excellent piece it was. I carried that smelly thing around all afternoon and even with me when we drove to Watsonville that evening. Pap had to do something in the store and when he came out we drove home. By that time it was my bedtime and, as was my habit, my gun went under my pillow. I was surprised when I woke up to find a brand new cap pistol under my pillow. What became of my temporary sidearm I never found out but I am surer it was gladly disposed of. Years later I finally appreciated the love I was shown at a time when money was really scarce.

Pap was very strict about the way I handled guns, even play guns. He drilled safety precautions into my head. One evening he told me he wanted to show me something. He handed me his .38 revolver and told me to step across the kitchen. He sat in his desk chair watching me. Then he told me to point the gun at him. I thought that was strange coming from him but I did so. Then he told me to pull the trigger. I objected but he insisted, saying it wasn't loaded. So I did. The .38 went off with a loud roar and scared the daylight out of me. Pap slumped in his chair. I was terrified. I think I burst into tears and ran to him. Then he sat up. What a relief! He then explained that the pistol was loaded with blanks but hoped that I had learned two things: first, to never take someone's word that a gun isn't loaded – always check for myself – and second, to never point a gun at anyone even if I know it is not loaded. I think I learned those lessons well.

There were other times we went to town for various things. I loved ice cream and I always hoped Mom and Pap would stop at the creamery to pick some up. It was a special treat when they did and I could hardly wait until we got home. Mom once said it was a shame to buy ice cream when it got so soft before we got home. Pap replied that he liked it best when it was a little soft. I found out that I did too, and I still do.

There was a lot of activity in the apricot orchard during the late summer harvest. Pickers and cutters were hired and a canvas shed was set up in the middle of the orchard for the cutters. Chuck and Pap were busy picking up boxes of fruit the pickers had filled and hauling them to the cutters to halve and pit. Chuck's team of Clydesdale horses – Bess

and Bill – was used to pull a sled or wagon to do the hauling. After the cots were cut in half and pitted they were packed for drying or shipping. Mom often helped in the cutting shed. I was busy running around behind the horses and occasionally helping to stack the props which were no longer needed to support branches laden heavy with fruit.

Pap usually handled the horses as that was his specialty. Any time he was working with them in the orchards he would unhitch them and leave the wagon or sled in the orchard overnight. Then he would ride one of them bareback to the barn while leading the other. On these days I hurried home from school, changed into play clothes, and rushed to the orchard before Pap quit for the day. He would ride Bess and let me ride Bill because he was the most gentle. Bess was sometimes a little frisky. This was the high point of the day for me.

One day when we reached the barn and the horses were turned loose in the corral, Pap let me stay on Bill. Bess started frolicking around to celebrate her release and tried to get Bill to follow her. Bill was usually pretty docile but on this particular evening he decided to join Bess and started romping around the corral kicking up his heels a little. I was scared stiff and started yelling like mad. I felt sure I would be bucked off and held onto Bill's mane with an iron grip. Pap came to the rescue and helped me down (those work horses were pretty high). He was a little disgusted with me for being such a "baby." I guess the ride seemed a lot rougher to me than it actually was.

I was always intrigued with the barnyard area. There were two cows which I watched him feed along with the horses, and clean their stalls. He used a scoop shovel and threw the manure out a window into a two wheel manure cart. He always took great pains in fluffing up fresh straw for horses' bed. There were also two cows which he milked regularly and periodically squirted milk into the mouth of a cat that was invariably present. Once in a while he would catch me unawares and I'd get a squirt of milk in the face. I tried to milk the cows but never could develop the knack.

The feed room was also interesting. I often watched Pap mix up some sort of mash for the cows along with oats and alfalfa. He ran ears of corn through a hand-cranked sheller and then cracked the kernels in a grinder. This was fed to the chickens along with laying mash and calcium supplements. When summer squash was in season Pap would cut it in quarters and we'd feed it to the cows. I couldn't understand why their tongues were so sticky and was amazed when Pap explained cows later regurgitate their food to chew their cud.

The pump house also amazed me. The big house was on a hill above the barnyard, flagstone steps led up the wooded hillside to the house. A water pipe also ran up that hill from the pump house to the tank house up above – the tank sat on a two-story tower (tank house) which I'll tell more about later. The pump house was a wooden structure but when you opened the door there was a deep pit. The pump and motor sat on scaffold-like stands in this pit. They were separate and a large belt about six inches wide allowed the motor to drive the pump. When a float-gage on the tank up above indicated the water level was low, Chuck went down to the barnyard to turn on the pump at a huge switch

box located in the pump house. When the motor was running and the pump was chugging away, Chuck would go down on a scaffold plank in the pit to apply belt dressing to the belt. This had to be done regularly so the belt wouldn't slip. I enjoyed watching these operations and used to perform them myself when I got older. These were some events that filled my days at Maluhia.

While we were living in the packing house the Herberts sold about half of Maluhia Ranch to a man named Mr. Gospenedich. This sale was of the apple orchard from the driveway past the packing house to the Corralitos Creek. The new owner decided to provide better irrigation to the orchard and dug a new well next to the pump house. Over it was built a corrugated steel pump house. This well had a more powerful motor and the pump was driven mechanically. But I still liked the old pump better. It was more of an adventure climbing around in that pit on a plank amid all the whirring machinery.

After the main apple orchard was sold, Chuck had to move his two saddle horses. They were named Lady and Major. Major was Lady's son. Lady was pretty gentle and she was Chuck's favorite. Major was another story. I wouldn't say he was unbroken – I've seen Pap ride him – but he was spoiled and mean. Pap was the only one who could handle him. Anyway, Pap and Chuck built a saddle horse barn up above just south of the big house. They also fenced in a pasture in the open area bounded by the driveway, the home orchard, and the eucalyptus grove. I recall helping Pap put in the posts and stringing the wire to enclose the area.

The sale of the apple orchard did not include the Frankette walnut trees which were on the same side of the driveway. Every year I had to help Mom and Chuck harvest them – a job I was not fond of. Chuck used a long pole to knock the nuts off the tree when they were ripe. Mom and I then picked them up and sacked them. Nana also helped but she had limited mobility. After the nuts were collected we took the hulls off, which was an awful job and stained our hands brown for weeks thereafter. Then the nuts were spread out on trays in the sunshine to dry. This took days and the trays had to be stacked and covered every night to keep the dew off. Then the nuts were weighed and bagged. Money from the sale helped our income. Many private parties bought walnuts for the Christmas season but the best customers were pastry bakers and ice cream parlors. Some places wanted the nuts shelled and even ground, and that brought a significantly higher price.

One year Pap and Chuck decided to use some of the apples for cider. They obtained a cider press somewhere and set it up alongside the pump house. Uncle Fred came out from Watsonville to help. I didn't get too involved with this project but I recall them working very hard at it. There was also a patch of rhubarb and some horseradish growing by the barn. I had never heard of either of them before. One day Pap cut some rhubarb and dug up some horseradish. Mom prepared them. I wasn't sure about the rhubarb but with enough sugar I could stand it. The horseradish was a little on the hot side for me. Today I love both of them.

At Maluhia I was isolated from my friends. Once in a while a friend from Amesti School would come to play after school and sometimes Bud Daugherty or Bill Bottero would spend the weekend. But most of the time I had to use my imagination to amuse myself. I had a tricycle which I ran along the driveway. I had a rope from which Pap fashioned a lariat. He spent a lot of time teaching me how to use it. I got pretty good at roping things and even doing a few tricks like spinning it. Pap said that only tenderfeet called it a lasso so to me it was always a lariat with which I roped things. With people I had to be very careful not to rope them around the neck. All of this fed into my favorite make-believe pastime – playing cowboy. My imagination used to run wild.

Sometimes I must have gotten too wild. I felt I had really set a record if I went a full day without a spanking. Mom had a switch made from a tree pruning a couple feet long. That was used across my behind, never anyplace else. Sometimes, instead, Mom would make me go to bed for a while. That was a terrible punishment to have to go to bed when I could be playing. One time she gave me a choice of going to bed or having a switching. I thought it was better to get switched and have it over with so I chose that. Guess what? He made me go to bed. I was never fooled like that again. Whenever I was given a choice I would pick the opposite of what I wanted. It always worked. But I do remember that I had to really try hard to go a day without punishment for something.

Mom's switchings were bad but they were nothing compared with the spankings I got from Pap. They were very, very rare and only for severe offenses, but they were something to remember. He only used his hand on my bare butt, but that hand stung! And he kept it up until my bottom was red. I tried to hold back my tears but eventually I couldn't help it. Then when I started crying he stopped. Eventually I got wise. I just let myself cry sooner and the spankings weren't so long.

Nana's mobility was not good and it eventually got to the point where she couldn't live by herself on First Street. Uncle Fred was not capable of taking care of her so she came to live with us at the packing house. She took care of me a lot when the folks went out. We were real pals. We played various kinds of card games – rummy, old maid, go fishing, and a couple others – and dominos. We often sat outside under the walnut tree while she told me stories about when she was a little girl. She never scolded me and I used to get away with almost anything. She liked to read a paper called *Cappers Weekly*. There was much talk in those days about the Townsend Plan – an idea promoted in the early 1930s by Dr. Francis Everett Townsend which would give elderly people \$200 per month. That was a significant sum at that time and would be worth more than \$3,000 today. Nana promised me that when she got her pension she would buy me a pony, which was the ultimate in my dreams. The Townsend Plan never worked out but it did influence passage of the Social Security Act in 1935. Social Security paid less than one-tenth of the proposed Townsend Act and I never got my pony.

It was while living in the packing house that I got chicken pox. About all I recall is being in Mom and Pap's bedroom with the shades drawn because it was thought that light would damage the eyes when infected with chicken pox. We had green roller shades on the windows which pulled down from the top. I remember lying on the bed and



visualizing all kinds of characters formed by the light shining through the age cracks in the shade.

Some time in mid-1933 Pap and Chuck went deer hunting at the southern end of Jolon valley along the trail leading to Three Peaks. I believe they did get a deer and skinned a rattlesnake that crept into camp and stretched out alongside them while sleeping. But the most spectacular thing, I thought, was that Pap caught two baby horned toads and brought them home for me. He helped me make a terrarium from an old shoe box and we covered it with cellophane so I could watch them. Holes were punched in the side so they could breathe and I caught flies to feed them. I gave them the ingenious names of Mike and Ike. They were very popular with my classmates when I took them to school. I liked them a lot and tried to take good care of them.

In early August my new baby brother or sister was due. I don't think I had any preferences this time. Gram and Gramp Durr were living in Berkeley at that time and he was in the real estate business. It was decided that I would stay with them until the baby was born. Of course I had to take Mike and Ike. Gram and Gramp were living in an apartment in a court. I became acquainted with some of the kids there and wanted to share my horned toads. I was warned not to take them out of the box but I thought it would be OK. Then while climbing on a fence I dropped one. It looked pretty sick and stunned so I immediately took them back to the box. It was too late. The injured one died and the other died shortly after. I was very sad.

Gram Durr was the one who warned me about the horned toads but I thought I could get by with things like I did with Nana. I soon found out differently. When I disobeyed, Gram took me by the shoulder and marched me to a chair. She sat me down and gave me a stern talking-to. I finally decided it was easier to be a little more obedient. Sometimes I went shopping with Gram and for the first time visited a large department store. It was The Emporium. Gram and Gramp also had friends named Odom. They had a daughter about my age (7 years) named Virginia. Gram and Gramp, and later Mom and Pap, tried to strike up a childhood romance between us. It wasn't very successful but we were good friends.

Gram and Gramp had a refrigerator, which we didn't, so that was a novelty. I loved to make popsicles in the ice cube trays, inserting toothpicks for handles. Gram also made ice cream a couple times and it was there that I was first introduced to iced tea.

Once I went with Gramp on one of his real estate showings. We had to take the ferry across the bay. At that time the San Francisco Bay Bridge was just beginning construction. The ferry went past the concrete foundations which had just been poured. On these the towers would be built from which the bridge is suspended. It is hard now to imagine San Francisco Bay without the bridge and, because there was no bridge at that time, ferry traffic was much heavier.

I recall another time when I was swinging in a play area for the kids living in the court. It was also an area for clothes lines. A black woman came and started hanging up clothes.

I was a little nervous for a minute because I had never had an experience with a black person before. Finally I got braver and talked to her. I can't remember the conversation but the subject of her being a nigger came up. She was very understanding and nice but explained very thoroughly that nigger was not a nice term and black people didn't like to be called that. I remember that lecture vividly.

One evening I went out somewhere with Gram and Gramp. As we arrived home the phone was ringing. It was Pap announcing that I had a new baby brother – Ronald Theodore Reaves. He was born at Nana's house on First Street. Everyone was excited. We nick-named him Skippy. Skippy was a comic strip character and at that time was popular among the kids. I had a cereal bowl with an image of Skippy on the bottom and a spoon with Skippy sculptured for a handle. The name stuck although it eventually was shortened to Skip.

A day or so after receiving the good news Gram and Gramp drove me home. I remember when leaving Berkeley I saw the movie *King Kong* advertised. Gram and Gramp had been planning to take me to see it but now it was too late. I yearned to see it for many years thereafter but never did – still haven't.

I don't remember my first meeting with Skippy but he became very precious to me. Once when he was still small Mom saw him chewing on something. She couldn't figure out what it could be because she hadn't given him anything. She used her forefinger to sweep his mouth and came out with a wood worm a couple inches long. Ugh. We used to find the wood worms and black centipede in the packing house but never thought too much of it. They look similar and about the same size except the worm doesn't have legs. After that incident Mom went around with a broom every night to sweep the ceilings before we went to bed. She didn't want any more unwelcome visitors dropping on us during the night.

As Skippy grew older I used to give him rides in my wagon. I really enjoyed his company. After losing Jerry I believe I appreciated this new little brother all the more. I looked forward to getting home from school so I could play with him.

One last, and lasting, remembrance of the packing house is a rash I developed. It was very tenacious and itched like blazes. It would often keep me awake at night, or wake me up after I fell asleep. Dr. Herbert prescribed some homemade salve that had a lot of sulfur in it and smelled awful. It was messy and gooey. This itchy rash seemed to be something that was going around and everyone called it the seven year itch. I didn't know how I could stand it for seven years. But I eventually got over it and it didn't take seven years..

I don't know the reason but Mom and Pap decided to move back to Nana's house on First Street. Perhaps because there would not be any rent, or maybe they just wanted more room. Anyway, before I finished the third grade we moved. Then in the autumn of that same year (1934) an arrangement was made with the Herberts that we would move back to Maluhia and live in the big house. I will tell about that in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5 – More on Maluhia

While living at Nana's home in 1934 Mom told me we would be moving back to Maluhia Ranch and live in the big house "up above." I believe there was some arrangement that, while Pap still worked on the ranch, Mom would be in charge of housekeeping. She started drilling me on proper etiquette. We would have a cook and I was to respectfully call her, for instance, Mrs. Jones. (It turned out that the cook really was a Mrs. Jones.) We would be eating at the table with the Herberts – Chuck and Dr. Herbert, a.k.a. Kauka which means doctor in Hawaiian – and I was to use proper table manners.

### Maluhia 1934-1936

Nana, of course, still lived with us as she was not capable of living alone. Skip and I shared a room on the end of the house next to the garage. Nana had an adjoining room with a bathroom between the two rooms. Both rooms had glass French doors opening onto a veranda which ran along the main wing of the house on the patio side. Mom & Pap's room was separate from the main house and enclosed one end of the patio, with a regular door opening onto the veranda and a glass French door to the patio. (See illustrations below.) Lorraine Groves also lived with us for a while at Maluhia but I can't remember where she slept. I think she shared the room with Skippy and me.

I was then in the fourth grade at Amesti School and Lorraine was just starting the first. We walked to school but it was quite a long walk for a first grader. Pap started a project down in the old packing house where we used to live. I was not to go near there but I accidentally barged in one day while he was working. He was making me a beautiful box scooter out of an old wooden box, a 2"x4" piece of wood, and an old pair of roller skates. He painted it a beautiful two-tone gray and orange. The box had handles on the top for me to steer the scooter, and a board at the bottom of the open end to retain my lunch box and books. He also put a smaller box on the back end of the 2"x4" rail for Lorraine to sit on. It also had a place for her lunch box. So I got to scoot her to school. It was a lot of work but I was very proud of my box scooter.

One thing I really liked about Maluhia was the grove of eucalyptus trees. It was like a miniature forest. When my friends came to visit we dreamed up all kinds of make believe games to play in the eucalyptus grove. I made a little camp. First I made a lean-to of sorts from tree branches which I lashed to standing trees. Then I made a network of bailing wire to for a roof and wove in twigs which were covered with leaves. It wasn't waterproof but it provided shade and a lot of fuel for imagination. In front of my hut I constructed a make-believe fire pit but I was not allowed to have a fire. Then I cleared a



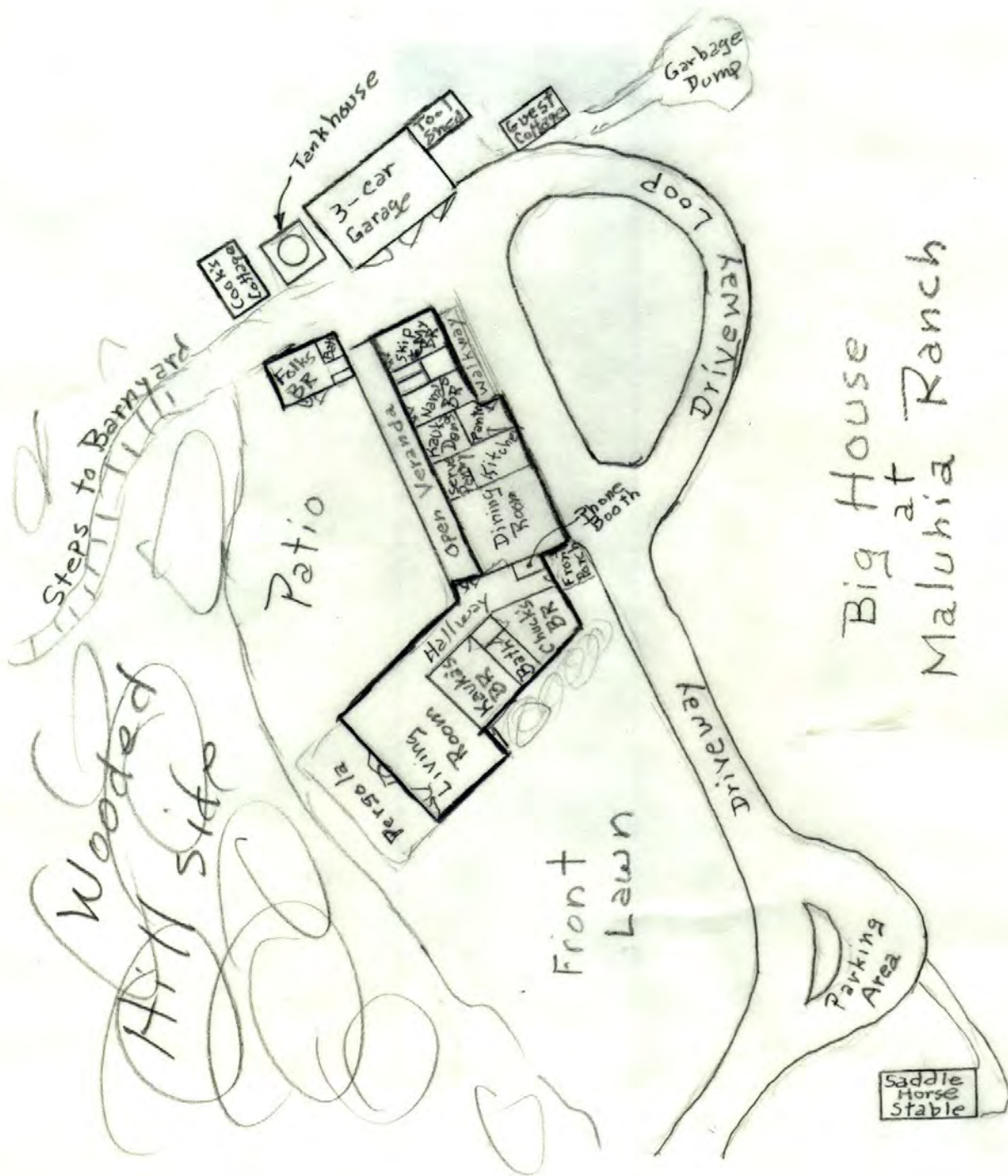
### **Aerial view of the Big House at Maluhia in 2010**

Swimming pool now occupies the area that used to be the front lawn.

Driveway is essentially the same except it is now paved -- view of the turn-around loop is partially obstructed by trees.

The steep, wooded hillside can be seen on the left.

Garage is visible at top end of driveway. Tank house, without the tank, is to the left of garage. Cook's cottage is to the left of that.



pathway to the reservoir which was overgrown with tulles, Nevertheless, in my dreams it was a beautiful lake. This was my little resort on the lake. I had lots of fun there and enjoyed taking my friends to see my camp. (For location of the eucalyptus grove see map of Maluhia Ranch in Chapter 4.)

I mentioned in the previous chapter how on my walk to and from school I would take a shortcut through the apricot orchard when it was dry. This invariably led me through the eucalyptus grove and I frequently stopped there to play at my “resort.” Then I usually cut through the horse pasture but that was tricky, and my parents had warned me against doing so because, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, Major was a pretty mean horse. He was not adverse to kicking and biting. But sometimes I took a chance. Once when I was cutting through the middle of the pasture he came running out of the barn toward me. I was able to beat him to the fence and dived between the strands of barbed wire.

Another time was different. I wanted to cut across the upper end of the pasture near the saddle horse barn. I looked all over but didn’t see any horses. I assumed Lady and Major were grazing at the other end of the pasture, just over the brow of the knoll, so I started across. When about midway Major came trotting out of the stable directly at me. I looked for the closest fence but knew I couldn’t make it. Fortunately Pap was working near the barn and saw what was happening. He called to me to just stand still and not to run. I froze but I sure was scared as that horse came right at me. Then when he was about ten feet away he stopped and looked at me, apparently unable to understand why I wasn’t running. After snorting and pawing the ground he reared up on his hind legs while shaking his head and whinnying. I was terrified but Pap called to reassure me, saying I was doing fine and to just stand still. Meanwhile he was coming at a fast pace. Major’s front feet came down on the ground with a hard crash. Then Major saw Pap coming, gave another loud snort, and walked away. He never could out bluff Pap.

On another occasion our whole family was down by the saddle horse barn. Skippy was just a toddler but he loved to feed slices of apple to Lady, Major’s mother. We were all doing something when Pap let out a loud war whoop. I looked up, startled. Skippy was next to the fence feeding Major a piece of apple, thinking it was Lady. At that moment Major bared his teeth and took a bite for Skippy’s head. When he made contact it knocked Skippy down and that prevented serious damage, but there was a nasty gash right above Skippy’s eye. Meanwhile Pap was on his way and Major took off at a gallop. But Pap caught him and put a halter on him. Then, while holding the halter in one hand, Pap used his other hand to give Major’s rump a good lashing with a piece of chain. Major ran around in circles, restricted by the halter rope and kicking up dust, but he couldn’t escape Pap’s lashing.

Pap still had his .38 police special but it was getting old. The cylinder wobbled and didn’t always line up perfectly with the bore in the barrel. One day our family was doing some target shooting at the dump behind the guest cottage. The hillside sloped downward from the dump until it came to the reservoir drain ditch. On the far side of the drain ditch was the apricot orchard and the terrain rose until it met Amesti Road. So while shooting at cans and bottles we were firing into the rising terrain. There was no

danger of a bullet going astray because the entire trajectory was in view. Anyway, while someone else was shooting the pistol – Mom, I think it was -- I sat off to the side. On one shot the cylinder was slightly out-of-line with the bore and when the projectile entered the bore a slice of lead from the bullet was shaved off and flew out the side. That small shaving of lead hit me square in the forehead. Luckily it didn't hit an eye but it did draw blood. I believe Pap never fired the .38 after that. He disassembled it and stored the pieces in a large jar. We did continue to use the dump for target practice with .22 caliber rifles and BB guns, however.

At this time butane gas was becoming popular for heating and cooking. Dr. Herbert had bottles of what was labeled "Rockgas" delivered. The tanks were set up on the tank house end of the garage. Because they were small they had to be changed frequently. Therefore an intricate system of tubing and valves was set up so that tanks didn't have to be continually disconnected in order to hook up a full one. Chuck seemed to be the master at switching tanks by turning valves so every time the flame started sputtering or the pressure getting low we had to find him to make the switch.

In Skippy's and my bedroom we had a small butane heater near the window. It was only a foot or 18 inches high and was connected to the outlet valve with a flexible hose. It looked similar to a hotplate and one could set a tea kettle on top to heat. We were always cautioned to be very careful that the drapes didn't get on the heater. Well, one morning we weren't. On cold mornings someone got out of bed, lit the heater, and then jumped back into bed. We would then hunker down in the covers until the room warmed up. One morning I looked back at the heater and flames were crawling up the drapes. I yelled to Nana and she came in through the bathroom but didn't know what to do. I guess Skip ran across the veranda and banged on the folks' door. Pap came running in and yanked the drapes down. Then he stomped out the flames, barefooted. The crisis was over but the drapes had to be replaced and the room re-painted.

It was during this time at Maluhia that the movie *Jesse James* came out in our local theater, starring Tyrone Power as Jesse and Henry Fonda as his brother Frank. I just had to see that movie. Grandad Aldridge used to tell me stories about Jesse James. Grandad always had a room of his own – sometimes in the house and sometimes in an outside shed or the barn, depending on where they lived – and I usually bunked in his room when I visited. Many nights after we were in bed and the kerosene lamp was blown out, he would tell me stories about the old days – stories like the 20-mule teams in Death Valley and other tales including the James brothers' fight against the railroad after it had taken over much of their land and caused the death of their mother. Jesse was my hero and I often played his part in my make-believe games. Grandma must have had a talk with Grandad because he made it a point to explain to me that no matter how romantic their battle against the railroad was at first, they were still outlaws.

Anyway, when the movie came to town I had to see it and I was pretty impressed. I don't know how many times I saw it but once I arranged to take Grandma and Grandad. Grandma seemed to like it but Grandad was more critical of Hollywood license. Robert Ford actually killed Jesse James by shooting him in the back while Jesse was hanging a



picture of his mother. Hollywood changed that to a plaque saying something like “Home Sweet Home.” Grandad was quick to point out that inaccuracy. There may have been others but I don’t remember what they were.

In 1936 we spent our second summer at Arroyo Seco and I finally learned to swim. It was a long summer and we stayed at Gruver’s River Camp (now Millers) for about two months. Toward the end I caught a cold and had to stay out of the water for a couple days. Then I felt better and I begged Mom to let me swim again. She finally relented and I went back to spending half my hours awake in the river. It wasn’t long before I had a relapse and it was worse than my original cold. When Pap came down for the weekend we packed up and headed for home. My chest hurt terribly and my incessant cough was really painful.

At home I was immediately confined to bed. My chest hurt terribly. I was told it was pleurisy. Living in the same house with Kauka was handy as I had a live-in doctor. He diagnosed bronchial pneumonia and came in several times a day to check my pulse and thump my chest. In 1936 there were no antibiotics or other types of medical treatment we take for granted today. I endured several mustard plasters a day followed by a brisk rub-in with Vicks Vapo-Rub along with breathing medicated steam under a hood. That along with bed rest was the treatment. I guess Mom and Pap were particularly worried after losing Jerry to pneumonia a few years previously. It took me a good six weeks to recover.

As I got better I could play with my toy soldiers and a small radio by my bed was my constant companion. “Oxydol’s Old Ma Perkins” and all the other soap operas filled my daily schedule. I recall it being about this time that soda pop started coming out in quart bottles. The first brand I saw was Par-T-Pak. Mom and Pap would get that for me when they went to town. Later I got fresh air by sitting on the veranda outside the French doors to my bedroom, or just outside my bedroom window on the walkway to the kitchen pantry, which was sheltered between the side of the building and a stucco fence. When I sat there Mom opened the bedroom window and put my radio on the window sill so I could listen to my daily dose of soap operas.

As I got better I was very anxious to get up and play but Kauka and Mom insisted that I not do anything strenuous too soon. Nevertheless, I was very anxious and one time when there was no one around I hopped out of bed and started across the room. My legs immediately caved in and I crashed to the floor. That really surprised me. I didn’t realize one could get so weak without exercise. I couldn’t stand by myself and had to literally crawl back into bed. Toward the end of my sickness it was the inactivity that bothered me the most.

School started before I fully recovered. I was not there to start the 6<sup>th</sup> grade so, when I could handle it, Mom got homework assignments from my teacher. I had a lot of time to do the work. I just kept going through the books. When I finally did return to school I was considerably ahead of the class. My absence from school didn’t hurt me academically.



One time I was sitting on the veranda with Nana when some of my school friends stopped by to see me. I felt silly just sitting there with a blanket over my lap when I could be running around enjoying their company. So I decided to get up and play. Nana was very upset but she couldn't walk well enough to settle me down. As I recall, my friends listened to Nana's warnings and they suggested that I settle down. Nana scolded me and one thing she said had a strong effect on me. She said if I didn't take care of myself I would get a relapse and if that happened I would die. I paid a little more attention to her cautions after that.

### Maluhia 1939-1940

Shortly after I had recovered from pneumonia and settled back into the school routine at Amesti, we moved again. This time it was to the Rodriguez Street home which I discussed in a previous chapter. Then before I graduated from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at E.A. Hall School we moved back to the big house at Maluhia. All of us had the same bedrooms as before and it was here we lived when I started high school. I rode to school with Pap as his work started at 8:00 AM and so did my school. In the afternoon I rode home on a school bus. Once in a great while I took the bus to school in the morning but not very often.

I was still active in the Boy Scouts at this time and eventually passed all the tests to achieve eagle rank. I liked to buy official scout equipment and one thing I cherished was my archery set. I got a 32-pound pull bow, a nice leather quiver, and some arrows from the Boy Scout supply store. Because I had trouble holding on to arrows I also bought a kit to make and fletch them, but I never had much luck with that. Earlier in my life, when I had a cruder bow-and-arrow set, I used to fashion arrows of a sort that served my purpose at that time. Sometimes I lashed a nail on the tip so the arrow would stick in wooden walls and trees. But when it came to doing a real fletching job I never seemed to get the hang of it.

I used that sloping field by the dump behind the guest cottage for archery practice. I never had bales of straw to back up the target so I used layers of cardboard. Then I got an old piece of oilcloth – oilcloth table covers were popular in those days – and painted a target on the back. I spent many hours practicing with my archery set and became fairly accurate. Once I wanted to see how far in the air I could shoot an arrow so I aimed it straight up. I watched it climb and climb, gradually slowing down until it finally stalled. Then it wobbled a little as it started its descent but eventually straightened out and gained speed. I saw it coming down faster and faster – right at me. It dawned on me that I should probably get out of its way but I didn't know which way to run. In my indecision I froze. The arrow stuck in the ground with a resounding thud, just about a foot in front of me. I was lucky, and I learned an important rule of physics: what goes up must come down.

Skippy got a BB-gun for his birthday one year. He set up a target on the veranda and started shooting from the patio. He was having a great time hitting tin cans, until Mom came along. She couldn't believe it. Here was Skippy shooting away oblivious to anything but the gun and the target. Behind the target were the French doors to Nana's room. Several panes had already been smashed by BBs. A cease fire was called on no uncertain terms. Skippy learned an important lesson that day.

I received my Mossberg .22 rifle for Christmas in 1939. Wow! Was I ever proud of it. It had a longer than normal barrel for a .22 caliber. The magazine under the barrel was also long and held a good supply of cartridges. There was also a lot of wood in the stock and fore piece. It weighed about 9 pounds which was heavy for that caliber. I always used .22-longs. They had more power than the shorts but a lighter bullet than the long-rifles. I later took the iron sights off and installed a 3X (3-power) telescopic sight. That was really nice. Years later I gave this weapon to my youngest son, Mark. But I cherished it for many decades.

Since I was living on a ranch I had chores to do every morning before school and again after school in the afternoon. It was my job to feed and water the chickens and gather eggs. Some of the hens were pretty mean and pecked real hard when I reached under them to get the eggs. We had large, white chickens called New Jersey Giants. Pap sent back east for the chicks and I helped him make a brooder to keep them warm as they matured.

Sometimes we also had a few leghorns in addition to the Jersey Giants. I once had a pair of bantams but the rooster just didn't have any sense. He was too aggressive for no reason at all. He was probably only a quarter the size of a Jersey Giant rooster but he kept picking fights with them. Once he was beaten so badly that he couldn't move. I nursed him back to health and then turned him loose. The first thing he did was head for one of the bigger roosters and start a fight. I gave up on him. The next time I went to the chicken coop he was laying there dead. I was heartbroken and held a funeral for him.

We didn't have cows anymore but Pap bought a Hampshire brood sow. We named her Rebecca. I helped Pap build a pen and shed for her. It was also my job to feed and water her. She was huge but tame as a kitten. I often sat on her back and scratched her ears – she loved that. She occasionally had a brood of pigs which Pap and I would castrate and later butcher. Once I happened to arrive at Rebecca's pen when she was giving birth to a brood. As soon as the new piglet emerged, it would hop to its feet and head for Rebecca's teats to start suckling. They were almost self-sufficient at birth.

I was a little worried about going into the pen when Rebecca had little ones because I thought she might be very protective. So, to put feed in the troughs, I tried to sneak in when she was distracted. One day she looked up and saw me pouring food in the trough. She gave a loud snort, and headed right at me. But she was only excited about the food. I found out that Rebecca didn't even worry if I went in the pen to pet her babies. She seemed to trust me completely.

One morning I went down to feed the animals and Rebecca was gone. The gate had been left unlatched and she evidently went out to explore the countryside. We could see her tracks in the soft ground so Mom and I tracked her through the fields. The tracks ended in the barnyard of a farm near us. We knocked at the door and asked the man if he had seen a loose pig. He took us to the barn and there was Rebecca locked up in an empty stall. I had brought a rope to tie around her front foot to lead her home if we found her. So she was retrieved OK but that farmer was sure hoping no one would turn up to claim her.

Not having cows anymore, what used to be the cow corral was now seeded with field corn. I helped Pap plant it and then harvest it. We used the old cow stalls for a corn crib. These were fed as is to Rebecca and her brood because they can chew the kernels right off the cob. For the chickens I first had to run the ears through a hand cranked corn sheller to remove the kernels. Then I cracked the kernels with a hand cranked grinder. Then it was fed to the chickens along with laying mash.

For a while I raised rabbits. We had several hutches. The rabbits multiplied fast and we had many rabbit dinners. I picked rabbit weed like I used to do with Uncle Fred but I also had to buy rabbit pellets. Then disaster struck. Pink eye, which is fatal for rabbits, started spreading through the hutches. I tried to stop it by immediately removing any infected animals. I used medicated drops to treat the water. But the pink eye spread rapidly and the pink eye was so tenacious that I eventually had to get rid of all the rabbits.

Two International Expositions – or World Fairs, as we called them – were held in the United States in 1939. One was in New York and the other on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. I didn't know much about the New York exhibit except that the Pylon and the Perisphere were the landmarks. The San Francisco World Fair was the one I watched closely and attended. It took place for the entire year of 1939 and was so popular it was held open for an additional year. Treasure Island is a human-made island and it was made especially for the world fair. It was named after the famous Robert Louis Stevenson novel *Treasure Island*. When the fair was over, and during World War II, it became a naval base. But in 1939 it was a place of enchantment and excitement. I only attended the fair one day and don't remember too much about it. I was too young to see the renown Sally Rand Nude Ranch, of which I had heard much, but I do recall going down in a bathosphere and seeing an octopus that was planted at the bottom of the tank. I also remember shooting .22 rifles in the shooting gallery and drinking milk shakes. Beyond that I no longer have any recollections.

I attended a summer session at Boy Scout Camp Esselen at Big Sur in 1939. Chuck drove down to take me home because the engine had gone out in our 1936 Ford – Betsy. As usual, I missed my little brother Skippy a lot during the week I was away and was anxious to see him again. On the way home Chuck told me about the escalating tensions in Europe and how that continent was on the brink of war. A few months later I was helping Pap in the barnyard. We went “up above” at noon to eat lunch. It was then that we learned that World War II had begun in Europe. I think I was a little stunned but I just couldn't grasp the full significance of that world development. I was not ignorant

about what was taking place because we had studied about world events in school. But it seemed so far away and theoretical. Now reality had hit and I found it hard to accept.

I had just graduated from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in June 1939 and was entering high school as the war began. High school was more immediate and something I had to deal with day to day. I was scared at first because I had heard disquieting stories about freshman initiations. But I didn't fare too bad. I did get my face painted with lipstick and once my shoes were run up the flag pole but that was the worst that happened to me. Becoming used to the new schedules and changing classes every hour required a little getting used to but I managed. My first years at high school were not exceptional. My world of interest was scouting and that took most of my attention.

There was one thing nice about high school. During my grade school years I changed schools so much that I only completed two grades out of the first six in the same school (the 1<sup>st</sup> at Minte White and the 5<sup>th</sup> at Amesti). Consequently I had two set of school friends – the country schoolmates and the town schoolmates. When I started high school, however, I had both sets of friends in the same school. That seemed really nice.

During my sophomore year in high school, Kauka decided to sell Maluhia. This was a terrible blow to Chuck because he had invested so much of his efforts and resources to keep the ranch going. But Kauka, now in his 80s, fell in love again and decided to move back to Hawaii with his new spouse. (Mrs. Herbert had died several years earlier while we were living in the packing house.) So we, in effect, had our eviction notice. I think Mom and Pap had been looking for a place of their own for a while but their efforts were now stepped up. They finally found their dream home in Green Valley – a 5½ acre ranch with a large house so old there was no record of when it was built. It was owned by people names Casson. The folks used the Oregon Street home as a down payment and in late 1940 we moved in. A new era in my life began.

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## **PART 2**

### **Green Valley**

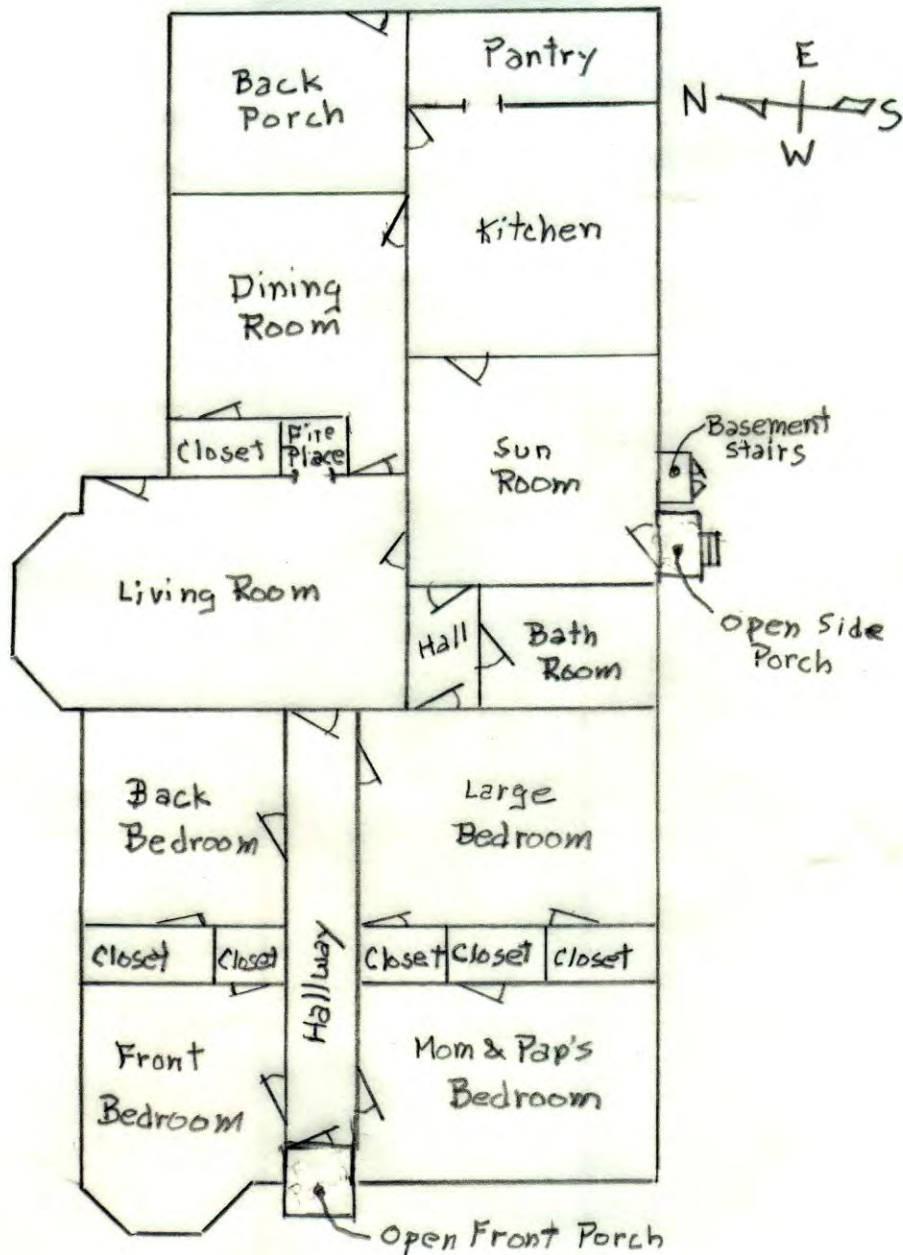
## Chapter 6 – Green Valley Ranch

The move from Maluhia to Green Valley was not a short, high energy event like calling a moving van or renting a U-Haul. We moved everything little-by-little over a longer period of time in the little utility trailer we had for hauling our camping gear. I don't know how many trips we made or how many weeks it took but we made it eventually. It was a bigger move this time because, in addition to our own belongings, we hauled many items belonging to Chuck as well as still other pieces of furniture, etc. that Dr. Herbert gave either to Chuck or Pap. The basement at Green Valley was packed and many items that we stored there in 1940 were still in the basement when the ranch was sold in 2006.

I was fascinated with our new home in Green Valley – both the house itself and the grounds. The house had almost 1,900 square feet of living space not counting the back porch. There was no record of when it had been built. The original part consisted of the four bedrooms, the living room and the dining room. (See floor plan below.) That part was built of virgin redwood heartwood using a box construction, rather than the modern technique of using 2"x4" studs and attaching wall covering to both sides (thus making the wall hollow to accommodate electric wires and pipes, and which can be filled with insulation). All lumber was rough and full dimension (not planed) and was cobbled together with square nails. Each wall was constructed of a vertical redwood post on each end with horizontal redwood 2"x4"s across the top and along the floor. To the horizontal plates were nailed 1-inch thick vertical planks to enclose the wall. Thus the walls were of single thickness with lathe and plaster on each side. The 12-foot high ceilings were redwood planks and not plastered. The original structure had no electricity and no indoor plumbing – an outdoor privy was located a little way from the back door.

That was the original house. By the time we moved in the walls had been covered with wallpaper and the bathroom, sun room, kitchen and pantry added. The back porch had also been added but it was smaller. In 1954 Pap completely rebuilt the back porch to go all the way across the back of the house as shown in the floor plan below. All of this addition was of conventional double-wall construction and the bathroom had plumbing, as did the pantry. Electricity had also been introduced with a single electric light dropping from the center of the ceiling in each room of the original house, and having a pull chain to turn it on and off. The new addition did have light switches for the ceiling lights and a few electric outlets in the walls.

I believe it was in 1941 that I helped Pap install additional electric wires in the house. This was before the time that Romex came into use for electrical wiring. We installed what was called "knob and tube" wiring. Porcelain knobs were nailed to the house structure at prescribed intervals to support the wires. Where wires had to go through the wooden framing, holes were drilled and porcelain tubes inserted. Then the wires were threaded through these tubes which prevented it from chaffing against the wood. We



## Green Valley House Floor Plan

**Basement under all parts of house except Bedrooms and Back Porch**

used a black wire for the primary and a white wire for the return. In this fashion we installed floor plugs in all the rooms. We also wired wall switches for the ceiling lights.

Mom and Pap had the big front bedroom which had windows in two walls – the only bedroom which did. Skip and I shared the large back bedroom. I had the side next to the outside wall and the window. Chuck, who also had to move from Maluhia, used the small front bedroom which had a bay window – the only room with a bay window besides the living room. Nana had the small back bedroom.

We used portable kerosene heaters to warm up the bedrooms in the mornings and the fireplace did a good job of heating the living room. If we left the hallway door to the living room open, much of the heat from the fireplace flowed down the hallway. A wood fire in the kitchen range heated the kitchen and sunroom although we sometimes used a portable kerosene heater in the sunroom to keep Nana comfortable. Later I helped Pap install a propane floor furnace in the hallway but it was very expensive to operate. It was also hot to walk on. When Cres was baby he fell on it and his hands were branded with the pattern of the grate.

That is the arrangement we had until my Aunt Deliah disappeared and Uncle Lloyd, Mom's brother, asked if she could take care of his three boys – Sonny (8 yrs), Jimmy (~5 years), and Ralph (2 years). Mom and Pap agreed so my three cousins squeezed in the large back bedroom with Skip and me. Part of the agreement was that Uncle Lloyd would provide help for Mom with the cooking and housekeeping. The first woman to help was named Mickey. Her bedroom was improvised in the dining room. All of these people lived in one house and shared one bathroom. Chuck, however, chose to use the privy on the hill (along the path to the chicken house) for his daily doings.

I guess it had always been agreed that Chuck would only live with us until he found a place of his own. He did, eventually, and moved out with all his personal belongings and furniture. That freed up some space. Nana moved into the front small bedroom and I moved across the hall into the small back bedroom. At that point I really appreciated a room of my own. In late 1942 or early 1943 arrangements were made for Jimmy and Ralph to live with the Crandalls, about a mile from our place on Pioneer Road. The second woman that lived in to help Mom married Uncle Lloyd and of course she moved out. Sonny and Skip then had the large back bedroom to themselves.

That was the bedroom arrangement until we boys eventually moved out and Nana passed away. Eventually Mom & Pap moved into the large back bedroom to make the heated part of the house smaller. The other three bedrooms were then used for guests or for storage.



The kitchen range in 1940 was an old fashioned type with two overhead warmer ovens. It had four butane burners and a wood-burning stove on the side. I believe the oven was butane but it might have been heated from the burning wood, or either. Next to the kitchen range was a side-arm water heater like I described for Nana's house. It was also fueled by butane gas. At one time Pap ran copper coils through the wood-burning portion of the kitchen range but I don't recall that arrangement working out too well.

The 50-gallon butane tank was right up against the house outside the kitchen window. Butane gas boils at the freezing point of water. That meant that when the temperature dropped below freezing, as it sometimes did, the butane in the tank remained liquid and neither the kitchen range nor the water heater would work. This happened a couple times and Pap decided to get a new propane tank – propane boils at a much lower temperature. He went to a larger size – 250-gallon – and had it installed across the driveway a legal distance from the house.

Eventually Pap refurbished the entire kitchen. He installed a new propane range and built a hood & fan over it to carry away the smoke and grease. He also installed a modern automatic water heater with thermostat controls. But I always recall that original old fashioned kitchen with nostalgic memories. We fired up the wood-burning side of the kitchen range to heat the kitchen in the morning. Pap heated water for shaving in a tea kettle and when we wanted a bath we fired up the side-arm heater on the water tank to heat the water.

The basement absolutely enchanted me. This was the first house I had ever lived in that had a basement. The entrance was from outside the house – by a stairway next to the side porch and directly underneath the sun room window. The stair well had a miniature gable roof on which our dog, Rip, used to climb upon from the porch and lie there in the sun. (We had brought Rip and Toby from Maluhia.)

In the basement was a workbench built between two of the posts which supported a stringer under the floor joists of the house. On this workbench was a huge vice. When Pap first saw it he said to Mr. Casson that he hoped it would be left there. It was. Behind the workbench was a huge brick structure that supported the fireplace in the living room. It was massive and took up a lot of floor space. Along the side toward the workbench were shelves on which supplies could be stored. Along the east side was a cabinet for canned fruit.

When we moved from Maluhia we had to store much extra furniture in the basement. This took up a lot of space and, as I said above, much of it stayed there until the ranch was sold in 2006. We also brought from the old packing house at Maluhia many berry crates. These were stacked along the back wall and much of the west wall of the basement to use for storage. They were stacked on their side so the lids could swing upwards and serve as cabinet doors.

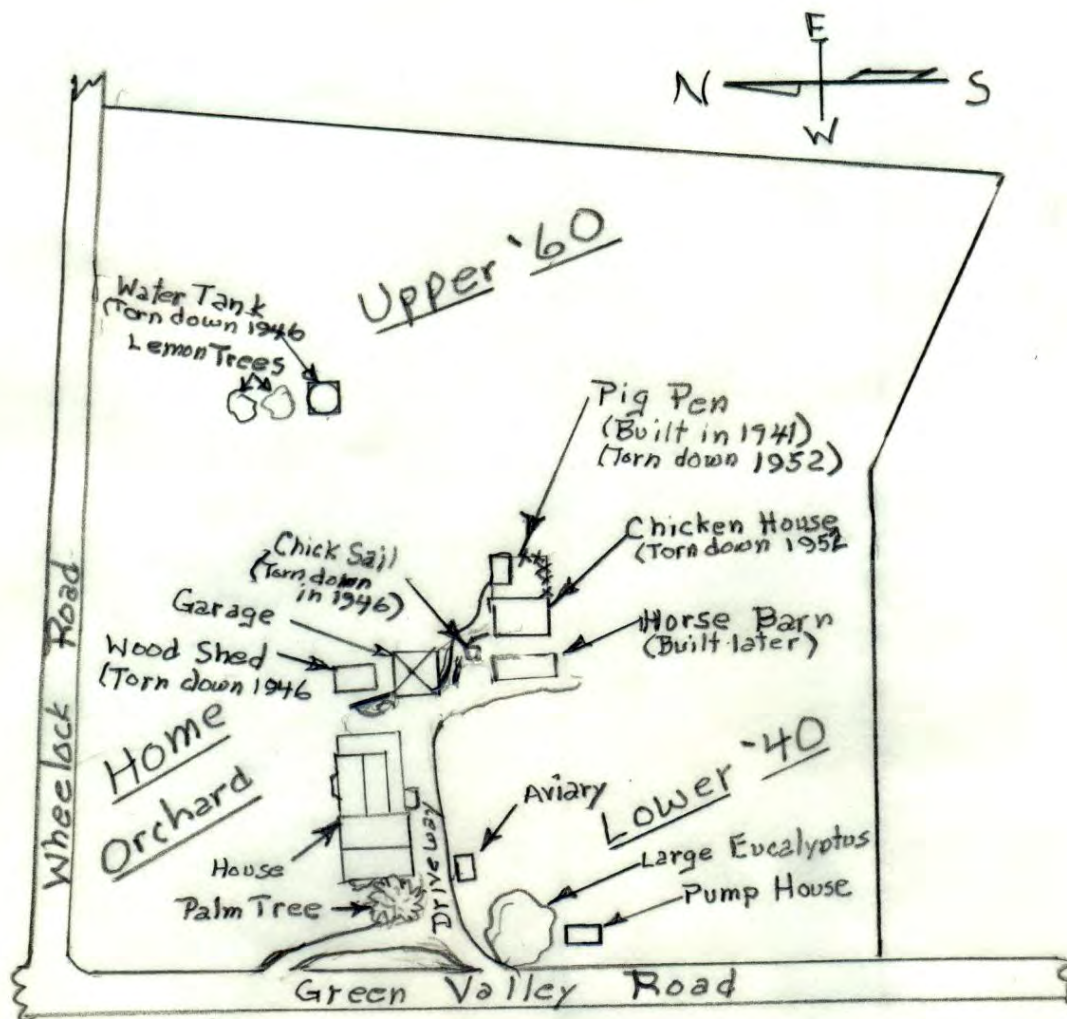
Many projects were pursued in this basement over the 66 years that we owned the ranch. The thing we had to be aware of was the size of the stair opening so we could get the finished product out of the basement.

When we first moved to the ranch in 1940 there was a water tank up on the hill behind the house. It was fed by a spring across Wheelock Road to which we had water rights. This spring usually kept the tank full and the tank seemed to have been placed so that its top was about level with the spring – it was kept full but did not have extra water continually running out of the overflow pipe. There was a float in the tank attached to a marker on the outside by a cable and pulley. When the water level went down in the tank, so would the float. Through the cable and pulley the weight of the float would pull the marker upward. This marker could be seen from our pantry window so we always knew how much water was in the tank. There was one problem with depending on the elevation of the tank for water pressure. The tank was at the level of the roof. In case of fire if one wanted to take a hose to the roof there would be no pressure.

If we used a lot and the water level in the tank went down we would turn on the pump to fill the tank. The well was located in what we called “The Lower 40,” next to Green Valley Road and close to the driveway. The pump was over the well and driven by an electric motor through a huge belt, very similar to the arrangement I described for Maluhia. A pump house enclosed the pump and motor. Wires came up to the house so the pump could be turned on from the sun room. Next to the side door, to the right facing out, was a small cabinet built into the wall, about 12” x 12”. Inside this cabinet was a fused switch box with a lever on the side to turn in on and off. So when we saw from the pantry that the tank was getting low we simply walked to the sun room and turned on the pump. When the marker showed full, or when water spilled out the tank’s overflow pipe, we turned the pump off.

A few years later we discovered that people across Wheelock Road were grazing goats near the spring that supplied our water. Their droppings were polluting our water supply. So Pap turned off the valve from the spring and we relied solely on the pump and well for water. During World War II, while I was overseas, Pap and Skip and Sonny tore down the old tank and burned it in the upper orchard in which it was situated. A more modern pump and motor was installed in the bottom of the well and a pressure tank in the pump house provided our water reservoir and water pressure.

To the right of the driveway, across from Mom & Pap’s bedroom window was an aviary. It was a small gable-roofed building with a wire enclosure on the end toward Green Valley Road. Thus the birds had an inside shelter and could also move outdoors and perch in the branches that were provided inside the wire mesh enclosure. I don’t recall how many canaries were in it but they provided a lot of singing. Mom was very proud of the aviary as she had a special liking for canaries. Eventually the canaries died and were never replaced. During the war Pap used the shed for a hot house to start tomatoes and other plant that would later be moved to our “victory garden” in the Lower 40. The aviary remained a gardening shed from then on.



# Green Valley Ranch

## Building Layout

The driveway wrapped around the back of the house to provide a parking area that would accommodate two cars side by side. This parking area was slightly uphill and on the far side from the house was a flower bed terraced with a rock wall. Built into that wall to form sort of a seat was an old black mill stone. Mom used it as a shelf for flower pots. The son of Cassons – the people we bought the ranch from – had hauled it from Oregon in an old truck he owned.

Across the back of that flower bed was a green lattice fence about 7 or 8 feet high. Behind that fence we kept a couple 50-gallon drums on end to hold our garbage and trash. The lattice fence provided a nice screen to keep them from view. Still a few feet back from the lattice fence was a shed partitioned into two rooms areas with open doorways facing the house. The room to the north became our woodshed. Our drum for kerosene was outside the woodshed on the end. The other room was given to me for a den. That made me happy but I never got real enthused about it because there was no door in the doorway. To have a proper den I needed to be able to close it up. Eventually I gave it up and that room was used as a tool shed. This shed fell into disrepair and was also torn down in 1946 while I was in the army. It was burned in the Upper 60 along with the old water tank.

Straight ahead in the driveway was the two-car garage. It had some kind of tin siding attached to the outside wall which was manufactured with sort of a red-dyed concrete finish on the outside surface. It held up well and didn't need painting. The roof was sort of a 4-sided pyramid made from corrugated iron sheet. It was galvanized and also held up well without maintenance. Two sliding doors enclosed the front. When they were both moved to the left it was possible to drive in and out of the right side of the garage. To access the left side the doors had to be slid to the right. Only one parking stall could be opened at a time. There was a window in the back of the garage and another on the south side. There was no electricity.

The garage was partially built into the hillside so that a portion of the walls toward the back were concrete, like basement walls. A trail to the chicken house led up the south side of the garage. An area between the garage and the trail was terraced with a rock wall. In this terraced area was a large walnut tree. Also, next to the garage in this terraced area was our 110-gallon gasoline drum. Gasoline was delivered in bulk and the tank was filled periodically.

About half way up the trail to the chicken house, on the right, was our outside privy. It was also a chick sale (so named after comedian Chick Sale who told outhouse jokes) but did not have a door with a crescent cut in it. It had an old half-screen door with the screen missing. Instead of a screen it had curtains to provide privacy. Chuck always used this privy for his morning cleansing of the bowels and it became nick-named "Chuck's Office." One day Skip and one of his friends decided to play a prank on Chuck. They laid in wait one morning and when Chuck entered the privy and gave him time to get seated. Then they bombarded the privy with large clods from the orchard. I don't recall the outcome except that Chuck was pretty angry. This old privy got hauled up to the burn pile in 1946 along with the water tank and woodshed.

The last of the original buildings was the chicken house. It had a ramp leading into the door to allow wheeling a load of feed inside. Slats were nailed across the ramp at about 6-inch intervals to prevent slipping in wet weather or with muddy boots. A fenced-in yard for the chickens was on the west side above the "Lower 40." Because the chicken house was built on an incline it was supported by piers on the west side. This allowed the chickens space underneath the chicken house floor as well as a sheltered ramp whereby they could enter and leave the chicken house through the floor.

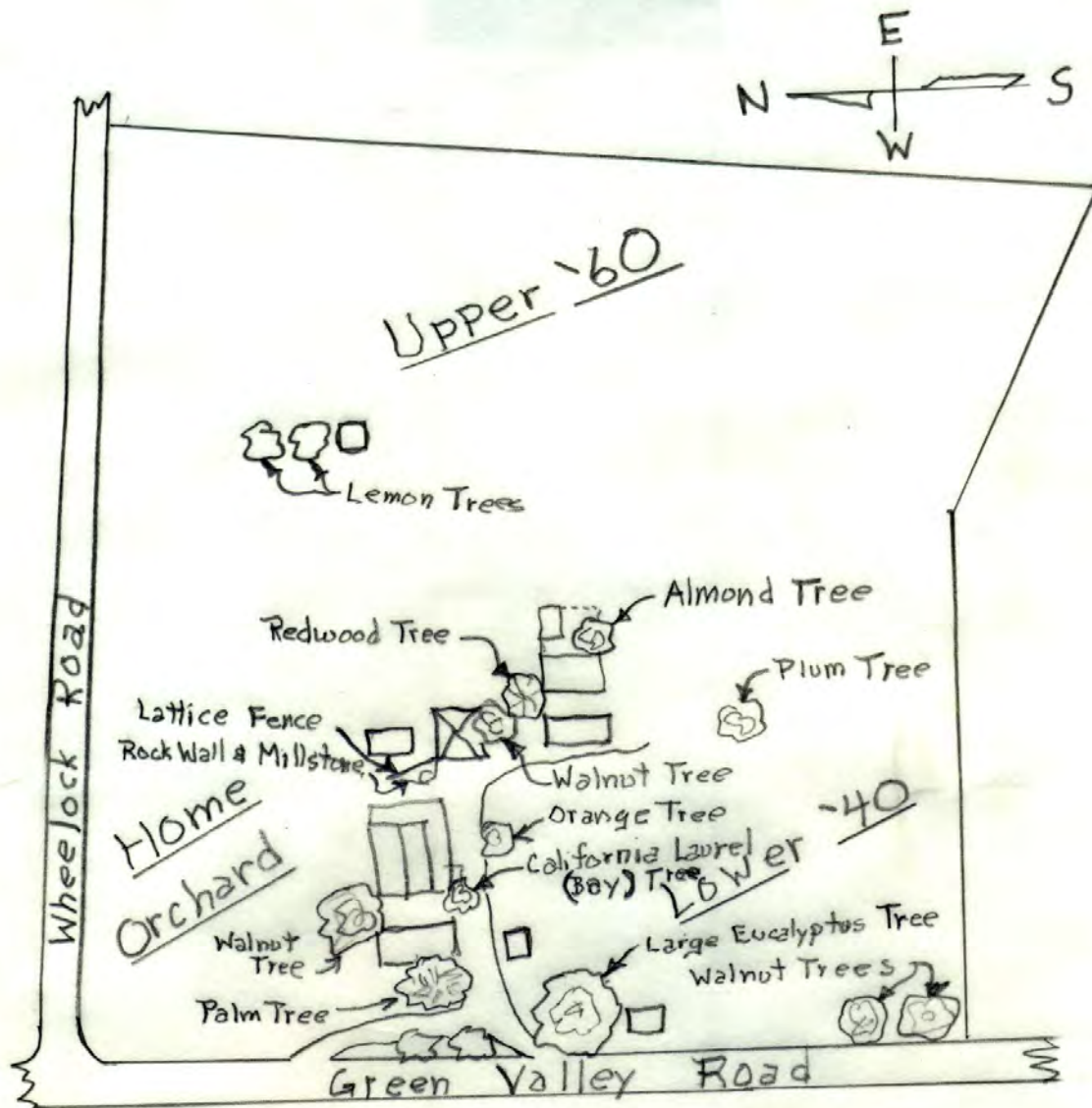
The chicken house was screened across the upper half of the east wall to provide light and air inside. The interior was divided into two rooms. The outside door entered the north room where we kept the barrels of feed for the chickens, and later the pigs. This room did have roosts in one half but we seldom used them unless we wanted to keep some chickens segregated. The corn grinder and sheller were also in this room. An inside door led to the south room where the chickens roosted and laid their eggs in nests provided. In 1952, a time when Cres was old enough to "help," we tore down the chicken house. I used the lumber to build a workshop on 77 Arthur Road, where Janet and I then lived with Cres, Janie and Jim.

Very shortly after we moved to Green Valley I helped Pap build a pig pen and shelter adjoining the east side of the chicken house. Later, in early 1943 I believe it was, after Pap had acquired his buckskin quarter horse, named Buck, we built the barn.

That takes care of describing the buildings on our Green Valley ranch. I want to also describe the original trees. The entire "Upper 60" was planted in double-red delicious apples. Unlike the candy-striped delicious, these were solid red. They were small trees when we moved in and, unfortunately, they never got much bigger. There were so many springs in the "Upper 60," and there was so much moisture in the ground, that the trees developed sour sap. The disease prevented the trees from bearing healthy fruit and Pap eventually pulled out the entire orchard.

To the north of the house and bordered by Green Valley and Wheelock Roads was our Home Orchard. Almost every kind of tree imaginable was planted here. We had several apple, peach and apricot trees. There were plum, crabapple and quince. On the hillside between the Home Orchard and the Upper 60 a variety of grapes grew. The clothes lines were just to the north of the woodshed and grape vines surrounded them. Another plum tree was in a more isolated position south of the garage and located between the Lower 40 and Upper 60. It is now gone but others were planted to take its place.

The most outstanding tree at that time was (and perhaps still is) the huge eucalyptus tree at the end of the driveway by the pump house. It is a landmark that can be seen from Phillips Corner and even located from the top of Mt. Madonna on Hecker Pass Road (Highway 152), to locate our ranch. When I was flying it stood out to lead me to the ranch. This eucalyptus tree was not a single tree. The original tree had been cut down at one time and the shoots that came up around the stump eventually grew together. Our children used to climb up a short ladder to get into the crotch which was large enough to be a natural tree house.



## Green Valley Ranch

### Original Trees

Another tree which now rivals the eucalyptus for being the most outstanding is a redwood tree. It was not as big in 1940 as it is now. It is located south of the garage next to the barn.

There were originally four walnut trees. Two were along Green Valley Road in the southwest corner of the ranch. A third was in the terraced area right next to the south side of the garage – between the garage and the path to the chicken house. The fourth and largest one grew outside the living room bay window. It was also right outside my window after I had moved to the small back bedroom. When I was training for the Emergency Service Corps in the Boy Scouts, I had a large rope tied to an upper limb for the 18-foot rope climb. The two walnut trees along Green Valley Road survived the longest and are probably the only ones my children remember.

We also had a few citrus trees. Across the driveway from the kitchen there was an orange tree. Farther along the driveway toward Green Valley Road there was a grapefruit tree and a lemon tree (these are not shown on the map). In the Upper 60, next to the water tank, were two more lemon trees. I believe these lasted longer than the water tank but all the citrus trees eventually disappeared.

Above the chicken house, close to its southeast corner, was a almond tree. It was eventually closed in by the pig pen. I believe this tree was dead, or almost dead, when we moved in. There may have been a few bitter almonds at first but we eventually cut this tree up for firewood.

A palm tree was and still is in the front yard. When we first saw it in 1940 the growth went all the way to the ground. There were huge clumps about 18 inches in diameter growing out from the main trunk. I took it upon myself to make this tree look presentable but didn't know what I was getting into. It was like cutting rubber. When I used an axe, it bounced in unpredictably. The saw bound and stuck. I kept at it and eventually whittled it down considerably. While I was in the army Pap and Skip and Sonny finished the job and hauled the huge chunks off the burn. In so doing they uncovered a rattlesnake. Pap was worried there might be a mate but no other rattler was ever found on the ranch.

Three more trees are prominent in my memory. Farther out toward Green Valley Road, in the little island formed by the driveway and the road, were two acacia trees. Those trees and the palm tree, much higher and more beautiful, are still there. The third tree was outside the window of the large back bedroom. It was a Bay Tree, or California Laurel. We were never in want of bay leaves for cooking. The tree leaned a little toward the driveway and a previous resident had placed a 4"x4" wooden prop with a concrete footing to hold the tree up. This tree, like so many of the others, had to eventually be cut down. And that ends my description of the original Green Valley ranch with which I became so enchanted.

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## Chapter 7 – Green Valley: 1940-1942

I was a sophomore in high school when we moved to Green Valley ranch. During my sophomore and junior years I was mainly involved with the Boy Scouts and Arroyo Seco during the summer. Mom (Mimi) has written a lot about our Arroyo Seco camping days so I haven't much to add. Scouting was at the center of my life. By the time we moved to Green Valley ranch I had already attained the highest rank of Eagle Scout. By my sophomore year I was a junior leader in the scout troop.

There was still the ranch with its apple orchard in the Upper 60 to keep up and I was expected to do my part. My chores were to take care of the chickens and animals as well as keep fuel in the kerosene heaters and wood for the fireplace and kitchen stove. A little later Pap bought an old Fageol Tractor with a plow and disc harrow. The picture here is not of our tractor but it looks exactly like it. These tractors are described as having been made as cheaply as possible. Spark for the ignition was supplied by a magneto. There



was no battery and hence no starter. It was started with a crank. The crank at least had a safety release so it wouldn't kick back and break your arm if the engine backfired. The gasoline tank was under the hood behind the engine. Fageols had no fuel pump.

Gasoline got from the tank to the carburetor by gravity. And these tractors had no muffler – just a short stack coming from the exhaust manifold, and it was LOUD.

These go-devils were powered by a 4-cylinder engine coupled directly to a simple transmission with one speed forward and one reverse – no clutch in between. Neither did they have a differential to synchronize the rear wheels while turning or allow foot brakes on each back wheel to assist turning. Instead, there was a clutch band on each rear wheel, operated by pedals, to disconnect the wheel from the drive train, but the wheel could still turn and coast. I couldn't depress the clutches while seated. I had to stand on the pedals and push them one at a time by shifting my weight or both at once by standing on both pedals. It was a full body exercise to pilot one of these contraptions.



Steering was with a tiller bar (no steering wheel) that worked like a wagon. I pushed the bar to the right to turn left and to the left to turn right. For gentle turns on hard ground the steering bar was adequate but for tighter turns the assistance of rear wheel clutches was needed. It was a real dance to operate this thing while jumping up and down on the wheel clutches. The gear shift was a flat metal bar sliding horizontally over a support bar. The support bar had notches for the shifting bar to engage – one in the center for neutral, one toward the right for forward, and one toward the left for reverse (or maybe it was vice versa, I can't remember).

After understanding the controls the next step is to start the tractor. Put the shifting lever in neutral. Turn on the ignition switch which merely disengaged the ground wire from the magneto. Go to the front and crank. As I recall there was a wire in the front hooked to the choke in the carburetor so that could be adjusted on cold mornings. When the engine started I would climb on the seat, stand on both clutches to depress them as far as possible, and then quickly move the shifting lever to the desired direction of travel. A quick motion was required to minimize clashing the gears. Then I would ease back onto the seat while releasing both clutches simultaneously in an attempt to get started in a straight line. It was then just a matter of making the critter go where you wanted it to go.

Tractors are made to work so our Fageol had to pull a plow or some other implement. The plow digs deep to turn over the soil. It is usually set to the proper angle and depth before starting. While actually plowing the plowshare had to be lowered at the beginning of a furrow and raised at the end. This was accomplished by levers. The levers were operated while the tractor was moving by use of ropes tied at one end to the lever and at the other to the tractor's seat where it could be easily reached. When I got lined up to plow a furrow I'd reach behind me and pull the rope to lower the plowshare. At the end of that furrow I'd do the same with the other rope to raise the plow. Then I'd turn the tractor around and line up for the next furrow.

The disc harrow is used to break up the soil after it has been plowed, or to cultivate to a shallow depth for removal of grass and weeds. It is comprised of banks of circular knives about 12"– 18" diameter, called discs. Our disc harrow had two banks of discs, each with a left and right side. If these discs merely rolled along in the direction of travel they would move like wheels and not accomplish anything.

The banks of discs had to be angled in order to dig into the soil. The left and right banks are angled so they work against each other. This gives them force to dig in and keeps the whole assembly from drifting to the side. (The picture, not of our disc or tractor, illustrates how the discs are angled against each other.) Sometimes sacks of dirt are tied on the top of the banks to give them weight to dig in. Levers adjust the angle and this adjustment is made before starting to roll. I then only had to concentrate on steering the Fageol so as to cultivate close to the trees but not damage them. That was not an easy task.



In addition to those implements, Pap made a drag harrow to smooth the orchard after plowing or disking. He used 2"x 6" planks to make two rectangular drags about 5-feet

square. Through these planks he inserted square spikes that protruded through the bottom about 6 inches. When pulled side by side behind the tractor the drags smoothed the ground and acted like a rake to clean up loose grass. If there was a lot of loose grass the spike teeth would become clogged. Then I would line up the tractor on a straight course along the edge of the field, hop off and run around behind to lift the rear of each drag to release the clumps of grass. Then I'd catch up with the Fageol and hop back on the seat.

I had some thrilling experiences on that old Fageol. One time I was disking the Upper 60. There was an embankment on the end of the field along Wheelock Road. I was finishing a run across the field and starting to make a turn to go back. The Fageols are stubborn and unpredictable when turning in the soft soil of an orchard. The turn started OK but when I was parallel to the embankment the front wheels hit loose soils. The tiller bar had no effect. The front wheels were turned but plowing straight ahead making a beautiful furrow. So I hopped on the left clutch to allow only the outer rear wheel to drive. I still continued straight ahead. The disc harrow I was pulling acted like a drag anchor to keep everything aligned straight ahead. Then I tried to shift the gears into neutral but there was so much binding on the gears that the shift lever refused to move. I was really getting worried because the tractor was starting to slide toward the edge of the embankment and was tilted at an uncomfortable angle. At the last few seconds, for no explainable reason, the front wheels took hold. The front end started moving back into the field, the back end slid a trifle over the embankment slope but the rear wheels dug in and I came out almost lined up for the next run. That was probably the most dangerous experience with that ornery piece of machinery.

On another occasion I was removing an old wire fence along the far side of the Lower 40 from the house, and was using the Fageol to pull out the posts. I used a chain to couple the posts to the rear of the tractor. If I tied the chain near the top I knew the post would merely break off. So I secured it near the ground. I hopped on the Tractor and put it into gear. Before sitting back and releasing the clutches I glanced back at the post. The chain was only about as long as the post was high. I had previously used the Fageol to pull out stumps and knew it had a tendency to do a wheelie when tethered to something. It occurred to be that the post was higher than stumps and when it comes out it is going to slam forward and hit the seat, and my back if I were sitting down. I decided I had better stay standing when I released the clutches. I did, and the tractor's front wheels lifted off the ground. Then they slammed back down hard and the post came out with a lurch, smashing angrily into the seat. Had I been sitting I could have easily ended up with a broken spine.

The fields, particularly the Upper 60, had many springs. They made the ground very soft and soggy. When the Fageol encountered one of these springs the spike-studded rear wheels tended to dig in rather than move forward. I then had to unhitch the plow or whatever I was pulling and if I was lucky the tractor would pull itself free. If not I'd trudge back to the redwood tree where Pap kept a supply of heavy timbers. When these were placed ahead of the rear wheels it usually gave enough traction to get out. Then I'd use a long chain to pull the plow to a place where I could safely hitch it back to the tractor. Once we knew where the springs were we stayed clear.

One time it wasn't that easy. I was pulling a disk harrow along the upper edge of the Lower 40 just below the plum tree. A large spring came down the hill by the plum tree but I thought I was far enough away. Not so. The Fageol stopped moving as the rear wheels dug in. I unhooked the disk but no luck. Fortunately I was close to the redwood tree so I started hauling out the big timbers. There were 4"x 6", 8"x 8", and various other sizes. The rear wheels were like a giant grinder and shredded them to splinters. I tried this several times and each time the wheels dug in deeper. They were now real deep. The seat was literally sitting on the ground. The front end stuck up at such an angle that gas wouldn't flow to the carburetor. Wooden timbers were useless as they just disintegrated to splinters. I didn't know what to do. Pap was at work and what would he say when he saw his Fageol half buried? I was sitting down wondering what to do when I spotted a pile of large rocks at the edge of the field.

I don't remember how that pile of boulders happened to be there. They were probably were removed from the field. Whatever, I knew they were my last hope. I threw a dozen or so in front of the buried wheels. I got a can of gas from the gasoline drum and poured some in the carburetor. I cranked the engine and ran back to the seat. Just as I threw it in gear the engine quit. I tried it again and moved faster. The Fageol bucked and kicked and strained and began to move forward and upward, when the engine quit again for lack of gas. I tried it again but this time the tractor wasn't so deep. It came out further and finally leveled off enough that it kept running. I was free. It's a good thing Pap never saw what his tractor with its rear end sunk in the ground and its snout sticking up at a 45° angle.

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I started archery at Maluhia and the sport stuck with me. I set up a range of sorts in the Lower 40. I erected a target near the plum tree at the upper end. Then I shot the arrows from down by the pump house. This allowed me to shoot into the hillside for safety. Pap and Skip and I sometimes used rifles and pistols on this same range.

One day when I was practicing with my bow and arrows I spotted one of our young chickens by the redwood tree. He must have escaped from the pen in some fashion although we frequently let them loose to forage. It was no big deal that the chicken was loose but it tempted a notion in my head. It was a small target at a long distance so I decided to see how close I could come. I had no thought at all that I could hit it. So I pulled the bow back and let the arrow fly. To my amazement I hit the chicken in the leg.

I was shocked. The arrow was pretty well spent by the time it reached the chicken but it had force enough to break its leg. I rushed to the rescue and carried the little guy to the chicken house. There I fashioned a splint for the broken leg and prepared a bed near the feed barrels. I nursed that chicken every day until it got well.

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When we moved from Maluhia we brought our pig, Rebecca, with us. Pap and I built a pen and shelter for her using the east side of the chicken house as part of the enclosure. Pap considered Rebecca a brood sow and not for butchering. She became a family pet. Pap had her bred periodically. She had three or four piglets at a time. I often helped him castrate the males and put rings in their snouts so they wouldn't root under the fence. Pap never let them get too large before butchering them. One time I helped him butcher one of the pigs. We used a .22 caliber rifle to kill it. He showed me the procedure. Draw an imaginary line between the right ear and the left eye. Then draw another from left ear to right eye. Aim for the spot where the lines cross. I guess I did it correctly because it worked. I have never forgotten those instructions and it seems like a ghastly deed to me today.

This pig wasn't so big that we needed a block and tackle to dunk him in the scalding water. We used a 55-gallon drum of water under which we built a fire to make it boil. We had a table next to the drum. The two of us were able to slide the pig along the table to dunk half at a time. Then we used scrapers to scrape off the bristles. Pap did the butchering and even cleaned the intestines to stuff, tying them about every eight inches or so to make individual sausages.

Living on the ranch exposed me to much slaughtering. I chopped the heads off many chickens and ducks. I helped Pap caponize chickens when we at one time raised them for market. Chickens sold to markets had to have their heads still attached. Pap designed a special knife for killing and bleeding them. It was about three inches long, narrow, and sharp on both edges. We'd hand the chickens by their feet. We'd then open their beaks, stick the knife inside and stab their brain where it didn't show. Then we'd stick the knife down their throat and cut the jugular vein. The chicken then hung until all its blood was drained. There was no sign of trauma on the dead chicken to deter a customer from buying it. I believe this was a more humane way to kill chickens because once their brain was pierced they went limp. When the head was cut off on a chopping block the chicken flopped around for several minutes.

I later got a Saturday morning job at a pig farm a little way up Wheelock Road from us. I had the experience to do just about everything required. One time I was assisting in castrating some young pigs. I held it down and sat on its head while the owner performed the operation. One time I didn't hold the pig down tight enough and it wiggled its snout around to bite me on the butt. It wasn't very funny at the time but since then I have always joked that the pig almost castrated me instead of the other way around.

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Another close friend of mine who I have not mentioned yet is Payson Gregory. We met at Gruver's Camp in Arroyo Seco in 1937. I was sitting in camp one day when I saw two kayaks coming down the river. Paddling them were a boy and girl I had not seen at Arroyo Seco before. They were Payson and his sister Ann. Their father had built the kayaks for them. I don't remember how we got acquainted but I was very determined to ride in those kayaks. When we became friends I was surprised to discover that he was

from Watsonville. His family used an isolated camp a couple hundred yards upriver from the main campground because, as Payson said, they were older and liked a quieter setting. During our remaining time in camp I would often borrow Ann's kayak and paddle up and down the river with Payson. We met again at Arroyo Seco in 1938 and deepened our friendship. When I started 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the brand new E.A. Hall School that year, Payson started there in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. He also became friends with Bud Daugherty and the three of us hung out together a lot.

I enjoyed visiting Payson's home on weekends. His parents had a small ranch in the Interlaken District which bordered on the Corralitos Creek and was not far from Kelly Lake. It was there I first played Monopoly and learned from his dad how to patch a tubeless bike tire. They had a giant desert tortoise named Josephine which roamed around the yard area. Payson's dad – who we called Pop Gregory – hooked a small trailer to his two-wheel garden tractor to let us drive it around the ranch. (Pap later had one just like it at our Green Valley ranch and our kids enjoyed riding in it.)

There was a building on their property in which Payson had a dark room for developing film and printing pictures. I learned that technique from him and photography became one of my hobbies. A relative or tenant lived in one part of that building and had a supply of girlie magazines which Payson and I would often thumb through on the sly. There was corn growing near this building and on one (or more?) occasions Payson and I picked some corn silk and smoked it in a secluded place along the bank of the Corralitos Creek. Such were the adventures of boys.

I believe it was me that talked Payson into joining Scout Troop 98. During the Januarys of 1941 and 1942 Payson and I, along with other scouts, went to winter camp at Yosemite. One year Pop Gregory drove us. The lodge at Camp Curry was used for a dormitory in which we slept on the floor next to a huge fireplace. Outside was a toboggan slide and the parking lot was frozen over for an ice rink. We drove to Badger Pass to ski and to the Awahnee Hotel for meals.

While driving home Pop Gregory had to relieve some gas. The sound of flatulence caused a lot of snickering among the boys in the car. Pop Gregory tried to mitigate the embarrassment of the occasion by reciting a little poem. I have never forgotten the words and they go like this:

A sigh is just a little breeze  
Arising from the heart.  
But when it takes a downward course  
It's often called fart.

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In 1938-39, while I was still living at Maluhia, the world situation became very tense. In our eighth grade current events class we followed European activity fairly close. We watched how British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain had made a pact with Hitler –

the Munich Agreement – in which he promised certain concessions if Germany would not invade any more countries. Irving Berlin had written a song in 1918 called *God Bless America*. Twenty years later, he revised the words to reflect contemporary world conditions. Renowned singer Kate Smith, on Armistice Day 1938 (11 November 1938), introduced Berlin's revised *God Bless America*. This version had a prelude that is not used today and that most people today have never heard. It went:

While the storm clouds gather far across the sea,  
Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free,  
Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,  
As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer.

*God bless America ... etc.*

On 1 September 1939, Hitler broke his agreement with Chamberlain and invaded Poland. Two days later Britain and France (and several of their allies) declared war on Germany. Winston Churchill became the British Prime Minister and World War II began.

On December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941, a sunny Sunday morning in Green Valley, Mom took us kids to Sunday school as usual. Besides me there was Skippy and our three cousins – Sonny, Jimmy and Ralph. Mom always said that after getting all of us ready there was no time left for her to dress for church. So she dropped us off at the Presbyterian Church in Watsonville and picked us up afterwards. When we arrived home that fateful day, the radios were clamoring about Japanese airplanes attacking Pearl Harbor.

This was just over a year after we had moved into our Green Valley home. Pap was putting up a radio antenna outside the living room bay window when we arrived home. He made some sort of remark about the little brown monkeys not knowing what's good for them. For the rest of that day, and for days to follow, our ears were glued to the airwaves. We would use that new antenna extensively in the months and years to come, to follow the war. In addition to news broadcasts, we gathered in the living room to hear President Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats" and listened to another program called "This is War." The latter was a very dramatic portrayal of the national crisis – stimulating patriotism, and drumming up the war fever.

I was shocked on December 7th. I could hardly believe we were really at war. I followed the news all day, and for days to come. I listened as President Roosevelt asked Congress for a state of war between the US and Japan, Germany, & Italy. I followed the attacks on Hawaii, the Philippines, and Wake Island. The Japanese were taking over the Pacific – island by island. Our friend Buck Henshaw was a newly commissioned naval ensign when he was captured on Wake Island. He was a POW until 1945 and was discharged as Lieutenant Commander.

My aunts once told me about my Dad Creston during World War I. He wasn't quite old enough to be in the military and continually fretted to get in. I felt the same way in 1941. I was only 15 and was afraid the war wouldn't last long enough for me to have a part in it. I sang the patriotic songs with gusto: *Remember Pearl Harbor*, *We Did It Before*, *Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition*, and more.

Watsonville took on the war role. Soldiers were housed in the Veteran's Memorial Hall. Sentries were atop the Hotel Resetar, the Luttenich Building, and other tall buildings.

Military police and the shore patrol prowled the streets. A new Navy airport was built near Freedom (it is now the Watsonville Municipal Airport). The old Watsonville airport on the road to Moss Landing became a base for Navy blimps which patrolled the coast looking for Japanese submarines. Civil defense was organized, blackout curtains were installed in the homes, and air raid drills were practiced.

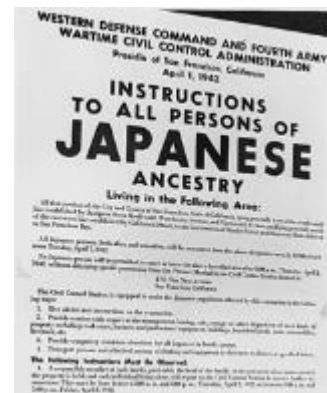
The Monterey Bay shoreline was considered the most likely place on the Pacific coast for an invasion. Camp McQuaide was established in the San Andreas district as a coast artillery base (it is now Monterey Bay Academy). A “dim out” was enforced after dusk, which meant driving with only the parking lights on. This was to prevent bright lights on land from silhouetting ships at sea which would make them easy targets for enemy submarines.

The speed limit was reduced to 35 miles per hour to conserve gasoline, which was rationed. Most everything else was also rationed – tires, sugar, meat, toothpaste (and we had to turn in the old metal toothpaste tubes before we could purchase a new tube).

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The attack on Pearl Harbor happened on Sunday. The next day I returned to school. I had many Japanese friends and they were very nervous, not knowing how to act or what to expect. A momentous anti-Jap mentality flourished. I was wary also, not being sure how to interact with them. It was common knowledge that Japanese students always went to “Japanese School” after regular classes. We had always been told it was to sustain their culture and language. After Pearl Harbor the general feeling was that something subversive was going on at that school. Some prominent Japanese citizens fell victims of rumors and many were actually arrested. The owner of a sporting goods shop I used to patronize frequently for fishing equipment was alleged to operate a secret radio. Mr. Sakata, father of my Japanese playmates who lived kitty-corner from Nana’s house, was also alleged to be communicating with Japanese submarines. (After the war these people returned and the malicious rumors and allegations were proved false, but this illustrates the paranoia of the war fever.)

Eventually the relationship between Japanese students and others stabilized and returned more or less to normal. Then in February 1942 Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 which eliminated due process, constitutional protection, and the bill of rights for 120,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of them US citizens. They were ordered to leave their homes on the west coast and move to relocation camps. Notices were posted at all prominent public places. My Japanese friends were given a timeline to move out. Most that I knew were shipped to Tule Lake near the northern California town of Newell. With a capacity of 18,700 it was the largest of the ten relocation centers. It was also the most controversial, described as the crucible of Japanese American resistance to America’s betrayal of their hopes and dreams. Tule Lake was high security ruled under martial law by the army. It was enclosed with barbed wire and sentry towers. Demonstration of rightful indignation was kept under control by machine guns and tanks.



As the Japanese people were preparing to leave their homes and farms they had to sacrifice their belongings and holdings. White people were picking up automobiles, real estate, and other things at unbelievably low prices. Pap bought a small flatbed truck used for berry farming at a ridiculously low price. We all rejoiced at our good fortune. I feel ashamed now for such exploitation.

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In early summer 1942 Pap was offered a job with the US Forest Service, as patrolman at Big Sur. His official title was Forest Guard and the place we lived there was a guard station. Mom has written extensively about our Big Sur days and I will not duplicate her work. Pap accepted the job. He would need his own horse so started looking around. He found a beautiful buckskin quarter horse named Buck. Buck was timid of water such as puddles and streams. Over the summer Pap worked with him and gave him confidence. It wasn't too long before Pap could ride him through ocean water along Dani's beach. I'll talk more about Dani's beach later.

So Pap bought Buck as well as a saddle and bridle. Before we could move to Big Sur it was necessary to dispose of the chickens and do something about Rebecca. Pap found a buyer and made it plain that Rebecca was a brood sow. I believe Pap let the fellow have Rebecca for a low price with the understanding she was not to be butchered. It did no good. We found out that Rebecca ended up as meat on the table.

Pap had to go to Big Sur by himself until Mom finished making necessary arrangements at the ranch. I was hired to work for a while on the staff at boy scout summer camp – Camp Esselin at Big Sur. It was just a short walk to the guard station so I got to visit Pap during my time off in the evenings. At camp I was in charge of health and safety. I also gave classes on the Emergency Service Corps. I only worked a couple weeks and then I moved to the guard station. By that time Mom had also moved there with Nana, Skip, Sonny, Jimmy, and Ralph.

The Big Sur Guard Station was located immediately above Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park on a frontage road along Highway 1. From the back of the guard station we used to go down the bank to immediately be in the park. This is the route we took to reach the swimming hole or to attend the park campfire programs. Also on this frontage road was the



highway maintenance headquarters and a one-room Big Sur Elementary School. This entire area along the frontage road had now been rebuilt. Where the maintenance station once stood is now the Big Sur Visitors Center. Approximately where the guard station barn once stood is now the trailhead for the Pine Ridge Trail which goes deep into the Ventana Wilderness.

On August 9, 1989 Janet and I visited the Big Sur Guard Station shortly before it was demolished. The pictures here of the station and the barn were taken at that time.



The guard station itself was very small – one bedroom and bath, living room, kitchen, and a small service porch. There was a garage to the side in back. The 2-stall barn and corral was about 75-100 yards away. The house was too small to accommodate our family so we pitched a couple tents in the back yard. We boys slept out there and Nana slept in a makeshift bedroom on the front porch, closed in by awnings. Mom and Pap had the regular bedroom.

The office desk was in the living room. There was a regular Pacific Bell telephone but also a crank phone for the Forest Service system. It was a one-wire grounded network that connected lookouts and guard stations with each other and with the King City Ranger Station. Each location in the Monterey Division of the Los Padres Forest where Pap worked had a designated ring made up of longs and shorts. To make a call the phone crank was used to crank the designated combination of long and short rings for whomever was being called.



There was no electricity in the guard station. The ceiling light in each room was gas – butane or propane. The kitchen range, of course, was also gas. I believe we had a cooler for food. Water was piped in but the sewage must have gone to a septic tank.

One day before Mom, Nana, and the boys moved down, a Forest Service pickup towing a horse trailer pulled into the guard station. In it were two mules named Kate and Monk. Kate was female and black. Monk was taller than Kate, male and brown – in horse color lingo he was a bay. Kate was to be Pap's pack mule for the summer and Monk was to be at Big Sur only temporarily.

Several other employees told Pap that Kate was mean and would kill him if he wasn't on his toes. Perhaps for them, considering the way they treated animals, that was true. But Pap adored animals and it didn't take long for him to win Kate's affection. She turned out to be as gentle as a kitten. As long as she knew you were there, you could walk all around her and she would pay you no notice. It didn't faze her at all when Skip, nine years old at the time, would crawl around underneath her. She became a family pet.

She not only loved Pap, she came to adore Buck. They were a perfect pair. When Pap was out on the trail away from civilization he would take the lead rope off Kate and let her amble along at her own pace. Sometimes she would lag behind and Buck would get around a bend and out of site. When she looked up and couldn't see Buck she would let out a loud whinny and "come a trottin'."

Pap had to not only patrol the trails in the forest but also keep an eye out along the ocean for any sign of sabotage activity. Sometimes he took me along on the trail with him. He would rent a horse for me from Bill Post, owner of the Post Ranch at Big Sur. (This ranch is now the site of Post Ranch Inn, a swanky and expensive tourist attraction.) One day we were riding near the summit of what is now Buzzards Roost Trail which has a good view of the coastline. Kate was lagging behind as usual. Thistles were her favorite food and she would wander fifty feet off the trail if she spotted one. That is what happened on this particular day. Pap motioned for me to follow him, saying we'd play a

trick on Kate. While she was off in the brush nibbling on a thistle we went ahead a ways and then hid in some trees a short distance off the trail. Soon Kate realized she was alone and let out her usual whinny. She trotted on up the trail without seeing us as she passed. When she reached the next summit she stopped abruptly. She expected to see Buck ahead on the trail but there was neither man nor beast in sight. Panic set in and she let out a mournful bellow. We then went back on the trail and her relief was very noticeable as she trotted back to us. For the rest of that day she stayed very close behind Buck.

Sometimes Pap patrolled out to Dani's Beach, now Pfeiffer Beach (a US beach). He went by a road that went from Highway-1 to Mr. Dani's farmyard. From there a trail



wound around a little knoll to the beach. Today you can drive to a federal parking lot, after paying a fee, which is adjacent to the beach. The aerial picture of Pfeiffer Beach today shows the road through a canyon from Highway-1 to the parking lot. (NOTE: This is a copyright picture used here according to my understanding of the "Personal Use" clause in the Copyright License.)

Then Pap rode Buck north on the beach to the upper end where a trail starts up the hill and connects to what is currently the Buzzard's Roost Trail. From there he rode back to the guard station. Along the way he usually coaxed Buck into wading through the surf. When riding Through Mr. Dani's farmyard Pap usually stopped to chat with Mr. and Mrs. Dani. One day Mr. Dani presented Pap with a nice set of leather saddlebags which must have been quite old. Pap attached them behind the cantle of Buck's saddle where it stayed from then on.

We used to go to Dani's Beach on many other occasions. Sometimes it was a family hike and picnic. At other times we drove and parked in Dani's farmyard, and hiked the rest of the way. While I was working on staff at scout camp we took an early morning nature hike to the beach to see how many birds we could identify. Other occasions were nature hikes sponsored by Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park.

In the course of Pap's duties as a federal forest officer we became acquainted with all of the personnel working in the state park. Lloyd Sweetman was the recreational director. He with his wife and two boys were from Sacramento. Mr. Sweetman led all the campfire programs in the evenings as well as the daily activities such as nature hikes to Dani's Beach and Pfeiffer Falls. Campfire programs were held two or three times a week at an outdoor campfire theater. There were rows of seats hewed out of huge logs and arranged as seats similar to pews in a church. There was a stage with a kiosk housing motion picture equipment if desired for the program. On each side of the stage, between the stage and the log seats, were large campfire circles. Toward the end of the season when there were few campers we would all sit more informally around only one of the campfire circles.

Across the street from the campfire area was a wooden dance floor about 20 x 25 feet. It had wooden benches around the edges and a kiosk housing a juke box (nickelodeon) at the far end. One of the park custodians called Frenchy led the people in many kinds of dances – congo, shoddish, etc. as well as normal waltzes and fox trots – no jitterbug (now swing dancing) or boogie woogie. Through the first three years of high school I had never learned to dance. I never even had a date except to movies where Mom and Pap drove us and picked us up because I didn't have a license. With my involvement in scouting I didn't have much interest in girls. So Mom talked me into going to the dances so she could teach me how to dance.

There were also dances where everyone changed partners when Frenchy blew a whistle. Mom said I didn't have to worry about dancing with anyone else because we just wouldn't change partners. One time the whistle blew at the same time I happened to make eye contact with a brunette. I could see she wanted to dance with me so I left mama's arms and took out on my own. Mom was kind of surprised. That was the first girl I had ever danced with. Her name was Dolores, she lived in Sacramento, and said she was 14 years old (I was 16). I got a crush on her and she seemed to like me. The next day we went for a hike together on the Oak Grove Trail which went above the campground along the side of the mountain to the east. But our acquaintance was short-lived as her family left for home in a couple days. I was very lonesome. I sang the song *Dolores* over and over to myself. I now had my driver's license but walked everywhere, keeping track of the miles, to save enough gasoline to visit Sacramento. We exchanged a few letters. Then one day Mom referred to Dolores as being 13 years old. What! She had lied to me. That was the end of that romance. I wrote no more letters.

We also met the Ross family at Big Sur. They were friends of the Sweetmans. Mr. Ross had a photography shop in Los Angeles. They camped in a trailer home they called "Happy House." Earlier they had toured the United States for a year in Happy House.

The Rosses had three children: two girls and a younger brother. Peggy was the oldest and I can't recall the names of her sister (I believe it was Mary Lee) and brother. After being disappointed with Dolores I developed an attraction for Peggy. She was a very responsible girl and took on much responsibility in her family. She was a good friend but never had any feelings beyond that for me. Our activities together were at the family level. Her younger brother loved wildlife and collected lizards and snakes. He would often carry a ruby ring neck – a small snake with a bright green back and a red collar – in his coat pocket. At one time, while dancing with a girl, she became very disquieted when he pulled his hand out of his pocket and opened it to show her a cute little ruby ring neck nestled in his palm. We had a lot of fun with the Ross and Sweetman families and they became very good friends.

When I finished working on staff at scout camp I got a temporary job at a Big Sur resort called Ripplewood. It was owned by a woman named Doris Fee. My main work was cleaning up the cabins and making the beds when tourists moved out. When not doing that I kept busy keeping the grounds clean, tending the store, and servicing gasoline customers. Ripplewood is still there and Janet & I have rented cabins occasionally. Doris Fee sold the resort but lived in a nearby house until her death shortly after the turn of the century.

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I passed the test for my driver's license in 1942 shortly after my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. There was no learner's permit in those days. When you thought you could pass the test you just came in and took it. No questions were asked about how you learned to drive. I just learned by driving with Mom and Pap. I also did a lot of my learning on the Arroyo Seco Road before it was straightened out as it is today. The road in those days was longer, narrower and much more winding. It required constant maneuvering. Chuck used to take one of my friends and me on weekend camping trips to Arroyo Seco, often hiking back to Girl's Camp to spend a night or two. (The Girl's Camp originally got its name from when it was a summer camp for Rainbow Girls. They moved out and the camp was vacant for years. Later the Girl Scouts used it and then they also moved out. The Forest Service then razed the camp because it feared vandals would harm it. Duh!)

On these trips Chuck would let me drive. Going down the hill from the Carmel Valley fork to snake-rock bridge was a challenge for me as I had to shift into second gear to keep from riding the brakes. That is where I learned the advantage of second gear on downhill slopes. On another occasion we were driving into Greenfield and going down the hill to the Greenfield bridge. The car was picking up speed and I was trying to decide if I should try shifting into second. The bridge was getting closer and closer. Its entrance was narrow and had a sharp turn to the right. Chuck started to panic and yelled "step on the clutch." (I later found out he meant to say "brake.") So I stepped on the clutch and consequently the car started moving significantly faster while Chuck continued yelling to "step on th clutch." Well I had it down as far as I could push it and we were really moving. We entered the bridge much faster than recommended. I made the turn with tires squealing and narrowly missed the bridge railing on the left. I then straightened the wheels but slightly overcorrected and started toward the railing on the right. I did manage to compensate and made it the rest of the way across without mishap. Fortunately there was no oncoming traffic. Chuck was real mad that I didn't pay attention to him but when I pointed out his misleading instructions that mitigated the matter. Later he actually complimented me on how I handled the vehicle.

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While living at Big Sur Mom, the boys and I went home to Green Valley every week of two to take care of things there. I now had my driver's license and got more driving practice on the Coast Highway between Monterey and Big Sur, sometimes at night. At night we were only allowed to use parking lights because the dim out was strictly enforced. Then, to make matters worse, it was frequently foggy. Driving that winding highway in the fog with only parking lights was a real challenge. The white line down the middle of the road was the lifeline – I never ventured away from that white line. Sometimes the fog was so thick I had to roll down the window to see the white line.

In September 1942, all of us except Pap returned to Green Valley so the younger boys could start the new school year. I was in High school and its starting date was delayed until October because of a wartime labor shortage -- the students were needed to harvest the apple crop. I picked apples in Paul Elm's orchard next door. Paul and Hulda Elm were ideal neighbors who lived just the other side of our "lower 40."

The reason Pap didn't come home when fire season ended was because the Forest Service

was constructing a building next to Ventana Lookout so the station could accommodate two people. Pap was asked to stay on to help pack supplies to that peak. Normally a lookout person merely slept in the lookout cab. During the war the army provided funds for a second person so a 24-hour watch could be maintained for reporting aircraft and ships seen at sea. This was part of the Aircraft Warning System (AWS) during the war. The small cabin alongside the lookout provided a place for the off-duty person to sleep.

All of the supplies for this AWS cabin – from full sheets of plywood and long two-by-fours to bundles of shingles and boxes of nails – had to be hauled to the top of Ventana Peak on the backs of mules. Pap had demonstrated his expertise with horses and mules so he was asked to stay on during the winter to help haul these supplies. He stayed until December. The full story on this and other Big Sur experiences are in Mom's (Mimi's) memoir entitled *Big Sur Forest Service Days*.

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In Pap's absence it was up to me to care for the ranch. I even "baby-sat" with Skippy and my three small cousins so Mom could be with Pap on their wedding anniversary. (Of course Nana was also with me but she wasn't very mobile.) The goat and chickens, as well as Toby and Rip, were also back from Big Sur and needed care. Weeds on the ranch had to be knocked down with tractor and disc. In addition to picking apples for Paul Elm there was also fruit in our home orchard and double red delicious apples in the "upper 60" that needed picking. I was kept pretty busy around the ranch.

During World War II tires were severely rationed. Rubber was in short supply. Synthetic rubbers had not yet been invented and butyl plants were just being planted to make rubber, although not the best. America's supply of rubber had been coming from the Malay Peninsula and Southeast Asia. But the Japanese now controlled that area and the supply was cut off. The shortage was so severe that tires were being recycled. An edict went out that all unneeded and worn out tires were to be turned in. Pap had an old Model-T Ford coupe sitting on blocks behind the garage so I took the tires off it and rounded up all the other old tires I could find to turn in. I even took the Model-T tires off the wooden trailer that Pap built to haul camping equipment to Arroyo Seco. Pap was pretty disturbed about that but he knew I tried to make the best decision in his absence. So he just chided me about getting carried away a little too far.

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The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 was signed into law on 27 September 1940. Actual drafting began the following month, a little over a year before the US entered the war. I recall seeing pictures in the paper of President Roosevelt drawing the first lottery numbers from a fish bowl. Men between the ages of 21 and 45 were to serve a year and a day, and only in the US or its possessions. No more than 900,000 men were to be in training at any one time. On 18 August 1941 a law extending the time in service became effective.

After Pearl Harbor a new selective service act was passed to draft men between 18 and 45. Service was to be for the "duration and six months." When I was later in the army all of us in the service thought we'd get out six months after the war ended. We found out, however, that the government interpreted "duration" to mean duration of the national

emergency, which could continue as long as the government deemed necessary. Over 1-million men were inducted during World War II.



I was very intrigued with all the war activity and wanted to get involved. For the time being it looked like the Civil Defense (CD) Corps was the most likely way of doing that. CD was set up quickly after America was attacked and was the forerunner of what is today known as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Block Wardens patrolled the streets during air raid drills to make certain blackout restrictions were tightly adhered to. During some drills there were mock casualties where people trained in first aid treated the injured. This is an area the boy scouts took part in. They also served as couriers to carry messages from place to place. Bill Bottero participated in this way. But I was stuck six miles out in the country and couldn't participate effectively when the air raid sirens sounded.

The boy scouts responded to CD and the war emergency by organizing an Emergency Service Corps for scouts over 15 years of age. There were rigid physical tests to pass such as climbing an 18-foot rope with hands only in something like ten seconds and jogging a mile in eight minutes. Specific merit badges were also required – first aid, life saving, safety, firemanship, pioneering, and others. Pap had become active as assistant scoutmaster in my Troop 98. He was asked by the scout council to be the Emergency Service Corps Commissioner for the council, which he did until starting work at Big Sur.



Pap started a training course for senior scouts to learn the skills required to join the Emergency Service Corps. We met at our Green Valley ranch to learn about ropes and knots, lashing poles together for emergency bridges, rescue work, and practice the rope climb. We took advanced first aid courses. I was the first one in the Monterey Bay Area Council to qualify for the Emergency Service Corps, and received an arm band to carry at all times in case an emergency arose. America, and Watsonville with it, including our Green Valley ranch, moved into the lifestyle of war.

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## Chapter 8 – My Senior Year at Watsonville High

After the summer of 1942 at Big Sur, where I learned to dance and got over some of my shyness around girls, I started my senior year with a slightly different worldview. I wasn't too afraid to ask a girl out. I went to the noon dances at the Vet's Hall (Veteran's Memorial Building across Third Street from the high school). Those dances were held every Wednesday during the noon recess and were chaperoned by a teacher. There were other dances that I went to such as the CYO (Catholic Youth Organization) dances in the hall on Ford Street behind the Catholic Church. I wasn't then a Catholic but some of my friends were and through them I found out about the dances, which were open to all youth. Also, the Presbyterian Church, of which I was a tenuous member, had a worship service on Sunday evenings for high school students called Christian Endeavor, or CE. It was at one of these services that I received the body and blood of Jesus. After the service we would all go to one of the member's home for refreshments and usually some games, singing, dancing. I met new friends there. My senior year was shaping up to be a different experience than my first three in high school.

I was still very interested in scouting and became even more interested after starting Sea Scouts. Some new friends to pal around with also filled the gap when I lost the companionship of my two best friends. Bill Bottero, to whom I was closest, had moved to San Francisco to live with his mother. He attended his senior year of high school up there. Bud Daugherty drifted away into a more active social setting and joined the De Molay, a youth group for boys sponsored by the Freemasons Lodge. Our interests drifted apart. So I made new friends. I don't recall how I met Dan Leddy and Steve Duer but somehow the three of us drifted together. They were in their junior year but we had several classes together. Somehow we all got in the Sea Scouts together when Ship 98 (sponsored by the American Legion as was Troop 98 to which I had belonged) was being rejuvenated with new recruits. We formed Crew 1 of the ship. Bob Quincy, who I had known in the scout troop, and other younger boys also transferred to the Sea Scouts and joined our crew. I was the crew leader and Dan was the assistant.

None of my former friends – Bill, Bud, or Payson – went into Sea Scouts and it was in Sea Scouts that the closest friendships for the remainder of my life were solidified. At the time of this writing (May 2011) only Bob Quincy and Payson, of all my boyhood friends, are still alive.

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I don't recall the details on how I met Jacqueline Carlyon but, vaguely, I think it must have been through one of her friends. I first heard of her the previous year. Bill Bottero and I both took music from her father, Mert Carlyon – Bill in the orchestra playing the



violin and me in band playing the trumpet. One day at the beginning of our junior year, Bill told me that Mert's daughter had started high school. I thought nothing of it at that time. Bill, who was never much interested in girls, just downplayed the information.

Now, in my senior year, after my summer's experience at Big Sur and getting my driver's license, I was anxious to get more involved in the social arena. Somehow I got acquainted with Patricia (Pat) O'Brien (who was a friend of Jacquie's) and I asked her out. We dated a couple times but didn't hit it off too well. I guess I must have met Jacquie through Pat because I then asked Jacquie for a date. I can't remember where we went on that first date but we continued to go out together. I didn't think she was real interested in me until she asked me to escort her to a Rainbow Girl installation ball. Rainbow Girls are the youth group of the Order of the Eastern Star – the women's branch of freemasonry. Jacquie belonged and every year they celebrate the installation of newly-elected officers. It is one of the few occasions when it is proper for girls to ask boys for a date (at least in those days) and it is a really special occasion. I was very thrilled that she had asked me. I think our interest in each other quickened after that date.

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I had a little problem with deportment during my senior year, just barely managing to stay off probation. The school policy for minor infractions of the rules was to issue demerits. We started each semester with 100 merits. Each demerit subtracted from that total. If our merits got down to 70 (I believe it was) we were put on probation. Something lower led to suspension. If we received four demerits at one time we had to appear before the merit board – part of the student council – to be disciplined by our peers. Teachers were usually pretty reluctant to issue more than three demerits at a time to avoid a merit board appearance.

Steve and Dan and I seemed to continually get into trouble. We took advanced algebra together from Alice Graeber. She was a young teacher and I believe this was her first year. Once during class I wanted to ask Dan something but he was sitting across the room (we were separated from each other for good reason). So I stuck a note in a blackboard eraser and threw it to him. Miss Graeber turned around about that time and said "Nice throw and nice catch – three demerits each." We definitely had to find a better way to communicate during class. As part of our Sea Scout activities we learned Morse code. That could be the answer. We concocted a system of putting our clenched fist down to our side out of sight of the teacher. We'd then extend one finger for a dot and two for a dash. We never got caught again.

The advanced algebra class was right after the noon hour break. One time I bought an ice cream bar too late to finish before class so I took it into class. Miss Graeber told me to leave the class so I went outside and watched the girls play volley ball while I finished the ice cream. When finished I went back to class and nothing was said. I don't know how I evaded some demerits that time. Once when Miss Graeber was chaperoning the noon dance I asked her to dance. The conversation drifted to my behavior and I guess I told her I'd try to shape up. I think she really liked our spirit but of course couldn't



condone such activity in class. After teaching that year at Watsonville high she moved to somewhere in the East Bay – Berkeley or Oakland. Steve stayed in touch with her and kept her advised of our activities.

Dan and I took physics class from Robert Lyon who was also dean of boys. He always waited at the classroom door until the last bell rang and then closed the door. One time I was talking to Jacquie in the hall when the bell rang. I made a dash for the door just as he was closing it. He said “OK, what do you want the demerits for – running in the hall or being late for class?” At least I had a choice (hah!) and, lucky for me I didn’t get penalized for both. He was always digging me about that blonde who gets me into trouble.

Dan and I liked to study our physics homework together. For a half hour each afternoon the students had what was called advisory period. We spent that time in our home room where we could consult our advisor (mine was Miss Ida R. Hayward) or just use the time to study. Sometimes we would get a pass to go to the library. Student hall monitors were stationed in the hallways to “write up” anyone walking in the halls without a pass. Dan was in a different home room than mine and we wanted to study our physics assignment together, so we each got a pass for the library. But instead we met on the front lawn and worked on our physics homework while lounging in the sun. We happened to pick a place just outside Mr. Lyon’s office window. He saw us and gave us demerits for cutting class. We explained that we were working on school work and, actually studying the work he had assigned, which we were. No matter. We had cut class and we were docked the merits.

Steve and I took chemistry from Justin K. Dyke. He had flaming red hair and bragged that his middle initial stood for potassium which is very fiery. The rumor was that students once set fire to a waste basket and he sat on it to demonstrate how fire, a chemical reaction, could be arrested by depriving it of oxygen. Anyway, for work in class we had partners. Of course Steve and I were not allowed to be partners. My partner was a very prudish girl not unlike “good ole Margaret” in Dennis the Menace. She was very intolerant of the behavior Steve and I often displayed. One day we had an experiment to do and Mr. Dyke said “When you finish you can read a book or look out the window or play a game of craps, but if you are smart you’ll study the next chapter.” Steve and I finished the experiment (I rushed my partner through it) and went over in the corner and started shooting dice. Mr. Dyke looked daggers at us but could hardly object because he had actually given us permission. My lab partner snorted indignantly as she buried her nose in the chemistry book. But Steve and I enjoyed ourselves immensely with the “African dominoes” until the bell rang to end the class.

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My very first car was a 1933 Plymouth coupe. Pap picked it up cheap for me somewhere because I wanted a car so badly. I was real proud of it but the folks laid down some strict limits. Driving it to school was severely limited and only to and from school. I parked it

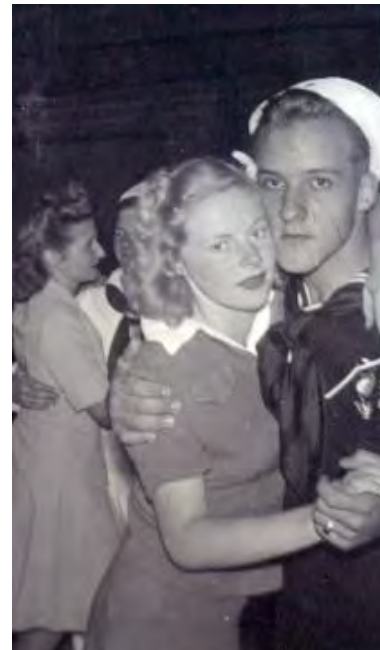
across the street from the building I had most of my classes in. During the lunch break I recall just sitting in the car while eating my lunch and marveling at my very own vehicle.

The Plymouth turned out to be a lemon. There was always something wrong with the engine and I didn't know anything about mechanical work. I just wanted something that would run to drive. Once when Mom used the Plymouth to get something in town the engine quit. She looked under the hood and saw something that looked loose. She fastened it back together with a bobby pin and it worked. I took it to Seacliff Beach when a bunch of us went there for an afternoon and it still held together with the bobby pin. It seems there was some trouble but I guess I got it home. After that when I went on a date with Jacquie I borrowed Betsy – the folks 1936 Ford sedan.

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Dan was going with a friend of Jacquie's named Frances Lamont. We often went on double dates together. To annoy the girls Dan and I frequently used our Morse code technique to communicate without them knowing what we were saying. That worked well for a while but one day the situation changed. We were talking back and forth in Morse code and the girls started asking us specific questions about what we were saying. We were really caught off guard. They had been studying Morse code together and could now understand everything we were communicating. That put an end to our secret sessions.

Sea Scouting is for older boys and was part of "senior scouting" program. As such, and in addition to learning sea lore, we were allowed to have social events. Our crew decided to plan a dance and arranged to use a building belonging to the Watsonville Women's Club just off Third street (now East Beach) in central Watsonville. Skipper Vern Dean and his wife attended as chaperones. Of course I took Jacquie. The father of one of the sea scouts knew Happy Jack Girdner who rented juke boxes (Nickelodeons) for various events. He arranged to have one delivered for the dance that was fixed so money did not have to be inserted. I recall some of the songs on the 78 RPM records were "Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer," "Murder, He Says," and "There's a Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere." There were a lot of songs geared toward drumming up patriotism in those days – wartime propaganda to which we youth were vulnerable and eager to hear. The dance seemed to go well but when we asked the Skipper what he thought, he seemed a little uncomfortable. He didn't like couples leaving the dance so frequently. He also said jokingly that he got kinda tired hearing about that star spangled



Jacquie and me at Dutch Oven dance. Frances Lamont and Steve Duer behind.  
June 12, 1943

banner waving somewhere.



Dutch Oven dance. Frances and Dan at left.  
Skipper and Mrs. Dean in center. Jacquie at right.  
June 12, 1943

The next dance we planned had stricter rules about going in and out. Permission was needed to leave along with information on what for and how long. This dance took place at a former restaurant that was rented out for parties called the Dutch Oven. It was located on "The Heights" – near where Lincoln Street forks into Main Street (now Freedom Boulevard). We made the same arrangements for a juke box but when we arrived at the dance we found coins had to be inserted to make it play. That would not do so a couple of us

drove to the home of the father who made the arrangements. He in turn called Happy Jack who immediately sent a man out to fix it to play sans money. This dance seemed to have a better atmosphere and went very well.

By this time I was driving a 1936 La Fayette which belonged to my Uncle Lloyd. (The Plymouth had finally given up the ghost.) He drove truck for Garin Lettuce Company in the days before they had iceberg lettuce which would grow anywhere. During the winter months the lettuce was grown further south at El Centro, California, where the climate was warmer. He left his car with us and I was allowed to use it. I fixed it up with a klaxon oogah! horn and had various other decorations inside and outside it. There was a custom at high school that a single stripe (usually applied with white adhesive tape) was put diagonally on the front doors to signify a "wolf on the loose (AWOL). Two stripes meant going steady and three meant engaged. I, of course, proudly displayed one stripe. Now back to sea scout social activities.

To advance in rank in the sea scouts the individual had to pass certain tests given by qualified people in the various fields. To approve the advancement in rank the sea scout then had to appear before a Board of Review where he was examined to assure his competency. Then came the gala affair called the Bridge of Honor attended by everyone in the Monterey Bay Area Boy Scout Council, where advancements and other recognition were formally presented.

The Bridge of Honor Ball was a very formal event – the sea scouts wore their dress uniforms and their dates wore formal gowns and corsages. Each girl had a dance card on which each dance was reserved for a certain partner who requested it. It was first come, first serve. Of course I always asked Jacquie to reserve the first and last dance for me, plus a few others. Some dances were competition where judges went around the dance floor tapping couples to drop out. It was a process of elimination where the last couple dancing won. One competition that Jacquie and I entered was ballroom dancing. The partners had to be held perfectly with hands and arms placed in the exact proper place. It

was pretty hard for us as we were more used to dancing cheek-to-cheek. As I recall, we were tapped out pretty quickly.

That Bridge of Honor Ball was held in Salinas. Dan was driving that night and on the way home to Watsonville he was driving with one hand with his other arm around Frances. Jacquie and I were necking in the back seat. I whispered in her ear asking if I could add a second stripe to the door of my car, signifying that we were going steady. She hesitated a while and then whispered back that I could have three. That is how on May 8<sup>th</sup> of 1943 we became engaged.

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In high school I wanted to try out for lightweight football but we lived in the country and practice was after school -- I had to go home on the bus. I suppose something could have been worked out but I didn't pursue the idea. I was interested in badminton and signed up for intramural sports in that category. As I was playing one day I struck the floor with one swing and broke the racket. There was no replacement budget so I had to pay for it. I mentioned it to Mom and she said I should also tell Pap because he feels hurt sometimes when I go to her first. So I asked Pap after dinner if I could have a talk with him. We went to the folks' front bedroom at the ranch and Pap sat in his swivel desk chair (that matched his roll-top desk) while I sat on their bed. Mom had, of course, already told Pap about the broken badminton racket. So he was set for our conversation, or so he thought.

I announced without prelude: "Jacquie and I are engaged." Pap was caught off guard. When he regained his composure he asked, timidly, if we intended to get married soon. I had just turned 17 and she was barely 15. I told him that was not the case and he seemed relieved. He then related a story that astounded me, about how he and an early girlfriend eloped as teenagers. The girls family didn't approve and had the marriage annulled. In those days you had to be 21 to get married without your parent's consent. Pap pointed out how that worked out for the best and I suppose that was his way of telling me it isn't wise to marry too young. He need not have worried about that. There was a war going on and I intended to be in it. Marriage would come after that job was finished.

I don't know how soon I bought Jacquie an engagement ring. It must have been after I graduated and had a job. I do member that we looked at many jewelry advertisements and visited many stores. We eventually settled on a matched set of wedding and engagement ring but the engagement ring didn't have a diamond. Mom gave me the engagement ring that my dad had given her. The jeweler took the diamond out of that and set it in Jacquie's ring, giving it sentimental value also. (Years later I gave the ring set, diamond and all, to one of my nephews who had become engaged.)

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I never did actually put three stripes on the door of the old La Fayette. I believe Uncle Lloyd returned from El Centro and took his car back. I did put my mark on the vehicle before he returned, however. It happened this way. The panel lights on the Lafayette

ceased to work and I could not see the instruments at night, so I carried a small flashlight to periodically check the gauges and speedometer. On night I was driving to town after dark. I was on a short stretch of Green Valley Road between its intersections with Pioneer Road and Casserly Road. I reached for the flashlight and dropped it on the floor. In the short time, so I thought, it took me to find it I was off the road and in the soft dirt of a recently-plowed orchard. There was a slight left bend in the road and when I looked up from retrieving the flashlight I was heading straight for a power pole. I turned the wheel to get back on the road but in the soft dirt it merely plowed straight ahead instead even though the wheel was turned. I was fast approaching the pole and I thought sure I was going to hit it head on. But at the last moment the car moved to the left and the front fender barely missed the pole. Not so with the rear fender. It clipped the pole and put a dent in it. It wasn't so bad that the car couldn't be driven but it sure scared the daylights out of me. I learned a very serious lesson that night: things happen fast in an automobile and one can't take one's eyes off the road for a second. I really did profit from that experience.

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One day Dan and I found another jewel. A friend of ours, Troy Cutter who lived next to Kelly Lake and near Payson, had a 1926 Model-T Ford he wanted to sell. (Years later Janet and I rented a lakeside cabin from Troy's father, Dr. Cutter) Dan and I went to take a look. Troy wanted \$10 for it but we talked him down to \$7. We couldn't get it started so we towed it to our Green Valley ranch and named it Almira. Steve came over with his Packard to give us a tow up Green Valley Road. We got Almira running on two or three cylinders but it immediately died. Steve pulled us again and ripped the rear bumper from his Packard. He threw it in his trunk and we got Pap to tow the Model-T back to the ranch.



*Mother, Nana, Skip and Pap in Almira  
Green Valley 4-25-43*



*Pap Green Valley  
Easter Sunday 4-25-43*

Steve then headed for home but got only as far as the Green Valley School, a short distance from the ranch, when the Packard stalled. He had a bad battery and couldn't restart the engine. Steve walked back to the ranch and we took Dan's car to give him a tow. We did get the Packard started again but pulled the front bumper off in the process so Steve went home with both bumpers sticking out of the trunk. He had been having other troubles with that car

and the bumper episode was the last straw. The next day Steve parked the Packard in front of the house where he bought it, bumpers in the trunk and all, and just walked away. We never saw the Packard again.

Pap helped us work on the Model-T. We replaced the transmission bands and did other work on the engine. We finally got Almira running and Pap taught me how to drive it – a task that is considerably more complicated than driving our 1936 Ford. While practicing to drive on Green Valley Road with Pap, one of the rear tires blew out. We drove home on the rim and while coming up the driveway I was a little slower than I should have been in getting it stopped. We were heading right for the garage doors and Pap was yelling to stop. It was an open top car and Pap was up on the seat about ready to bail out when I finally came to a halt inches from the door.

I had turned in all the old Model-T tires for the war effort so there was no way of replacing the tire on Almira. The Model-T just sat at the ranch until I went into the Army the following year. Dan then took it to his house. While I was in basic training at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, Dan got picked up for driving around Watsonville on the rim. The police impounded the Model-T and Dan had to prove ownership in order to reclaim it. However, he couldn't find the pink slip which he said he had put in his dresser drawer. The result was we never saw Almira again.

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In the Sea Scouts, Crew-1 often planned activities of its own. When the Boy Scout Council held a camporee for all the Monterey Bay Area at Freemont's Peak, we decided to attend. Steve, Dan and I planned our meals and transportation together. I believe we used Dan's folks' Oldsmobile sedan on that occasion. After Dan picked me up we went after Steve – at that time the Duers were living just north of Freedom on the Old Santa Cruz Highway, before they bought land in Monterey County near the mouth of the Pajaro River. Steve thought it would be nice if we took a jar of the grape juice his mother had preserved. It was a little dusty so Steve washed it off under the hot water faucet. Then we proceeded on our way to Freemont's Peak.

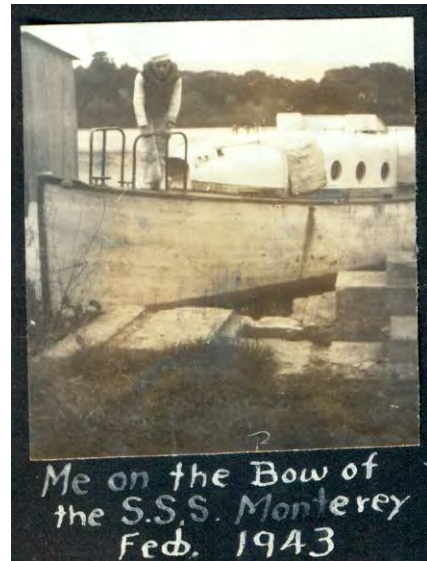
When we arrived we pitched our tent and set up camp. Then we took part in the activities of the day. When mealtime came we prepared and ate our dinner, and washed it down with grape juice. Everything went well for a couple hours and then the three of us started feeling sick to our stomach. When stomach cramps were experienced we decided we must pack up and return home. I don't remember the return drive or what our folks said about the situation. I think we were feeling better the next day. What I do remember is that Steve's mother told him he never should have rinsed the grape juice jar with hot water. That broke the seal and in the hot weather the juice quickly fermented. I guess we were fortunate that we were capable of driving home.

Sea Scout Ship 98 owned a 30-foot admirals barge named SSS Monterey (SSS standing for Sea Scout Ship). It had been donated and was moored at the Pinto Lake Poultry Farm which was just across Pinto Lake from Maluhia Ranch. Crew 1 often went there to work



on the barge – maintain the 6-cylinder Chrysler engine, paint the boat, and sometimes we even slept on it. We enjoyed driving it around Pinto Lake and sometimes rode on an aquaplane which we made to tow behind the boat. We also had the use of a dinghy (rowboat) which belonged to the poultry farm. This we would use for synchronized rowing practice because it had rowlocks for two people to row. We also had the use of a 12-foot sloop (a sailboat with two sails: a mainsail and a jib) belonging to Gil Perry – a lawyer who was a commissioner on the Boy Scout Council – in which we got valuable practice in manipulating the sails to sail with and against the wind.

With the USS Monterey moored at the dock there was a problem of other people climbing aboard and vandalizing it. So we decided to anchor it in the middle of the lake and use a dingy to get to and from it. This went well for a while but after I went in the army someone chopped a hole in the boat's bottom and it sunk. I guess it is still on the bottom of Pinto Lake somewhere.



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I graduated from Watsonville Hi on mid-June 17, 1943. A good share of our class had either signed up in the military or had been drafted. The few students left fit on the stage of the Vet's Hall where the ceremony was held. Everyone brought peanuts to eat during the ceremony and dropped the shells on the floor. As each person walked up to receive his or her diploma there was a very noticeable "crunch-crunch sound of peanut shells being crushed underfoot. That's about all I remember of the ceremony along with walking down to Babcock's Creamery afterward with Jacquie for root beer floats.

My old Plymouth was long gone and Uncle Lloyd had reclaimed his Lafayette so I was without a car. Mom and Pap decided to but me a car for a graduation present. They located a 1936 Oldsmobile convertible that a party on Casserly Road had stored in their barn. It had a rumble seat (just like our old Model-A) and an 8-cylinder in-line engine. As Bud Daugherty described it, it had an acre of hood. I loved this



car – boy, did I love it. And it served me well until I started school in Glendale the following November. At that time I sold it to Dan Leddy.



1936 Olds Convertible at Big Sur Lodge  
June 1943

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## Chapter 9 – My First Post-High-School Year

Pap started his second and last year as Big Sur patrolman for the US Forest Service in June 1943. Mom and the rest of the family also went to Big Sur with Pap. I also accompanied them for a little while but I had put in an application to work as a lookout for the Forest Service. When that application was approved I moved to King City as my base of operations.

Chuck had been working as a lookout for a few years. This year (1943) he would be a lookout relief – that is, staff the lookout while the regular staff took some accumulated days off. During the war there were two people on each lookout to provide 24-hour watch for aircraft, ships at sea, and any pyrotechnics observed. Every aircraft had to be reported to the army as part of the Aircraft Warning Service initiated as part of the war effort. Consequently, two people were needed to relieve the regular lookouts. I was to be that second person.

It was nice working with Chuck for two reasons – he was someone I knew well and he was able to help me learn the ropes. It also had its disadvantages because I was not always compliable with how Chuck wanted things done. But on the whole it was a good arrangement. Mom (Mimi) wrote a memoir called *Lookouts of the Los Padres Forest: Monterey Division* which described each lookout, along with pictures, and explained the tasks associated with lookout work, how lookouts are supplied and serviced, how pack animals were used, and many other details, so I will not repeat that information in this autobiography. This will be my personal experiences as a forest fire lookout.

On July 21, 1943 I checked in for work at the King City ranger station. My job description was threefold: Forest Guard SP-3, Lookout A, and Relief AWS Observer. For the first few days I worked around King City doing vehicle maintenance, learning radio procedure, standing by for the dispatcher, and other odd jobs. In addition Chuck and I packed and bought groceries for my first lookout assignment.

At 10:00 AM on July 26<sup>th</sup> George Frame drove us to the trailhead for Cone Peak Lookout in a stakeside truck along with two horses and a pack mule. I was starting out on perhaps the busiest lookout in the forest as Cone Peak was a relay station to King City from other lookouts that could not make contact. In short, this lookout was the only channel of communication for those other lookouts. George Reischneider, the forest guard for that area, escorted us up the trail. Mr. and Mrs. Boundy were the regular lookouts and George packed their things on the mule and took them down the trail for a few days off. Chuck and I took over the lookout at 4:00 PM and it was my watch. Chuck gave me instruction on using the radio to report “Army Flashes.” When an airplane was sighted or heard we announced “Army Flash” over the radio or telephone, whichever mode of communication

was being used. (The Forest Service telephone was like a party line with many lookouts and some guard stations sharing.) This gave us priority over routine traffic as we reported the details on the aircraft as best we could determine.

At 5,148 feet elevation with the cab built on the ground, Cone Peak has a visibility of 88 miles to sea. The people on these lookouts – on the buzzards’ roost they called it – develop a community of their own, exchanging experiences such as finding a rattlesnake, what they cooked for dinner, or almost any other event that breaks the monotony. When King City went off the air at 5:00 PM this kind of chatter increased enormously. Sometimes we would send flashes to each other with mirrors. Ranger Anderson (Andy) taught me a lookout code for communicating with mirrors that is simpler than Morse Code. The key letters were A, G, M, S, Y and those are all you have to memorize. Long reflections with the mirror (dashes) depict these five key letters – one dash for “A”, two dashes for “G”, etc. Then the short flashes (dots) that follow are for the letter immediately after that key letter. For instance, two dashes would be “G”. Then one dot would be “H”, two dots would be “I”, and so on up to five dots for “L”. The matrix for this code is:

A	B	C	D	E	F
G	H	I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X
Y	Z				

Because of the possibility of sabotage, the forest area was closed to the public. Anyone entering had to have a closed area permit issued by the ranger’s headquarters in King City. One afternoon two men arrived at the lookout on foot. They identified themselves as agents from naval intelligence and said they were there to instruct AWS observers how to identify ships at sea and watch for pyrotechnic displays. I was on duty so I asked to see their permit for entering the forest. They looked a little puzzled and said they didn’t know about any permit. I explained the permit requirement to them and then contacted King City by radio. King City had no record of them but checked with the navy and determined they were legitimate. I relayed that information to the men but told them they must obtain a permit before they visit any other lookouts. They seemed a little miffed but were nice about it and then went ahead with their instructions. It was from them that I learned a formula for determining the distance to the horizon at sea and how to estimate



Cone Peak Lookout 1943

the distance of ships at sea. Approximating the distance to the horizon is done by multiplying the square root of the altitude in feet by 1.225 to get the distance in miles.

On July 29<sup>th</sup> I reported my first smoke. It was on the Hunter Liggett Military Reservation. That was not on Forest Service land but we reported all smokes and King City relayed the information to the appropriate authority.

On July 31<sup>st</sup> my five days on the mile high (almost) lookout ended. George Reischneider, accompanied by Jack Curran (the fire-control assistant to Ranger Anderson) arrived at the lookout with Mr. & Mrs. Yates, who were veteran lookouts and the new people to staff Cone Peak. Jack asked me to lead three mules down the steep and winding trail to the trailhead. I was a little nervous but he said to just ride my horse down the trail and the mules would follow. They did and that was my first experience as a mule packer.

Shortly after Janet and I were married in 1947 we visited Cone Peak. Chuck was stationed there. Janet and I drove up from Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo while Mom and Pap with Skip and Sonny drove down from Watsonville. We met at the trailhead and hiked up together. I believe we spent a couple nights on the lookout and did some deer hunting during that time. Again in 1989 Janet and I drove our Volkswagen bus to the trailhead and hiked up to the lookout. A friend named Soaring Jenkins, from Big Sur, was on duty. We had a couple hours visit with her and then hiked back down.

Back to 1943. After we returned to King City I had a day off so I drove my Olds convertible to Watsonville to see Jacquie. We met with Dan and Frances and other friends in the Sea Scouts. Since nobody was at the ranch in Green Valley I spent the night with the Carlyons and returned to King City very early next day.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> Chuck and I drove to Chews Ridge Lookout, elevation 5,060 feet with a 12-foot high tower. For lookouts we could drive to we always used good old 2415. That was the Forest Service number assigned to a Chevy pickup that frequently gave us trouble with clogged gas lines and such. I took over my watch at 1:00 AM the following morning. I switched watches with Chuck because I liked the early morning for writing letters and listening to commercial radio when we had one. Then I could read for a while and sleep in the afternoon. There was a separate little cabin for this purpose. It worked out well and I think Chuck preferred the afternoon watch.

Chews Ridge used the telephone for communications instead of radio. It was a Forest Service line which connected to some of the other lookouts but could also access the public AT&T system. One day Jacquie called me and I was elated. I was on duty at the time and while we were talking I heard a plane fly over. I should have broken off the conversation to report an "Army Flash" but I just couldn't do it. The plane was heading south toward Anderson Peak which also used the Forest Service phone line. Very soon the lookout on Anderson Peak came on the line and said "Army Flash." I had to quickly say goodbye and hang up. I wasn't used to such short conversations with Jacquie.



Chews Ridge Lookout 1943

While we were on Chews Ridge, Mom and Skip drove over from Big Sur to visit us. It was good to see them. I was off duty in the afternoon and could hike around the area with them. Skip got covered with pitch when he climbed up a small pine tree to get a pinecone. They left in the evening and I turned in to get some sleep before my watch. When Chuck woke me at 1:00 AM he gave me the bad news that they had an accident going down the Chews Ridge Road. Skip was OK but Mom hurt herself when she hit the steering wheel. The car was towed to Salinas and Mom had to take it easy for quite a while.

On August 11<sup>th</sup> the two regular lookouts (Mrs. Parks and Mrs. Powers) returned. On our way back to King City we had to haul some equipment from the Carmel Guard station to the Cahoon Fire Suppression Station,

while stopping to blow the gas line out several times on the way. We continued on through Paloma to the Arroyo Seco Road and then to Soledad to pick up some Forest Service films before returning to King City where we spent several days doing odd jobs and running various errands.

Sherman Mansfield was the official Forest Service mule packer. He and his string of mules moved about to transport materials into the wilderness for major projects. He had just finished packing into Pinion and Santa Lucia Lookouts. His base camp was at Hanson Flats (not too far from King City) which is the trailhead for the lookouts. Now he had to be moved to the Palo Colorado on the coast just a little north of Big Sur. I was assigned to go with George Frame and P. White to help move the mules in stakeside trucks. Chuck was quite miffed that I would be away from him but I looked forward to getting out from under his wing. We drove to Hanson Flat and camped overnight there.

That night we cooked supper over the campfire. I remember George Frame making gravy – first burning the flour black in the grease before adding the rest of the ingredients – to “give the gravy some color,” he said. Coffee was brewed in a large pot over the fire. When the water boiled the coffee was thrown in. After an appropriate time it was removed from the fire and a small amount of cold water added to settle the grounds. Then it was poured into tin mugs. I had never drunk coffee before – I never had a desire for it. But I drank some of this camp-brewed stuff, strong and black, and liked it. I guess that’s why I now like strong, black coffee.

We talked around the campfire – or rather, I mostly listened while the others talked. These were real mule packers and horseman who led a rough life. I guess it was as close to frontier days as I could get. They kidded me a lot about being free from Chuck and getting out in the real world. They also gossiped about Chuck – his prissy ways, how he pussyfoots around the pretty woman office manager in King City, and his driving habits

such as waiting until he got to the bottom of a hill before stepping on the gas to make the grade. I guess Chuck liked precision too much for such rough characters. There were some dirty jokes and shady stories exchanged but I won't be able to relate those here because, regretfully, I don't remember what they were. But this was a new experience for a 17-year-old kid just out of high school. It gave me a taste of the real rough-and-tumble world. According to my Forest Service diary this was August 17, 1943 – exactly four years before Janet and I were married.

The next day we rose early and fixed breakfast. Then we packed, loaded the livestock, and started out. We went down Reliz Canyon to Arroyo Seco Road. (the Reliz Canyon road is no longer open because the property has been bought by private parties and the road closed.) Then towards Soledad and onto Ft. Romie Lane past Spreckles to Monterey. There we gassed up the trucks and charged some per diem against our expense account for lunch. I recall that one of the horses was sick and we had to find a veterinarian in Monterey. He gave the horse a shot on the neck with a hypodermic needle about the size of a pint jar. Then we proceeded south along Coast Highway 1 and reached the Palo Colorado Guard Station by mid-afternoon.

After unloading the livestock, as I recall, the rest of the men went on to Big Sur to spend the night at the fire suppression station. Dale Vandervort, the Palo Colorado patrolman, and I took the pack string up the trail to Sherman Mansfield's base camp (I think that was what is now called Bouchers Gap). I rode Sherman's Arabian horse which was small and had a very choppy gait. Then I drove a stakeside truck to the Big Sur Guard Station to spend the night with Mom, Pap, Nana and the boys. Pap's horse, Buck, was very sick and the vet didn't think he had much chance to pull through. Pap was really worried and sad. It wasn't an opportune time for my visit. But Buck did pull through and lived to a ripe old age.

The next morning one of the Forest Service men, Cecil Stacy, and I left for Monterey to pick up his furniture and horse. (It might have been his horse that was sick and had to be left with the vet.) We then went to Arroyo Seco and unloaded the furniture and horse. I got back to King City in the evening and started preparing for departure to Pinion Peak the next day.

Pinion Peak! That was the one Chuck spent entire summers on and he was anxious to show me his favorite buzzards' roost. At 5,264 feet altitude, its 36-foot high tower was the classic image of what a forest fire lookout should be. It was remote at that time and only accessible by foot or horseback. (Later the trail was bulldozed to accommodate a jeep.) Radio which used car batteries was the only means of communication and it was a hassle for the local patrolman to keep the lookout supplied with charged batteries, to say nothing of propane tanks and drinking water. Pinion sat across a small canyon from Santa Lucia Lookout which was on the highest peak of the Santa Lucia Range. Two lookouts were needed here to observe 360 degrees because the peaks obstructed each others view. (I did visit Santa Lucia Lookout briefly in 1955 when Skip was working for the Forest Service at Arroyo Seco. We went to both Pinion and Santa Lucia in his jeep.)



We left King City for Hanson Flats at mid-morning. There we packed the mule and the forest guard for that area escorted us up the trail to Pinion Peak. The local forest guard always escorted us to the lookout so he could bring back the livestock and the people taking time off. Miss Pollock, the person we were relieving, had a hot lunch prepared for us. Then everyone except Chuck and me left and I took over my watch – the afternoon watch this time. It was a long way to the bottom of the tower and the AWS sleeping cabin so Chuck slept in a bed in the tower. I preferred the privacy for reading and writing letters so I used the cabin.

After three days passed with no significant activity I took over my watch at 1:00 PM on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. I picked up two smokes within the first hour but after that the rest of the afternoon was quiet. Then at 7:48 in the evening I spotted a large smoke south of us, which I reported immediately. Chuck got excited and wanted to take charge. I told him it was my watch and that I'd handle it. He was extremely miffed and laid on his bed and sulked.

In half an hour I gave King City another bearing on the smoke and reported that it was getting pretty big. Soon crews were on the scene and I was called upon from time to time to give updated information. After dark I could actually see the fire itself, and had to provide periodic updates on its size. I estimated as best I could – using the Osborne fire finder for angle measurements, the map for distance, and doing a little trigonometry. Late that night things looked better and when I turned the watch over to Chuck the excitement had died down considerably. Chuck was still mad at me but cooled off the next day. He even admitted that I did a good job handling the situation.



Pinion Peak Lookout 1943

The rest of the time on the mountain was all routine work. Chuck gave me some lessons on lookout cooking. Because water boils at lower temperatures at higher altitudes, food that is boiled or steamed has to be cooked longer. He liked rice but he liked it cooked the English way. Just enough water is used so that it has all boiled away at the exact time the rice is done. If this technique is performed properly the rice will be flakey – not one grain sticking to another. Asian people would have a tough time eating this type of rice with a chopstick. “Chopstick rice” sticks together for better handling and, in my opinion, has more flavor.

I had not taken a foreign language in high school so I decided the time on lookouts would be ideal for study. Chuck talked me into choosing Latin. He helped me find a Latin book from a retired professor who hadn't used Latin for so long he didn't think he could still understand it. With this book and a notepad I proceeded to study. It went pretty well on paper but I had no way of learning proper pronunciation.

After eight days the regular lookouts returned and we headed down the trail for Hanson Flats and then on to King City. Again we had a few days in town to take care of various chores – doing laundry, buying food, seeing a movie, buying a chocolate milk shake. The cute gal at the soda fountain always gave me a couple extra scoops to make it real thick. I had been having a little trouble with my Olds convertible. It had a bad wheel bearing and the front end bushings were badly worn. Chuck told me of a mechanic around the corner from the station. The mechanic said it was almost impossible to get parts because of the war but if I'd leave the car there while working on the lookouts he'd try to improvise some bushings for me. That is what I did so I was without transportation except for using old 2415 pickup on official business. Fortunately, King City was a small town with everything within walking distance. At least I was saving my gas ration tickets for when I got together with the Watsonville gang again.

On August 31<sup>st</sup> Chuck and I left King City early for Hunter Liggett with Hal Krenkle, the heavy equipment operator, also known as a Cat Skinner (Cat being short for Caterpillar bulldozers.) After breakfast at Hunter Liggett we headed south through the military reservation with Patrolman Norman Parks who would pack us up to Three Peaks Lookout.



Three Peaks Lookout 1943

Three Peaks is the farthest south lookout in Monterey County with an elevation of 3,275 feet and a ten-foot high tower. At the trailhead we unloaded the livestock, saddled the horses, packed the mules, and headed up the trail. We arrived at the lookout in the afternoon and relieved Mr. and Mrs. Bousfield to have a few days off. Chuck had the afternoon watch so I turned in early because I had to get up early.

My eleven days on Three Peaks was largely uneventful. There were many "Army Flashes" each day and occasionally a smoke which proved to be nothing important. I used the early morning hours to write letters, review the latest *Hit Parade* magazine, and read. When the Bousfields returned late afternoon on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Chuck and I headed down the trail to re-trace our route. We arrived in King City after midnight.

Our next assignment was to be Anderson Peak above Big Sur. It is an AWS station which Pap serviced, so he would be taking us up to the mountain. AWS stations are somewhat different from lookouts in that they are mainly the small sleeping cabin like those at the foot of lookouts. The difference is that a bedroom is partitioned off from a small kitchen and a small cupola above the roof where the on-duty lookout stays. There is also a door leading out from the cupola to a deckway, or porch. The cupola can be accessed by a stairway up from the kitchen and there was always a ladder outside to get down from the deck. The cupola had windows all around

The wartime duties were the same – the military work of reporting airplanes, blimps (rubber cows, as we called them), ships at sea, and pyrotechnics plus the Forest Service responsibility to report smokes. I had been to Anderson Peak several times with Pap and knew Harry Dick Ross and his wife Lillian Boss Ross (a.k.a. Shannagolden), the regular lookouts who had been there since the station was established. Shannagolden was an author and wrote two books about wilderness around Big Sur: *The Stranger* and its sequel *Blaze Allen*. She wrote *The Stranger* while stationed on Anderson Peak. Harry Dick became a renown sculptor and artist in the Big Sur area. The radio call letters for Anderson Peak were 26-Lucy-7 and he enjoyed drawing pictures of the “Lucy Bird” depicting humorous events that happened on the lookout. One day Pap lost his portable Forest Service radio when it fell off Kate’s pack saddle and rolled down the hill. Harry Dick drew a cartoon entitled “One Day Lucy Stole a Radio.” Kate was in the picture. He was always called by the double name: Harry Dick. My rough-living mule skinner friends pronounced it to sound like Hairy Dick.



Anderson Peak AWS Station 1943

After returning from Three Peaks We spent a day regrouping in King City: washing, buying supplies, packing our gear, etc. I was looking forward to a couple days off at Big Sur with the family. Mom & Pap arranged for Jacquie to be there at the same time. We had fun swimming, hiking and, would you believe it, horseback riding. I guess I liked horseback riding a lot and didn’t get enough of it in the

Forest Service. I had to rent horses to go riding with Jacquie.

On September 16<sup>th</sup> we left Big Sur for Anderson Peak. Pap brought Mom and Jacquie along. It gave Jacquie a chance to see a little of the work I was doing and the life I led on a lookout. We arrived shortly before noon, the Rosses left, and I took over my watch. The folks and Jacquie visited for a couple hours and then headed back down to Big Sur.



Nothing very eventful happened. I experimented with making biscuits and did some hiking when off duty.

Chuck and I were on Anderson Peak a week. Our next assignment was the Carmel Mountain AWS Station. Since it was also accessed from the coast, we were to go directly there after spending a day in Big Sur to replenish supplies, buy enough food for the 5 days we were rescheduled to be there, and attend to whatever else was necessary. George Frame arrived with a stakeside truck into which we loaded the livestock and supplies and headed for Palo Colorado Forest Guard Station which was the trailhead for Carmel Mountain and where we spent the night.

We rose at 5:00 AM on the 25<sup>th</sup> and got an early start for the peak. Chuck had a black mare named Babe and I was mortified to have to ride a mule called Monk. Dale Vandervort, the Palo Colorado patrolman, escorted us on the trail. Monk was a tall mule and moved, as Dale described it, like he was walking on eggs. I believe it was because his hooves weren't trimmed properly – some of the Forest Service blacksmithing wasn't very professional. Several animals that were almost lame were returned to normal after Pap shod them properly.

A short way up the trail Dale warned us of a stretch with many yellow jacket holes. He suggested we go through at a good trot. I was leading a mule and as we neared the danger area I nudged Monk in the ribs. He started to move faster but the mule I was leading thought he was going fast enough and held back. In trying to hold onto the lead rope and stay on Monk I felt like my arm was coming out of its socket. About then a yellow jacked landed on the pack mule's rump and that urged it to a faster space. We left the area at a gallop. When we reached a safe place to stop and regroup I thought I was lucky to have escaped unscathed. Then a very angry yellow jacket came out of the blue and zapped right into my eye. It swelled almost closed and didn't subside for several days. Chuck also got stung several places on the head, as did the stock. For us the stings made bumps but on the poor animals the lumps were the size of a baseball.

We arrived at Carmel Mountain Station and relieved the Boundeys again – the same ones we relieved at Cone Peak. Cone Peak is a busy lookout and has to relay messages to King City from some other lookouts, and between lookouts. So they changed places with the Yates. Mrs. Boundy had a pot of



Carmel Mountain AWS Station 1943

beans made for us and I was so famished I ate a big bowl. That night I got so sick I had to go outside and vomit. I noticed some peculiar white spots in the stuff I upchucked. Maggots had gotten into the beans and were cooked along with them. We dumped the rest of the pot.

That was the first of the bad luck we had on Carmel Mountain. We had expected to be on the mountain for five days so we had supplies for that time. Then we were informed that the Boundys were taking more time off. We had to stretch our rations until King City could send more supplies to Palo Colorado for Dale to pack up to us. That was not the end.

It is a constant problem to keep charged batteries on a lookout so there is communication. King City decided to try providing a means of charging these car batteries on the lookout and keeping them charged. So the district radio technician came the Carmel Mountain with his assistant to install a wind charger where a propeller driven by the wind would run a generator. That was nice but that meant two more people and they were there several days blasting holes in the rock (it seemed it like took place mostly when I was trying to sleep) to anchor the mast and then hooking up the system. And they didn't bring many supplies – a great feast of steaks for all of us for one night and then they started mooching. Some Forest Service employees are renown for their mooching. So we had to share our scant supplies which were closely calculated to subsist only two people.

Water is another precious commodity on the lookouts and had to be packed in on the backs of mules. Soon we were running low on that. During my time off I made several trips to a spring about a half mile down the trail. I carried water to the lookout in jeep cans – at first five gallons per trip and then increasing it to ten – two cans. It was hot, sweaty work on the steep, sun-baked trail.

We ended up spending 18 days on Carmel Mountain which overlooks the Salinas Valley with visibility as far as the Pajaro valley. At night I could see the beacon light on Santa Cruz Pier and the lights of Watsonville. I was a lonesome and homesick 17-year-old boy who desperately wanted to see his girlfriend and buddies and enjoy some social life. Lookout work would not be a profession for me.

When the Boundy's finally returned I was very anxious to head down the trail. All the other lookouts knew this would be my last assignment. Binns called on the radio from Ventana to tell me goodbye. Binns was a veteran lookout man I met only through the radio. We talked with each other from various lookouts. After King City went off the air in the evenings each day the personal radio traffic increased. I recall he once called to tell us he had just killed a rattle snake and he helped me many times with his experienced coaching. We often sent signals back and forth with mirrors. The Yates on Cone Peak were a very nice couple. They also called by radio to tell me goodbye.

On October 12<sup>th</sup> we left Carmel Mountain and spent the night at Big Sur. On the 13<sup>th</sup> we drove to King City. The fire season was nearing its end and there were no more lookouts

to relieve. On October 13<sup>th</sup> I signed my resignation papers, told Ranger Anderson and the other headquarters people good bye, and packed to return home. The mechanic did a good job on my car in improvising the repair. He only charged me \$80. I loaded my gear and headed for Watsonville.

It was late at night when I finally left King City. It felt like I had been released from confinement when I pointed my Oldsmobile convertible north on US-101. But my elation didn't last long. A little north of King City the engine started to heat up and the water pump developed a noise. I decided to keep going and hope I could make it to Watsonville. Just before reaching Castroville the water pump gave out completely when the fan shaft broke loose and went through the radiator. I pulled to the side of the road wondering what I would do now.

Soon a semi-truck and trailer pulled to a stop behind me. The driver asked if I needed help. In those days truck drivers were the road angels. They were friendly and helpful. I explained my problem and he said he'd push me to Watsonville. Cars in those days had functional bumpers and being pushed by another vehicle was a normal way of getting started with a dead battery. There were no freeways at that time but the main road went right through downtown Castroville. So he gave me a good shove before we got there and I coasted through the downtown area – no cops could see that I was being pushed. Then he picked me up on his front bumper again and we made it to Watsonville with no trouble. I pulled over and parked on Main Street and he stopped to see that everything was OK. I learned that his name was Darrell Hall – the elder brother of Dean Hall and Yvonne Hall who were both in my graduating class. They had also been my classmates since third grade at Radcliff School.

I just locked the car up and left it there on the street for the night. Mom, Nana, and the boys were still at Big Sur – Skip and Sonny were attending the one-room Big Sur School which was only a stone's throw from Buck and Kate's barn. So there was no one from my family to call and I didn't want to bother Jacquie and her folks that late, so I walked to Gram and Gramp Durr's apartment about a block off Main Street on West Lake Avenue. Gram and Gramp were happy to put me up for the night.

The next morning I called Dan Leddy and he borrowed his parents' Oldsmobile sedan to give me a tow. He pulled me to Freedom where a family friend, Everett Mollenhauer, had an auto repair shop. The mechanic there managed to patch up the radiator and repair the water pump. After picking up a few things at the ranch I went to see Jacquie and we drove to Big Sur. My application for aeronautical engineering training at Curtis Wright Technical Institute in Glendale, California had been accepted and I was scheduled to start in early November. In the meantime I was enjoying a little time at Big Sur and Jacquie stayed there with us.

When the time to depart came, I went back to Watsonville. I believe Mom came with me. I sold my Olds convertible to Dan Leddy and packed my things. It was my first train trip which took 11 or 12 hours. I departed in the evening and arrived at Glendale in the morning. Along the way we went through Burbank and by Lockheed Air Terminal. I

could see acres of P-38 fighter planes under camouflage awnings which covered the entire field.

Curtis Wright Tech was located at the Glendale Airport and next to the railroad tracks. The school was inside a restricted area and I was issued a photo-identification badge to gain entry. There was much military air traffic at this airport and many types of military planes. The school had contact with various houses which provided room and board for the students. I was assigned to a house about a mile up Bel Air Boulevard from the school. I believe the lady's name was Frump. I don't recall if she was widowed or a spinster but I think we called her Miss. She and her mother lived in the back part of the house and cooked for us. There were three rooms rented out and the six of us had exclusive use of the living and dining rooms as a common area. My bedroom was off the dining room and I had a boy from Texas to room with. In the front bedroom off the living room were a boy from Texas and one from Oregon. In the third bedroom, also off the dining room, were two boys from India. We all went to Curtis Wright Tech and became good friends. We walked to and from school together each day.

The school was interesting. We spent time at the drafting table as well as lectures. I did learn a lot about materials, types of fasteners, and aircraft construction that helped me later when I attended Cal Poly. The back door of our classroom opened to an area adjacent to the aircraft parking strip. We often went out there for breaks to watch the various military planes take off and land. One day I was walking along this area and a man on the control tower stuck his head out the window and yelled something to me. I didn't understand him but I may have moved to the side. Then a long steel cable fell out of nowhere and hit the pavement all along the walkway I was on. An aircraft was towing a target and meant to drop the tow cable and target in the regular drop zone. But he miscalculated and it fell along the walkway. Fortunately no one was hit or injured.

Sometimes my housemates and I would take the light rail to downtown Los Angeles to look around or go to a movie. The L.A. area at that time had the beginnings of a good public transportation system but it ran into strong opposition from the petroleum, auto manufacturing, and auto insurance industries. They put up such a strong lobby that the tracks were eventually torn up while the number of automobiles increased to make the Los Angeles area the smoggiest place in the nation. The same game was replayed a couple decades later to keep the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system from extending to San Jose.

On another day I took the light rail to downtown L.A. and transferred to a public bus to visit the Ross family in Inglewood. It was good to see Peggy and her family again, and talk over the good time we had at Big Sur. They took me to the Hollywood Bowl for some performance which I've now forgotten. Then we all went ice skating. Finally it was time for me to retrace my route to Glendale.

Three things led me to dissatisfaction with the course at Curtis Wright Tech: I could see that I'd never become a credible aeronautical engineer in eleven months, I was spending too much money, and I was homesick. So in early December 1943 I withdrew from the

course and returned home. My family was still at Big Sur and wouldn't return to Green Valley until just before Christmas. I stayed there with them but I'm sure I made frequent weekend trips to Watsonville to see Jacquie. One day Pap had to pack supplies to men doing trail work on the Pine Ridge Trail. They were camping at Redwood Camp which is 15 miles by trail from Big Sur. I wanted to go along but Pap didn't have enough horses for me to ride. He was taking one Forest service fellow back in to join the work crew and I could ride that horse back. So I decided to hike. I started ahead of the pack train in the early, dark hours of the morning. I knew that an average person hikes about three miles an hour and horses usually travel four in that time. So I made sort of a forced march, jogging much of the way. Occasionally I could hear the stock animals behind me so I pushed myself all the faster. I did beat the horses to Redwood camp but I was one tired boy when I got there. Anyway, I had a horse to ride back. There was some kind of a dance or public meeting that evening in Big Sur Park and, even after hiking 15 miles and then riding horseback another 15, I attended that event. Youth have a lot of energy!

We were all home at Green Valley by Christmas 1943. Then we celebrated New Year's Eve and 1944 was off to a grisly start with the war raging full blown in Europe and the Pacific.

I started 1944 working on Paul Elm's 20-acre ranch next door to our Green Valley home. I had previously worked for him picking apples. Now he was pulling out his apricot orchard and planting new apple trees. At first I was cutting up the apricot trees that had been pulled out of the ground with a tractor. I also did some plowing and disking with his old Fordson wheel tractor. It was similar to our Fageol but more mechanically sophisticated. I also plowed and disced the hillside where I would later help plant new apple trees.

This was in the decade immediately following the dust bowl disaster in Oklahoma which resulted in many people migrating to California to find work. As a result there was a high consciousness concerning erosion and washing away of the topsoil which was the cause of the Oklahoma dust storms. Contour plowing was the way to go where the furrows went around the hillside at the same elevation so water would not run down them and erode the soil. That was all very fine but some of those hillsides are pretty steep and it was a thrill a minute to pull a plow around them with the tractor crosswise to the slope.

During this time I also became active again with the Sea Scouts. I would often go with Steve Duer, Dan Leddy, Bob Quincy, and some of the other sea scouts to work on our 30-foot admiral's barge in Pinto Lake. For one thing, it was a challenge to keep that 6-cylinder Chrysler engine running, especially when none of us knew anything about mechanics. But, somehow, we did and that allowed us to have fun running the barge around Pinto Lake. Sometimes we'd pull an aquaplane behind the barge to ride on and at other times we'd sleep on the barge overnight.

One weekend we held a small regatta on Pinto Lake. Besides the powered barge we borrowed row boats to practice synchronized rowing. A lawyer friend of ours, Gil Perry, who was also a local scout commissioner, had a 12-foot sloop in which we practiced

sailing. We learned how to tack a course against the wind by maneuvering the jib and mainsails. We experimented on how close hauled we could sail the sloop into the wind. Then when we arrived at the end of the lake we turned around and zoomed full sail on a downwind leg to the other end of the lake.

Dan and I got the notion we would like to sail that 12-foot sloop across Monterey Bay, from Santa Cruz to Monterey. We asked Gil Perry if we could refurbish his boat to make it more seaworthy. Dan's father had a woodshop where he made wooden model kits which kids could assemble. We used his shop to work on the boat. No one had objected to our plans to sail across the mouth of the bay until we got to the stage of setting a date. I guess everyone thought we'd give up on the idea eventually but we were dead serious. So when we tried to set a date our parents were very much against the two of us heading out in open water. At this stage our Sea Scout Skipper also thought it would be too dangerous and even Gil Perry joined in the dissention. We offered to not venture out so far and to follow the shoreline, although that would be a longer journey and perhaps too long to accomplish in a day. Everyone still vetoed our plans, saying we could run into trouble and get caught in the surf. We argued that we knew how to beach a boat in the surf and could handle a bad situation. But the bottom line was that such an excursion was just too risky for a couple 17-year old kids all by themselves. We were extremely disappointed and a little resentful that objections hadn't been voiced earlier, before we put so much work and planning for the event. In hindsight, I can see that the wisdom of our elders was much more reasonable than we thought at the time.

I had always been interested in mechanics and tinkering around with the Sea Scout barge sharpened that interest. In early 1944 I got a job with Everett Mollenhauer, a friend of the family who owned an auto repair shop in Freedom. I was mostly a parts cleaner and go-fer parts boy, but I did get some experience at twisting nuts and bolts. While on this job I bought a 1929 Graham from Paul Elm next door. I went to the local ration board



the get a “B” ration book of coupons to use the car for work. During gas rationing every car owner received a book of “A” coupons which were dated and only allowed 4 gallons per week. If one needed the car for transportation to work a “B” book would be issued which allowed enough gas for the miles driven to work and back each week. A sticker on the windshield with the same serial number as the gas ration book, either “A” or “B”, was supposed to insure that the rationed gas went into the proper vehicle.

Four gallons of gas a week was not adequate for the driving my friends and I liked to do. So I rode to work with Paul Elm next door, since he could drop me off on his way to work, and used the “B” coupons for personal pleasure. Often I would pool gas with my friends. If we had a friend working in a gas station he would put the gas in any car as long as we had ration tickets. Sometimes we siphoned gas out of one car to fill up another. Steve’s dad was in the well drilling business so he had an “R” book which was for non-highway vehicles such as tractors or, in this case, drilling rigs. Accountability was far from precise and we often had an “R” coupon or two. I think the “R” coupons were good for 5 gallons each.

These were the travails of a teenager during the war years. Some of the “short cuts” we took were not proper or ethical but we didn’t understand that in those days. The imperative to drive and find enjoyment were paramount in those years.

In April of 1944 I turned 18 and immediately registered for the draft. One morning I drove to work and arrived a little early. I was sitting listening to the radio when the station announced the invasion of Normandy. It was D-Day 1944 and the allies were now on the ground in continental Europe. The itch to get into the fray got stronger than ever and I started hounding the draft board for a quick induction into the military. That finally happened on July 18<sup>th</sup>.

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## Chapter 10 – Highlights of Arroyo Seco

*The following is a letter to my Great Granddaughter Fiona Adeline Locke when she was two years old. Her parents asked me to write a family history of Arroyo Seco to put in an Arroyo Seco Scrap Book they are starting for Fiona. I have included it here as Chapter 10 but still in the original letter form.*

July 16, 2011

Dear Great Granddaughter Fiona,

It was such a pleasure to see you and your cousins enjoy all the wonders of the wilderness at Arroyo Seco this year. I don't take part in the events much anymore but I get much enjoyment watching all of you have such fun and relating your activities to my experiences of the past. Arroyo Seco has a long and nostalgic history for me.

I first went to Arroyo Seco in 1935 at the age of nine. Mimi and Pappy (as my parents were called by my children and grandchildren) were asked by friends to camp with them in a place in the Los Padres Mountains called Arroyo Seco.(which means Dry Creek in Spanish). They accepted and we camped in a resort along the Arroyo Seco River which was at that time called Gruver's Campground (now called Miller's). Today this area is occupied by privately-owned cabins along the river but in 1935 it was all campsites. I did not know how to swim at that time and Pappy tried to teach me. Mimi said the campers could hear me yelling and screaming from one end of the river to the other. All in all it was not a very pleasant experience in 1935 – we had a very hot and uncomfortable camp and I got a very severe sunburn – I mean very severe, I was laid up and under a doctors care for a long time after returning home.

My parents said they would never return to that God-forsaken place again. But when the summer of 1936 rolled around they began to reconsider. With some improvements Arroyo Seco might not be too bad, and the river water was so comfortable and refreshing to swim in. If they could get a camp on the shady side of the river it would make a big difference. And now we had learned to respect what careless exposure to the sun could do to our bodies. So they decided to try it again. 1936 was a completely different experience. We had a comfortable camp. I learned to swim. And we became acquainted with other campers who also made this a yearly summer event. I did go home with a bad case of bronchial pneumonia which took six weeks to heal (no antibiotics in those days), but that was not the fault of Arroyo Seco. After two months of summer fun it did not



squelch our penchant for outdoor camping.. We returned to Gruver's Campground again in 1937 and 1938.

In 1938 someone told my parents about a government campground about four miles up the road so we drove up to have a look. We were amazed. The campground was spacious and the campsites were spread out – not jammed up against each other as they were at Gruver's. There was a large CCC Camp located there and the CCC boys kept the campgrounds in immaculate condition. They also kept the beach at Big Rock Pool free of rocks and very sandy. And, not having any camps higher up the arroyo, it was not contaminated and stirred up by swimmers upriver. In addition, camping was free and there was no limit on how long we could stay. The only bad part was that it was a hot walk to the river. Mimi and Pappy decided then and there that next year that is where we would camp.

1939 was our first year at the Government Camp and that is where we have been going ever since. We made our camp under a huge oak tree (which is no longer there) and encircled it with 75-100 feet of unbleached muslin. We went in for more privacy in those days. We had a tent for changing clothes and dressing but we slept outside under the stars. We did indulge in the comfort of cots. Only our immediate needs were transported to Arroyo Seco in the first trailer load. Pappy had to work during the week so he only came down on weekends, bringing supplies and additional camping equipment as well as a 100-pound block of ice. He made a large wooden, upright ice box which would hold the 100-pound block. The sides were covered with burlap and on the top we placed a large bowl of water draped with strips of burlap -- one end immersed in the water and the other leading to various positions on the burlap-covered sides and back. These strips acted like a wick to carry the water from the bowl to the sides and back to keep them wet, where the water evaporated creating a refrigeration effect to help keep the ice box cool.

The drudgery of camping was the daily and weekly chores. We were responsible for keeping the bowl on top of the ice box filled with water and keeping two buckets of water filled – one for drinking and the other for washing our face and hands. We had to “water down” our camp area daily. This was accomplished by using a bucket and an empty can with holes punched in the bottom for a sprinkler. With this we sprinkled water over our camp area. By the time we left for home the ground in the kitchen and eating area was hard and packed, and provided absolutely no dust. Washing clothes periodically was another chore. We heated water either over a white-gasoline stove or the wood-burning camp stove which was a permanent fixture in each camp (it was made of rocks with a steel top and square metal chimney about four feet high). We then poured the hot water into a large old-fashioned wash tub and used a “plunger” to plunge the clothes. This plunged was similar to a plunger used for unclogging drains only it was conical and made of metal. The plunging action created a suction which drew the dirt out of clothes. For some stubborn garments we had an old fashioned wash board on which we rubbed the clothes over a corrugated surface with our knuckles. Then we rinsed the clothes, wrung them out by hand, and hung them on lines to dry.

All the while we were at Arroyo Seco we were virtually isolated from the rest of the world. Portable radios were huge and expensive to keep furnished with batteries. We depended on Pappy bringing the latest news down on weekends. We really looked forward to seeing Pappy on weekends. We usually walked down the road to meet him. It was often dark before he arrived but we could tell the old 1936 Ford by two extra fog lights on the front, which Pappy always turned on. Sometimes he was later than usual because of car trouble. One frequent problem was a fuel pump going out. It was always wise to carry spare parts, especially a rebuilt fuel pump.

Another nice thing about weekends was that we had a car to drive to Big Rock Pool. During the week we walked both ways carrying all of our swim and beach gear. It was hot. So weekends were a treat in that respect. It was also a treat for my grandmother, Nana, because she wasn't able to walk to the pool. Weekends were the only time she could go to the river to cool off. During the week, when we walked, we looked forward to returning to camp and enjoying a bottle of ice cold homemade root beer and some hard candy which was kept in a round tin in the ice box. Sometimes we boys went ahead while walking back to camp. When we did, Mimi always gave us strict instructions on how much candy we could help ourselves to.

Making root beer was a yearly ritual before going to Arroyo Seco. We always made root beer on the back porch at the Green Valley ranch. We saved bottles for this purpose, bought the bottle caps, and borrowed a capper to press the caps on the bottles after they were filled with the root beer mix. Some were small soda pop and beer bottles and others were quart bottles. After being capped the bottles had to be stored in a cool place for the root beer to age – that is, for the yeast to work to produce carbonation. The basement of our Green Valley Ranch was the ideal place. About this time the beer industry started using non-returnable bottles which were lighter in weight (in those days all bottle were returned to the store for a refund). So we started using the empty, non-returnable bottle for root beer. That was a mistake. Soon after starting to use the non-returnable bottles we began hearing occasional explosions coming from the basement. Those lightweight bottles just wouldn't hold the pressure. When Pappy brought more root beer down on weekends he always placed it atop the block of ice. Even so, there were always a few bottles that didn't survive the trip.

But the most fun of all was the root beer fights we kids used to have. Before opening a bottle we shook it up good. After removing the cap we held our finger over the opening like one would with a water hose to make it squirt farther. We'd all open our root beer at the same time and have a free for all. The foaming and squirting would consume most of the root beer in the bottle. This used to infuriate Mimi because it was such a waste. But we thought it was fun (and Pappy, although seeming non-committal, appeared to enjoy watching us).

Besides going to Big Rock Pool we also hiked back to Kings Hole, as you do today. The pool at the upper end of the picnic grounds, which today you call Gilligan's island, we called the children's swimming hole because it had so much shallow area. We also went "over the bank" from the campground to other holes for swimming. One was the Pump

House Pool which today you call George's Gorge. If you look closely you can still see bolts and holes on top of the rock embankment where the pump house used to be bolted down. This pump house hung out over the river and the pump was in the overhanging part of the house. A pipe went down through the floor to draw water up from the river. The water was treated and pumped up the hill to two large storage tanks on the edge of the campground. (In those days there was no "upper" or "primitive" campground across the lake and the group campsite (which we now use) was a group picnic area for day use only. What is now known as the "improved" campground was the only place for camping, and in those days it was primitive. Two CCC boys were stationed at the pump house to operate the pump and take care of the water purification. They had their cots in the pump house and slept there. I liked fishing off the rock embankment and often shot my .22 rifle across the river from there.

.Another favorite pool was what came to be called Pipe Bridge Pool, and that leads to another story. For some reason a project was initiated by the CCCs to replace the pump house by piping water from Rocky Creek. The source was a location up Rocky Creek which was higher in elevation than the campground. A four-inch pipe carried the water down Rocky Creek and then followed the Rocky Creek Trail above the Arroyo Seco River for a short distance. Then a new trail was built that angled down from Rocky Creek Trail to Pipe Bridge Pool. The four-inch pipe followed that trail. As you stand at the railing today and look across the canyon toward Rocky Creek you can still discern the faint scar where that trail used to be. At Pipe Bridge Pool the pipe crossed the river on a narrow suspension bridge about 18 inches wide which we also often crossed on foot, holding on to cable railings and walking on the pipe. I liked hanging from one of the spreader bars above the pipe by my knees like an acrobat on a trapeze. It wasn't really that dangerous because the pipe was below me but it used to drive Mimi mad. Anyway, from there the pipe went up the hill to the storage tanks in the campground. The entire system was gravity fed all the way and required absolutely no pumping. It was a very "green" system which would be hailed by ecologists today. Your Grammy Teri found a coupling from the old four-inch pipe and it is now in our front yard next to the rock planter. It has a succulent plant growing in it.

In 1939 we were about half way through our two-month stay at Arroyo Seco when the water level got so low that that the river was condemned for swimming. Many campers went home but we decided to stay. Our drinking water had to be boiled and we took sponge baths in the tent. All of us kids from the various camps got to be good friends and we spent the time hiking and exploring the wilderness. We started a project of placing a white flag atop every mountain peak surrounding the camp. One group put a flag on Old Baldy and another flagged Bat Mountain. My group climbed the ridge you can see above the Rocky Creek Trail and put a flag on that peak. Then, instead of coming back down the ridge, we went straight down the mountainside toward the river. It was pretty rough going, and in our hurry we almost ran off some cliffs along the ravines, but we finally ended up safely at Pipe Bridge Pool. Mimi watched our descent from camp and, from reports I heard, almost threw a fit.

On another excursion we hiked to the Girls Camp but ran low on drinking water. It was hot and we were really thirsty. Santa Lucia Creek (which runs into the Arroyo Seco at Kings Hole) was dry. Under the bridge where the road crosses Santa Lucia Creek we started digging in the sandy creek bed. Not too far down we found water but didn't know if it was contaminated. We thought that water flowing underground that far upriver was OK but we weren't positive. I had heard that if permanganate of potash turns purple in water the water is OK to drink. I had some granules in my first aid kit so we tried the test. The water turned purple so we assumed it was OK, and proceeded to quench our thirst. (I don't recommend this test for water purity. I believe permanganate of potash will turn purple in any water.)

The main reason we didn't return home when the river was condemned for swimming was because we had a good friend of Pappy's staying there with us. His name was Charles Herbert but we called him Uncle Chuck. He had been suffering from severe arthritis for several years and it was so bad he could hardly get out of bed. We thought the warm, dry Arroyo Seco climate would be good for him. When we arrived at camp that year Pappy had to almost carry him to the Adirondack chair Pappy had made. After a few weeks at Arroyo Seco he could not only get up by himself but carried the chair around camp to where he wanted to sit. Since the Arroyo Seco climate was so good for his arthritis we decided to stay there even though we couldn't swim in the river.

Uncle Chuck became so attached to Arroyo Seco that he got a job with the US Forest Service as caretaker for the CCC Camp after it closed up during World War II. In that capacity he was able to live there the year around. That job led into him becoming a lookout in the Los Padres Forest and he was stationed on Pinion Peak. However, Uncle Chuck still wanted to live at Arroyo Seco so he bought the cabin. When he died in 1960 the cabin went to Pappy. At the time Mimi and Pappy were struggling to make ends meet in the real estate business and they could hardly afford the time or money to keep the cabin up. I suggested that since Uncle Chuck was so fond of my brother, Skip, that the cabin should go to him. Pappy was quite amenable to the idea and said if it was OK with me he would give it to Skip with the understanding that the family could occasionally use it. So that is the story of how the cabin came into the family.

There was another event that helped take the place of swimming in 1939. One Friday evening Pappy arrived at camp with an old canoe tied on top of the car. He had bought it for \$2.50 from one of his gasoline-route customers, whose son had made it in school. We patched it up enough to float and used it in the upper lake. That winter, in early 1940, I helped Pappy completely rebuild the canoe. We replaced all the damaged wood structure, built new floor slats and seat backs, and covered it with new canvas. In 1970 – 30 years later – your Great Uncle Dan helped me completely overhaul and recover the canoe again. By about 1990 it was again getting in pretty bad shape. This time your dad helped me overhaul and recover the canoe. Today your Great Uncle Dan has the canoe. Perhaps some day it will again be restored to use.

1939 was my first hunting trip. Pappy borrowed a deer rifle for me to use and we hiked up the road to Horse Bridge and then up Willow Creek to where it is joined by Tassajara

Creek. We rested during the afternoon at Willow Creek Camp and in the evening we hunted deer up the trail toward Tassajara. We spent the night at Willow Creek Camp and hunted again the next morning. After breakfast we packed up and headed back to Arroyo Seco. We saw many signs of mountain lions but no deer.

Hiking along the upper lake and around Bat Mountain to Bat's Cave was something else we enjoyed. It was a short hike but interesting. Bat's Cave is a sandstone rock overhang that must have been used as a home for the Indians years ago. The ceiling is blackened from smoke and there are holes in the rocks where corn and other meal was ground with another rock, like a mortar and pestle. When a flashlight is shined up in the crevices of the rock ceiling you can see bats resting during the day. The rock ceiling gets very low toward the back of the cave but if you get down on your hands and knees you can crawl under it into another darker room. You need a flashlight here. The floor of this inner cave goes very steeply uphill and then ends.

One year my boyhood friend, Bill Bottero, came to stay a couple weeks with us at Arroyo Seco. On weekdays there were many vacant camps and we kids would often find one on the far outskirts of the campground and camp by ourselves. Bill and I did that and planned on hiding some "treasures" in the caves. I don't recall what all they were except we had one small wooden box which little loaves of processed Kraft Cheese came in. We filled it with various things, including firecrackers, and nailed the lid shut. We put something at the top of the steep floor in the inner Bat's Cave. Then we went through a narrow rock passageway past Bat's Cave and found another small cave which we named Rattlesnake Cave. It was only a couple feet high and went in about ten feet or so. We had to slither in on our bellies. This is where we cached the wooden cheese box. Then we went further around the mountain and saw a cave up higher on the sheer cliff. We leaned a fallen pole against the cliff and scaled our way up to the cave. It was just a recess in the rock cliff and we named it Lion's Den Cave. There was a formation like a stone bench in it on which we could sit and look out across the valley toward Fred's Camp. I left my Boy Scout pocket knife on that rock bench.

I believe it was the following year that I retrieved the "treasures" from Bat's Cave and Rattlesnake Cave, but not Lion's Den Cave. Many years later, probably in the 1980s, I went back to Lions Den Cave with some of my children. We arranged a pole so your Uncle Mark could shinny up to Lion's Den Cave. The knife was no longer there.

1941 was the last year we camped at Arroyo Seco until after World War II. The summers of 1942 and 1943 were spent at Big Sur where Pappy worked as a patrolman for the US Forest Service. Then I went into the army and didn't get discharged until August 1946. Shortly after that I started taking flying lessons and enrolled at Cal Poly. One hot day my friend Dan Leddy and I were discussing how nice it would be to be swimming at Arroyo Seco. The idea was so tempting that we rented a little two-place Aeronca airplane and headed for the Los Padres Mountains. We landed on the flat plateau above Fred's camp, parked the plane, and walked down the hill to the pool. We swam for a while and then basked in the sun on the shale rock across the river from the beach at Fred's. After a few hours we hiked back up to the airstrip, cranked up the plane, flew to Three Peaks Lookout

to buzz Uncle Chuck, and then headed home. One other time four of us flew to Arroyo Seco for a swim. Dan flew his war surplus basic trainer with a passenger and I flew a Luscombe with the fourth person.

The first time I took Grandma Janet to Arroyo Seco was in early May 1947. I was going to Cal Poly and Grandma came down for the Poly Royal (which they no longer have). We had been recently engaged but I hadn't bought a ring yet. While she was there for the Poly Royal I gave her the engagement ring. On the way home to Watsonville we stopped at Arroyo Seco to have a picnic. Grandma was favorably impressed during the picnic but a couple years later when we actually camped there with our firstborn, Cres, she had some difficulty dealing with the dirt. Later she became more used to camping and in 1949 she and Mimi and Cres (in his play pen) camped there for several weeks. Pappy and I were both working for the State Forestry and joined them on our days off. We had different days off so our visits were staggered. I believe that was Grandma Janet's first long-term camp at Arroyo Seco and I think she enjoyed it.

In 1959 we decided to rent a cabin behind Uncle Chuck's cabin. It was the cabin directly behind the cabin (or house) that is across the driveway from Uncle Chuck's cabin. Your Great Aunt Mary was only 5 months old. When we went to the pool we had to take her play pen and find a shady spot under the sycamore tree. When we returned from the pool we always made a pitcher of Kool Aid. One time Cres reached for the sugar sack and grabbed a scorpion which stung him. We weren't sure what we should do but I used the razor blade in the snake bite kit to make a very shallow cut. Then I used the suction syringe. It was a transparent syringe and when suction was applied I could see a cloudy white glob come out with the blood. The stinging from the bite stopped immediately. That white glob must have been all of the poison. We kept a close watch on him but there was no more pain and no swelling.

On another night we were sitting at the outside table for dinner and I happened to look out at the driveway, which ran next to our table. There was a huge rattlesnake about three feet long slowly slithering across the driveway toward us. I didn't have a good appreciation of the creatures of nature at that time so I killed it. Today I would merely have removed it to another area away from human population.

After that we had a more serious event take place. Your Grammy Teri was just a little over two years old and she started having a pain in her hip. We tried to take her temperature but could not "shake down" the mercury thermometer we had. The weather was 103 degrees and that is the lowest temperature the thermometer would read. Her hip started getting very painful and the pain was aggravated by the least little movement. Grandma Janet and I decided Teri should definitely see a doctor. We decided that I would drive her to Soledad to see Uncle Chuck's doctor. Grandma Janet would stay at our rental cabin with the rest of our children. As I drove to Soledad Teri laid across the front seat with her head on my lap (no seat belts in those days). She was in so much misery. I don't remember the details but the doctor in Soledad wasn't available and I was advised to see another doctor in Gonzales, so we took off again. The Gonzales doctor looked like he was ready for retirement. He couldn't diagnose Teri's problem but

gave her penicillin which seemed to help. He advised us to go home immediately and contact our own doctor. So we cut our vacation short, packed up, and headed for Santa Clara.

The next morning Grandma Janet took Teri to our doctor, who referred us to a specialist. The specialist put her in the hospital immediately and operated to drain the infection. A culture of the drainage was not conclusive because the penicillin given by the Gonzales doctor had killed much of the bacteria. I can't remember what the specialist's diagnosis was but he said he had never seen anyone in that much pain from the disease who wasn't permanently crippled. Teri was in a lower body cast for weeks and the doctor was amazed at her recovery. My theory is that Arroyo Seco prevented her from being crippled. At the pool she used to sit in the shallow water up to her waist for all the time we were at the pool. I believe that soaking effect brought the infection to a head and she was able to be treated before damage was done.

Another adventure I had at Arroyo Seco was when my brother Skip and I went deer hunting. We started out one morning before daylight and hiked up the ridge behind the cabin. We climbed for a long time but didn't see any deer. When we got up to a pretty good altitude we found there were many other hunters there. Skip and I decided we weren't going to find any deer in that crowd so we went down the side of the ridge into a narrow valley. (If you stand in the back yard of the cabin and look at the hill directly behind, the valley to the right is the one we went down into only much farther up.) In those early days of the atomic age, staking uranium claims on government land was the new fad. Someone thought there might be uranium deposits at Arroyo Seco so entrepreneurs were staking out mineral claims in the forest. A friend of Skip's had a claim in the bottom of the valley we were descending into. Skip took me to it and we sat down to rest when we reached it. We could still see other hunters up on the ridge. Skip told me that it looked like one of them was aiming his rifle in our direction. No sooner had the words left his mouth than we heard a loud BOOM and almost simultaneously the "splat" of a bullet hitting the rocky face above us. We ducked for cover and then cursed the air blue letting the greenhorn hunters know why they shouldn't be in the wilderness.

We decided the hunting was over for that day and headed down the valley toward the cabin. It was still fairly early and cold. We were walking down the trail with Skip in the lead when he stopped suddenly and started waving his arms in the air attempting to regain his balance and move back. There was sort of a step in the trail and as he was about to step down he saw a rattler coiled up right below his foot. He tried to stop but finally wound up jumping over the snake. As it turned out the poor thing was so cold it could hardly move. It was a good sized adult rattler and in our ignorance we killed the poor little critter. I carried it back to the cabin to show our kids what a rattlesnake looks like up close – the rattles, the fangs, the skin design and whatever else. Then we buried it.

Uncle Chuck died of a heart attack at his cabin in January 1960. Then the cabin reverted to Pappy and eventually to my brother Skip, as I explained earlier. From 1960 to sometime in the late 1970s our family spent our Arroyo Seco time at the cabin. We

usually went there for two weeks every summer. We used Skip's jeep with the trailer attached for transportation to the swimming pool. All our swimming gear – tubes, life jackets, play pen, beach backs, canvases to sit on, etc. – was left in the trailer hooked to the jeep so we could just hop in and take off. Some rode in the jeep and some in the trailer. In those days we could drive right down to the sycamore tree on Big Rock Beach so we didn't have to carry all our stuff. Either Grandma Janet or I stayed on the beach to watch our kids while they were swimming. We seldom got to swim together. I don't recall ever having to rescue any of our own kids but we did pull a few others out when they got in over their heads.

We got the large, white rock in our front yard from Big Rock Beach. I drove the jeep and trailer to the beach and our oldest children helped me roll the rock up a plank into the trailer. It was pretty heavy. Then we changed the trailer from the jeep to our car and drove home, where we backed up to the front garden and rolled the rock out. It has been there ever since.

In 1980 we started camping again. We had Camp 39 (I believe it was) in the "upper campground" (now called the primitive campground). Your Grammy Teri and Grandpa Greg camped next to us with Heather and Cortnie. Your Dad was not yet born. But your two aunts got sick and their family had to go home. Grandma Janet and I stayed the rest of the week with our younger children who were still living with us.

I believe we used the upper campground for one more year and then we started camping in what is now known as the improved campground, although it was not improved at that time. All of our extended family got camps close together. Grandma Janet and I, with our younger children, usually used Camp 18. Your Grammy Teri and her family used Camp 8. Sometimes we camped during February and April when the schools had a break. In February it was beautiful with everything green and nice balmy weather. We didn't have as good luck in April because it sometimes rained and that makes camping miserable.

In 1996 we started using the group area and have done so every year since, except for two. (One year the entire campground was closed for modernization and in 2008 it was closed because of a forest fire.) And that is where you, Fiona, came into the picture.

So, those are some of my memories of and experiences at Arroyo Seco. Now you will go from here to create your own Arroyo Seco history. I know it will be an enjoyable experience and that you will develop the same memories and passion for the wilderness that I have experienced over the past 76 years.

With much love and wishing you lots of future fun,

Grampa Bob



## **PART 3**

### **My Little Piece of the War**

## Chapter 11 – Welcome to the Army

Shortly after my 77<sup>th</sup> birthday I compiled a collection of my wartime memories. I called it my *War Journal* and gave a copy to each of our children. This Part on my memoirs is essentially the same. I have made some minor changes/corrections, did some editing in a few places, and added a little additional information.

When I wrote *War Journal* I had been thinking more intensely than ever of my war experiences during the 1940s. I don't know why. I have developed a strong dislike for war and killing and it would seem logical that I would relegate all those memories to the past and forget about them. But that wasn't possible, and it shouldn't be. I recall what Tolstoy said:

“Past and gone? What is past and gone? Can anything be gone that we have never begun to exterminate and cure, that we even hesitate to call by its right name?”

We call it “war.” It's right name is “murder.” Institutionalized murder called by any other name is still not right in God's eyes. We were all murderers in World War II, but we excused ourselves by calling it “war” and claiming that God was on our side.

I have gone through my war experiences day by day, to the best of my memory, and documented them as accurately as possible. Much of the information comes back to me from a journal I kept, pictures I took or saved, and other memorabilia. But a good share comes straight out of my head – from memories I have never been able to dispel. I hope this attempt at a comprehensive compilation of those years of my life will help me understand why they have been haunting me so much.

Perhaps by documenting my memories of that carnage in the greatest detail my memory will allow, it will help my children, and my grandchildren, and their children and grandchildren – perhaps it will help them all to understand the viciousness of mass, international slaughter which we euphemize and glorify under the label of “war.”

I have not pulled any punches or glossed over any experiences. I recorded everything as precisely as possible after all these years. At the very least I pray that it will be some contribution to bringing peace and justice to this world.

### UNCLE SAM CALLS

During my senior year in high school I took a test for what was called the Navy V-12 Program. It provided a few years of college and a naval officer's commission. Very few were accepted but I passed with a high score and could have gone into the program. I didn't. I would have had to start immediately but decided I would rather finish high school first. I was young for my grade and would be able to graduate when I was barely 17. Most of the boys in my class were in the service by graduation time, and some were

already casualties. Anyway, I decided to put the program off for another year.

When the V-12 test was given again the following year, I took it. I could have enlisted at age 17, and was tempted to do that, but I decided to wait it out and see how I fared on the V-12 test. The results were a long time coming back to me and then I was not accepted.



Me at Monterey Presidio

July 1944

But by that time I had turned 18 and could not enlist – I had to wait for the draft.

I turned 18 in April of 1944. It was almost impossible for a young person caught up in the patriotic emotions of “fighting for freedom” to think of alternatives to killing. Everything and everyone encouraged us to fight and kill. There were a few insightful conscientious objectors but they were very few and publicly despised as draft dodgers and cowards. No, I was caught up in the fighting fever of the times and would not miss out on the action.

Shortly after I registered for the draft, I was called up for a pre-induction physical. A group of us went by charter Greyhound bus to San Francisco. There we went through all the exercises and examination to make sure we could breathe and walk. At the end we went into a room to complete a lot of records. While feeling disillusioned at being drafted into the Army, I noticed a table with a couple Navy men. I asked why they were there. They said if I was interested in the Navy they could have me

assigned there as they were taking a few draftees. I jumped at the chance and felt exhilarated during my return trip to Watsonville. I was classified 1-A.

Two months after my birthday I still had not received my “greetings” from Uncle Sam. I went to the draft board to find out what was the delay. I had become quite friendly with the chairwoman of the draft board. She said there would be a call-up in a couple days and offered to put me on it. That was a little too short notice but she assured me I’d be in the July call-up. I was, and on 18 July 1944 I was inducted and on my way to war.

On the day of my induction, a chartered Greyhound bus left the Watsonville depot at 6:30 AM Pacific War Time (PWT – which is merely daylight savings time all year long). The chairwoman of the draft board was there to check us off on the roster and see us on our way. She wished me a special “good luck.” Then we were on our way back to San Francisco for another physical examination and induction. I felt sure that before this day was over I would be on my way to Farragut, Idaho for Navy boot camp.

Was I disappointed! When I arrived at the induction center in Frisco I was told that no more draftees would be going into the Navy. The Army gets them all. I went through the routine physical and other routines all day long. I was finally sworn into the Army of the United States (AUS) at 5:30 PM. (There were two armies – The United States Army was composed of enlistees and career soldiers; the AUS was for draftees.) By 6:15 we were back on the bus headed for Monterey Presidio (now the Defense Language Institute), where we arrived at 10:30. We were checked in and eventually got to bed at 11:30 PM.

For the next several days we went through indoctrination lectures, had interviews, filled out all kinds of forms, had some drills and calisthenics, pulled some KP (Kitchen Police), and washed some windows. My Army serial number is 39149347. All soldiers from California had their serial number begin with 39. The last four digits were also significant. Preceded by the initial of my last name, it was my laundry mark – A-9347.

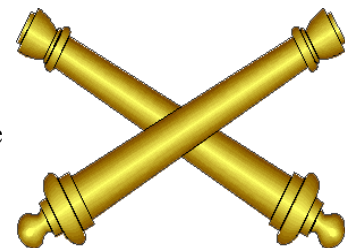
On several evenings Mom, Pap, and Jacquie came to visit me. Sometimes Skip and Sonny also came along. Dick Lynn was still with me and I met some other older fellows from Watsonville. They were married and when their wives came to visit them they would often bring Jacquie along, for which I was very grateful.

On July 24<sup>th</sup> I got my shipping orders. Those who were in their 20s were assigned to Camp Roberts, California for infantry training. The rest of us, mostly 18-year-olds, were assigned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma for artillery training. I felt a little disappointed about that because Camp Roberts would have been closer to home. In addition, I had become closely acquainted with my new married friends and was reluctant to part so soon. But my orders said Fort Sill and that is where I went.

Basic training in those days lasted 17 weeks and then a soldier was usually shipped overseas. On the evening of July 25<sup>th</sup> Mom, Pap and Jacquie came over to the Presidio to tell me goodbye. We were shipping out for Oklahoma the next day. Of course I wasn't supposed to tell anyone but it was pretty hard to keep secret.

Up at 5:45 AM on the 26<sup>th</sup> and departed by train at 8:15. The first segment of our journey was by rail to San Francisco and then a bus to Oakland. There we would board a train for Fort Sill. In Oakland we boarded a Santa Fe train and pulled out at 2:45 PM. There were many stops and we reached Fresno by 9PM. I went to bed at 10:00. Dick Lynn, a friend from high school, was my buddy on this trip and we shared a Pullman berth. I believe Allyson Rider may have been on this train, too – if not, he did get to Fort Sill later while Dick and I were still there.

The next morning, the 27<sup>th</sup>, I awoke at 6:20. We were somewhere in a desert. I guess it was the Mojave as we crossed the Colorado River into Arizona at 10:20 AM. By 6:40 PM we were at Flagstaff. A pretty boring day.



Field Artillery Insignia

The next day we were in New Mexico. It was hot on this train and just as hot outside. There was no air conditioning in those days so we left the windows open for air. Trouble was that all the soot from the engine also drifted in. We were soon covered with a sooty grit and that, combined with the heat, makes us all the more miserable.

We stopped at one small town. The back car on our train had a fenced platform to stand on, and I found a place on that platform. All the people in the towns seemed very supportive of soldiers and gave the “V” for victory sign. At this particular town they brought us large slices of cold watermelon, sliced longitudinally in southern fashion. It tasted really good. This particular watermelon was yellow inside instead of red. It is the first time I had seen one like it. But it sure hit the spot.

On the next morning (July 29<sup>th</sup>) we woke up in Fort Worth, Texas. The train had

stopped. All of us new recruits disembarked to change trains for Fort Sill. The officer in charge marched us a few blocks down the street to the YMCA. There we were able to take a nice hot shower and clean up. That made us feel much better. Then we boarded a train headed north and arrived at Fort Sill at 4:30 PM CWT (Central War Time).

On the first night there was a terrific thunder storm. We didn't hear much about tornadoes in those days so we weren't aware of any. That was our welcome to Oklahoma.

## FORT SILL

In the 1840s, Kiowa and Comanche Indians held their war parties on the site where the Old Post (original fort) now stands. After the Civil War, Maj. Gen Philip H. Sheridan led a campaign into Indian Territory (Oklahoma) to protect settlements along the Texas and Kansas borders from hostile Indians. On 8 January 1869, he staked out the site of Fort Sill. It was first called Camp Wichita because it was at the foothills of the Wichita Mountains. Later he renamed it after his West Point buddy, Brigadier General Joshua W. Sill, who was killed during the Civil War. As the frontier disappeared, the Mission of Fort Sill changed from cavalry to field artillery.



Insignia for the Field  
Artillery Training Center  
at Fort Sill

The Field Artillery Replacement Training Center came into existence with the selective service (draft) law. It was established at Fort Sill by an order dated 10 January 1941. (During World War II, there were similar centers at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina and Camp Roberts, California.) Today, the Field Artillery Training Center (dropping the word "Replacement" in the title) at Fort Sill is the permanent home for artillerymen, who are commonly called "Red Legs." (The artillery color is red. Braid on garrison caps for artillerymen during WW-II was red. A red guidon is the field artillery flag.)

The first selectees (a euphemism for draftee) began arriving on 10 March 1941. After the US entered WW-II, and the fighting picked up, field artillery battalions had to be organized rapidly to support all the infantry divisions being formed. A 1944 Fort Sill publication touts its training in this manner: "The superior coordination demanded to move, communicate, and fire has resulted in an amazing development of speed and accuracy ... and standards have repeatedly been set higher and higher as abilities progress to a peak of firepower and surprise. The enemy's respect and fear of our 'automatic artillery' is a testimony of training success." That seemed like a PR statement at first. But as I got further into training I began to see the standards and abilities that had been developed. Later in my Army career I would learn first hand just how much the enemy feared artillery as very deadly units with a high priority to "neutralize."

One of the first things that caught my attention at Fort Sill was the name of the place – the Field Artillery Replacement Training Center. It begged the question, Training a replacement for whom? No one was being rotated back to the states. We were all in for the duration. Seeking answers highlighted the morbid reality. I believe I was not the only one who felt expendable. If anything happens, a replacement will be cranked out to

take your place. We retaliated in some small way. The abbreviation for the Field Artillery Replacement Training was F.A.R.T.C. We just called it the Fart Center.

When I arrived at Fort Sill, there were three training regiments – the sixth, seventh, and eighth. The first task was to classify us to see where we would be assigned. Basic Training consisted of 17 weeks. Everyone took the same training during the first six weeks. The Fort Sill publication states: “Field Artillery specialists ... gain the skills that equip them for some of the most vital jobs in modern warfare. ... [but] each new recruit received here is trained first not in his own specialty but in the duties of the basic soldier. Each soldier to leave our Center at Sill can, if the emergency should arise, assume and credibly perform the duties of the man at the gun.” That situation would arise later during my time in the Army. I used more of the knowledge gained during that first six weeks of training than all the technical information I absorbed during the last eleven. Those first six weeks were nothing more than learning how to kill.



Classification Room at Fort Sill

(Ft. Sill Publication)

On our first day at Sill – Sunday, 30 July 1944 – we went to classification where we were assigned the specialty we would be trained in. It was a room with pictures on the wall of all the specialties. The picture at the far right illustrated the Mule Pack Artillery. Since I had worked with mules in the US Forest Service, I decided that is what I wanted to do. I told that to the person who interviewed me but he looked at my high school transcript and said with all the math I had that I would be more useful in Surveying and Fire Direction. I was pretty disappointed at the time. It seemed that every time I tried to get what I wanted in the military, I was sent somewhere else. First the Army instead of the Navy; then Fort Sill instead of Camp Roberts, now surveying instead of mule-pack artillery. Welcome to the Army!

I was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon of Battery B (Baker Battery), 34<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Training Regiment. Our platoon occupied a two-story barracks. Sergeant Parrato was our platoon sergeant.



3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Barracks

October 1944



The first several days were pretty boring – orientation lectures, training films, being assigned clothing and equipment, and a lot of calisthenics and dismounted drill (marching). We were taught how to make our bed with the blankets so tight that when Major Speckman dropped a silver dollar from three feet it would bounce six inches. (The silver dollar was much larger and heavier in those days – 1½ inches diameter) If it didn't do that you would get a gig, which meant extra drudge duty. Major Speckman was the one who oversaw all our training. He was always prowling around the grounds carrying a baton for pointing things out. We called it his "swagger stick." Rumor has it that the Major got his name from a time he ran across a perfectly immaculate barracks where there didn't seem to be anything wrong. He finally found a reason to issue a gig because he found fly specks on a light bulb.

Speaking of immaculate barracks, we also learned to "GI" the barracks. That entailed a thorough cleaning including scrubbing the entire wooden floor with strong lye soap (GI soap) and a brush, on our hands and knees. Then we had to wash all the dirt off thoroughly with buckets of water splashed along the floor. The first time our platoon GI'd the barracks we thought we had done an excellent job. Then our top sergeant, Sergeant Barnes (a grandfatherly type at first appearance), came around to inspect. He said the dirt wasn't washed off good enough and we had to do the entire job over again. Of course this type of housecleaning was always done after the regular training day, on our own time.



Noon Briefing at Fort Sill

(Ft. Sill Publication)

All in all, though, Baker Battery was a pretty good one to be in. Most of the non-coms and officers were pretty human and had a sense of humor. Even old Top Sergeant Barnes wasn't really so bad. He was very strict but he wasn't one of the type that screeches in your face. I felt he did have a little respect for us. He was nearing retirement and spent most of his evenings at the NCO Club drinking beer with his buddies.



Our Team in 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon      September 1944  
Me in back row, 2<sup>nd</sup> from right



The B-Battery mess hall was also unique as far as Army standards go. Most of them had a chow line where the grub was tossed onto a metal tray. We sat down to a family type meal with china dishes and food served in china bowls or on china platters. That meant a little extra detail for us – table waiting – but we didn’t mind. It only took a couple hours a day every several weeks for each soldier. Table waiters did get up earlier and eat breakfast with the cooks and KPs. Then they waited tables for the rest of the battery. After the tables were cleared they joined their platoon. At noon and evening meals the platoon would be in ranks about 15 minutes before chow time. The corporal would yell “Table waiters take off.” They would take off on the double to eat early so they could wait tables. At noon, the rest of the platoon joined many others in an assembly area to get the daily news and see the progress of the war on a situation map.



Mural on wall at our Recreation Hall

“Liberty, Honor, Country as we follow the Red Guidon” (Ft. Sill publication)

In our free time – Sundays and evenings (usually) – we went to movies (there were several theaters on post), to the recreation club, for a walk to explore the old post, or just sat around and talked or wrote letters. Upkeep of our equipment was always done in our free time; such as scrubbing our web equipment with GI soap (pistol belt, canteen holder, leggins, and the such), dubbing our shoes, cleaning our rifle, etc. At least we could send our clothes to the laundry so we didn’t have to wash them. On Sundays we could sleep in (usually to about 0800) but on training days we were out of the sack at 0530. Sometimes our training was interrupted by a day of KP or latrine duty.



Me in Class-A uniform  
September 1944

We were confined to the post for the first three weeks of training. On August 26<sup>th</sup> I received my Class-A pass to visit the nearby town of Lawton, but only after I could recite the general orders for sentry duty by rote. Of course a Class-A pass meant you had to be in class-A uniform. This Army command was very strict. We couldn’t wear the belts and billed caps that we

could buy at Army-Navy stores in town. Everything had to be GI (government issue). MPs patrolled off-base to make sure these regulations were enforced. [Just as a note, I went directly from basic training to overseas and couldn’t believe the comparatively casual atmosphere over there. In Manila one time, an MP stopped me because I wasn’t wearing my cap. As I was putting it on, he reached over and buttoned one of my shirt pockets. Nothing so casual would have occurred on the streets of Lawton, Oklahoma]

The summer class-A uniform were the cotton khakis, which were lighter and cooler. That is what I wore when I first arrived. Of course during the work day, while training, we wore fatigues. But after hours, even on post, we had to change to class-As. Later in

the year, as the weather became cooler, and on a prescribed date, everyone simultaneously changed to wearing woolen olive-drab for the class-A uniform.

This Class-A pass was permanent for our off duty hours but only to visit Lawton. Even then, there were areas off-limits because of prostitution. Oklahoma was a “dry” state at that time (beer was allowed) so there was no appreciable alcohol problem. Racism was rampant and I’ve seen bus drivers tell black people to move to the back of the bus. There was segregation everywhere – even in the Army at that time. Everyone I trained with was a white.

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## Chapter 12 – Basic Training

We started our basic training during our second week at Fort Sill, on August 7<sup>th</sup>. The first six weeks included orientation and basic combat training for an artilleryman. The remaining eleven weeks were devoted to our specialty – in my case, Surveying and Fire Direction. Of course we were informed of the two critical codes on behavior: (1) there are three ways to do things – the right way, the wrong way, and the army way, and (2) the army can't force you do anything, but it can sure make you wish you had done it. I'll start with the first six weeks.

### THE FIRST SIX WEEKS

Each area we were trained in had training films to watch and sometimes demonstrations. Below is the list of areas:

- Chemical Warfare
- Cannoneering
- Carbine
- Driving
- Army Organization
- Military Sanitation and First Aid
- Machine Guns
- Malaria Control
- Ammunition
- Enemy Information
- Cordage (knot tying)
- Hand Grenades
- Camouflage and Concealment
- Field Fortification
- Bazooka
- Local Security
- Mines and Booby Traps
- Visual Signaling
- Wire Communication
- Defense Against Tanks



Chem. Warfare Exercise  
(Ft. Sill publication)



Working the target pit  
on the firing range.(Ft.  
Sill publication)

I will describe some of the most significant. In **Chemical Warfare** we learned all the different types of gasses – how to recognize them, how to protect ourselves from them, and how to treat for exposure to them. We learned to use and maintain the gas masks. We went into gas chambers to experience the exposure. First we went into a tear-gas chamber with masks on. Then we removed them, recited our name, rank and serial number, and got out. We would then stand outside with the wind blowing into our watering eyes. As we became more proficient we went into a chamber containing phosgene gas (at least that is what they told us it was). We had to enter without a gas mask, put it on, and then clear it. The gases were so strong they even burned our skin, not just our eyes. We also learned the different types of smoke grenades – thermite, white phosphorous, red smoke, and green smoke. The latter two were used for signals.

The **carbine** used by artillerymen is a .30 caliber weapon that is more like a long-barreled pistol than a rifle. The cartridges are just slightly longer than a pistol's. The carbine is an artilleryman's auxiliary weapon – the cannon is the primary weapon. The carbine is only intended for close-in self-defense. The first thing we were taught was a long list of safety precautions, which included the classic: "Don't point your carbine at anyone unless you intend to kill him." Next in line was care of the carbine and the immediate action to take if it fails to fire. And above all, the importance of keeping the weapon clean.

We were never allowed to possess live ammunition except on the firing range. When on the range, the rounds of ammunition were counted and recorded when given to us. After we had fired them, the brass (empty shell casings) was turned in and counted. The numbers had to match. Possessing live ammunition at any other time was a court martial offense. On the range we spent part of the time firing at the targets and then we

changed off to operate the targets and signal the score from the target pit. We were taught a formula for setting the sites for range and windage. Wind velocity was

estimated by taking the angle of a flag, or the angle a handful of grass falling, and divide it by four. Use that for wind velocity. Range had to be estimated in yards and then divided by 100. Then these two numbers were plugged into an equation:

$$(\text{Range})^2 \times (\text{Wind Velocity}) / 5 = (\text{No. of Inches on Sight})$$

For instance, at 200 yards range with a 10 mph wind from the right, we would have to aim 8 inches to the right of our targets. Range was compensated by raising or lowering the sight. It was a terribly windy day when our battery went out to qualify and



On the firing range (Ft. Sill  
publication)

the carbine doesn't have much muzzle velocity. The wind was so bad that sometimes I had to almost aim at the target next to mine in order to hit mine. I managed to qualify for Sharpshooter with a score of 161 out of a possible 200. I did not feel very happy with that. Sharpshooter was OK but I knew I should have done better.

Carbines also had a bayonet. It was more the size of a double-edged hunting knife than the type of bayonet used in the infantry. During bayonet drill we were instructed on all the thrusts and obstructive maneuvers. Here again it was driven into us that we were being trained to kill. The corporal in charge of the class started out with gruesome instruction: "When you thrust, don't just stick it in and then pull it out. Twist it a little and pull a little shit out with it."

One day I had KP. The corporal in charge of our team said a friend of his was to be corporal of the guard that night and didn't have a carbine. He asked if I would lend mine since I had KP and wouldn't be carrying it. Of course I consented. The next morning, the friend-corporal put my carbine back in the rack and thanked me as I was getting ready to stand reveille. So I just grabbed the carbine and ran out to get in formation. During inspection the officer found dust in the bore of my weapon. Consequences: the following Sunday I was back on KP again. It didn't seem fair but there were no excuses accepted. Had I been facing an enemy with a dirty weapon that jammed, the enemy wouldn't accept an excuse that I didn't have time to clean it.

**Driving** instructions took place all through our basic training. We had motor marches, classes on operating the vehicles, highway signs and rules, safety precautions, how to drive in convoys, hand signals between vehicles, constant observation for malfunctions, and vehicle maintenance. We spent hours on our backs under the trucks wiping off every dust, grease, and oil spot after use. Inspection was rigorous. One day we had a test to see who qualified for an Army driver's license. It was in the 2½-ton truck (which I really preferred to the 1½-ton 4x4). The 2½-ton was a 6x6, which meant it had six wheels and all six of those wheels were driving (powered). I can't remember what all we had to do for the driving test but



2½-ton 6x6 Truck

I do remember having to stop on a very steep hill that required 6-wheel drive, and then start again. All shifting was manual – no automatics in those days. Anyway, I passed and was qualified for everything from jeep to 6x6. I was then called upon to ride with recruits who were just starting their training. During nighttime blackout marches there were some roads where only the licensed drivers could be at the wheel. One was the



.30 caliber Machine Gun  
(Ft. Sill publication)

"Little Burma Road." When we went to the mess hall for refreshments after one night march, the lieutenant who led us was joking about the road we had traveled. I remember his one remark: "I bet most of you were holding a pretty tight asshole going over that least stretch."

We received training on both the .30 caliber water-cooled and the .50 caliber air-cooled **machine guns**. Classes taught us how they were used, safety precautions, field stripping and



reassembly. During one class on the .50 caliber, everyone went to sleep. We had guard duty the night before and couldn't keep our eyes open. Our whole team was gigged. Besides having to repeat the class, we had to double-time everywhere we went in formation for a week.



Our Team after the Machine  
Gun Obstacle Course  
14 Sept. 1944

I enjoyed firing the .50 caliber guns but the .30 caliber I had was a dud. We just couldn't get the head spacing right and it kept rupturing the cartridge casings and jamming the gun. I never did get a real experience at firing it.

Later in our training we had to go over the machine gun obstacle course. The course was muddy with all kinds of barbed wire obstacles. A machine gun was firing back and forth about 30 inches above the ground. It was blocked so it couldn't fire lower and all was OK as long as we didn't go higher. The object was to crawl out of a trench and wiggle our way across that muddy field and still keep our carbine clean and dry so it would fire. There was a lot of barbed wire to scoot under on our backs. Because of the mud and messiness we were issued a Class-D uniform for this event.

That is one so worn out that it will just be thrown away when we took it off. What we got were blue denim fatigues that looked like World War I vintage. We also had to wiggle our way across the machine gun obstacle course at night when we could see the bullets were real. The tracers seemed to pass only inches above our bodies.

Other weapons we had to master were **Hand Grenades**, the **Bazooka**, and **Mines & Booby Traps**. To practice **Hand Grenade** throwing we hiked out to the fragmentation court. This was a system of trenches where most of the personnel could wait safely in a rear trench. Only the instructor and the trainee throwing the grenade were in the front trench which had a high parapet to throw over.



Fragmentation Court for Hand  
Grenade practice (Ft. Sill  
Publication)

Just before we entered the trenches the non-com in charge reminded us once again of our purpose for being there: "You are here to learn to kill." With those words ringing in our ears we entered the court. When it was my turn to go to the forward trench and throw a grenade, the instructor seemed very nervous. He gave me clear instructions that I had to throw high enough to clear the high parapet, other wise the grenade would roll back down in the trench with us. I said OK and took the grenade. I pulled the pin and gave it a mighty toss in the proper form just as we had been taught. I thought I had done pretty well. When I turned to the instructor he looked as white as a sheet. He said: "You only missed the top of the parapet by inches." I didn't think that was true and to this day I think he was just spooked.



Loading and Firing a  
Bazooka.  
(Ft. Sill publication)

The **Bazooka** was the earliest version of a shoulder-fired rocket launcher. It was a recoilless weapon used against tanks, pill

boxes, armored vehicles, and various types of fortifications and was most effective within 100 yards. The launcher was 54 inches long with a smooth bore tube of 3.26 inches diameter. The propulsion is in the rocket which is electrically ignited. The head of the 21-inch long rocket held a “mystery charge” which was extremely secret at the time but what we now know as a shaped charge with a piezoelectric fuse to penetrate armor. It melts a one-inch hole in a tank and sprays the inside with molten shrapnel. We fired dummy rounds against an old tank.

The **Mines and Booby Traps** course covered many things. Some mines were set off with a push pin when they are stepped on or driven over. Others had a pull pin for other applications. Still others had a combination of pull and pressure fuses. There were also delay fuses and multiple fuses. One type of anti-personnel mine had a charge to boost it 4-6 feet above the ground before the main charge went off sending fragmentation in all



Demonstrating a land mine.

(Ft. Sill publication)

directions. Anti-tank mines worked basically the same but were more powerful. Some had 100% plastic explosives. We had to learn how to lay a mine field and map the location of each mine.

The most popular type of booby trap was made with a hand grenade. They came packaged in cylindrical cardboard containers. To set booby traps around a bivouac area, the telescoping top of the container was removed. The grenade was removed and, while carefully holding down the lever so as not to trigger the fuse, the safety pin was removed. Then the grenade was gingerly slipped back into the topless tubular container.

While in the container the lever was held down so the fuse was not triggered. This assembly was tied to a tree about a foot off

the ground. Then a string was tied to the grenade and secured to another tree or rock some distance away. If an enemy came along at night and tripped over the string it would pull the grenade out of its container. That allowed the lever to release and the grenade

would explode. Because of these booby traps we were always cautioned never to take short cuts and always watch where we are stepping – even in a friendly area. I’ll explain in a later chapter how I almost got caught in one of our own booby traps.

Two other courses we took were **First Aid** and **Malaria Control**. Each soldier carried two items on his pistol belt. One was a first aid pouch for wounds and the other was a canteen. Penicillin was not developed until after the war was over. The first aid kit contained a large dressing to cover the wound, a packet of sulpha powder, and two sulpha tablets. When giving first aid to a wounded soldier one always used his first aid kit. We were instructed to never use our own first aid kit on someone else because then we wouldn’t have it when we needed it. The first aid procedure was to sprinkle the sulpha powder on the wound and then wrap it with the wound dressing. Then give the wounded soldier the two sulpha tablets with lots of water. The canteen of water was as much a part of the first aid kit as the pouch.

**Malaria control** consisted of recognizing the Anopheles mosquito (Anopheles Annie) which carries the Malaria parasite, and destroying its habitat when possible. I believe we had a mosquito repellent, or had access to it if needed. Every person in the Pacific was



issued a mosquito bar (net to go over a bunk). We were instructed how to use it, and to use it every night. Where possible, it was strung on a rack over our cot, and always tucked in. The importance of always using the mosquito net was continuously drummed into us. In addition, we were told that before entering a malaria zone we would start taking Atabrine tablets to prevent the symptoms and effect of malaria from showing if we should contract the disease. We were also instructed about Dengue fever which is also carried by mosquitoes. We were told it lasted about ten days and, although it wouldn't kill us, it might make us wish it did.

**Cannoneering** was the central issue in the field artillery. All other training supported firing the artillery pieces in a precise manner at the correct time. Artillery is deadly. Shells could register on a target with chilling precision, even in those days. One cannon in a battery usually did the registering and then the entire battery fired. That saved ammunition. An enemy gets to feeling pretty frightened when he sees an artillery round explode just past him, and then another just short of him. An "over" and a "short" to any experienced soldier indicates he has been "bracketed." He'd better duck for cover because the next one is going to be real close and more of them.



105mm M101 Howitzer (Ft. Sill Publication)

It was the practice in WW-II for each infantry regiment to have an artillery battalion dedicated strictly to its support. In an artillery battalion there are three gun batteries

(Able, Baker, and Charlie), a headquarters battery, a service battery, and a medical unit. Each artillery battery consists of four guns (#1, #2, #3, and #4). There are ideally 9 men in a gun crew – a sergeant in charge, a gunner corporal, and 7 cannoneers, although in combat it is often much fewer than that.



105mm howitzer engaged in high angle fire.  
(globalsecurity.org)

My training was mostly on 105mm howitzers although I also had to learn the procedure on 155mm howitzers and 155mm rifles (called the long-toms). I was not trained on the 240mm howitzer or rifle (now called 8-inch artillery). A howitzer has a shorter tube (barrel) than a rifle so it can be aimed almost straight up for a very high trajectory. This so-called 'high-angle fire' can hit targets hiding behind a mountain where they are shielded from "direct fire". In other words, the projectile comes almost straight down like an airplane bomb.



Gunner at Scope  
(Ft. Sill Publication)

We used the 105mm, M101 howitzer in World War II. It weighed 4,200 pounds and had a bore of 4.123 inches. The muzzle velocity was 660-1,500 feet/second, depending on the powder charge used. It recoiled 42 inches. During high-angle fire, with the tube near to vertical, we had to dig a hole so it wouldn't hit the ground when it recoiled. The projectile (called the shell) weighed 33 pounds and the entire round weighed 42 pounds. That includes the projectile (shell), the shell casing (the brass), and all seven powder bags.

For those of you with a more technical mind, the 105's tube had 36 lands and grooves rifling (spiraling) to the right. It had a maximum elevation of +1,182 mills and a minimum elevation of -89 mills. It could be traversed 400 mills right or left from center. Anything more than that would require shifting the entire howitzer. (A mill is a line-of-site angular shift of 1 yard in 1,000 yards.)

So we had to learn the "cannoneers hop" as well as how to set up, maintain, and transport the piece. Each man in the crew had a specific job for each of these operations, and we had to learn all of them. The crew sergeant usually received the fire commands via field telephone. He then relayed them to the crew who carried them out. The gunner corporal set the base deflection (traverse right or left from the base) with a "gunner's scope" mounted on the left side of the tube. The base from which the horizontal deflection was measured was a permanent aiming stake which was surveyed in when the howitzer was set up. At night the aiming stake was equipped with a small light which had to be turned on during a fire mission.

The #1 man stood to the right of the tube and set the elevation. He also pulled the lanyard to fire the howitzer on command. Deflection and elevation were measured in mills, and they were set by cranking wheels that moved the tube.

The #2 man loaded and unloaded the howitzer. He had to wear a leather glove to catch the expended shell case when it was ejected because it was HOT. Ammunition was fixed and handed to the #2 man by #3 and #4 men. Fixing ammunition was the process of removing the projectile from the casing, taking out the excess powder bags, and then re-installing the projectile. It also included setting the fuse. Each round came with seven powder bags, all numbered and attached together with a string. If, for instance, the fire command called for "Charge 5," the sixth and seventh powder bags would be pulled out and the string cut on the end of the brass shell casing.

The remaining members of the crew did whatever was necessary. The #5 man usually pulled the proper rounds off the pile and handed them to #4. Others hauled in more ammunition as needed, removed the expended brass from the gun pit, and removed the discarded powder bags (which were always a safety hazard).

In between fire missions the crew prepared for the next. There was always a large burn pit in each battery where the cylindrical cardboard shipping containers for each round were incinerated. All the excess powder bags were also disposed of here a few at a time so as not to create excessive heat. Replacement ammunition had to be carried from the ammunition dump to the gun pits. When truckloads of new ammunition were brought in,

they had to be unloaded and stored in the ammunition dump. Then the expended brass was loaded on the trucks for recycling.

This was the day-to-day life of a cannoneer.

Now a little about the **ammunition**. There were four types of shells (projectiles) made for the 105mm howitzer. They were HE (high explosive), HEAT (high explosive anti-tank), Smoke (white phosphorus), and gas (in case chemical warfare were initiated).

Some HE shells used a “time” fuse. These were to allow the shell to explode above the ground and rain the area with fragmentation. It was used as an anti-personnel weapon. When the #3 and #4 men were fixing the ammunition during a fire mission, they would also set the time until the shell would explode. This controlled the “height of burst,” or the height above the ground it would explode. Time can be set from 4/10 of a second to 25 seconds. The timer was activated by acceleration when the howitzer was fired.

Other HE shells used an impact fuse which had two settings – “quick” and “delay.” This setting would also be set when the ammunition was being “fixed.” They worked exactly as their name implies. The “quick” setting would detonate at the moment of impact. The “delay” setting allowed the shell to penetrate the target a short distance before exploding. What was used depended on the target. Fuses were armed when the howitzer was fired.

I have never used the HEAT but I presume it had a shaped charge for armor penetration, such as the bazooka rocket. Smoke shells were used mostly as markers, such as for air strikes, and for smoke screens. They are also used for harassing fire. When white phosphorus gets on the skin it just keeps burning in. The only first aid treatment is to dig it out with a bayonet. Gas shells are of two types – persistent (respiratory and skin sensitive) and non-persistent (respiratory sensitive only). Gas shells are gray with green lines. One green line indicates non-persistent and two mean persistent. Although the use of gas was, and still is, forbidden by international law, we always had a few on hand in each gun pit.

The shell casing is center fire very similar to most small-bore pistol and rifle ammunition. It had a fulminated mercury primer which ignited when the firing pin hit it, and that set off the powder bags. All seven powder charges together weighed three pounds.

All of these choices and settings are given in a sequence of commands from the Fire Direction Center for the Battalion. The sequence goes like this. The telephone rings in the gun pit. When it is answered the caller announces a “Fire Mission.” The one answering the phone calls out “Fire Mission” to the crew and they immediately drop



105mm M101 shells & shell casing.  
(Simon Fraser Univ. website)

everything and jump to their stations. Then follows a sequence of commands in a prescribed order.

1. "Battery Adjust" Usually "Battery" adjusts, or brackets in on the target, but for some missions it may be only "No. 2" or possible one of the other howitzers. In that case the remaining howitzer crews can relax but must still follow through on the elevation and deflection commands.
2. "Shell \_\_\_\_" That can be "HE," "HEAT," "Smoke," "Time," or "Gas."
3. "Charge \_\_\_\_" The number of powder bags to be used, depending on the range.
4. "Fuse \_\_\_\_" "Quick," "Delay," or the number of seconds for "Time."
5. "Base Deflection \_\_\_\_" "Right" or "Left" so many mills.
6. "SI \_\_\_\_" This is an elevation correction factor expressed in mills, also set by the #1 man. It compensates for the angle of sight between the howitzer and the target, i.e. their difference in altitude (plus or minus) over the given range.
7. "Battery \_\_\_\_ Round(s)" The number of rounds the battery will fire. Or it may be "No. 2 One Round." The commander may also add "At My Command."
8. Elevation \_\_\_\_" This is in mills. After setting that, the #1 man immediately pulls the lanyard to fire the piece. Then the crew will reload and continue firing the prescribed number of rounds every 15 seconds, unless the previous command had specified "At My Command."

If the battery is registering on a target, or if the range and deflection need changing for any other reason, the next series of commands will only be the changes required – normally just deflection and elevation.

This is a quick sketch of how an artillery gun crew operates. But it takes a lot of information, calculations, and cooperation to determine what those firing commands must be. That gets into the specialized training in Survey and Fire Direction that I received during my last 11 weeks of basic training, which I will describe below. But I will say this. Although my training as a cannoneer can probably be measured in hours, whereas my specialty training was measured in weeks, cannoneering is the training I used most



during my actual combat duty.

I have not covered all of the subjects taught in the first six weeks of basic training, which are listed at the beginning of this chapter. I have just hit the high spots. My basic training diary and my basic training notes shed a little more light on the subjects omitted here. Now I'll go into the next eleven weeks.

## SURVEYING & FIRE DIRECTION

To start our 11 weeks of specialty basic training we began with the tools we were to use. The course was "Care & Use of Instruments." The instruments we used in artillery surveying were aiming circle, transit, battery commander scope (BC scope), field glasses, pocket compass, alidade, and plane table. We probably used the aiming circle the most. It was smaller (about 3 feet high), lighter, and simpler than a transit. It had four-power optics, was graduated in mills, and had a single, spherical bubble to tell when the instrument was level. Our surveying lieutenant was always chastising us to



Surveying with a Transit.  
(Ft. Sill publication)

"keep your bubble level." That became a standing phrase with us – whenever someone was acting a little far out, we'd tell him to "keep your bubble level."

A mill is the angle which subtends 1 yard in 1,000 yards. There are 6,400 mills in a circle. The sum of the angles in a triangle is 3,200 mills. Thus we can calculate that 1 degree equals 17.778 mills. Inversely, 1 mill equals 0.056 degrees.

The transit is more accurate than an aiming circle but it stood higher and was heavier. The user was exposed more to enemy fire by having to stand up to use it. Also, since it was graduated in degrees/minutes/seconds, the

data had to be converted to mills because that is how the instruments on the howitzers were graduated. But for long-distance measurements it was better to use the transit because of its greater accuracy and its 10-16 power optics.

The BC scope (Battery Commander scope) is also mounted on a tripod. It is graduated in mills, has 10-power lenses, and looks like a cross between field glasses and a double periscope. Because of its periscopic nature, it can be used without exposing the user to enemy fire. It was designed mainly for a forward observer to direct artillery fire.

Pocket compasses had sights that could be raised upright to run "quicky" surveys. Likewise, the six-power field glasses, or binoculars, had lenses graduated in mills to estimate azimuth (horizontal) measurements. We didn't use the alidade much and the plane table was nothing more than a map table that could be set up level on a tripod. It was a luxury we seldom enjoyed.

A survey team was usually divided into three parts: Target Area, Connecting Area, and Gun Position Area. Surveying in the Target Area was usually done by triangulation from



Surveyor with Aiming Circle.  
(Ft. Sill Publication)

a base leg (the base of a triangle) to define a base point (the apex of that triangle). Surveying of the other two areas was usually by running a traverse (measuring off sequential, connecting legs and determining the azimuth of each one). Consequently the part of a survey team in the Target Area needed two instrument operators (one for each end of the base leg), two tapemen (to measure base leg lengths), and ideally a recorder to document the data. Team parts for the other two areas only required one instrument operator but they needed two rodmen each to mark aiming points for the instrument. They also required two tapemen and a recorder each.

In surveying we also had to consider the angles between grid (polar) north, magnetic north, and stellar north (Polaris, or north star). We might sight on Polaris, and we might take a compass reading on magnetic north, or set our instrument up by magnetic north, but maps used grid north. These angles change with locations on the earth, and Polaris changes seasonally with relation to north pole. Usually this information was given on maps of the area but how the various angles were measured still had to be factored into the survey data.

As a matter of interest, Polaris is 186,000,000 light years away from earth. A light year is the distance light travels in one year. Light has the speed of 186,300 miles per second. If you calculate the number of seconds in a year and multiply the result by 186,300 you get 31,536,000 miles in a light year. Multiplying that by 186 million light years gives a distance of  $5.86596 \times 10^{15}$  miles for the distance of Polaris from earth. That is 5,865,960,000,000,000 miles, or almost 5.866 quadrillion miles. (Somebody check my figures to see if I'm right.)

Once the Target Area team had established the coordinates and elevation of a base point and base leg in the target area, and that data had been connected to the gun batteries with a surveyed traverse, and then plotted on the battle map, the forward observer could use these reference points to direct artillery fire to targets as they appeared.

Artillery surveyors measured all of these horizontal and vertical angles to give a three-dimensional relationship of the target to the gun battery. That would be so simple today with the global positioning system (GPS) and modern communication. All one would have to do is work with coordinates. We used coordinates and topographic maps when we had them. But the purpose of surveying was to establish those coordinates and altitudes in areas where good maps were not available.



Me with some of my buddies at our  
barracks door    October 1944

About half way through basic training I made a phone call home. Long distance calls were very expensive in those days and I didn't think I could afford more than one during the five months I was away. So on September 30<sup>th</sup> I splurged with the call. I talked to Mom, Pap, Skip, Sonny, Nana, and Jacquie (who was at the Green Valley ranch as the call was pre-arranged).

Then another month rolled by and it was Halloween. Several of us decided to play a prank on our platoon sergeant – Sergeant Parrato. When he was away from the barracks we snuck into his room, which was upstairs on one end of the barracks. We took his bed apart and made it again – short sheeted. We also left a “Happy Halloween” note but did not sign it. The next day at mail call we heard about it. He said he was going to catch the culprits when he found out who spelled sergeant wrong. I had written the note and spelled it S-a-r-g-e-n-t. He was not too disturbed about it, though. I think he had more fun worrying us that we might show our spelling ignorance. Nevertheless, I quickly looked up the correct spelling.

Now back to my specialized training. All of this survey data, which I have been describing, had to be put together in such a fashion that the guns could be pointed to hit the target. That was the task of the Fire Direction Center (FDC). FDC was almost invariably established at the battalion level so that each Center controlled three batteries – 12 guns. FDC was always in direct contact with the forward observer and the liaison airplanes (small L-5 Cub aircraft).

The battalion commander (a Lt. Col.) was in charge of FDC, and in his absence an officer designated S-3 (a Major) or his assistant (a Captain). The others in FDC were the Vertical Control Officer, the Horizontal Control Officer, three Battery Computers, and a radio/telephone operator. We had to learn the functioning of the vertical and horizontal control officers as well as the battery computers.

The sequence of operations went something like this. If the forward observer requested fire for any reason, the battalion commander (or the S-3 in his absence) would decide if the fire mission was advisable. If so, he would then decide how many batteries would fire and how much ammunition to expend.

Then the S-3 would decide the type of ammunition (shell, powder charge, and fuse), and would announce the range spread, concentration, and the method of fire.

The horizontal control officer then plotted the mission on the fire chart, calculated the range and deflection shifts from the base point, and sent the information to the battery computers. The vertical control officer also plotted the fire mission and set the site (Si) for the battery computers.

Each of the battery computers kept a record of every mission fired. After receiving information from the battalion commander, the S-3, the vertical control officer, and the horizontal control officer, each battery computer used a graphical firing table (similar to a slide rule but with data pertinent to artillery) to formulate the fire commands for his particular battery. (The fire commands were described above in the cannoneering section). He then sent the commands to the battery commander (a Captain).

But even after the surveys are complete, and the FDC is set up, most of the fire missions depended heavily on the forward observer (FO). In basic training we had to also learn how to observe fire. Forward observing was one of the most dangerous, if not the most dangerous, mission in ground combat at that time. The FO party is usually out in front of the infantry where the enemy can be observed. There is never enough physical protection and survival depended almost entirely on concealment. Radio was the traditional means of communication because stringing phone wires took too long and was usually



unfeasible. If the enemy has any access to a radio detection & homing device, radio use can also be dangerous. Adding to this vulnerability was that the FO party was always highest on the enemy's priority list of targets. They were the eyes of the artillery, and the artillery was a significant hazard. But those chances had to be taken because artillery fire was needed to support the infantry.

In optimum conditions the forward observer used a BC scope to get approximate coordinates of the target. But conditions usually were not optimum and FOs had to rely on quicky surveys. Sometimes the graduated field glasses did the trick. Under the worst conditions, and those were plentiful, they improvised. It was similar to my experiences on Forest Service lookouts. We were trained to improvise. In my case I had an automatic pencil which I calibrated in mills. Holding it at arms length, the length of the pencil subtended something like 400 mills. The diameter of the plastic barrel, the length



Me in Battle Dress  
September 1944

and end diameters of the brass tip and cap, were all calibrated for the number of mills they subtended. I could run a quicky survey with just that pencil and a pocket compass.

For the completion of our training we went on a field exercise in the Wichita Mountains. It was terrible weather and cold. We were confined to our shelter-half tents for many days. We spent the first night somewhere, and on the second day I drove one of the trucks to our new position. After we set up the FDC I spent that night on the observation post (OP). It was wet, windy, and cold. By morning it was also foggy. I spent a lot of time running surveys and being on the OP during the field exercise. We also got gassed a couple times during transport from one area to another.

I had KP one rainy day and we had to move the field kitchen that night. While traveling I remember bouncing around in the back of the truck over the twisting, steep and bumpy Panther Road and not being able to stay awake. We pitched the field kitchen at 1:30 AM. When I

got off KP the next morning at about 8:00 AM, my lieutenant said he'd like me to be the vertical control officer that day. I was bushed, and explained to him that I couldn't think straight. Fortunately, he was a sympathetic person and gave me the day off to rest up. We were in the field for Thanksgiving. The cooks fixed us a real delicious meal – turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes & gravy, pumpkin pie, the works. The problem was that just before chow time the colonel decided we should pull out for another position. When the cooks asked what to do with the dinner, they were told to “dump it.” All of it went into the garbage pit and we ate rations on the run.

On another night I was on sentry duty, guarding one of the roadways into our bivouac area. It was real cold. I had previously contracted a case of athletes foot in the battery shower. I think my feet were frostbitten a little that night because they got to where I could hardly walk. After the field exercise I went on sick call and was confined to the dispensary for a couple days. I missed the famed forced march and obstacle course that

was supposed to culminate our training. I graduated anyway. We had a big graduation party that night which was a beer bust in of battery mess hall. It was well supervised and no one could go too far astray.

I received my orders to report to Fort Ord on the day after Christmas, December 26<sup>th</sup>. I was happy to be going to the Pacific theater because I felt more attached to that region. I left Fort Sill by train on December 13<sup>th</sup> with a 10-day delay-en-route at home. I was now supposed to be a trained artilleryman.

This simple summary of a vastly more complicated experience is all I will say about my specialty training at Fort Sill. As I pointed out earlier, I never had a chance to use it in actual practice. All of my time during live firing was as a cannoneer. I will discuss that in future chapters.

But, to put current events into proper perspective, I want to make an observation regarding basic training for the US armed forces. The media today raises public indignation by reporting about vicious people who have attended al Qaida training camps to learn to kill Americans. But what are US soldiers taught? In US training camps they are taught how to kill their enemy, either directly or indirectly. Is there any difference in God's eyes between al Qaida training camps and US basic training camps? Are there really exceptions to God's commandment not to kill, or to Jesus' bidding us to love our enemies? With those thoughts I end this chapter on basic training.

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## Chapter 13 – Off to the Pacific

The day after Christmas in 1944 I reported to Fort Ord under penalty of desertion. During World War II we operated under the “Articles of War,” portions of which were read to us every six months or so, to keep us alert. (These have now been replaced by the Uniform Code of Military Justice.) Under the Articles, if a soldier is not present at his assigned station when he has been ordered for war duty, he is not AWOL – he is considered a deserter. The maximum penalty is death. Fort Ord was the jumping off place for the Pacific war. Anyway, I showed up.

I did not report in the manner specified, however. We were instructed to take a train to Fort Ord, no matter how close by we were. We were not under any circumstances to arrive by private automobile. I thought that was baloney. So my family drove me to the base. We went through the main gate without a hitch when I showed my orders to report. I was dropped off at the barracks specified. And that was that. But then I was in for another wait. The old slogan is “Hurry up and wait.” Everyone had not reported yet so I had to cool my heels. Boy! The sudden change of environment coupled with nothing to do made me real homesick.

Fort Ord was the preparation for overseas duty. We reviewed a lot of the things we had in basic training – lessons on chemical warfare, use of the lensatic compass, personal hygiene, and of course lots of calisthenics and close order drill. There was more practice with the carbine. Those who didn’t know how to swim were given lessons. We had classes and films on how to board and leave a ship using debarkation nets (more commonly called cargo nets), how to establish a beachhead from a landing craft (which were called Higgins boats), how to abandon ship, how to fight off a shark attack, how to survive on a life raft, how to care for and use life jackets (they are not a pillow or a cushion). There were obstacle courses, infiltration courses and machine gun courses. We also got a completely new issue of clothing and equipment (I turned in the wool overcoat). Something I particularly liked were two pairs of the new combat boots with high leather tops to replace the canvas, lace-up leggings. They were really welcome.

While at Fort Ord I met my lifelong friend, Bill Bottero. I had known him since before I can remember. He was raised by his grandparents and lived about half a block from Nana’s house, on Locust Street in Watsonville. He went into the Army a month ahead of me and took infantry basic training in Arkansas. He was under orders to ship out soon so he couldn’t get any passes. I did start getting overnight passes eventually and hitchhiked home whenever I could, or my folks would come and pick me up.

One evening my folks brought Jacquie and Bill’s grandmother over to visit the two of us. We had a good time and gave them a tour of the post. Bill showed us where he was taking swimming lessons – he never did learn to swim although we had taken him to Arroyo Seco with us. We went to see the barracks I was staying in and the one where Bill was quartered. Bill told me he was shipping out the next day and hoped we would meet someplace in the Pacific. He said he didn’t really think he would be put in combat because of his poor eyesight. Anyway, we

said goodbye for the last time that night.

When I could get overnight passes, I went home every night. On New Year's Eve I drove back to the post in the morning, and then home again that evening to celebrate the birth of 1945. The next morning, January 1<sup>st</sup>, my family and Jacquie drove me back to the post where I immediately obtained another pass. Then we went to Big Sur for the day and had a great time. They dropped me off at the post on their way home.

In the evening of January 2<sup>nd</sup> we were alerted that we would be shipping out soon. I could get no more passes. But the folks and Jacquie could come over to see me. We usually met at the Enlisted Men's Club built by General Stillwell when he commanded the post. It was across Highway-1 from the post proper and open to the public. It was a beautiful building that overlooked Monterey Bay, and cost a million dollars to build. Now it is about to slip into the ocean because the cliff is caving away. To move it would cost many millions.

January 5<sup>th</sup> was my last night at Fort Ord. I wasn't supposed to reveal any troop movement but my family got the idea I would be gone by tomorrow. Pap just happened to mention that he could look down on the railroad tracks going past the Granite Rock Quarry in Aromas, where he worked as a bookkeeper. He said he would probably walk out on the point and watch the morning train go by the next day. After that we said our goodbyes. It was hard, but kind of a relief when it was over.

The next morning we boarded a train. There was a military band playing for us – giving us a big patriotic send-off. It made us feel kinda good. We were heroes, after all, going off to war. Our first destination was Camp Stoneman near Pittsburgh, Calif. The train tracks ran past the Aromas Quarry. All troop movements were really hush-hush with strict penalties for blabbing. But somehow Pap got the notion from our conversation the night before that I would be on a train the next day. And I got the idea that he might be standing up there on the cliff watching. He knew the train schedules pretty well.

When we approached the quarry I was afraid to try waving from my seat – too many around to see me. So I walked out the end of the car to the space between cars. I was in trouble there, too. Two MPs were also standing there on the platform, talking. When they seemed to be looking the other way I gave a quick wave across the window and then scurried back to my seat. I was scared stiff that someone might have seen me and presumed I was signaling to some enemy spy. I didn't think Pap had seen me.

He did see me, I was told later. I was also told later that Pap saw a piece of paper fly from the train. He went down to the tracks and discovered it was an envelope addressed to someone's parents with a note attached asking any finder to please mail it. He did.

Camp Stoneman was our Port of Embarkation (POE). When we arrived, the place seemed deserted. It reminded me of a ghost town. As we marched through the empty streets, our footsteps echoed from every corner. The dismal atmosphere matched my gloomy mood.

For three days we received more indoctrination. As at Fort Ord, we were continually told we would get seasick so we just had to resign ourselves to it – no escape. We were given more indoctrination on censorship and what we could and could not write home about. From this

point on, all of our mail would be censored. The officers in our outfit would do the censoring. If they found something that shouldn't be told, they would cut it out with a pair of scissors. For that reason we were advised to write on one side of the paper only, just in case. Oh yes, one of those three days at Camp Stoneman was spent on KP.

On January 10<sup>th</sup> we left under full pack. We marched about two miles through the city of Pittsburgh to the ferry pier. Again there was a band playing as we boarded the ferry. Of course we went through the traditional archway with the traditional slogan: "Through These Portals Pass the Best Damn Soldiers in the World." I guess all the patriotism was supposed to lift our spirits. And in a way I suppose it did, although I wasn't in much of a mood for flattery

Before boarding the ferry we retrieved our duffle bags which had been transported to the pier by truck. We would carry them, also, from now on. The ferry conveyed us through the various bays to a pier in San Francisco. When I was young I used to accompany my folks to San Francisco to see Dr. and Mrs. Herbert off for Hawaii. They had lived most of their life in those islands and by then were traveling back and forth frequently on the *SS Lurline*. When we arrived at the San Francisco pier I wondered if perhaps this was the same one used by the *SS Lurline*.

In San Francisco there was another band to greet us with catchy marching music. I really like marching music but by this time the ever-playing bands were becoming somewhat stale. We had to wait around for a while before embarking on our ship. Red Cross girls served coffee and that sure hit the spot. It seemed to help relieve some tension.

Finally, at 7:30 PM Pacific War Time, I checked off my name with the clerk at the foot of the gangway. Then, after weeks and months of movies, lectures, farewell and goodbyes, hand clapping and bands playing, in the dark of night with everything deathly still, full pack on my back and duffle bag on my shoulder, I started up the gang plank. I was in a daze and the thought kept thundering through my head that "This is it. I'm really on my way now." It seemed like I would never get to the top. But I finally did and took my first step on the deck of the *USS Fond du Lac*. I was told that in French it means "Bottom of the Lake." A comforting thought!

After I boarded the *USS Fond du Lac*, we were shown to our berths. Several of us who had gone through basic training together were still together. We were assigned to the bow of the ship – called the forecastle. As I recall there were four deck levels containing berths. I was on the second one down. That made me kind of happy because I wasn't way down at the bottom. I would have felt more trapped down there. But later I found out that evacuation started from the bottom up. In other words, in an emergency, our deck would be almost the last one out. Oh well, I then consoled myself that if a torpedo hit us it would most likely be amidships. Way up in front we would have a better chance of survival. Such were the mind-games we played to console ourselves.

Anyway, the sleeping quarters were very cramped. The bunks were nothing more than a sheet of canvas laced to a metal frame. They were hinged to a pole at each end and could be folded up and out of the way to provide more room if another type of cargo were to be carried in this hold. There were five bunks high with a tier on each side of the poles. A line of poles went the length of the compartment to make a double row of tiered bunks. This arrangement was repeated all the

way across the compartment for the width of the ship. Each of us had a bunk space about six feet long by two feet wide. The vertical distance between bunks was about two feet. We could sit on our bunk with our legs dangling over the edge but we would have to hunker down so as not to hit our head on the bunk above. The guys on top had long climbs to get up there but they had more headroom.

The aisle way between rows of bunks was about two feet. We had to stow our duffle bag and all our gear on our bunk. There was about eight inches of space between my bunk and the corresponding bunk on the other side of the pole – essentially a gap the diameter of the pole. In this space I could lay my duffle bag and the person on the adjoining bunk could do likewise – end to end. This provided storage space for our bags as well as giving some privacy.

My bunk was almost all the way forward in the row, and I was third up (or third down). As I lay on my bunk after being shown to our hold, I could see the iron walls of the ship where they came together at the prow. They were cold steel and the thought ran through my mind that this could be my watery tomb. It was not unusual to have such dismal thoughts, nor could they be easily avoided. These thoughts did give a soldier hope in a divine protector.

The *USS Fond du Lac* was designated PA-166. The PA stood for Personnel Assault. (In some places it has been designated APA-166, standing for Amphibious Personnel Assault.) It was a ship designed to carry troops for beachhead landings. It was operated by a Navy crew. The decks were stacked with racks of Higgins boats which could be placed in the water with the shipboard cranes. The outer walls of our compartment (the shell of the ship) had first aid supplies and stretchers hanging on them. So, after an assault this ship could also haul away the wounded.

Photo # NH 98719 USS Fond du Lac in San Francisco Bay circa 1945-1946



*USS Fond du Lac* (PA-166) underway in San Francisco Bay. Late 1945 or early 1946. (US Navy Photo)

There were four twin 40mm anti-aircraft gun turrets (2 on each side of the ship) and ten 20mm gun turrets (5 on each side), with a 5-inch cannon on the stern. Occasionally the crew would have gunnery practice against weather balloons. The two barrels of the twin-barreled 40mm guns fired alternately, and also recoiled alternately. They were called pom-poms because they looked like they were waving one hand after the other as a cheer leader would. The 20mm guns were more like a .50 caliber machine gun only with a larger bore. The 5-inch cannon was slightly larger than our 105mm howitzers.

The *Fond du Lac* was launched on 5 October 1944 and commissioned on 6 November 1944. It was 455 feet long,

62 feet abeam (across), weighed 6,873 tons empty, and could make a 3-degree turn with 10 degrees of rudder. Top speed was 25 knots (nautical miles per hour) but it usually cruised at about 18. This would be her maiden voyage – she was fresh out of the shipyards. And she split two seams on the way over.

We left San Francisco the next morning, 11 January 1945 – destination unknown. We left alone. We were one of the first ships to cross the Pacific during wartime without a convoy and its naval protection. But we didn't go straight across. We dipped way south below the equator and then came back north along the chain of islands that had already been secured by US forces.

At 9:50 AM PWT, on this beautiful sunshiny day, we sat on hatch covers and watched the Golden Gate Bridge pass overhead. When we got into open water the ocean became a little rough. This continued for about three days. As I sat on the hatch cover that first day and watched the ship go up and down, I began to feel a little queasy. We had been indoctrinated that we would be seasick – there was no escaping it – so I decided to go down to the head (as the shipboard latrine is called) and get it over with. But when I got there it was a mess. Soldiers were barfing all over and it stunk so much it gagged me. The smell made me sicker than the ship's motion. I left immediately and decided to tough it out. I started feeling better after a while.

There were only two times aboard ship that I almost became seasick. One was after drinking a big gulp of distilled water (which is all that was available aboard ship). Distilled water on an empty stomach can sometimes hit bottom like a rock. When the feeling hit me I rushed up the hatchway to the open deck and to the side of the ship. As I stood there leaning over the railing I began to feel better. In a few minutes I was almost normal.

The other time was when we hit some real rough seas somewhere near the Solomon Islands, I believe. We were in the hold because waves were coming over the deck. Being in the very bow of the ship, we went up and down like an elevator, only faster going up and much bumpier coming back down. It was one weightless feeling after another. I think the ship's bow must have been bobbing about 50 feet up and down. I began to feel pretty bad so I lay down on my bunk. I was able to go to sleep and when I awoke I was much better.

We had to pull various details aboard ship. Of course there was KP and mess orderly. We did have a dishwasher for the mess trays. The trays were stacked in a rack and then went through these sprays and came out clean at the other end. It was something like the drive-through car washes we have today.

Another detail one of my buddies and I had



*USS Fond du Lac* at anchor. Date and place unknown. The new paint job it had when I was aboard has worn thin.  
(navsource.org photo)



was to empty the ash cans – yes, ash cans, not trash cans. Nothing could be thrown overboard that would float – not even a cigarette butt. If debris were found by a Japanese submarine crew when they surfaced at night to recharge their batteries, they would know that a ship was nearby. Also, garbage thrown overboard would attract sharks. So the ship had a huge incinerator in which all garbage and trash was burned. Then the ashes were put into regular metal garbage cans. Our job was to take the cans to the stern of the ship – called the fantail – and throw the ashes overboard. They would quickly soak up and sink.

We hauled the last can of ashes, one of us on each side, down the companionway and out through the hatch to the fantail. Then, still with one on each side, we lifted the can up to empty it overboard. But something went wrong. Either a gust of wind caught the can or we overdid ourselves in hoisting it up, but it went right on over and out of our grasp. We stood there dazed, holding the metal lid. One of the sailors up above us in a gun turret yelled: “You might as well throw that in too.” So we did. Of course everything sank so there was no security problem. But we didn’t go back to the incinerator room because we didn’t want to explain the missing garbage can.

Every morning at sunrise and every evening at sunset, the entire ship had to stand general quarters. The PA system blared: “Now hear this. Now hear this. All hands man your battle stations.” Every gun turret was manned and all the hatchways dogged shut. This was the time of day that detection by a submarine was most acute because the ship could be silhouetted against the rising or setting sun. We couldn’t go on deck at night, mainly, I believe, because there was too much chance of someone lighting a cigarette. That would also signal our location. Consequently, we were shut up in the stuffy hold. Later, aboard ships I was on after the war, we could enjoy a lighted deck at night. It seemed so different and the cool night air at sea was very refreshing.

I say the holds were stuffy, but we did have to keep them spotless. They were swept daily and scrubbed often. Bunks were inspected and had to be kept neat. The head also had to be immaculate. If we were lucky, we would be issued salt-water soap; because that is the kind of water we had to shower in. It lathered up somewhat. We showered frequently because at sea the salt air makes one’s skin feel clammy and salty. We felt a little better after a salt water shower, but not much. The showers mainly got us clean, though, and they did cool us off. (My memory may be wrong here. The *USS Fond du Lac* may have been one of the ships that had fresh-water showers.)

We also had improvised entertainment on deck. Some members of the crew were very talented with musical instruments, drama, and singing. One black sailor who was the officer’s steward – the only black person aboard because the military was still segregated – often acted as master of ceremonies and had a beautiful voice. We also had access to some of the ship’s facilities such as the barber shop and ship’s store. All in all the soldiers and sailors got along very well.

There were a couple other officers aboard that I remember. One was a Marine officer – the only marine aboard. He was not too well liked because he had charge of troop discipline. But being disliked was understandable because he was the disciplinarian for a bunch of 18-year-old kids. Another was a Navy lieutenant who, I believe, was in charge of the Higgins boats. Perhaps he

was called officer-of-the-deck, or deck officer. He was a jovial and casual person, even a little boisterous, who seemed very considerate of us soldiers. He was called Mister Popoff. Mister is the salutation used for naval officers and Popoff may have come from his personality. But I don't know. It may have been his actual name. Or maybe it was something like Mister Popov.

On 20 January 1945 at 2:45 PM +12 Zone time, we crossed the equator at Latitude 00° 00' 00" (of course) and Longitude 172° 52' 30". The night before, all of us had received A Royal Summons from Davy Jones, Secretary to His Majesty. It stated:

### **DOMAIN OF NEPTUNUS REX NOTICE AND LISTEN YE LANDLUBBERS**

**I order and command you to appear before me and my court on the morrow to be initiated in the mysteries of my Empire. If not, you will be given as food for sharks, whales, pollywogs, frogs, and all living things of the sea, who will devour you, head, body, and soul as a warning to landlubbers entering my domain without warrant.**

**You are charged with the following offenses:**

- (1) Being a lowly pollywog.**
- (2) Not showing due respect to a Shellback.**
- (3) Calling a head a latrine.**
- (4) Calling a ship a boat.**
- (5) Not appreciating Navy chow the first few days out.**
- (6) Mopery, dopery and skullduggery.**

**THEREFORE, appear and obey or suffer the penalty.**

As soon as we crossed the equator the ship veered sharply off course as the Royal Navigator took over. Old Glory was hauled down and the Jolly Roger hoisted on the mast. The vessel zigzagged crazily in circles as King Neptune, ruler of the raging main, came aboard. All pollywogs were summoned and duly sentenced to the initiation of the Ancient Order of the Deep. It all seemed pretty intimidating but I finally submitted.

First we were given a Royal Toast. We had to sip from a canteen cup of Atabrine tablets dissolved in water. We had not yet been introduced to Atabrine but it is very, very bitter. Next we were duly shorn. Barber shears plowed all the hair off one side of my head. Then we were baptized into the Order. This amounted to daubing the hair on the other side with zinc chromate primer. It was like a production line. We were kept moving along with an electric prod and a whip. The next ceremony awaiting me was to "Kiss the Baby's Ass." One seaman was outfitted with a large diaper. The backside of the diaper was liberally smeared with French's yellow mustard, which dripped down his legs. We had to kiss that disgusting mess. Of course we knew what it was but it was still revolting. .

Finally we were shoved out into a companionway where a fire hose picked us up and washed us

along the deck. We were hosed off the end of the deck into the Royal Bath – a canvass pool of seawater – on the deck below, where we were properly dunked and soaked. There was Mister Popoff to grab our heads and shove them underwater. Then he'd bring us up and ask "Pollywog or Shellback?" To go along with the game we would usually at first say "Pollywog." Then we would get another dunking with the same question asked again when we came up. When we finally relented and said "Shellback" we were released and considered properly initiated.

It was over and the next thing I had to consider was how to get the zinc chromate out of my hair. One of the seamen opened the paint locker and poured some solvent into a bucket. I washed my hair in that and got most of the paint out. Then I went to the ship's barber to get a buzz cut.

The experience was fun, although somewhat stressful, but I wouldn't have missed it. When finished we were certified as Trusty Shellbacks. And we were given a certificate to prove it.

On 22 January 1945, at 3:20 AM +12 Zone time, we crossed the International Date Line into the Realm of the Golden Dragon. I slept through the event.

Three days later, January 25<sup>th</sup>, we arrived at the island of Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides group (now renamed Vanuatu). Here we had a one-day shore liberty. The crane lowered one of the Higgins boats into the water and a cargo net was lowered over the side of the ship. We climbed down the net into the boat and we were taken ashore. We hit the beach and the forward door dropped like a ramp so we could unload.

It was a glorious day. We played sports and swam in a little cove that was protected by shark nets. I found some orange coral which I still have as a souvenir. We ate coconuts and fruit. The oranges were orange colored when they were green and green colored when ripe. There was a very delicious banana that had an orange-tinted meat. It seemed to melt in my mouth. We also traded trinkets with the natives. I didn't like my pair of GI sunglasses so I traded them for something. I had a swell time for my first experience on a tropical island. When the time was up, we loaded back onto the Higgins boat and returned to the ship.

As we came alongside the ship, the Coxswain (the one who drove the Higgins boat) told the sailors to secure the boat to the ship. There seemed to be confusion. Perhaps the green crewmen weren't sure what to do, or perhaps they didn't understand what the Coxswain wanted. One of my buddies, Johnny Basher, and I looked at each other. I knew that he had been a seaman in the Merchant Marine (his ship was actually torpedoed), and he knew that I had received some nautical training in the Sea Scouts. When the crewmen seemed confused, the two of us grabbed the lines dangling from the ship and secured them to the boat's bow and stern. Now the Coxswain could shut off the engine and we could climb back aboard the ship on the cargo nets which were still hanging over the side. We felt a little proud of ourselves that we could teach these sailors a little bit about seamanship.

I wrote home about my experience, although I couldn't reveal which island it was. I told about the trading and the souvenirs I collected. A few days later when I was on KP, in the scullery washing dishes, one of the Army 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenants who was also in transit called me out to the companionway. He asked where my sunglasses were. I told him what happened. He already knew because he had been censoring my letter. He chewed me out good for selling government

equipment. He said he was going to have me court marshaled when we reached port. I was feeling pretty intimidated although I sort of realized he couldn't use something in the mail to convict me of a crime. I really did sweat that one out. But, nothing ever happened. I actually saw the officer ashore later and he just said "hello," pretty cordially, and passed by.

Most of our time aboard ship was free. We could snooze in our berth, stay in our compartment, or lounge on deck. We played cards a lot and read books. I even saw some pretty shifty poker scams going on. Nevertheless, with a crew of 480 enlisted men and 56 officers, and a troop accommodation of 1,475 enlisted and 86 officers, it could get pretty crowded. A few of us discovered that if we climbed up into the top Higgins boat – they were racked four or five high on the boat deck – we could get some peace and quiet. That was supposed to be off limits for us but nobody ever checked. We often found some sailors up there seeking the same solitude.

I also spent a lot of time standing at the rail watching the ocean. Most of the journey was balmy weather with gentle swells on the sea. A couple of times we hit some rough waters but once, and once only, I saw the ocean when it looked like a sheet of glass. I mean that literally. It was absolutely calm and still. Not a ripple except where our ship was plowing through. I have never before, nor since, seen such a spectacle.

I also enjoyed watching the flying fish. As I recall they were about six inches long with wings. They reminded me of giant dragon flies. As the ships prow would go through the water they would become frightened and fly away from the ship. They would go perhaps 50 to 100 feet and then dive back into the water. This phenomenon brought to mind of Rudyard Kipling's poem:

On the road to Mandalay,  
Where the flying fishes play,  
And the dawn comes up like thunder,  
Out of China 'cross the bay.

As we entered the harbor at Guadalcanal on January 30<sup>th</sup>, we saw fins cutting the ocean's surface around us. At first I had the creepy feeling we were surrounded by sharks. Then when I looked closer I noticed that some were arcing out of the water. Johnnie Basher, my buddy who had previously been in the Merchant Marine, told me they were porpoises. I felt a lot better then. There is a legend that it is good luck to have porpoises follow your ship. They keep the sharks away because they like to butt into them. I think that may be true, but I don't know for sure.

We did not go ashore on Guadalcanal. From the ship we could see quite a bit of the dock area and Henderson Field. Someone pointed a beach out that was supposed to be the site of the original beachhead. The island looked rugged and uninviting. In another direction we could see Florida Island, which was not too far away. This was my experience with Guadalcanal.

We only stayed at Guadalcanal long enough go into a dock – if you want to call those island mooring spots a dock. It reminded me of a PT boat base I had once seen in a movie. We watched the crew remove one of the large hatch covers. Then, with the ship's boom, they hoisted the mail and supplies out of the hold, bundled together in a cargo net. They also hoisted out some vehicles. In return we picked up a small detachment of soldiers. They were combat veterans and had a completely different demeanor than us recruits fresh from the States. They



Route of USS Fond du Lac – January-February 1945

were quiet and solemn and seemed to prefer their own company. They didn't appreciate our attempt at humor or our jocular attitude. I finally decided it was best to just leave them alone.

Our course then continued in a northwesterly direction until we arrived at Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea (later called Irian Jaya and now West Papua Province of Indonesia) on February 4th. We had two shore liberties there but it was a stinking place and the evidence of recent combat was everywhere. As we walked along the beach we found a boot. But there was more, there was still a foot inside. At another place we saw a life jacket washed to shore. We fished it out and there was still part of a torso inside. Everything exposed had been eaten by fish. The detritus of war was strewn everywhere. This was the beach where the invasion of New Guinea began.

The natives were small, very black, and not too friendly. I thought of them as pugnacious little pygmies. There wasn't much to do there with two days ashore (we went back to the ship at

night). Johnnie Basher and I did enjoy a little swimming. We swam all over the harbor – from marker buoy to barge to whatever. I remember getting my toes cut on barnacles as I tried to climb up on one of the buoys. I never realized barnacles were so sharp. Swimming might not have been such a good idea because we didn't know what the shark situation was. It was especially not a good idea with my toes bleeding from barnacle cuts. Well, that was just the first of many careless risks I took while overseas.

We probably stayed longer in Hollandia than previous ports because we were being made up as part of a convoy. The remaining journey to the Philippines, we found out, was too dangerous to travel alone. But we did leave on February 9<sup>th</sup> and the *Fond du Lac* was the flagship of the convoy.

Somewhere in this time we started taking Atabrine tablets to ward off the effects of Malaria. They were dispensed by an officer to make sure we swallowed them. We were warned to swallow them whole with a gulp of water – they should not be chewed because they are very bitter. One of my friends insisted that he could not swallow a pill whole. So he proceeded to chew it up. That was the last time he did so. He learned real quickly how to swallow a pill whole.

Eight days later, February 17<sup>th</sup>, we steamed into Leyte Gulf, near the island's capital city, Tacloban. This is where Imelda Marcos was born and where she was once a beauty queen. Anyway, we didn't get off the ship that day. We didn't disembark until 11:15 PM the following night. It was pitch black and raining cats and dogs. That was my farewell to the *USS Fond du Lac*. I boarded in the dark at San Francisco, and I likewise departed in the dark 38 days later at Leyte. Since then I have been on three troop transports and a hospital ship, but my voyage on the *Fond du Lac* holds the most nostalgia, as far as it is possible to feel nostalgic about wartime voyages.

We disembarked the *USS Fond du Lac* at 11:15 PM on February 18<sup>th</sup> and hit the beach of Leyte near Tacloban at 11:30 PM. It was pouring down rain. I believe the reason we were unloaded late at night in bad weather was because Leyte was still a combat zone. Residual Japanese observers in the area might observe the troop movements.

Once ashore, it was too late to report for normal quarters. We had to pitch our pup tents in a muddy area and the mosquitoes nearly ate us up. We had no chance to spread out our mosquito nets. So much for the courses on malaria control. I worried all night about getting Dengue fever and enduring the ten days of hell we were told it caused.

When I awoke the next morning from my first night on a tropical island, the sun was shining brightly. We were at Replacement Depot #4 (Again that unnerving term – “replacement”). It was too much of a mouthful so we just called it the “Repple Depple.” We were assigned to squad tents aligned in military style under the coconut palms. The tropical setting was just like in the war movies we had seen at home. There was a PX, also in a tent with the counter at the front, and an outdoor movie area. For recreation I spent a lot of time reading, writing letters, and playing solitaire.

We had more instructions and indoctrinations. Although there was a lot of waiting around

(leisure time?) we also had some details to perform. I was given latrine detail. It was a little different than the name implies and it only took a couple hours each morning. The rest of the day was my own. The latrines were in a corrugated steel shed and consisted of 55-gallon gasoline drums half buried vertically. The height remaining above the ground was the proper level to sit on. Removable “chic sale” seats were constructed to fit over the top. All one had to do was open the lid, sit down on the cutout in the seat, and do your business. My job each morning was to remove the wooden seats, pour some Japanese gasoline onto the droppings, and set it afire. (The Japanese gasoline was blue in color.) It smoked and smelled something terrible but it sanitized the facility. From outside you could see this black smoke pouring out of the sides of the latrine, which was open from the waist up. I waited outside, of course. We called this the “shit burning detail.”

After the latrine cooled, I simply replaced the seats and took the rest of the day off. Sometimes I was too anxious to get the job done. One time I replaced the seats too soon. Someone came in to use the facility. He lifted the cover and sat down – but didn’t stay there long. Talk about a hot seat! I got chewed out good for that and thenceforth I was more patient during the cooling process.

Taking a shower also gave us some exercise. There was an empty gasoline drum on top of an arbor-like structure. Underneath was a pipe coming out of the drum with a shut-off valve. When the valve was opened the water ran into a tin can wired to the bottom of the pipe. Holes were punched in the bottom of the can so it acted like a shower head. No water heater was needed in the Tropics.

Before we took a shower, we had to climb up on top of the arbor. There was a bucket with a rope attached which we dropped into a large tank of water at ground level. A water tanker truck kept this tank full. We then pulled the bucket up full of water and emptied it into the shower container. This process was repeated until there was enough water in the shower container for our purpose. Then we would crawl down, strip off our clothes, turn on the valve, and enjoy a shower. Since I was working on the latrine detail, which gave me a lot of free time, I could pick a time to shower that avoided the rush.

The fresh water on Leyte had to be chlorinated – even that for washing and showering. We couldn’t swim in lakes and lagoons. An alert medic discovered early on that a parasite called schistosomiasis was in all the fresh water. More commonly called blood flukes or liver flukes, this parasite didn’t bother you while you were wet. But as you dried off it sought moisture and dug into your skin, and got into your blood stream. There was no cure at that time. Within about ten years and much discomfort the disease was fatal. Once while I was tromping through a marshy area I stepped into a puddle. I had to rush to a purified water supply to wash off. The flukes die in chlorinated water or in the ocean’s salt water. That alert medic saved hundreds, if not thousands, of lives with his early find. (Today there is a simple cure – pills to take for a couple days.)

We also had entertainment. On the night of February 20<sup>th</sup> we saw Irving Berlin in person. He was pretty much a clown and was just the same as in the movies. He sang several songs. He was there mainly to entertain some ex-prisoners of war who had been held on Leyte. They were





C3 Type Troop Transport – Same as *USAT Sea Devil*

awfully emaciated. The pictures we had previously seen of POWs were not an exaggeration.

There was also Olson and Johnson with their “Hellzapoppin Revue.” Even with all the pretty girls, I was disappointed in it. Of course there were also movies each night.

That lifestyle went on for well over a week before I had my first contact with the “enemy.” The signal for an air raid was three shots from the anti-aircraft guns. On the night of March 1<sup>st</sup>, I was reading in my bunk when I heard the “boom - boom - boom” at the

south end of the bay. Then another triple shot a little farther north. Then more in sequence until the entire length of Leyte Gulf had been alerted. I doused my candle and flashlight and just laid there waiting for something to happen.

At home, prior to being in the Army, we had many Civilian Defense drills. There were practice blackout warnings and mock attacks. These memories raced through my head. The realization, hard to grasp, was creeping up on me that this was no practice. I was really in a war zone. But what could we do? There were no air raid shelters. We had no assigned duties in such a situation. So we – we “replacements” – just lay there on our bunks waiting for something to happen.

We didn’t have to wait long. Soon I heard a strange-sounding airplane coming – I could see it off to one side as a shadow. Japanese planes had a distinguishing rough sound like they needed a tune up. Then there was a large blast as the sky lit up and the plane left. Soon our P-61 Black Widow night fighters took off in pursuit. Everything was quiet for a long time, but no “all clear” signal. Then I heard another plane coming from inland. It really sounded terrible – worse than the first, like it was not firing on all cylinders. It came directly over my tent and didn’t seem like it was more than 100-150 feet high. I just lay there holding my breath. It passed over and headed out toward the bay. Then there was a loud explosion and a huge fireball flash.

As the story was related to me the next day, the first plane dropped a bomb on the airport. It destroyed the tail of a B-25 bomber. By a quirk of luck, a mechanic who was sleeping underneath the bomber didn’t even get scratched. Then the Black Widows tailed the Japanese planes and fired on them, but that was out of my earshot. A second plane had also been damaged but it tried a Kamikaze attack on a ship in the harbor. That is the one that skimmed my tent. The plane didn’t quite make it to the ship. It crashed and exploded in the bay. It was just a nuisance raid but it was a big experience for me.

On March 8<sup>th</sup> we left Leyte on the *USAT Sea Devil*, in convoy. (USAT stands for US Army Transport) We were the flagship. Again, our destination was uncertain.

The *Sea Devil* was a US Maritime Commission C3 Type Ship. It was 492 feet long, 69.5 feet

wide, an empty weight of 7,800 tons, and a speed of 16.5 knots. Between 1940 and 1947 there were 465 of these cargo ships built. Some of them were converted to troop transports.

I don't remember too much about that voyage. We had taken the southern route through the islands – through the Sarigao Strait (sometimes spelled Suragao). We were told that we were the first convoy to go through that strait without being attacked by submarines and torpedoes. It was in these waters that Admiral Kinkaid and his battleships had recently destroyed so much of the Japanese fleet in a good old-fashioned naval battle of firing broadsides from battleships.

I also remember that I was scared – we all were. I happened across a poem in some magazine I was reading which inspired me. I tore it out and carried it in my wallet from then on. There were three verses but it was the last verse which I remembered verbatim. It went:



Route of USAT Sea Devil through Sarigao Strait.  
8-15 March 1945

Thy will be done, if Thou decree  
That I should die afield.  
Then let me go face to the foe –  
Sustain me, lest I yield.  
Let no man cry, he saw me fly  
The battle's agony.  
And let me die as a man should die  
In a fight for liberty

I took that poem seriously and, as I said, I carried it in my wallet. For some reason it gave me comfort. Whenever I started becoming a little afraid, I took that poem out and recited it like a prayer. It gave me more strength than bible passages.

On 15 March we arrived at Lingayen Gulf on Luzon of the Philippine Islands. We debarked by cargo nets into Higgins boats. First we loaded some of the Higgins boats with our duffle bags. The cargo net was pulled out from the ship's side so that it was more of a slide than a vertical ladder. We rolled our duffle bags down this and, luckily, none of them bounced into the water. Then we climbed down into another boat that carried personnel only.

When we arrived on the beach we had to search through the piles of duffle bags to find our own. Then we climbed into trucks and were transported to the 12<sup>th</sup> Replacement Battalion. (There's that word again. We are still replacing someone.)

There were still five of us together who were in the same platoon in basic training. One of them,

Craik, was from Redwood City (he was the one who couldn't swallow a pill whole until he tried an Atabrine tablet.) He was inducted with me in San Francisco, we were together in the same reception center at the Presidio in Monterey, and we went through basic training in the same platoon. Then we traveled together to Fort Ord, Camp Stoneman, on the *USS Fond du Lac*, and now up to Luzon and then the 25<sup>th</sup> Division. (Later we would meet again and be discharged together at the same place in California.)

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## Chapter 14 – “Tropic Lightning”

After spending four days doing the usual things you do in one of these “casual camps” or “repple debbles,” as they were called, I was assigned to the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division – the Tropic Lightning Division. I would later be assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion of that Division.

### THE 25<sup>TH</sup> DIVISION

Shortly after World War I, in 1921, the Hawaii Division was organized to protect the US Territory of Hawaii. The organizational structure was called “square.” Under the Division commander were two Infantry Brigades and under each Brigade were two Infantry Regiments. There was also a field Artillery Brigade under which was three Artillery Regiments, which in turn was composed of Artillery Battalions.

During 1940 and 1941, with war looming, the Army was planning a more agile structure and adopted what was known as a “triangular” Division. The Infantry and Artillery Brigades and the Artillery Regiment were abandoned. Directly under each Division commander would be three Infantry Regiments and four Artillery Battalions plus support units (engineers, medical, quartermaster, etc.). Each Infantry Regiment would have an Artillery Battalion dedicated to its support. Thus the command chain for the triangular structure for World War II became:

**War Department** consisted of several Armies

Each **Army** consisted of two or more Corps plus auxiliary units.

Each **Corps** normally consisted of two or more Infantry Divisions plus service troops.

Each **Infantry Division** normally consisted of three Infantry Battalions, four Artillery Battalions, and necessary service troops.

Each **Infantry Battalion** normally consists of three Infantry Regiments

Each **Infantry Regiment** normally consisted of three Rifle Companies.

Each **Rifle Company** normally consisted of three Platoons.

Each **Artillery Battalion** normally consisted of three Gun Batteries.

There were further breakdowns into teams, sections, squads, crews, etc., whatever was appropriate. It should be noted that today the Regiment is no longer used. It has been replaced by smaller Brigades of 3,000 - 3,500 troops which report directly to the Division commander.

On 1 October 1941, two new sister Divisions were activated – the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions – from units of the old Hawaii Division. They were based at Schofield Barracks in the Territory of Hawaii. The Divisions were new but the units of which they were comprised were existing. Two months later they saw their first combat when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. These two Divisions were the first Army units to see combat in World War II.



25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division  
Insignia.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Division was composed of the 27<sup>th</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup>, and 161<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiments; and the 8<sup>th</sup>, 64<sup>th</sup>, 89<sup>th</sup>, and 90<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalions. The 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, to which I was assigned, provided dedicated support to the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment – the “Wolfhounds.”

In late 1942 the 25<sup>th</sup> Division underwent extensive training in amphibious operations and jungle warfare. Then it sailed for Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands to relieve the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, which had made a beachhead there. It commenced offensive operations on 7 January 1943 under the command of Major General J. Lawton Collins. Within a month the Division had captured the mountainous area and circumvented the island to prevent retreating Japanese from escaping. The speed with which these operations were completed earned it the name of “Tropic Lightning”

Division. General Collins was dubbed “Lightning Joe.” After Guadalcanal was secured, the 25<sup>th</sup> helped to seize other islands in the Solomons: New Georgia, Vella La Vella, Sasavele, and Kolombangara. The Solomon campaign ended on 6 October 1943. The 25<sup>th</sup> was then sent to New Zealand to recuperate and replenish their forces.

Up until this time the Division had been too busy to think about an insignia. The final design chosen used the red and yellow colors of Hawaii royalty on the shape of a taro leaf (red leaf with a yellow border). This recognized the Division’s Hawaiian roots. On the taro leaf was a yellow lightning bolt to represent the Division’s nickname – “Tropic Lightning.”

On 8 February 1944 the 25<sup>th</sup> moved to the island of New Caledonia for intensive training in preparation for the invasion of the Philippines.

On 9 January 1945, under heavy attack from Kamikaze pilots, about 68,000 soldiers of I Corps and XIV Corps, 6<sup>th</sup> Army, under Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, landed on the beaches of Lingayen Gulf on Luzon, the largest Philippine island. At that time there were some 250,000 Japanese troops on Luzon under the leadership of General Yamashita. About 140,000 of them were in the north-central part of the island defending Lingayen Gulf. Most of the remainder were farther south near Manila and some in the far north of the island. The invasion at Lingayen Gulf was planned to divide the Japanese forces, presumably so it would be easier to capture Manila, and that it did.



25<sup>th</sup> Division Troops Landing  
at Lingayen Gulf. 11 January 1945  
(From 25<sup>th</sup> Div. History Book)



Over the next few days about 175,000 US troops landed on the beaches. On the same day I passed under the Golden Gate Bridge on the *USS Fond du Lac*, 11 January 1945, the 25<sup>th</sup> Division landed on White Beach 3 about a mile north of San Fabian. The 25<sup>th</sup> Division, now under the command of Major General Charles L. Mullins Jr., was attached to I Corps of the 6<sup>th</sup> Army.



Lingayen Gulf Beachhead  
9 January 1945  
US Embassy (Manila) Photo

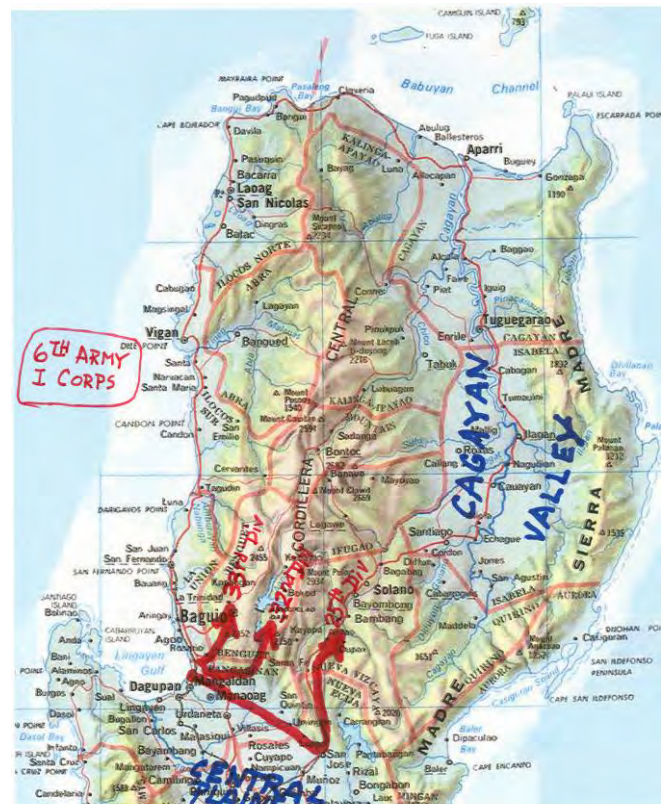
only five divisions to Krueger's northern forces – five divisions to tackle the bulk of the Japanese army on Luzon. Yet after the fall of Manila in March 1945, MacArthur depleted even that force, pulling two divisions out of the north to aid the 8<sup>th</sup> Army operations in the rest of the Philippines. As Captain Robert Maynard of the 128<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 32<sup>nd</sup> Division, related, “MacArthur took Manila ... then he didn't care about the dying in the mountains.”

MacArthur was not well respected by the men serving under him. He was considered a “glory grabber” who had no concern regarding casualties and fatalities as long as his objectives were obtained. After he took two division for use elsewhere, there were only three divisions – 60,000 soldiers when at full strength– in I Corps to confront some 150,000 Japanese who were dug in on the reverse side of every ridge and who had artillery in caves covering every approach. They were in an ideal defensive position with a good supply line from the north.

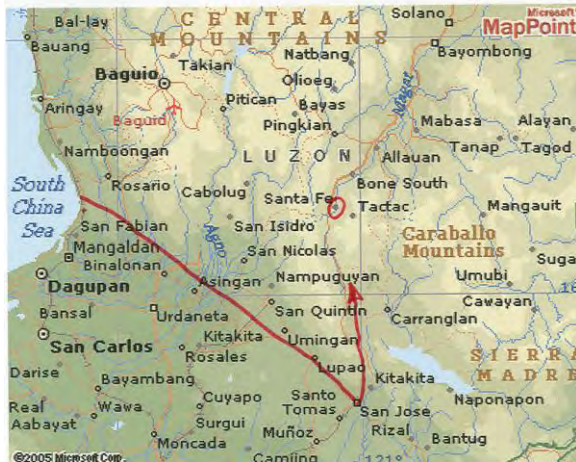
The three divisions remaining in I Corps were the 33<sup>rd</sup>, the 32<sup>nd</sup>, and the 25<sup>th</sup>. The 33<sup>rd</sup> was on the left (west) flank guarding Lingayen Gulf and preventing Japanese troops from

XIV Corps went south to take Manila. I Corps, under the command of Major General Innis P. Smith, went across the Central Plains to protect XIV Corps' flank – as it headed for Manila – from a massive attack by the main part of the Japanese army in the north. As Tracy L. Derks wrote on the February 2002 issue of *World War II* magazine:

The bitter campaigns raging in the mountains were low priority to General Douglas MacArthur, commander of all Allied forces in the Philippines. MacArthur had originally allotted



moving down from Baguio, which was the Japanese army headquarters on Luzon. The 32<sup>nd</sup> division was in the center securing several river valleys out of the Carabello Mountains and the southern end of the Villa Verde Trail. On the right (east) flank was the 25<sup>th</sup> Division near San Jose and Highway 5 – a critical north-south route connecting the Central Plains to the Cagayan Valley.



Advance of the 25<sup>th</sup> Division in early 1945.

So I Corps and its three divisions were poised at the southern foothills of the Carabello Mountains facing a far superior Japanese force. In late February, with the battle for Manila almost won, 6<sup>th</sup> Army Commander Krueger changed the mission of I Corps. He ordered it to advance into the Carabellos and attack the Japanese in their seemingly impenetrable defensive lairs.

So, on 21 February 1945, I Corps was on the move. The 33<sup>rd</sup> Division started northward through the mountains to capture Baguio. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Division started up the treacherous terrain of the Villa Verde Trail toward the Cagayan Valley.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Division advanced northward in the mountains adjacent to Highway 5 with the objective of capturing Balete Pass and then moving on to Santa Fe. The resistance encountered is described by Captain Ralph B. Reeves Jr. in an official report ordered by Colonel Philip E. Lindeman, commanding officer of the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. That report is entitled *Battle Report, Luzon Campaign, Twenty-Seventh United States Infantry*:

Some three thousand yards south of Balete Pass, the gateway to the Cagayan Valley, the enemy constructed his Main Line of Resistance. These defenses formed a general east-west series of fortifications extending from a right flank west of Highway 5 to some distance beyond the Old Spanish Trail which parallels Highway 5 approximately 12,000 yards to the east.

To man this Main Line of Resistance the enemy had formed a provisional force composed of elements of his main Infantry reinforced by various service units collected from all sectors of Luzon. Principal enemy units represented were the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 63<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiments; the 10<sup>th</sup> Engineer Regiment; the 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Regiment; the 8<sup>th</sup> Railroad Regiment; and artillery from the 10<sup>th</sup> Division reinforced by independent artillery and heavy mortar units.

The terrain south of Balete Pass was especially suited for defense. Perpendicular to Highway 5 the enemy's defenses were constructed along a series of ridges and principal hill-masses to which there were few natural routes of approach. The central anchor of the Main Line of Resistance was formed on Myoko Mountain, the dominating hill-mass of the entire area south of Balete Pass and north of Putlan. This mountain, southeast of Balete Pass, rises to a peak of over 4,000 feet above sea level and is the connecting link between the great ridge and hill-masses of Kabuto, Minami, and Kongo, the latter being the terrain formed by Lone Tree and Wolfhound Ridges.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry was assigned a zone of action east of Highway 5 with the mission of pushing north and building a road east of the highway.



It was while the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was fighting to capture Myoko Mountain that I joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, a unit equipped with 105mm howitzers. Its mission was to provide direct support to the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. The map above shows approximately how far the 25<sup>th</sup> Division had advanced when I was assigned. The fighting was much different than that on the Central Plain. As illustrated in Captain Reeves' report, distances were measured in yards. That is also how advancement in battle was measured – yard by bloody yard.

## INTO THE DEPTHS OF HELL

On March 19<sup>th</sup> we rode in the backs of trucks for the 65-mile journey from the 12<sup>th</sup> Replacement Battalion at Lingayen Gulf to San Jose, which was then the rear echelon for the 25<sup>th</sup> Division. It was exhilarating seeing all the Filipino people along the road waving to us and giving us the “V” for Victory sign. Just like in the movies. We gave them the Victory sign back and felt like heroes heading for the front to liberate this country. Such was the exultation of 18-year-olds.

We arrived at San Jose and spent the night there. Our tent was on the campus of the San Jose Agricultural College. The next morning there was a weapons carrier parked outside. It had the canvas roof up over the bed. Out of the back end were sticking six pairs of field boots. They were on corpses stacked three high and two across in racks. I presume the weapons carrier belonged to a grave registration unit and they had casually parked in the most convenient place while they went to chow, or took care of some other business. This was the beginning of the unmasking of war for me.

I am struggling for words to explain my feelings at that moment. I was shocked ... filled with



awe ... scared. Gone was the rapture of the previous day when we rode in glory past the people making “V” signs. This was the environment I was entering; a world where death – violent and sudden death – is so common there is no attempt to disguise it. There are no flag-draped coffins or any other means to mask the wholesale slaughter. Death is there in its bare and grisly form. I think I became a little more solemn – perhaps a little more like those combat veterans we picked up at Guadalcanal on the way over. I now silently entertained traumatic thoughts.

I met Lou, the gun crew sergeant I would be working under. I would be on the #2 piece in Baker Battery (cannoneers refer to howitzers as a “piece”). Lou had to take care of some other business and then we headed up Highway 5 toward the front lines, just a little north of Dig Dig. My memory is a little hazy here, but for some reason we spent the night at Dig Dig with Service Battery. We took a bath in the river by a destroyed bridge – the Japanese destroyed all the

bridges as they retreated. Later I found a picture of this same location in the 25<sup>th</sup> Division History Book.

The next morning, March 21<sup>st</sup>, we reported to the Battery Commander, a captain and a heck of a nice fellow, but I can't remember any of the officers' names. He apologized that there were no openings in survey or fire direction at this time but cannoneers were badly needed.

He told us to turn in our gas masks and mosquito nets, as we wouldn't need them anymore. So much for all the malaria control and chemical warfare training that was

drummed into us. Then he said we couldn't wear the brand new combat boots we were so proud of. They looked too much like officers' boots and that would make us a choice target for snipers. Even the officers wore canvas leggings. No one wore insignias of rank and officers were not saluted. We just knew who everyone was. (Within a couple months all the new replacements had combat boots and, because so many had them, they were allowed to keep them. But I had turned mine in so I was stuck with leggings.)

I then got acquainted with the crew I would be working with. Our position was on top of a hill just off Highway 5 (which was more of a dirt road than a highway). Although the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry, which we were supporting, was back in the hills east of the highway, the Artillery had to stay closer because of logistics. Our shells still reached up there, though.

The #2 piece was just about worn out. Being #2, it got more firing than the rest of the battery. The lands in the tube was wearing thin and peeling off. For a while we had to look down the tube between every shot to make sure nothing was protruding. Then #3 piece had to take over the job of adjusting the battery until, as I recall, we eventually got a better howitzer. In combat we were using the M2A1 models of the 105mm howitzers. Every evening at dusk we had to do the rammer-staff drill to clean the piece. The Gunner would disassemble and clean the breach block and we'd use a rammer staff to clean and oil the bore. We used regular automobile oil for this job.

I also noticed there were gas shells handy in each gun pit. This surprised me because it was against the Geneva Convention to use chemical weapons. I was told they were there just in case the Nips started using gas.

I also noticed that the Japanese were always referred to as "Nips." (For Nipponese.) It didn't seem to me that this was as derogatory as the word "Jap." Although we hated the enemy, as we were programmed to do, we did respect him as a formidable opponent. The word "Nip" seemed to be used as just the name for him. At least that is the way I always thought of it.

We also had Smoke, HE, and Time shells in the pit. I never used anything but Smoke and HE (both fuse-quick and fuse-delay). Fuse-delay shells were used mainly to penetrate the caves the enemy was dug into. But they never seemed to do much good. The only effective way was for the Infantry to go after them with flame throwers.

**ROBERT ALDRIDGE  
IN PHILIPPINES**

Word has been received by Mr. and Mrs. Ted Reaves, Rt. 1, Box 188, that their son, Pvt. Robert Aldridge, arrived safely in the Philippines where he is with an instrumental surveying branch of the field artillery. Aldridge left the states shortly after spending Christmas with his family at their Green valley home.

Article in Watsonville *Register*  
*Pajaronian*. 1945

There was one cave from which the Nips were shelling the highway which we could see from our gun pit. They'd fire at some vehicles and then pull their piece back into the cave so it couldn't be damaged. This was one of the few targets we could see from our gun position, and we shelled it many times. That approach just wasn't working. Then one day our piece was given a mission to fire a smoke shell at the cave. It was a marker for an air strike. We could see the column of white phosphorous smoke rising as the planes were flying in. When the bombs were dropped, they didn't fall quickly as gravity bombs do. They seemed to flutter on the way down and then there were huge flames. They were some kind of naphtha bombs – an incendiary bomb which was a forerunner to napalm.

We were given free cigarette and beer rations – a pack of smokes a day and 3 cans of beer a week. The beer we drank at the hot ambient temperature. I did not smoke at that time so I gave my cigarettes away or traded them to native Filipinos for laundry service, whenever native Filipinos were around. Once I saw a very primitive native from the hills. He wore only a loin cloth and carried a spear for a weapon. His woman followed behind. I recall someone was trying, with difficulty, to converse with him – possibly to see if he could furnish any intelligence information.

When I first reported to the 8<sup>th</sup>, they didn't have a carbine to issue me. Our crew had an old-fashioned Tommy Gun that they had acquired someplace. It was .45 caliber with a drum magazine – the kind I used to see in gangster movies. I didn't know anything about it and neither did anyone else. But I carried it until a carbine was available.

When I finally did get a carbine, I didn't know how it would shoot. The Talivera River (Dig Dig River ??) flows alongside Highway 5 and we used to go down to a nice swimming hole to bathe. One evening I went down with others in the back of a truck. After we had finished our swim and were loading up, someone decided to have some target practice. Several others started shooting, too. I decided this was a good time to find out how accurately my carbine would shoot. I fired three shots and that gave me a pretty good idea. When we looked up on the hill toward our Battery, there were people looking down. They told me later they thought we had been ambushed by a Nip patrol.

On another day, I had to walk back up the hill by myself. There was some detachment bivouacked along the highway. In basic training they drilled it into us to never take shortcuts – always stay on the trail. But I thought this was harmless enough. So I cut through the bivouac area instead of going along the road. As I proceeded, I felt an urge to look down and there, across the trail about a foot above the ground, was a string. I followed the string with my eyes and saw it was attached to a hand grenade. Had I taken one more step I would have tripped the booby trap which was set in case of Japanese infiltration at night. That drove home the lesson to not take short cuts.

Another time when I was walking up from the river, there was a group of new Infantry replacements bivouacked along the road. I could hear them laughing and joking. They would go up to join their outfit the next day. In my mind I recalled the statistics that showed that half of the new Infantry replacements would be casualties within 24 hours – not all killed, but casualties.

Those who lasted that first 24 hours learned survival skills fast. I couldn't help feeling a lonely sadness for those boys. I was only 18 but they still seemed young to me.

Somewhere I found a 40mm shell casing that had been fired. I decided to keep it as a souvenir. Using the leather punch on my pocket knife, I started engraving the name of the Artillery Battalion and the Division I was in, as well as the date and location. It was looking pretty good. Then one of my friends said he knew where I could find some Japanese fuses that make real nifty souvenirs. He said that back on the road toward Dig Dig there was a little cave along the side. In that cave were some boxes of Japanese artillery fuses.

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, Easter Sunday morning, I hitch hiked back along the road. It is not hard to hitch a ride with Army vehicles. I got off in the vicinity of where the cave was supposed to be and soon found it. It was a small cave only about three feet high and I don't know how deep. It was an ammunition cache. I found boxes of two kinds of fuses and picked out a few of each. They were solid brass and had Japanese writing on them. Then I hitched another ride back to my outfit.

Now I had to disarm them. We had a large burn pit where we incinerated excess powder bags and the cardboard containers for artillery rounds. It was usually always burning. I tied a wire onto the fuses and threw them into the fire. When they popped I knew they were disarmed. I was able to screw the two types together, one tapered and the other more rounded. Then I cut out some brass fins and slotted the end of the tapered fuse. When I inserted the fins, the assembly looked like a miniature bomb made of brass. I thought it was a neat souvenir.

Artillerymen, even on the front lines, are able to have a mess tent where we got actual cooked food. In that respect the Artilleryman had it much easier than an Infantryman who went for weeks at a time with nothing but C-rations or K-rations. One day I was eating while sitting on the grass by the mess area and saw two dogs frolicking about on the hillside. One of the other fellows pointed out two trees, between which was a wire for a grenade booby trap. The dogs were tumbling and playing as they rolled down the hill right toward the wire. There wasn't much we could do except take cover. They hit the wire and the grenade exploded. I believe it killed one dog and the other went yelping away. I don't know what happened to it.

It was while eating at this same place that a fellow told me how I could tell how long a soldier had been overseas by watching him eat. He said, if he finds ants in his chow during the first six months, he throws the chow away. After six months he just picks the ants out and eats his chow. After a year he doesn't pay any attention and eats the ants and all. But after a year-and-a-half, if the ants try to get away he catches them and puts them back on his plate.

On another day, April 8<sup>th</sup>, I was eating by the mess area and I saw an announcement posted about President Roosevelt's death. I learned about it cold, just like that! I was shocked and sad. He was a great man. I didn't vote for him because the voting age was still 21. Even if I had been of age I couldn't have voted because at that time servicemen were not allowed to vote or exercise any other political role.

So the war continued with Harry S. Truman as our commander-in-chief. But before I move on I want to tell about my first night with the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion.



## BANZAI ON MYOKO MOUNTAIN

When I joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, the Tropic Lightning Division had already crossed the Central Plain and was fighting in the Caraballo Mountains. The 25<sup>th</sup> *Infantry Division History, World War II* book depicts the situation:

As the Division zone shifted from the Central Plain to the Caraballo Mountains, terrain became of paramount importance. The densely wooded, razorback ridges, the V-shaped ravines choked with underbrush, the absolute lack of secondary roads and supply trails all weighed heavily in favor of the Japanese defense plan.

Except for Highway 5 itself, movement northward was restricted to the ridges which paralleled the main road and along which the enemy conducted a dogged defense in depth. The highway was covered by fire from artillery, anti-tank, and automatic weapons and could be opened for traffic only after the hills to either side had been cleared. That, then, was the herculean task facing the Division as it plunged into the mountains.

That plunging into the mountains was taking place when I arrived on the scene. As I mentioned in previous chapters, the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery provided dedicated support to the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Together with the 65<sup>th</sup> Engineers and some logistical support units, we made up what was called the 27<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team (RCT). The 27<sup>th</sup> was then advancing along the ridges toward Myoko Mountain. The importance of this drive was explained by Captain Ralph B. Reeves Jr. in his *Battle Report – Luzon Campaign: Twenty Seventh United States Infantry*:

The ultimate objective of the current operation was Balete Pass, and from air and ground reconnaissance the [27<sup>th</sup>] Regimental Commander determined that the key to Balete Pass was towering Myoko Mountain. From Myoko Mountain, Lone Tree and Wolfhound Ridges formed a natural and feasible route of approach for an envelopment of the Pass from the southeast, and from the beginning of the advance from Putlan the concentrated effort of the regiment were bent toward the seizure of Myoko.

The terrain was characterized by steep slopes covered by dense rain forest which offered many problems and hardship in both maneuver and supply. The enemy was supported by intense mortar and automatic weapon fire, and his riflemen were well dug-in on commanding ground. The importance of Myoko Mountain to the enemy was evidenced at this early date by tenacious counter attacks against our troops as they slowly made their way, sometimes on hands



and knees, up the precipitous slopes.

The most favorable approach to Myoko was a long ridge extending southeast to Highway 5, and here it was decided to construct a supply road. The ridge itself was a razor-back formation with steep slopes [on each side] averaging eighty degrees. The absence of lateral fingers or more gentle slopes prevented any appreciable flanking movements and the alternative was a direct drive along the ridge line.

That was the situation when I joined the 8<sup>th</sup>. Many of the crew on #2 piece had been with the 8<sup>th</sup> since before Pearl Harbor. They had gone through the December 7<sup>th</sup> bombing and then the Guadalcanal campaign. They were seasoned veterans. On my first night with them, 21 March 1945, the field telephone in our gun pit rang. It was a fire mission. That was nothing unusual but this particular fire mission was exceptional. The Nips were charging in a Banzai attack. The 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry trying to capture Myoko Mountain urgently needed fire support. The Army's website for the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery History, describes this event:

Taking the ridges that ran parallel to Highway 5, the "Wolfhounds" [27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment] began to advance toward the main objective, Balet Pass. In a classic example of effective fire support, on 21 March the Japanese attacked the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry in the Myoko Mountains. During the fight, clerks, cooks, and wiremen joined the gun crews to ward off the Japanese. In a 1½-hour period, the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery fired more than 1,100 rounds. In some of the fiercest fighting of the Pacific war, the division fought its way through the Japanese defenses on one hill after the other along Highway 5 with the key terrain, Balet Pass, falling to US forces on 13 May 1945.

We received the fire commands and it ended with a phrase that I had never heard used before or since – "ten rounds at will!" That meant to pump those 10 rounds out there as fast as we could load and reload the piece. Normally, the firing is regulated to one round a minute to prevent the tube (gun barrel) from overheating. In extreme cases we might be ordered to fire every 30 seconds but that was usually for a small number of rounds. There is tremendous friction when the shell goes down the tube as the brass rotating band on each shell extrudes itself to fit the lands and groove in order to seal and make maximum use of the ejecting gasses. But this was "ten rounds at will." When we reported that mission complete we were commanded to fire another "ten rounds at will." I don't remember how many times that command was repeated. Able and Charlie Batteries were doing the same. Our hilltop was blazing with artillery fire.

We were working like mad fixing charges and loading the piece, then getting the expended brass out from under our feet. Soon the ammunition stock in the gun pits was being depleted. That is when cooks and clerks and wiremen were put to work hauling more rounds from our ammo dump and removing them from their shipping cartons. I believe we even used some "Time" shells set to go off on impact.

Being the rookie on the crew, I was #5 man, pulling the rounds off the pile and handing them to #3 and #4 to fix the powder charges. That meant I was off to the side of the piece where concussion from the muzzle blast was most severe. I absorbed all the pressure from 10, then 20, then 30, and I don't remember how many firings. If the Battalion fired 1,100 rounds, and those rounds were divided evenly among the 12 howitzers, that would mean our crew fired some 92 rounds on the mission. That's a lot of noise. When we were finished, my ears were ringing louder than I'd ever experienced. That was my baptism to battle.

I walked over to one of the fellows and he said something to me. I saw his lips moving but didn't hear a sound he said. I'll never forget that moment. This was the time my hearing was damaged. It came back enough that I could cope – hear the fire commands, talk on the telephone, etc. – but it was pretty dicey. I'll discuss that more later.

I would like to comment on one phrase in the quote above from the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery history. It refers to the evening I just described as “some of the fiercest fighting of the Pacific war.” In almost every history of any military outfit that I have read about, it refers to taking part in “one of the fiercest battles” of something or other. I don't know how such battles are evaluated. Is it the amount of ammunition expended? ... the amount of damage inflicted? ... the number of casualties suffered? ... the number of dead counted? I am beginning to think that phrase is a cliché to glorify military organizations. When a soldier is caught in a fierce battle, to him that battle is undoubtedly the fiercest anywhere. I think it is an exercise in futility to try to classify battles as the fiercest, second fiercest, and so on down the line. Ernie Pyle evidently felt much the same way. I will close this story with a quote from that respected war correspondent and universally-loved journalist:

I haven't written anything about the “big picture” because I don't know anything about it. I only know what we see from our worms-eye view, and our segment of the picture consists only of tired and dirty soldiers who are alive and don't want to die; of long darkened convoys in the middle of the night; of shocked, silent men wandering back down the hill from battle; of chow lines and atabrine tablets and foxholes and burning tanks; of jeeps and smelly bedding rolls and C rations and blown bridges and hospital tents and shirt collars greasy-black from months of wearing; and of laughter too and anger and wine and lovely flowers and constant cussing. All these it is composed of; and of graves and graves and graves. – Ernie Pyle.

## MOVING UP

There is one other fire mission that I recall vividly that took place while our Battery was in that same position. It was much smaller and occurred at dusk or later. I don't remember how many rounds we fired at different elevations and deflections. Not too many, but finally the “cease fire” order was given. Then something unusual happened. We were told what we were shooting at and the results. We had just destroyed a Japanese tank column. Some human beings who had been alive a few minutes ago were now dead. We were the cause. That made this killing much more personal. Of all the fire missions I have participated in, that one stands out in stark clarity. Over the years I have often thought about the mothers and fathers who grieved over their sons killed in that tank column. Some memories just linger and linger and linger.

I had a large filling in one of my teeth which came out frequently. This happened while I was at the front and I had to go on sick call to see a dentist. I was sent to rear echelon by ambulance. Several of us from the battalion went together for various reasons. The dentist there put in a filling that lasted longer than any other before or since. To power his drill he had a soldier riding what looked like an exercise bike. A belt ran from the wheel to a pulley that drove the drill. When he wanted to use the drill he would give the soldier a nod, and the soldier would start pumping.



When the filling was installed, I went back outside to where I was supposed to meet the ambulance for a return ride. I saw the driver and a couple others lying on the ground holding their stomachs. They were all from Charlie Battery and apparently they ate something at their mess that gave them food poisoning. An officer asked the rest of us if anyone had an Army driver's license. I was the only one who did so I had to drive the ambulance back up Hiway 5 to our battalion. That wouldn't have been so bad but they drove on the left side of the road in the Philippines. The steering wheel was also on the left side of the vehicle. It seemed tricky to me but I made it back OK with all the other fellows. Shortly after that, due to US influence, everyone in the Philippines started driving on the right-hand side of the road, and they've been doing so ever since.

One day we received word that we would be moving up closer to the Infantry. The 105mm howitzer battalions were always closer than the 155mm or 240mm guns because of their shorter range. Those others were behind us and when they fired their shells went over us. The 155mm shells made an eerie sound, especially if there was a loose rotating band on them that made them really shriek. The 240mm howitzers (now called 8-inch guns) belonged to the Corps artillery and fired in support of all three Divisions – the 33<sup>rd</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup>. When those shells went over it sounded like a freight train going down the valley. We could even feel the vibrations. Of course one only hears the shells that pass overhead. The old adage is true that you never hear the one that gets you.

One day we were told we would be moving up to a new position soon. The bulldozer assigned to our battery was already in our new position preparing the gun pits. It bulldozed out a hole and pushed the dirt up along the edges to create a large berm. One small opening in the berm was left for us to get in and out, and also to get the piece in and out. Once the piece was in position we erected camouflage nets over the top so it was harder to spot. The Japanese air power seemed to have been depleted but we never knew for sure. Also, there were Nip scouts looking down from the surrounding hills.

When our new positions were ready we received the order to move up. We had to package all the rounds in the pit and prepare the howitzer for towing behind our truck. Then we hopped into the back of the truck with our personal gear. It happened that we moved on my birthday – April 15<sup>th</sup>. People back in the States had been told that although youth were drafted at age 18, they would not go overseas until they were 19. When that was no longer true, the people were told that a soldier might be sent overseas sooner but would not go into combat until he was 19. I spent my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday digging a foxhole in our new gun position while fighting in the Luzon campaign.

We usually paired up in the foxholes. I was paired with a soldier who had been in the outfit during the Pearl Harbor attack, and subsequently on Guadalcanal and then the invasion at Lingayen Gulf. He was a heck of a nice guy. His name was Ticorelli, and of Italian decent. We just called him "Tic." He seemed to feel some compulsion to take me under his wing to watch out for me. (Perhaps our crew sergeant paired us up on purpose – to have a seasoned veteran look after the new rookie.) Many times we would talk at night and he would tell me about his experiences at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, and at Guadalcanal. He would also relate the

Luzon invasion and the move across the Central Plain that happened before I got there. At other times he would tell about the werewolves in Italy and the experiences his parents had with them (he was US born). He really believed in werewolves and could tell some pretty creepy bedtime stories. Of course I told a lot about myself – my girlfriend, my work in the Forest Service, etc. Although everyone in the crew knew how to perform any position, Tic was recognized as the #1 man. That is the one who sets the Si and Elevation, closes the breech block after the #2 man shoves the round in, and then pulls the lanyard to fire the piece on command.

The 105mm howitzers used the horizontal-sliding, wedge-type breech block. One of our surveying instructors at Fort Sill designed it. It worked just as its name indicates. A lever, not unlike the one a bus driver uses to open the door for passengers on a bus, was used to slide the breech block to the right. The #2 man fed the round into the breech and then shoved it all the way in with his right fist. The fist wore a leather glove and was kept doubled up like a fighter's. He would then hold the round in place with his gloved fist while the #1 man closed the breech. As the breech slid back into position, it would push the gloved fist to the side. The fist had to be kept tightly doubled or a finger might be lost. A glove was worn for protection from the breech block but also because the shell casing was real hot when it came out. The #2 man was responsible for catching it and throwing it out of the way.

The foxholes we constructed were not the usual holes dug quickly and then abandoned soon. Since we stayed in one position a little longer than Infantry men, we had a chance to fix them up a little. They were dug right outside the gun pit so we wouldn't have to walk far at night when changing the guard – people walking around at night were certain to be shot. We would dig a hole deep enough and large enough for the two of us to sleep in. Then we would build up around the sides and one end with dirt. After that we would gather whatever materials were available to make a cover over the hole and then cover that with dirt. It usually rained some every day so this was important. Oftentimes we would just dig a recess in the berm of the gun pit which, after being covered over, was something like a cave. Inside, we would dig little shelves to put some of our belongings in. I used to place my extra boxes of ammunition, as well as hand grenades, in these shelf-like excavations so I could find them quickly at night.

For the carbines we used what is called “ball” ammunition. That means the nose of the bullet was round like a ball – no hollow points or dum dums. High powered ammunition, like the 30-06 cartridges used in the M1 Garand Infantry rifles, were steel jacketed. It gave them better penetrating capability but they also made clean holes in flesh, rather than mutilating the victim. I understand that it was (is?) required by a Geneva Convention that bullets used in war must be steel jacketed.

Every evening we would clean our carbines. It was so much different than basic training. There, we were court martialed if we had even one live round of ammunition. Here we just had to ask supply for another box when we needed more, or for a few grenades. We not only had a full clip in the carbine, and two spare clips on our pistol belt, but we always had a round in the chamber. All we had to do was click off the safety when we wanted to fire. But, except for those three shots I fired to sight-in the carbine, I never fired it again. Obviously, we were very safety cautious. One person I recall was being a little careless about where he pointed his carbine.

Someone told him to “watch it.” He replied that the safety was on and pulled the trigger to prove it. Pow! Luckily he had it pointed up at the time. There was one fellow in another battery that actually shot himself in the foot. We always wondered if it was an accident, or a ticket out of the action.

The clips for our carbines each held eight rounds. Some of the fellows tried to improve that capacity by soldering two clips together, end-to-end, and stretching out the spring for more travel. That didn’t seem to work well, though, because the extra length and the modified spring caused jamming. I remained satisfied with the government-issue clips.

Someone always had to be in the gun pit, day or night to alert the crew if there was a fire mission. At night it was also to stand guard duty or to fire harassing fire. Each of us usually spent an hour on guard. If there were enough men in the crew, we would periodically be able to sleep through an entire night. That was a real luxury but highly unlikely. It was more the norm that someone had to serve two shifts. Since we usually rotated in the same order, thus knowing who to wake up for the next shift, we only got a double shift every third night or so.

We always fired harassing fire at night to make the enemy nervous. The batteries took turns doing this. Sometimes we would fire all pieces together at designated times. At other times we would fire one at a time at 15-minute intervals – #1 on the hour, #2 at 15 minutes after, etc.

During my shift on guard when we were doing the harassing fire at fifteen minute intervals, I felt so strange in the gun pit alone. At fifteen minutes past the hour I would get up and open the breech. Then I’d pick up a round and slide it into the breech, holding it there while I reached over with the other hand and closed the breech block. The aiming was preset so all I had to do then was pull the lanyard. It seemed so weird, with everyone asleep and everything so deathly quiet, that I could fire a cannon in the middle of the night. It didn’t disturb anyone’s sleep though. The howitzers and .50 caliber machine guns were all friendly fire and didn’t wake anyone up. I have slept right next to a wheel of the howitzer and not awakened when it was fired. But any strange-sounding weapon would put everyone on instant alert.

When we conducted harassing fire together as a battery, someone in Fire Direction would call the guns on a field phone. We would answer and then fire together on command. One night I was sitting in the gun pit waiting for the phone to ring. It was hanging on the gunner’s scope a little ways away. When I heard it I started to get up. Then something came crashing over the parapet. I froze and was scared stiff. I thought a Nip might have rushed over the top or thrown a grenade. I could hear the phone still ringing and then it dawned on me that someone in the next gun pit was trying to get my attention. When I finally answered I got chewed out good for being so late in responding. The person in the next pit told me he was afraid I may have dozed off and he didn’t want me to get in trouble, so he threw a big clod over. Apparently the phone had rung several times before I heard it. It was very demeaning to think that everyone believed I had been asleep on guard. That was the first incident that tried to tell me that my hearing may interfere with my functioning as a cannoneer.

We received one batch of rounds that someone said had been bouncing around Guadalcanal for a while before being sent to us. The shell casings had been dented. It was impossible to push

them into the howitzer's breech. But they had to be used. Consequently we got an axe and pounded them in. We had to be careful not to hit the primer in the center of the shell casing – they were center fire like so many small arms. I remember watching very nervously as one of the crew swung the axe, and I was sure happy when that batch of ammo was used up. There was no problem getting the shell casing out because after being fired they were explosive-formed to be perfectly round.

This new artillery position was in a beautiful little valley branching off of Highway 5. Flowing down one side was a tributary stream that fed into the main river running parallel to the highway. There was a secluded place on the stream just a short way from our gun pit where we used to bathe and wash clothes. It was both convenient and peaceful. I didn't know yet that this scenic valley was going to be the place where our battalion would see its most vicious action during the Luzon campaign.

### THE ENEMY STRIKES BACK

On the quiet evening of April 19<sup>th</sup>, I was relaxing in the idyllic little valley branching off to the east from the main canyon traversed by Highway 5, where our battery was positioned. I was relaxed while reading a thrilling detective story entitled *The Lady in the Morgue*. Then the tranquility was shattered by an ear-splitting whistling sound screeching over us, followed by an explosion on the hillside behind us. My heart leaped. We were under attack. I had heard these situations described. I had seen training film of artillery attacks. Now it was really happening ... to me!

Perhaps the Nip artillery was adjusting on us. That one was an "over." The next could be a "short." Then we would be bracketed and the third would probably be right on us. Except for an air raid on Leyte, this was the first time I had been on the receiving end of hostile fire. I wrote in my journal that night: "I learned one thing tonight and that was to keep a cool head and keep it down. I was pretty proud of the way I held together."

Another whistling projectile went over us and exploded in the same hillside. That wasn't a "short." It was still "over." What was going on? As it turned out, all of the shells were "overs" – into the hillside behind us plus a few a little farther up the valley. I was surprised at how many duds there were in the Japanese arsenal. Many just crashed into the hillside but didn't explode.

Our battalion area didn't get hit. But the 251<sup>st</sup> Artillery Battalion which was positioned farther up this little valley took a beating. They moved out that night. Charlie Battery of our Battalion was between the 251<sup>st</sup> and us – they moved to the north side of this valley the next day, to get in the shelter of the hills. We were next in the lineup but we remained in place. As I recall, one fellow in the 251<sup>st</sup> lost a leg. I was told that he said he'd often been willing to give a leg to get home, but he didn't think he'd really have to do that.

The next night, April 20<sup>th</sup>, the situation got much worse. The Nips had moved their artillery pieces to a different position where they could look right down our idyllic little valley. They had a couple of 47mm guns up on the ridge which they had pulled into position with carabao (water buffalo). They started "walking" their shells right down the valley, starting at the upper end,

which was nearest to them. They spaced the impacts about 50 feet apart and moved from side to side.

“Walking,” in artillery jargon, means spacing the shells one after the other in a zig zag pattern, similar to the pattern made by a person’s footsteps. We first watched them clobber the abandoned gun pits where the 251<sup>st</sup> had been. Then they walked through the old Charlie Battery area. I shuddered to think of the casualties had soldiers still been in those positions.

It was getting harder to see because of the smoke and dust. The exploding shells tormented my nerves. I was getting plenty scared as I watched those detonations get closer and closer and closer. Would they pulverize our battery as they were doing to the empty gun pits of the 251<sup>st</sup> and Charlie Battery? We decided that if we were to live to fight another day we should head for better cover. We made a dash across the valley for the hillside to the north, where our ammunition dump was concealed; hitting the dirt every time there was an explosion. I could feel dirt and debris and little pieces of shell fragments falling all around me. Some fragments hit my neck and bare back – we seldom wore our fatigue jackets in the tropics. They were hot and they burned. I was glad the Nips weren’t using white phosphorus.

We sat in our ammunition dump for the rest of the shelling, which wasn’t long. (Later we laughed at the irony of sitting on the ammunition dump for shelter.) The last shell exploded some 50 feet from our gun pit. One more and it would have been hit. 47mm guns aren’t large by artillery standards – slightly under two inches diameter. They are an anti-tank gun and their specialty is “direct laying,” which in artillery terms means aiming and shooting directly at something you can see. That is what they were doing to our gun emplacements. We couldn’t locate them because when they finished firing they moved out. Even if we could see the flashes of their howitzers it would do no good. They were shooting from the side of us and we couldn’t shift our pieces fast enough to return fire.

The next day we moved our position closer to the hills to get better cover. Our bulldozer operator worked hard to scoop out some gun pits. He also scooped out a long area in the hillside just outside our pit and built a huge berm on the valley side. That was to be our sleeping quarters and our entire crew shared this one, long dugout. We found logs and other material to lie over the top, and then covered it all with dirt. The opening was toward the hillside so we had good protection there. I don’t know if it would have withstood a direct hit from a 47mm shell but it gave us a much better chance.

Patrols were sent out to find the Nip artillerymen, which they eventually did. There was still occasional shelling close by for several days but it did no harm.

I had another harrowing experience shortly after that. I was now acting as #2 man on the crew fairly often – the one that loads and unloads the piece. On one fire mission we went through the usual procedure. I shoved the round into the breech and Tic (the #1 man) closed the breech block. Then he pulled the lanyard. Nothing happened except some sizzling noise and some smoke coming out of the breech. It was a misfire – something every artilleryman dreads, and it was the only one I ever witnessed. The procedure was to pull the lanyard again, which Tic did. Still nothing happened. The next thing on the procedure list was report the misfire to the battery

commander, which we did. Meanwhile, the rest of the battery went on with the fire mission while our crew just sat there.

The Captain came quickly. He waited a couple minutes and then told us to pull the lanyard again. Still nothing happened. Then came that dreaded order: "Unload." Most of the crew left the gun pit for safety reasons and there I was as #2 man who had to catch the dud when Tic opened the breach. Only the shell casing with the powder bags comes out during unloading. The procedure for a dud is to take it immediately out of the gun pit, away from the other ammo. When I caught the shell casing and turned to head for the exit. A couple officers in the arc I swung with the shell dropped to the ground. I laid the shell casing down outside and the officers gingerly fished out the powder bags. One was a little scorched. We'll never know why it didn't burn, but it didn't. The emergency was over and all we had to do was get the rammer staff, with a special fitting on the end to fit the nose of the projectile, and nudge it loose from the breech. That was no big deal, we had done it many times before when we had to unload because fire missions were cancelled.

Now we breathed a sigh of relief. We felt fortunate that we had survived the artillery attack and hoped things would be better now. That was not to be. More action was in store for this peaceful little valley.

## STEALTH IN THE NIGHT

After we had moved our gun position a few hundred feet to get away from being sighted directly down the valley, we were smack up against the hill. We had to keep the howitzer's tube above a certain elevation or the shell would hit the hill. I found that I had to watch carefully if I walked along the hill above the gun positions to make certain a fire mission was not about to begin. The projectile was skimming the hill's slope so closely that I could have been hit.

Our group dugout was cut into the hill directly alongside our gun pit. It was covered over with a big berm on the valley side. It was all open on the hill side. Our sleeping areas were all in a row. We would roll our blanket up during the day so it wouldn't get too dirty. One time I unrolled the blanket and found that blow-flies had laid eggs all over one section. It was a mess but it was the only blanket I had. I had to get some gasoline to wash out that portion, then a good rinse with water. It still smelled like gasoline but that was better than fly eggs.

One of our crew members was a red head from Louisiana (as I recall). He was completely illiterate. He could understand the fire commands OK but couldn't read or write. The Army requires that soldiers write home at certain periods. They can get help writing the letter if need be, but they must write. Well, Kazmersak, as I recall his name, never asked for help. Consequently, his family contacted the Army to find out about him and how he was. The information came down the chain of command from Washington to our battery on northern Luzon – Kazmersak was ordered to write home. I forget who eventually helped him get a letter off but he finally did.

Mail was often delayed. I remember receiving letters very late that looked like they had been soaked. The ship had probably been sunk and the mail bag floated around for a while. Or the

bag may have just been dropped carelessly and gotten wet. I used to speculate about all the places that letter went before it got to me. One person received a salami loaf in the mail because salami keeps well without refrigeration and is a real delicacy on the front lines. But this one wasn't. It had taken a whole year for it to make the journey.

In our relocated gun position we were a little farther from the creek that ran down this little valley. But it wasn't too far. We would walk through our old gun emplacement and through a little thicket. Our favorite laundry and bathing spot was only a few inches deep but it was peaceful and secluded. On the opposite side of the creek, a steep and thickly wooded hillside went up.

We used to take unused powder bags down there to heat water in a 5-gallon can for washing clothes. We'd set the can on a couple rocks, slit a powder bag, and throw handfuls of the powder pellets on the fire. They would flame up real hot and it didn't take long for the water to boil. We'd usually put the bulk of the powder a safe distance away, and have a few bags close so we could get to them easily. The bags are cloth and sewed like a cylinder to fit the four-inch diameter of the shell casing. Depending on their charge number, they were anywhere from a couple inches thick to possible four inches.

One day several of us went to the creek to wash clothes. We set up the usual arrangement of 5-gallon can and powder bags. We filled the can with water and shavings from GI soap (a yellow cake of irregular rectangular shape about the size of a pint milk carton – very strong with lye) and started the fire with some powder. Then we waded into the water to bathe. I guess we threw a little too much powder on as it ignited the small pile close by. The flames and heat were terrific. We scrunched down into the water as far as we could but it was too shallow to completely cover us. Anyway, that pile of powder bags soon burned out and we thought the excitement was over. Then I saw a spark go in the large pile. I yelled and everyone hit the water again. That was really hot. My back, which I couldn't get under the water, felt like it was cooking. The tree limbs about 25 feet overhead were badly scorched. One fellow's carbine was burned and the round in the chamber discharged. A lot of our clothes were burned and it was difficult to find replacements while in combat. As I recall, we hesitated to apply for replacement equipment because it wasn't exactly regulation to use old powder bags for such cavalier purposes. My biggest loss was that the plastic cylinder on my "calibrated" mechanical pencil was burned off. The metal parts were still OK so most of my calibrations to run a "quickie" survey were still intact. I always kept that pencil with me.

Things remained calm in our relocated gun position for only a couple days. Late at night on April 22<sup>nd</sup> I was abruptly wakened by strange firing. It was the slow chug-a-chug-a-chug of a Japanese machine gun. It was close by and I knew we were in trouble. They couldn't get us with artillery so they were infiltrating during the night.

I thought the shooting had come from our gun pit, which was right next to us. I imagined that the two fellows who were in it had been killed and that the Nips would soon be coming over the parapet toward us. I knew that anyone coming toward us at that time would not be a friend. I picked up my carbine, flipped off the safety, and waited. I believe that was the only time I ever clicked off the safety except when I fired those three practice shots to zero-in the carbine.



I have never before or since felt the feelings I had then. They still seem so clear to me. I really believed I was very close to the end of my life. I was scared silly but, strangely, I was calm and in control of myself. The lines of that poem in my pocket kept running through my head:

*Thy will be done,  
If thou decree,  
That I should die afield.  
Then let me die,  
As a man should die.  
Sustain me, lest I yield.*

This all sounds pretty mushy and melodramatic but it is the way I remember it. The words of the poem weren't exactly in the proper order but that's the order I have always recalled them. I was convinced that God was on our side.

The Nips weren't in our gun pit after all, but they were close. Their chug-a-chug machine gun kept firing and our .50 calibers were hammering away. Small arms fire was crackling everywhere. We remained fixed and alert, as we were supposed to do. There was one fellow in our crew that had seen a lot of combat on Guadalcanal and was pretty shell shocked. He grabbed his carbine and said "I'm getting out of here." I remember his words precisely. I had to speak pretty roughly to him to get through that if he left this bunker he would be killed in a second, and that was true. Even if the Nips didn't get him our men were shooting at anything that moved. That's the way it is in a firefight. One mistake and you are a casualty. We had to just stay put and be alert for anything we could do. I was a little worried about how I would handle him but eventually he did calm down and regain control of himself.

This conflict lasted well into the early morning hours. Parachute flares were shot high into the sky to light up our area. I can't recall any other thoughts I had that night but I must have had plenty. I doubt very much that I went back to sleep after the shooting stopped.

The next morning I ventured out with the others to see what had happened. I didn't have to walk far. Only about 100 feet from our dugout were some fellows who were on guard in foxholes. About 10-15 feet from one soldier's foxhole was a dead Japanese. The person who shot him was still dazed about it. He said that all of a sudden he saw this shadow coming toward him and didn't know who it was. But the thought ran quickly through his head that a friend would not be running around at that time. So he shot with his carbine. And the shadow fell. He didn't know for sure who it was until daylight.

I looked at the dead Japanese soldier. He was small and had smooth features. He reminded me of one of my best friends at Amesti school when I was in the elementary grades. This friend had lived across the road from us and his parents were field workers. He was in my class for many years. We had played together, and walked home from school together. I remember feeling sad about that dead Japanese but then my Army training snapped into gear, and I became a soldier again. But I still remember that fellow to this day. And those were my feelings, as best I can recall them. Some memories just linger and linger and linger.

Just a few steps away were two more dead bodies. They had been setting up a tripod-mounted



This picture of dead Japanese soldiers was taken on Guadalcanal, but it looks almost identical to the mass burial scene I recall on 23 April 1945 before the bulldozer covered them over.

(Source: 25<sup>th</sup> Division History Book)

machine gun right in line with a bunch of foxholes in which our soldiers were sleeping. It was a Nambu type and almost ready to fire. It would have wiped out a lot of our soldiers because their shelters were only deep enough to sleep in. Someone saw the two Nips in time and shot them. I cannot remember any special feelings at that point except seeing that machine gun set up there and the ammunition magazine they were about to insert in it.

Then I saw a group congregated farther up the valley. I walked up there to see what was going on and saw two more dead Japanese in a clump of bushes. One of my friends was on perimeter guard at that location. He told us he thought he saw some movement in the bushes, but wasn't sure. But, as he related his train of thought to us, he felt he was out there to shoot at suspicious things so he sprayed the bushes with .50

caliber rounds. I presume this was while one of the flares was burning. He didn't see any more movement so he assumed it had been his imagination.

When daylight came, my friend walked down to the bushes to check things out. He found the two dead Japanese soldiers. They were a gruesome sight. I had never imagined what those half-inch-round slugs could do to a human being.

I recall that the bodies were terribly mangled but the only picture that remains vividly in my mind is the head of one of those dead soldiers. The .50 caliber bullet had taken the top of his skull completely off. It looked like a coconut shell that had been hacked open with a machete. The severed piece was laying there leaving the rest of his head open. I could look right inside at his brains, which were oozing out onto the ground.

We didn't have any casualties but the count for the enemy was 11 dead, all within our battalion perimeter. Our battery killed three and Able Battery shot eight. They consisted of ten enlisted men and one officer. The officer had orders in his pocket to "Get the artillery at any cost." We had been doing a lot of heavy firing and I guess it was taking its toll on the Japanese.

These Nips were very clean and appeared well supplied. They looked fresh, not like soldiers that had been dug into caves for weeks. One of them had a belt of knee mortar ammunition but we found no mortar.

A detail was assigned to gather up all the bodies in the back of a weapons carrier. Our dozer operator scooped out a big hole and the weapons carrier backed up to the edge. The bodies were

just shoved out and allowed to lie as they fell. Then the dozer shoved the dirt back into the hole and the funeral was over. One of the officers marked the grave with a board upon which was inscribed: "11 Dead Nips." I was hardened to combat, somewhat, by this time, but seeing human bodies dumped out of a truck like garbage and buried in a messy pile had some kind of revolting effect on me.

For the rest of the day we built better dugouts for those who didn't have them, and strung barbed wire entanglements. Knowing now that we were a very high priority target, we had to take better precautions. The dozer also filled in our old gun pits that we had abandoned after the shelling. The Nips had used them for cover when they infiltrated our perimeter.

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## Chapter 15 – Yamashita's Defeat

The Nips continued the daily shelling but never seemed to get close enough to our position to be a threat. It became a daily experience to hear the shells whistle overhead and explode somewhere close behind us.

I mentioned in a previous chapter that we always referred to the Japanese soldiers as "Nips," for Nipponese, and that as far as I could determine it was not used in a demeaning manner. It seemed more like calling American soldiers the "Yanks," or British soldiers the "Brits." We were conditioned to hate them, and we did, but we still respected them as a formidable foe.

I think it was late afternoon of the day we buried the 11 Japanese soldiers that I went to our favorite place at the creek to bathe. There were usually quite a few people there but on that day it was deserted. It felt eerie being there all by myself. But I decided that I had come there to take a bath and I was going to take a bath. I did feel really spooked all the time. It seemed like someone was watching me but I tried to dismiss it as just my imagination. Nevertheless, I didn't waste any time bathing and getting out of there. When I got back to the gun pit I asked the other fellows where everyone was bathing. They said we were supposed to use another water hole farther downstream and more in the open. The Nips had infiltrated our area from our old bathing area. It was also determined that one or two had been wounded but escaped by that same route, and may still be lurking on the hillside. They wanted to know why I hadn't gotten the word. I realized that I probably didn't hear it when it was passed on. That was the second heads-up that my hearing was a handicap, but it didn't penetrate my thick skull.

The next day a patrol from our battalion went up the hill in search of wounded Nips. I presume it was because of concern about the knee mortar that wasn't found – why would anyone infiltrate our area with knee mortar ammunition but no mortar? From the hillside behind us a mortar could be extremely deadly.

They found one Nip just a little ways up the hillside behind the pool where I had bathed. They shot him with a .45 caliber "burp gun." Chills went up my spine when I heard where the location was. He had to have been watching me. I am convinced that the only reason I didn't get shot was because that would have given away his location.

### THE EMPORER'S BIRTHDAY

April 29<sup>th</sup> was Emperor Hirohito's birthday. It was a great honor, we were told, for a Japanese soldier to die on the Emperor's birthday. We expected a big increase in the Nip's offensive action. So the order went out to double the guard and assign more men to the perimeter guard. I was assigned to one of our battery's .50 caliber machine gun emplacement that night. Each gun battery usually has four machine guns for perimeter protection and Headquarters Battery usually has five. They have an effective range of 2,600 yards with the open leaf sight. They are capable of firing 400-600 rounds a minute, but they have to be fired in 10-second burst in order to let the barrel cool. We frequently just aimed the gun with a tracer stream, where every 5<sup>th</sup> round is a tracer bullet with phosphorus at the rear end that burns while it travels. It is like aiming a water

hose. Using tracers, the effective range is 1,500-1,800 yards – about one mile. Of course on perimeter guard at night we would only likely be firing up to 200 yards.

I shared the watch with two Filipino Guerrillas. They were part of the regular perimeter watch detail. We had quite a few of the guerrilla soldiers working with us in the artillery probably because there weren't enough "replacements." Although this night was uneventful, it was one of the scariest and most frustrating guard watches I had ever stood. First of all, we were right on the perimeter. It was up to us to protect the battalion and nobody was farther out to protect us. We were on a hill above our battalion area overlooking a grassy hillside with densely wooded cover down in the bottom. To get at our battalion from this side, the Nips would have to sneak down that wooded ravine and then crawl up that hillside toward us.

The two Filipinos had already assembled and set up the .50 caliber and everything was done according to what "the book" had always warned us against. With the ground mount we used, the gun can only be elevated or depressed 50-60 mills. This one was set up so that it couldn't be depressed far enough to shoot down the hill. It would literally only be effective for about 10-20 yards because for anything over that distance the bullets would be going over the enemy's heads. I decided that my carbine would be the most effective weapon that night and completely disregarded the machine gun.

The next event in this chain of "Keystone Kop" behavior occurred after we had been sitting in the dark for a while. One of the Filipinos decided to light up a smoke. Wow! The cardinal rule is that you never – repeat, NEVER – light a cigarette in a foxhole at night. That is an open invitation to sniper fire. I remember cringing against the far side of the dugout, as far from him as possible. Anyway, again, nothing happened.

Then the two Filipinos decided to get some sleep. As I recall, all three of us were ordered to stay awake, and keep each other awake. But they decided they were sleepy. The whole exercise of guarding the perimeter seemed to be a joke to them. In days that followed I felt much less safe having a perimeter guard around our gun emplacements. But for that night I decided it would be safer if they were asleep. If anything happened, they would wake up fast enough. It was a long but uneventful night. I was relieved and glad when it was over.

The next day, April 29<sup>th</sup>, we were doing the usual activity around the gun pit when the field phone rang for a fire mission. We received all the fire commands but were told to hold the fire until commanded. We were informed that the forward observer had spotted an entire hillside covered with Japanese soldiers praying on their emperor's birthday. Every artillery piece in the division – 105s and 155s – was zeroed in on that hillside. Even the 240mm howitzers of I Corps were preparing to fire. I remember writing "Happy Birthday" on one of the shells before I loaded it. That's the kind of things we saw done in the movies. Hollywood had had a strong influence on me.

When the fire command came, it came simultaneously for every piece of artillery. The roar in the canyon and along Highway 5 was thunderous. I don't remember how many shells our crew pumped out there. I do remember the 155 shells screaming over our heads on their way to their targets – and the 240mm shells from I Corps artillery were like freight trains rumbling up the

canyon.

When the shooting stopped, the quiet was deafening. We were told the mission was accomplished and we went on about our routine business. But I have never forgotten. I was #2 man and I have always wondered how many lives were snuffed out by the shells I had loaded into our howitzer that morning. How many Japanese families would be mourning a young soldier killed on the Emperor's birthday? How much was I responsible? And this was only one of perhaps hundreds of fire missions I had participated in. Memories linger, and linger, and linger.

Finally it was time to move forward again. Our dozer operator was sent to the new location to prepare our gun emplacements. He came back each night and told us about the nice location our pit would be in. It was sheltered by a hill but close to the top of the knoll so we could depress our howitzer tube a little more than was possible in the present position. But from this position we would have a nice view back along the main canyon.

He also told us about a stretch of Highway 5 that was zeroed in by the Nips. Every time a truck went by they would fire at it. The artillery piece was in a cave. The Nips would roll it to the cave's mouth when they wanted to fire, and then quickly roll it back in so it wouldn't be destroyed. Our officers told us they were worried about towing artillery pieces up that road. With the priority the Nips were putting on getting the artillery, they would surely lambaste us. We were told to figure out how to build a box around the howitzer so it looked like an ordinary trailer. Then we would drive like mad through the danger area and hope that we had fooled the Nips. I was really sweating out that move because we would be sitting unprotected in the backs of trucks.

As it turned out, the artillery piece that was shelling the road was "neutralized" before we had to move. We didn't have to build a box over the howitzer. We just packed up as usual and made a routine motor march to the advanced position.

I wasn't really sad to leave that location. It was the hottest position the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion had occupied during the Luzon campaign. The old timers in the battalion were particularly dissatisfied with the strategy. They said that when "Lightning Joe" Collins commanded the 25<sup>th</sup> Division, if the artillery had to be placed so close to the infantry front lines there would be an infantry unit assigned for additional protection. In the artillery, the howitzer is the primary weapon – all other weapons are secondary. We had only low-powered carbines and burp guns plus a few .50 caliber machine guns. Our howitzers did not have the flexibility of responding to heavy fire as infantry mortars or tanks could. We were neither equipped with nor trained to use Garand 30-06 high powered rifles, Browning Automatic Rifles (BARs), and grenade launchers.

Nevertheless, General Mullins put us right up next to the infantry. I guess we did a good job of protecting ourselves without any casualties. And, we were told, the artillery took its toll.

By this time I was becoming very disenchanted with this war. I really hated it. I remember praying to God, and I believe I was very sincere, that if any of my children ever had to experience war I would rather not survive this one. God has answered that prayer. Sometimes,

today, I wish I had included my grandchildren and great-grandchildren in that prayer. But I really thought the freedom and peace we were fighting for would endure, and that America would be great.

## DAYLIGHT ATTACKS

The three divisions of the 6<sup>th</sup> Army's I Corps on northern Luzon were moving closer to their objectives. On April 30<sup>th</sup>, the 148<sup>th</sup> Regimental combat Team of the 37<sup>th</sup> Division (which had gone south to capture Manila) was attached to the 25<sup>th</sup> Division to strengthen it for the final push to Balete Pass. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Division cleared the road to Baguio. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Division continued to battle along the Villa Verde Trail (between the 33<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Divisions) with the



The Three Divisions of I Corps in May 1945

objective of connecting with the 25<sup>th</sup> at Santa Fe. The 25<sup>th</sup> Division's objective, after seizing Balete Pass, was extended to take Santa Fe at the junction of Highway 5 and the Villa Verde Trail.

We moved up to our new position about May 1<sup>st</sup>. When traveling along the roads one often saw dead Japanese sprawled along the side. There was also occasionally dead American soldiers wrapped in mattress covers waiting to be picked up by the graves registration units. Most always

the pants of the Japanese were opened because they frequently carried Japanese flags in their waist. These flags were signed by, I understand, their family members before the soldier left for foreign service. There was some kind of superstitious or religious significance to carrying these flags into battle. They were also considered a prize souvenir by US troops, hence the searching of the body.

Our gun pit in this new position was also on the back side of a hill. But it was closer to the top so we could depress the howitzer tube lower than in the previous spot. Looking back down the canyon toward San Jose, we had a beautiful view. We could also see a lot of the surrounding hills and mountains. I would often sit outside our gun pit in the evenings and enjoy this view. Usually every evening a large thunderhead cloud would form at the mouth of the canyon.

We had two Filipino guerrillas assigned to our gun crew. One was an older fellow and very quiet. The other was young and very enthusiastic. I can't remember their names but neither spoke English very well. They soon learned how to fix ammunition and do other tasks around



the gun pit. I asked the younger one once if he had ever killed a Japanese. He nodded his head “yes,” and held up one finger. He had killed one. I asked how that happened. He pointed to his shoes and indicated he needed a new pair of shoes. He had killed a Japanese soldier for his shoes. Now we have that same thing happening on the streets in our large cities.

The older Filipino usually just sat quietly, thinking, when he wasn’t assigned a task. I tried to strike up some kind of conversation with him. He had on a ring which he had made and I thought it would be a good conversation piece. I told him it looked nice. He removed it and gave it to me. I realized then that I had committed a blunder. It is their custom, that if anyone admires something of theirs, they present it to the person. I couldn’t refuse the ring because that would be a big insult. So I thanked him and took it. It is also the custom that one repay such kindness by giving them something. When I received my cigarette rations, I gave them to him. That seemed to make him happy.



M4 Sherman Tank  
with 105mm Cannon

The attacks on artillery continued but we were better prepared now, and they didn’t take us by surprise. Sometimes at night the flares would be in the sky and I could hear the .50 caliber guns hammering away. I

used to huddle in my foxhole and think of a human being out there trying to infiltrate with all the light and shooting going on. I could not see why two groups of human beings were so set on killing each other. It made me sick. But I continued to hold up my share of the killing.

On May 3<sup>rd</sup> the Nips started a new tactic. They started attacking in broad daylight. I could see skirmishes on a hillside close to us. There was some rainforest cover part way down from the top. The Nips would try to get in a good position for sniper fire, or even grenade throwing if possible. The crackling of small arms fire was taking place, off and on, all day long. Even though patrols were sent up, they could never seem to get all the Nips, and the attacks continued.

Finally a Sherman tank was sent in that had a 105mm cannon in its turret. It sat right in the middle of our battalion area. When the Nips would initiate an attack, the tank swung its turret around and fired directly at them.

I decided to write home about the daylight attacks. I figured that if it wasn’t supposed to be advertised our officers would cut it out of my letter – our own officers censored our mail. Shortly after I deposited the letter to be mailed, I was summoned to the battery headquarters dugout. The officer that had my letter explained that we shouldn’t mention these daylight attacks when we write home. He was very nice about it and said he didn’t want to send my letter off all cut up. So he gave it back to me to write over. Well, I found out that was one thing I couldn’t write home about.

Our battalion captured one Japanese prisoner at this location. It was rare occasion because the Nips usually preferred to die rather than be captured. On the other hand, we wanted to take some

alive. Captured soldiers, especially officers, were a good source of information about the enemy. We never heard anything about torture so I don't know if it was practiced then, or not. I suspect it wasn't to any great extent. I just saw this prisoner standing with some officers shortly after being captured. The younger Filipino guerrilla was all excited about it. He was pounding my shoulder trying to tell me they caught a Nip. He wanted me to run right down there with him to see what was going on. I wasn't really that interested.

May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945 – VE Day!! Germany accepted unconditional surrender. The war in Europe was finally over and more resources could now be allotted to the Pacific. Shortly thereafter the first rotation home from the Pacific began. Those in the 25<sup>th</sup> Division with five or more years overseas were finally sent home. Lou, our crew sergeant, was one of them. The fellow who was gunner was also relieved of duty to be sent home – I can't remember his name but he was from Pennsylvania. A new sergeant was assigned to our crew and Tic became the gunner corporal. I became one of the #1 men on the crew. More than one person knew how to do each job so that the regular man had a replacement. He could take time for bathing or washing clothes, or just relaxing for a while to write letters and read. We had to arrange it so that at least one person was in the gun pit at all times to answer the phone. Enough of the crew had to be immediately available to fire the howitzer if the phone call was a fire mission. With these rules we were able to rotate enough to give everyone a chance to clean up and get somewhat refreshed.

This modus operandi settled into a somewhat stable day-to-day existence. Compared to the last location we were in, this gun position had become a lot more routine, until I volunteered for a forward observer mission. I'll tell about that now.

## MY FORWARD OBSERVER MISSION

We in the artillery were very conscientious about the fire missions carried out. We knew that the slightest error on our part could cause the barrage to strike our own troops. We also knew that the infantry depended heavily on our support, and we were very eager to give that support in the most helpful fashion. Ernie Pyle, a war correspondent who spent months with troops on the front lines – especially the infantry – was loved and respected by every GI in World War II. In one of his famous columns entitled “The God Damned Infantry” he wrote this about the artillery:

We have fallen back to the old warfare of first pulverizing the enemy with artillery, then sweeping around the ends of the hill with infantry and taking them from the sides and behind.

I've written before how the big guns crack and roar almost constantly throughout the day and night. They lay a screen ahead of our troops. By magnificent shooting they drop shells on the back slopes. By means of shells timed to burst in the air a few feet from the ground, they get the Germans even in their foxholes. Our troops have found that the Germans dig foxholes down and then under, trying to get cover from the shell bursts that shower death from above.

Yes, we did work hard to deliver the barrages where they were wanted. We respected the infantry and the dirty job they had to do. We knew they were the ones doing the nasty work. We had time to relax between fire missions – they seldom had time to themselves. We could bathe and shave and have three warm meals a day – they had to let their beards grow and smelled of the clay ground they lived and slept in, their daily rations were two C-ration meals a day, if that. In the same column mentioned above, Ernie Pyle described

his emotions as a string of battle weary infantrymen in Tunisia walked past him, heading for the skirmish:

Now to the infantry - the God-damned infantry, as they like to call themselves.

I love the infantry because they are the underdogs. They are the mud-rain-frost-and-wind boys. They have no comforts, and they even learn to live without the necessities. And in the end they are the guys that wars can't be won without.

The men are walking. They are fifty feet apart, for dispersal. Their walk is slow, for they are dead weary, as you can tell even when looking at them from behind. Every line and sag of their bodies speaks their inhuman exhaustion.

They don't slouch. It is the terrible deliberation of each step that spells out their appalling tiredness. Their faces are black and unshaven. They are young men, but the grime and whiskers and exhaustion make them look middle-aged.

In their eyes as they pass is not hatred, not excitement, not despair, not the tonic of their victory - there is just the simple expression of being here as though they had been here doing this forever, and nothing else.

There is an agony in your heart and you almost feel ashamed to look at them. They are just guys from Broadway and Main Street, but you wouldn't remember them. They are too far away now. They are too tired. Their world can never be known to you, but if you could see them just once, just for an instant, you would know that no matter how hard people work back home they are not keeping pace with these infantrymen ...

Ernie Pyle was killed by a Japanese machine gunner on Iwo Jima on 18 April 1945. GIs mourned the world over. The soldiers erected a simple plaque reading: "At this spot, the 77th Infantry Division lost a Buddy, Ernie Pyle, 18 April 1945."

Yes, the infantrymen are the pawns in the game called war. They are the ones who do the dirty work. They are the ones who suffer the most casualties. However, there is one job in the artillery that is even more dangerous than the infantry. That is the task of the forward observers, the ones who observe the fire and send necessary corrections. The ones who direct the fire and call the shots. The ones who have to crawl out ahead of the infantry so they can see the enemy and calculate their positions. Forward observing is so dangerous that no enlisted man is ordered to perform it. They can be asked but with the option to refuse. It is strictly voluntary work. They cannot be forced to go.

There are two main reasons that being a forward observer is more dangerous. First is that it is frequently out in front of the infantry, or at a place remote from the infantry. It's chief means of protection is elusiveness – secrecy. If the location of the observation post becomes known, it will quickly be wiped out by a raid or with mortar fire. The second reason is that forward observers are prime targets. They are the eyes of the artillery and the artillery is a formidable force. It takes tremendous tolls on the enemy. The enemy is diligently watching all the time to locate the observation post and destroy it – in order to blind the eyes of the artillery. In other words, it is not just another target. It is a special target on which the enemy spends extra resources and time to locate and demolish.

I learned in basic training that a turn at forward observing would change one's whole outlook on life. My buddy, Ticorelli (Tic), had been on a number of forward observer (FO) missions. He

told me that one ages fast “up there.” He was frequently asked to go with the FO party. They would be made up every few days or so from soldiers in the same battery. The batteries took turns because the FO party served the entire battalion.

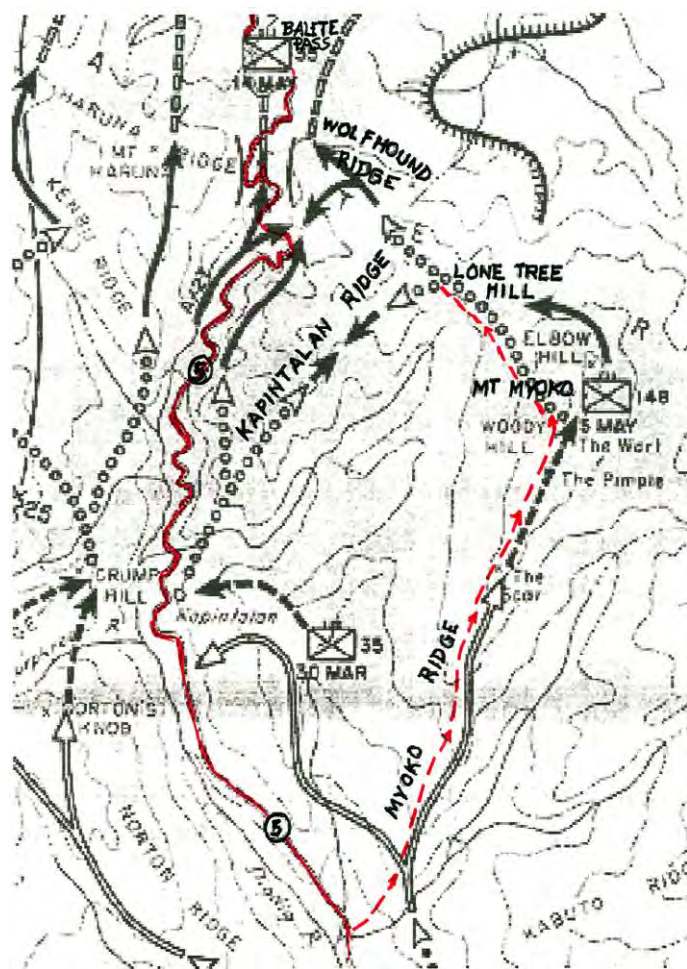
One day I went to our foxhole/dugout and Tic was there angrily throwing things into a pack. I asked what was going on. He had been asked to go on another FO party. I asked why he didn’t just refuse, because he hated the ordeal. He just said he couldn’t do that. I mentioned that I would like to go sometime and he vehemently told me to forget it.

I was alone in the foxhole while Tic was gone. I thought a lot about FO parties. I was trained for that work, which is more than most cannoneers here were – they just learned from experience. I wanted to go and I decided I’d volunteer for the next one our battery was responsible for.

On May 9th another FO mission was being organized. I told the officer who would be in charge – a lieutenant from our battery – that I would like to be included. He asked if I knew what I was getting into. I said I was trained to observe fire and would like a chance to do it. I was accepted.

I went to my foxhole to throw a light pack together. Tic came by and asked what was up. I said I had volunteered for the FO party. Wow! Did he get mad at me. He said I was stupid. He said I should leave the forward observing work to him. He told me to keep myself safe for that little blonde back in the States. But with all his fussing and fuming he could not prevent me from going, and I was intent on doing so.

We hopped into a couple of jeeps and took off. As far as I can figure out we left Highway 5 to go up Myoko Ridge on the road constructed by the 65<sup>th</sup> Engineers. Then we went a short way further to the end of the road – probably close to Lone Tree Hill. (See red dotted line on map above.) Here we departed from the jeeps and their drivers. We would go the rest of the way on foot. At the end of the road there were a lot of dead Nip



Route of the Forward Observer Mission  
as best I can determine (dotted red line)  
9-12 May 1945





bodies strewn about. One of the party mentioned that they seemed pretty large, and speculated that Japan might be drafting Koreans now. There were also several bodies of American soldiers encased in mattress covers, waiting to be picked up by a Graves Registration unit. It was a somber experience seeing those dead GIs. They were identified with their dog tags. I prayed that my mattress cover and my dog tags would not be put to such use.

We started walking down the trail through the rainforest. I don't know if we went down Wolfhound Ridge or Kapintalan Ridge. Soldiers of the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment – the Wolfhounds – were fighting both places. The trail went steeply downhill in places. It was very wet and muddy and slippery here in the rainforest – hard to stay on our feet. We met medics carrying out wounded soldiers on stretchers. There were eight medics to each stretcher. Four carried the stretcher – one at each corner handle. The other four stayed close to the corners and were poised to grab a handle if the carrier slipped. The poor guys on the stretchers were having a wild and tumbling ride.

Bivouac area of the 27th Infantry in the front lines at Balete. This photo was taken from an L-5 plane which dropped food, water, and ammunition to forward elements.



This bivouac area of the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry looks very similar to the one I was at. It looks like the same one.  
(Source: 25<sup>th</sup> Division History Book)

I had brought three grenades with me and I hung them by their handles on my pistol belt. That is the way I had seen commandos in the movies wear them. I wanted to be tough, too. Yes, the movies really did have an effect on me. Later I looked at the grenades and found that the flimsy sheet metal handles were developing a pronounced bend outward. They were bending so far that the firing pin looked like it was starting to move outward. That seemed pretty dangerous. So, to heck with Hollywood commandos, from then on I carried grenades in my fatigue pants pockets like everyone else.

I don't remember how long it took us but we eventually reached the infantry bivouac area on a knoll of the ridge. I guess we weren't too far from Balet Pass. Everyone was dug in. The foxholes were covered with logs and dirt with an opening large enough to get in and out, and to look out of while on guard duty. There were a few temporary graves, also, marked so the bodies could be recovered later. Some of the soldiers were heating up C-rations over cans of sterno. We in the FO party were also on C-rations for two meals a day – we lived just as the infantry did.

We did have K-rations with us for an emergency. They came in a waterproof cardboard container about the size of a crackerjack box. They consisted of a bar of chocolate, a piece of hard tack (we called them dog biscuits – and that wasn't far off), and some other hi-density power food. The C-rations were more elaborate. They had small cans of fruit and stew, and dehydrated food – also powdered milk. Each ration included a can of sterno for heating water in which to mix the dehydrated food. Canteen cups were used for cooking (they fit over the bottoms of our 1-quart canteens and had a folding handle).

Our battery commander was leading the FO mission we were to relieve. We were surprised to find them there with the infantry. They had been attacked the night before and had to evacuate the observation post. The Nips had overrun it. The captain and his party were lucky to have gotten out. One of the fellows had a bullet hole through the canteen on his belt. Another had a hole in his helmet (I don't know how that happened without hitting his head). Then our battery commander rolled up his pant leg and said; "Look. I earned a purple heart." There was a clean bullet hole right through his thigh. It didn't hit any bones and made a clean entry and exit. Thank the Lord for the international treaty that said only steel jacketed bullets can be used in war. The captain was able to walk and hike OK.

Well, we couldn't get to the observation post so we had to settle there with the infantry until it was decided what to do. Three of us were assigned a dugout together. At least we didn't have to dig our own. Our dugout was right on the edge of the perimeter facing toward the Nips. That meant we had to take turns standing watch at night. I believe we usually had one hour on watch and then two hours of sleep.

On night when I was awakened to take over the watch, the other fellow said there was some mortar fire off toward the right but nothing serious. Then he laid down to catch some sleep. I was still blinking the cobwebs out of my eyes when I saw a shadow move somewhere out there to my left. It looked like someone had dashed toward our area and then hit the dirt. I thought it was just a few yards from our dugout. I nudged the other fellow, who wasn't asleep yet, and told him what I saw. He decided to throw a couple grenades out there. He pulled the pin on one, let

the fuse pop, and held it for a few seconds. Then he tossed it out. (It wasn't taught us in basic training, but in practice we usually held a grenade a few seconds so the enemy wouldn't have time to throw it back at us. The time delay of 4½ seconds, I believe it was, was too long.)

Then he did the same thing with another grenade and tossed it out a little farther. We had to be careful not to throw them too far or they might go into the dugout next to ours. We didn't see any more movement so the other fellow went back to sleep.

Just then I saw the movement again. Only this time I knew what it was. A small tree frog at the side of our dugout had just hopped. Well, I've told this tale to my children and grandchildren about the time we threw hand grenades at a tree frog. Nobody said anything about the explosions the next day – not even the fellows in the dugout next to ours. It was not unusual to hear bangs in the night. Some soldiers were so jumpy while on watch that they arbitrarily threw a grenade out every so often as a precaution.

Supplies were dropped to the infantry by small L-5 cub aircraft. Packages of food, water, and ammunition were attached to the wing struts and released over what was designated as the impact area. I watched them drop a few boxes and decided I'd rather stay away from there. The aim wasn't very good and the boxes came crashing down almost everywhere. I was sitting next to our dugout once and an infantryman close to me was heating something over a can of sterno. I saw one of the L-5s coming in rather erratically right at us and called out to warn others. We all dived into our dugouts until we heard the thud. Then we crawled out to see where the package had landed. It had made a direct hit on the fellow's canteen cup and sterno can. They were both smashed flat.

We had arrived at this bivouac area on May 9<sup>th</sup>. We did not know at the time that the final battle for Balete Pass, which was almost underneath us, was taking place. On May 11 the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment made contact with the 35<sup>th</sup> on Kapintalan Ridge (both of them were part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Division). Army history records report that "over 200 caves had been sealed and almost a thousand Japanese dead counted."

A history report for the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment – the one which had made contact with the 27<sup>th</sup> on Kapintalan Ridge – states:

... and approximately 200 caves were counted. Some were so deep that ladders were required to enter them, and almost all were connected by tunnels, so that it was possible for the Japs to shift troops all around the perimeter without once venturing above ground. It would almost be true to say there was more blank space than earth in the hill. ...



Troops of the First Battalion, 161st Infantry, push on past Japanese dead littering a battle-torn hill captured in the drive to Balete Pass.

This picture was not on Kapintalan Ridge but it is similar, except the bodies we saw were burned and charred black.



The course of battle for this unnamed plateau was an archetype of all the fighting in the Caraballo Mountains. Possessing the initial advantage of being on the defensive, and exploiting the rugged terrain to the full, the Japs dug so deeply that even if the surface might be occupied, they could hold out indefinitely against any number of troops attempting to reach them in their caves. The only possibility they did not anticipate – and for countless numbers of them, it was a tragic oversight – was the technique of cave-sealing our troops have developed.

The battle for Balete Pass would rage for another couple days but this Kapintalan Ridge massacre on May 11<sup>th</sup> was undoubtedly the deciding fight. And it was going on practically under our noses. Hundreds on Nips, nearly a thousand were virtually buried alive. Those that tried to get out were shot or roasted with a flame thrower. Flame throwers were used to the utmost against Japanese seeking refuge in caves.

The next morning, May 12<sup>th</sup>, our FO party was ordered to return to our battalion. Fighting was still going on along Kapintalan Ridge but our lieutenant decided we would go down the West side and meet our jeeps near Highway 5. That would be much shorter than backtracking over Myoko Mountain, the way we had come in. So down the ridge we went.

Soon we came upon a Japanese area that had been burned by flame throwers. Many bodies of Nips that were crawling out of holes had been blasted with a napalm-like substance of flame throwers. They were burned black, and already starting to deteriorate in this hot, humid climate. The stench was more than I had even experienced. We were gagging and some of us threw up. I can't find words to describe this ghastly sight. There were lots of bodies. Some in the FO party who had been in combat in the Solomons said they had never seen such horror. I recall one young and bloated Japanese soldier. His mouth was open and a huge, black beetle was crawling on his swollen tongue. The same thoughts that I had entertained so many times before, returned – whose sons are these? Who loved them? How many families will be grieving when they are notified? Memories last and last.

A little way farther and we came upon a wounded American soldier. A couple of medics were trying to help him. His shirt was off and his whole upper torso looked riddled with either bullets or shrapnel. His eyes were glazed and wide, and I believe they also held fear. It was a haunting sight that has always stayed with me. I was happy to get away, but I have never been able to shake that indelible picture in my mind.

Somewhere I had picked up an M1 Garand infantry rifle. I loved guns. I had studied a little about how the Garand worked and wanted to examine this one. So I carried it along with my carbine.

One of the more experienced fellows told me it would be better to get rid of it. He said that a



Balete Pass 1945

sniper would pick the person carrying the largest weapon for his first target. But I was stubborn and held on to it. When I got back to the battery I studied it and disassembled it.

Farther along the trail we came to a rendezvous point. I think it may have been the location we were to meet our jeeps – I can't remember clearly now. There were a lot of other troops congregating at this place. There were also bodies waiting to be picked up.

We stopped and rested for a while. Soon some medics came into the clearing with a stretcher and laid it down not too far from us, alongside some others. The body on that stretcher was enclosed in a mattress cover. We asked the medics if this was the boy we saw back along the trail. They sadly nodded their heads and said they couldn't save him. He was wounded too badly.

I cannot remember any more about this FO mission where I still didn't get a chance to observe fire and call the shots. Somewhere we met our rides and were transported back to our outfit.

The next day, May 13<sup>th</sup>, Balete Pass was declared Japanese -free. The 25<sup>th</sup> Division had achieved its original objective. But now the objective had been extended to capture Santa Fe at the junction of Highway 5 and the Villa Verde Trail. We were to meet the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division which had been coming up the Villa Verde Trail. The troops moved on. There was much more artillery firing. There were more forward observer missions.

The FO party after ours was assembled from another battery. They went up there somewhere near where we were. A few days later the news came back to us. A direct hit by a mortar shell had killed the entire party. I had only become slightly acquainted with one of them – a tow-headed youth who seemed cheerful and friendly. The battalion chaplain held a memorial service for the party. Those who could leave the gun pits attended.

A monument to the 25<sup>th</sup> Division stands at Balete Pass today. The inscription reads:



ERECTED IN  
HONOR OF THOSE  
SOLDIERS OF THE  
25<sup>TH</sup> DIVISION WHO  
SACRIFICED THEIR  
LIVES IN WINNING  
THIS DESPERATE  
STRUGGLE.  
BALETE PASS  
IN TAKING THIS PASS  
7,403 JAPS COUNTED KILLED.  
2,365 25<sup>TH</sup> DIVISION  
KILLED AND WOUNDED.  
MAY 13, 1945

## EVACUATED FROM COMBAT

After I had returned from the forward observer mission, life as a cannoneer continued as before, even though Balete Pass had been captured. The Division regrouped and on May 14<sup>th</sup> started the drive to Santa Fe, our new objective. We kept the artillery pieces barking pretty steady.

One day we had a fire mission where the entire battalion was sending shells out there to support the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. I was the No.1 man in our crew, setting the elevation and pulling the lanyard to fire the howitzer. Then, in the middle of the mission came an abrupt “cease fire” command. Some of the rounds were falling short – too close to our own men. Officers went to every piece in the battalion to check the elevation that was set on each piece – which, for our gun, I had set. I was really worried. I knew that my hearing wasn’t as good as it should be and was worried that I might have heard the wrong numbers. I could never again live with myself if the rounds I fired had fallen on our own men.

As it turned out, it wasn’t our battery at all. One of the pieces in Charlie Battery had the wrong elevation. When that was corrected the battalion resumed firing. I made it through that fire mission but never again did I function in the No.1 position. I realized then how easy it could be to hear the elevation incorrectly. Perhaps I was just lucky that it happened to someone else first, and gave me a “heads up” on my damaged hearing.

On another day, when I was in the gun pit alone, the field phone rang. I answered for #2 piece. It was a fire mission and I immediately called the rest of the crew. When I reported #2 ready, the fire commands began. I was dumb-struck. I just froze. Everything sounded garbled on the phone. The other pieces reported “ready” and I hadn’t even given out the first command. Everyone in the crew was in their position looking at me expectantly. I had to tell the sergeant that I didn’t understand the commands. He was really burned, and so was the battery commander when he had to repeat the commands for the benefit of #2 piece. I was very embarrassed and the sergeant would not let me be in the gun pit alone anymore.

All of the crew now realized that I couldn’t hear as well as I should. They insisted that I go on sick call to have my ears checked. They threatened, perhaps only half-jokingly, perhaps not, that they would carry me over there if I refused. The doctor, an Army captain, treated me as though I was trying to get out of the action. He washed out my ears and sent me back to my crew. I, also, hoped that would solve the problem.

On May 27<sup>th</sup>, the 25<sup>th</sup> Division captured Santa Fe and met up with the 32<sup>nd</sup> which had been fighting along the Valle Verde Trail. We had achieved our objective. The next day, May 28<sup>th</sup>, the 37<sup>th</sup> Division relieved the 25<sup>th</sup> in Santa Fe and continued the drive northward along Highway 5. The 25<sup>th</sup> was assigned to mop up operations along Highway 5 from San Jose to Santa Fe, and on the ridges around Myoko Mountain and Balete Pass where there were still pockets of deeply-entrenched Japanese. Mop up sounds like a relief from combat but it can be the dirtiest and most dangerous job of all. When advancing in combat it was often possible to skirt the areas where the Nips were dug in the deepest – just cut them off and isolate them. In mopping up you had to

go back and neutralize every one of those most treacherous fortifications. General Robert L. Eichelberger, commanding general of the Eighth Army which was fighting in the southern Philippines, commented in his book: "If there is another war, I recommend that the military, and the correspondents, and everyone else concerned, drop the phrase 'mopping up' from their vocabularies. It is not a good enough phrase to die for."

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, the day after the 25<sup>th</sup> was relieved by the 37<sup>th</sup>, I again went on sick call. The ear wash did not help at all. So I went over to the medics tent that

morning just as I was. I thought I would be returning soon. The doctor examined my ears again, looked at me disdainfully, and told me to get in the ambulance for transportation to the 25<sup>th</sup> Medical Clearing Station in rear echelon. I thought I would be back so I didn't even think about taking any personal items with me. (Everything except my souvenirs made from expended ordnance materials was later sent to me. I even received my "bootleg" journal, which was against Army orders to write. I think Tic must have put my things together and just slipped it in.)

At the clearing station my hearing was tested at 2/15 in each ear. I was then sent to the 36<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital where my hearing was again checked. It was the same and I was admitted for evacuation. I wrote down the diagnosis from the official report: "Deafness due to heavy firing of 105 mm howitzers in the vicinity of Balete Pass, Luzon, Philippine Islands." I had been in front line combat for 70 days. I was now statistically a "casualty." Soon, perhaps, a "replacement" would arrive to fill my slot.

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25<sup>th</sup> Division Mopping Up in the Caraballos

(Source: 25<sup>th</sup> Division History Book)



## Chapter 16 – Sweating it Out

It was in this tent hospital – the 36<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital – that I started smoking. Every day the Red Cross put a pack of cigarettes on by bed stand. It was so boring just sitting around all day that I decided to try one. That led to another and it seemed to help fill in the idle hours. We did have outdoor movies at night and that was a real treat for me but cigarettes gave me something to do all day long.

I became pretty well acquainted with the fellow in the next cot. He had been in the infantry and was wounded, but ambulatory. He had been caught in the sweep of a Japanese machine gun. The traversing speed of the gun, and the timing of the bullets, was amazing. He was first hit in the biceps of one arm. Then as the gun moved in its sweep, the next bullet hit the biceps in his other arm. They were both clean holes – neither bullet hit a bone or an artery. Nothing hit him in the chest. He was really lucky. Thanks again to steel jacket bullets.

I don't remember the fellow's name but he told me a story that stuck in my memory. When he was on patrol one time they came across the body of a Japanese soldier. They wanted to turn him over to make certain he was dead. It was a common practice for a wounded (not dead) Japanese to play possum while hiding a pistol; under his body. If American soldiers passed him by, he might fire at them. Also, he would fire at anyone who turned him over to check if he were alive. So this friend of mine was assigned to cover the Japanese with his rifle while someone else turned him over. If there was a pistol, my friend was to shoot.

As another soldier turned the Japanese body over, my friend thought he saw a movement. He fired. The enemy was alive, but was now dead. As it turned out, there was no pistol and there was no booby trap. My friend was very much disturbed about killing someone. It was all according to Hoyle in the "game of war," but the psychological shock doesn't play by those rules when you see someone die at your own hand. I cannot forget the remorse and disturbance in that soldier's feelings. Perhaps he just wanted to talk about it with someone. I hope he eventually got his mental turmoil resolved. I was lucky in the artillery. I didn't see the victims I killed.

On June 1<sup>st</sup> I was taken by ambulance to San Jose. That is where I first joined up with the 25<sup>th</sup> the previous March. It was far to the rear by this time. From San Jose I was flown by Grasshopper (L-5 Cub) to a small airstrip 4 kilometers from Rosalis. It was a real bumpy ride but I got a good view of some Luzon countryside. Besides the pilot, I was the only other occupant – the plane was only a two-seater.

I spent the night in some quarters at that air strip. Others were there also. I went for a walk with them through the little town of Carmen and over to the 7<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital. I believe most of them were from that hospital and also waiting for a flight in the morning. I can't recall for sure now, but I believe we visited their friends in the hospital. Of course all of these hospitals were field hospitals consisting of tents and canvas cots. Later in the evening we played a game of rummy and then turned in.

The next morning, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, all of us were flown to Manila in a C-47 named "Jungle Skipper." We got a good look at the city from the air. It must have been beautiful at one time with the

Pasig River winding through it. But what I saw was a city in ruin. I did get a close look at the hotel which MacArthur was using for his USAFFE (US Armed Forces of the Far East) headquarters.

I was taken to the 264<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital which was across the street from the Rizal Stadium where a big battle raged during the conquest of Manila. I recall seeing newsreel footage (in the movies) of a tank driving around the field inside. Inscribed on the front was:



Rizal Memorial Stadium  
I took this picture on 30 June 1946 – just a little over a year later than the present story.

RIZAL MEMORIAL STADIUM  
FOOTBALL AND TRACK  
MCMXXXIV

It was also a baseball stadium. I did not know at the time that months in the future I would be assigned to a unit in Manila and our baseball team would play other teams in that stadium. At the far outfield fence were painted the names of teams that had played there before the war. The only one I remember was the Tokyo Giants. The Japanese were very much into baseball.

I stayed in the Manila hospital two days. On June 4<sup>th</sup> I was transported to the waterfront where a landing craft took us out to the hospital ship *USS Hope*, which was anchored in Manila Bay. It was one of three such ships operating in the Pacific at that time. It was certainly an improvement over troop ships. Being an ambulatory patient, I still slept in a hold on a similar bunk, but it was much less crowded. The *Hope* had a crew of 516 and could accommodate over 400 wounded passengers. The crew was Navy but the medical teams were Army. The ship was 418 feet long with a top speed of 15.5 knots.

Manila Bay, as I saw it that day, was a real mess. The detritus of war was everywhere. There were all kinds of wrecked ships, mostly Japanese.

At 10:30 the next morning, June 5<sup>th</sup>, we got under way and steamed out of Manila Bay. Our destination was still uncertain; at least as far as we patients were concerned.

I was beginning to notice my lack of hearing more now, possibly since I have been exposed to more normal sounds. The ringing in my ears was nerve-wracking. The doctor on the ship said my ear drums were OK and that over time my hearing would return somewhat. He said it would take weeks and possibly months. But to me it seemed like it was getting worse, if anything. I had been away from the firing for two weeks now and I couldn't notice any improvement. Most of the time I couldn't even understand the radio when I am only a



Hospital Ship *USS Hope*

few feet from it.

I was also noticing a difference in my behavior in social situations. On the hospital ship there were nurses and Red Cross girls who I had to converse with. It was difficult because I had not talked with a woman for months. I recall once that a Red Cross girl came up to me and asked a question. She had a high pitched voice that was very difficult for me to understand. I was extremely nervous and embarrassed when I couldn't communicate with her. I soon found myself breaking out in a sweat when I had to make a social contact.

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, after spending seven days on shipboard, we docked at a small island called Biak. It was off the northern tip of New Guinea and in the harbor entrance of Hollandia – the same Bay I had visited when on the *Fond du Lac*. Biak is located about two degrees south of the equator. Here I was taken to the 132<sup>nd</sup> General Hospital – still a tent hospital with canvas cots but at least not an “Evacuation Hospital.” Perhaps this was the end of my long evacuation trek. It was certainly well out of the war zone.

On Biak they had Netherlands East Indies money – in cents and guilders. That was a change and so was the water. Everywhere I had been before the water was purified with chlorine. Here they used iodine. It was strong and smelled terrible. To drink it was like taking medicine. I spent the time reading books, smoking cigarettes, buying things at the canteen, and watching movies at night. It was a lazy and boring life.

Finally, after a week, I was called up for a doctor appointment. This one was a little more sophisticated. Rather than have me stand with my eyes closed and one ear covered while he said certain words from various distances, this one used the high technology of tuning forks. After examining me he pronounced that I would be non-combatant from then on. Great! I fly, drive, and sail the length of the Philippines and then way down to the southern hemisphere for someone to give me a hearing test. But things started moving faster after that.

On June 19<sup>th</sup> I was discharged from the hospital and taken to the Base H Casual Camp. There were a lot of Australian soldiers there, and they seemed to be just like the Yanks. I bought a bracelet made of Australian coins to add to my collection.

We were told we would leave very early the next morning for Leyte. It looks like I'm going through the same cycle again – leaving New Guinea for the same 4<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot where I was a few months previous. Only this time I would fly.

We were rousted out at 3:30 AM the next morning, June 20<sup>th</sup>. We were transported to the airstrip to catch a plane. It was raining a tropical downpour and we got soaked to the skin. We shivered under the wing of a C-46 until 7:00 AM, waiting for the pilots to show. Finally we were taken back to the Casual Camp and had breakfast. At 11:00 AM we went back to the airstrip and boarded a C-46 named the “Golden Horseshoe.” We sat on bench seats that went along the sides of the aircraft. Our duffle bags and other gear were stored on the floor in the center. One exception was an obnoxious soldier who must have been drinking all night. He needed help getting into the airplane and he slept on top of the duffle bags for the entire trip.

We had a good view of Biak when we left. I was not used to the views from the air. Until I was evacuated from northern Luzon I had only been up in an airplane once, and that was when I was very small. It was also the first time I had been above the clouds – something I had always



wanted to do. The ships on the ocean's surface far below looked so small and seemed to be moving so slowly. All in all it was a good experience.

In 3¼ hours we landed on Peleliu in the Palauan Islands (now the Republic of Palau). We had another nice air view of those islands. The airstrip was paved with a special steel matting made for that purpose. The steel strips had many holes in them to make them lighter, and they interlocked together. The wheels of the aircraft made a unique whirring racket as they rolled along this matting – something like running with a stick along a picket fence. This is where we would stay the night. I had now crossed the equator four times – three times by ship and once by air.

This island really impressed me. It seemed like a barren, sandy Pacific island and you could see for a good distance. As I recall, there was a bright moon that night. We took showers in shower stalls that actually had wooden floors. Our tents had wooden floors. We watched a movie that night on the beach. It starred Esther Williams, the renown swimmer actress. I was much impressed with the “luxuries” on this island. They wouldn't amount to a hill of beans at home, but they gave a real morale boost for the soldiers there.

I would visit this island again 36 years later – in 1981. I couldn't believe it was the same place. The jungle had grown again and there was none of the openness I recalled. The beaches seemed secluded and edged with jungle. I drove along where the airstrip was and it had all overgrown – there was a small, grassy strip down the center that light planes had used but it was mostly heavy vegetation now. I could see some of the airstrip matting that had been salvaged and fashioned into benches and seats. Everything seemed much different.

We left early the morning of June 21<sup>st</sup> for the 3¼-hour flight to Leyte. Again another good view of Leyte, Leyte Gulf, and the capital town of Tacloban. Here I was back in Repple Depple #4. The biggest problem with Leyte was too many mosquitoes and too many diseases. Yet, by the time I left Leyte this time, after 1945 had waned and 1946 dawned, Leyte had been declared “malaria-free.” We no longer had to take Atabrine tablets and we did not have to use mosquito nets.

Just a note about my old outfit. The 25<sup>th</sup> Division was relieved from combat on 30 June 1945, to rest up and prepare for the invasion of Japan. It was replaced by the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division which, I believe, had been in rest camp since the capture of Santa Fe. By this time the 25<sup>th</sup> had spent 165 days in continuous active combat, which was the record for combat endurance in the Pacific Theater. I had been with them for 70 of those days, which were by far the most intense of the entire time. I really was sad to have to leave them.



Manila to Biak to Leyte via Palau      My Travels by Ship and Air  
4<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of June, 1945

## THE 97<sup>TH</sup> FIELD ARTILLERY

I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot at Tacloban for about 2½ weeks. I had several more “field hearing tests” and on July 1<sup>st</sup> (about 1½ weeks after arriving here) I was called to see the personnel consultant. I requested to return to the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery but he refused that outright. I argued and tried as hard as I could but he had his orders on how to assign people. He put me down for either a stock clerk or a truck driver. There’s nothing very dramatic about non-combat specialties.

As I left the personnel consultant and was walking down the company street I saw someone that looked familiar. It was Bob Evans who I had gone to high school with and who had been in my crew in the Sea Scouts. We had a good reunion and wrote a joint letter to our old Skipper, Vern

Dean, and all our old shipmates in Sea Scout Ship 98. That resulted in an article in the *Watsonville Register Pajaronian*.

Bob Evans and I had a good time for almost a week, until he was assigned. It was sure good to see someone I knew from home. We talked over old times, went to church together on Sunday, played some softball (just like PE at high school), saw movies together, and traded off mess halls to eat in. On July 6<sup>th</sup> Bob moved out. He had just come overseas and this was his first assignment. I believe he was in the infantry, but the war only had another month to run. He survived and I have met with him several times since at San Luis Obispo, where he then lived and where I went to Cal Poly. It seemed like our paths continued to cross.

A negative incident that remains fixed in my memory involved a racial dispute. These casual camps are the only places where blacks and whites were mixed during World War II. One afternoon some of us were discussing racial problems with a black fellow. He told of a lot of

experiences he'd had that were really sad. Later, I saw the fellow who had been drunk on our flight from Biak. He was drunk again and was running as fast as he could. Close behind him was the black fellow we had been talking with, with a bared knife and a murderous look. It seems that the drunk GI, in his obnoxious manner, had made some racist slurs about the black fellow.

I was shocked and frightened. Was I about to see a murder? I followed their path and in a clearing was the drunk parading around with an axe. The black had apparently decided to forget it and take off. But the drunk was strutting around the clearing daring any S.O.B. that wanted to mess with him to step up. I don't remember what happened after that but there was no bloodshed.

On July 9<sup>th</sup> I was assigned to the 97<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion which was stationed on the southern end of Leyte Gulf, next to the barrio of Tarraguna and about an hour's ride on the dirt roads from Tacloban. Units in this part of the Philippines were under the Eighth Army and the 97<sup>th</sup> was loosely attached to the 81<sup>st</sup> Division at that time. Later it was attached to various other command units. But it was basically an orphan – unattached and unassigned. It had never seen combat and had just lazed on the beach of Leyte Gulf. The battery areas were lined up along the coast just a mere stone's throw from the ocean. The beach was somewhat narrow but beautiful now that the invasion debris was cleared away. All of the debris, that is, except a destroyed landing barge for vehicles and a sunken Japanese ship farther out. We used to paddle out around the ship in little outrigger canoes made from aircraft belly fuel tanks.

Another fellow – a motor pool mechanic – was assigned to the 97<sup>th</sup> at the same time I was. He and I

#### SEA SCOUTS MEET IN PI

Sea Scout Skipper Vern Dean recently received word from two of his former scouts, Pvts. Bob Aldridge and Bob Evans, who met and held a reunion in the Philippines. Aldridge is the son of Mrs. Irma Reaves, Rt. 1, Box 188, and Evans, who attended local schools entered the service in southern California. His parents reside in San Luis Obispo.

7-45



97<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion Sign

Headquarters Battery on the left in the palm trees. (My tent visible.) Beach and ocean to the



were the only two in the entire battalion who had seen combat. It looked like a soft assignment but I was still happy to be reassigned to a line outfit. Perhaps my discussion with the personnel consultant had some effect.

At first I was assigned to Service Battery – probably because of the “truck driver” classification. But after being there four days I was ordered to report to the battalion commander, Major Carriker. After reviewing my record he had called me in to ask if I would like to get back into surveying. I eagerly accepted and was told to report to the survey officer, Lieutenant Broadbent. I was then transferred to Headquarters Battery. It was a small but very congenial crew – all very likeable guys, including the lieutenant. One fellow in the survey crew – Bob MacGarva – became one of my two closest buddies while overseas. We corresponded and exchanged Christmas cards for decades afterwards.

My personal effects caught up with me here. The letters I had been saving, and had already read, were merely forwarded by regular mail. Everyone was envious one mail call when I received over a dozen letters. But they were recycled correspondence. A couple other administrative items also caught up with me. I had been in the Army for a year and was awarded the Good Conduct Medal at retreat one evening. I also found out that I had been promoted to Private First Class (Pfc) last May 25<sup>th</sup>, while I was still with the 25<sup>th</sup> Division – an automatic promotion once one was sent overseas..

During one of my routine physicals, the battalion doctor quizzed me about my hearing. He had seen my medical record but wanted more details. Then he said he was going to put me in for a purple heart. After that I heard no more about it. I guess you have to draw blood to get that decoration.



Me ready for guard duty.

**ROBERT ALDRIDGE  
HAS NEW RANK**

Pvt. Robert Aldridge was promoted to private first class, he writes his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Reaves, Rt. 1, Box 188. PFC Aldridge was confined to the hospital on Biak island for several weeks, but is once more back in the Philippines, where he is in the instrumental surveying branch of the field artillery.

\* \* \*

On the evening of August 10<sup>th</sup>, after both atomic bombs had been dropped, we heard news that Japan was willing to accept the surrender terms of the Potsdam Ultimatum. I guess the a-bomb and Russia entering into the war was too much. I had just written a letter and was going to mail it when I heard news flashes about Russia's gains in Korea – Russia had declared war on Japan when the end was near so it could grab as much territory as possible. While I was walking back from the mail box everyone started yelling bloody murder. I couldn't figure out what had happened. I'd never seen such a bunch of wild soldiers. Japan had announced acceptance of unconditional surrender. After the first news broadcast they played “When the Lights Go On Again All Over the World” over the PA system. So much yelling and so many search lights shining all over. A ship in the harbor looked like a 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks show with all the flares and shooting. Tracer bullets were criss-crossing everywhere. The news seemed too good to be true. The entire island literally lit up. After that we broke out our beer rations and celebrated. Everyone was passing out cigars and I didn't

get to bed until 2 AM.

On August 12<sup>th</sup> there was a call for volunteers to go to Tokyo, Japan on a special mission – to leave in three weeks. I volunteered but didn't get to go. I was disappointed and a little peeved because my name was third on the list. On August 15<sup>th</sup> the war was officially announced as ended. On September 6<sup>th</sup> the Army stopped censoring first class mail.

I started going back to school – taking USAFI (United States Armed Forces Institute) courses. I signed up for College Algebra and Modern Business English. Our survey lieutenant was the algebra instructor. Something happened that he had to go into the hospital and guess who was appointed to take his place. College algebra is almost identical to the advanced algebra I had in high school but I was rusty. I studied and only kept one lesson ahead of the class but I managed to get through it. Needless to say, I passed the course.

With the war ended, our survey team sort of became a paper assignment. On September 8<sup>th</sup> our battery commander – Captain Bell – called me in for an interview. I was then assigned to the Battalion Message Center. I had to move to the Command Post area (CP area) but it was a pretty good assignment. Our battalion had recently been re-assigned to the 207<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Group and we had to take an airplane ride to Group Headquarters every day for dispatches. As it turned out, I never did go on the airplane because that was the job of the Message Center Chief. But best of all, I no longer had to pull KP or guard duty.

On the evening of September 20<sup>th</sup> I received an awful shock. The letter I had written to Bill Bottero was returned to me, marked “Deceased.” It was my notification of Bill's death. He was killed on 5 May 1945. We had been fighting side-by-side in the Caraballo Mountains.



CP Area for the 97<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion. Message Center tent, where I lived, to far right.

September 25<sup>th</sup> was a big day in my army career. With the war ended, some of the real old timers went home – some from our survey crew. That left advancements in rank open to the rest of us and I was promoted to T/5 (Technician Fifth Class) – instrument corporal for our ghost survey team. I continued working in the message center.

On the first of November I had my first experience with Pacific typhoons. We were alerted that one was heading toward us and was predicted to hit in 54 hours. We might have to evacuate to higher ground. I had to get all critical material ready to move, including two top-secret cryptograph machines I had padlocked in a wooden foot locker (Some security!) On November 4<sup>th</sup>, at the last minute almost, the typhoon changed course and we didn't have to evacuate.

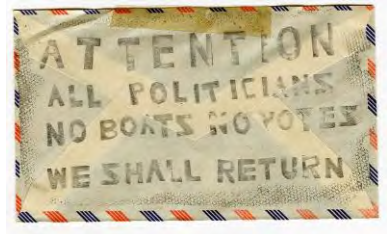


Filipinos with Carabao on Leyte.

During the movie news reel one evening I saw some battle scenes that I actually saw in combat. They were air strikes with naphtha bombs near Balet Pass. It was our howitzer that fired the smoke shells to mark the target. And I was the one who pulled the lanyard to fire those shells.

By mid-November all of the men who had 60 points (been overseas 60 months, or five years) were on their way home. That included the other fellow in message center. I was now the Message Center Chief. I was promoted to sergeant on November 24<sup>th</sup> (Technician Fourth Grade, or T/4). Again, it was the survey sergeant position for our ghost survey team. It didn't seem possible that I was actually a sergeant now.

Many of the rest of us were getting impatient about going home. We found that the length of service for draftees – the duration plus six months – didn't mean the duration of the war. It was now interpreted to mean the duration of the national emergency, which the government could arbitrarily set. We were getting more disgruntled every day because the delay in getting soldiers home was attributed to not having enough ships for transportation. I carved out an "ink stamper" from a piece of battleship linoleum that said "ATTENTION ALL POLITICIANS. NO BOATS NO VOTES. WE SHALL RETURN." It was similar to a woodcut and we stamped that message on the backs of our letters home. The last phrase was borrowed from MacArthur's promise when he had to leave the Philippines after the Japanese invaded. This message actually did get to our congresspersons, for all the good it did.



On the 13<sup>th</sup> of December, the 97<sup>th</sup> was classified a Category IV unit to leave the island of Leyte for the continental United States on 15 January 1946. That sounded good but only soldiers who had been overseas 42 months would still be attached. The rest of us would be reassigned.

Christmas on Leyte in 1945 was a beautiful day. The ocean was calm, a cool breeze was blowing, and we had turkey with all the trimmings. New Year's Day was uneventful. Then on 2 January 1946 I departed from the 97<sup>th</sup> for the 28<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot just outside Tacloban. I would be a replacement again – this time for someone going home.

This is a summary of my time on Leyte with the 97<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion. A more detailed account can be found in my Overseas Journal.

## MANILA 1946

Two days after arriving at the 28<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot near Leyte's capitol city of Tacloban, I received orders that I would ship tomorrow (5 January 1946) for Manila. I was being assigned to Headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Western Pacific (AFWESPAC) Command. (See Insignia to left)

I didn't leave the next day – some mix-up in troop movements. January 5<sup>th</sup> was, however, the one-year mark since I had said goodbye to my loved ones before shipping out. I wrote in my Overseas Journal: "It's been a long time and I'm getting tired. Just one long, continuous, worn out, strained tiredness. It's Hell!" I was complaining after just one year when many that I served with had been ESPAC overseas more than five.



AFWESPAC Insignia

On January 9<sup>th</sup> I finally left Leyte. We packed our bags at 5:30 AM and



Our route from Tacloban, Leyte to Manila on Luzon. January 1946

were taken out into the bay in a landing barge. We boarded the army transport *SS Marine Eagle* (built in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). We pulled anchor and got underway at about 1:00 PM. This time we went through the San Bernardino Strait which is a more direct way from Leyte to Luzon than what I took on the previous trip. But on the previous trip the San Bernardino Strait was too dangerous. On this trip there was no blackout and we could enjoy the deck at night with lights all over. We even slept on deck when the holds were too stuffy.

On January 10<sup>th</sup> I was Sergeant of the Guard from 4:00 AM to 8:00 AM. The Officer of the Day just turned everything over to me, personally, and went to bed. I was in charge of security for the entire ship. I took about 3½ of the 4 hours to find out where the posted guards slept so I could wake them up.

As the reader can surmise, no one took security too seriously at this time. There was one post, however, that I was real particular about. That was the guard on the fantail – the stern of the ship. The wake behind the ship was lighted with flood lamps and this guard was to watch for anyone overboard. Throwing a life preserver to someone overboard and sounding the alarm was that person's last hope for life. I tried to impress that fact on the guard and kept a close check on him. I spent most of my spare time on the fantail with him.

Bob MacGarva was on this ship with me and it was during this cruise that I met my other closest buddy while overseas – Ollice Brewer, a.k.a. "Buddy." He, also, had been in the 97<sup>th</sup> F.A. but I hadn't met him because he stayed at the "water point." He and others kept the battalion supplied with purified water.

We pulled into Manila Bay early in the morning of January 11<sup>th</sup> – only a two-day journey this time. I could again see Corregidor and the Bataan Peninsula on the west side of the bay. In the bay were two Japanese destroyers – the *Keyaki* and the *Hagi* – and a Japanese hospital ship. I



was Sergeant of the Guard again for four hours that night. We were at anchor, though, so no worry about someone falling overboard. If they did, they wouldn't get separated from the ship. It was a pretty relaxed stint.

We docked at Pier-7 on the morning of January 12<sup>th</sup> and disembarked in the afternoon. We were taken by trucks to Camp #2, AFWESPAC. That was my new home for a while. It was something like a casual camp but everyone here was permanent. We would be transported back and forth by truck to an office downtown each day. On the way from Pier-7 I saw a 1942 Plymouth (the last model built before the war) with a California '45 license plate. It was the first California '45 license plate I had seen.

The next day was Sunday and I got my first pass to visit Manila. I went with Bob MacGarva, Ollice Brewer, and some others. We did a lot of sight-seeing and tasted some Filipino food. I kept losing my bearings in the town until I found out there were some triangular blocks – I was thinking each block had four sides. We shared a bottle of Four Roses (I believe it was) whiskey and danced in some of the honky-tonk dance floors. For a bunch of GIs fresh out on the boondocks it was a lot of fun.

My buddies and I were assigned to the Recovered Personnel Division (RPD) on January 15<sup>th</sup> and we officially started work on the 17<sup>th</sup>. I worked in the Message Center of the Administrative Section, of the Claims & Benefits Branch (C&B) of the Administrative Sub Division of the RPD. The files and letters I handled in message center pertained to claims by family members of deceased Filipino Guerilla, Filipino Army and Filipino Scouts soldiers. It is a lot more work (record-keeping) and responsibility than I had experienced with the 97<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery on Leyte. It operated just like a "Claims" office in civilian life.

My office was on an upper floor of one of the surviving buildings along the Pasig River. I could walk out on the balcony and view the river and surrounding Manila. It was mostly a mess. I worked under a lieutenant colonel who was a fatherly type and didn't stand much on formality. On the first day he took all of us new people out on the balcony for an orientation and Q&A session. He devoted a lot of personal time helping me to "learn the ropes" in the message center.

In the evenings we returned to Camp #2 by truck. One evening I was waiting along the curb with others for the trucks to arrive. I wasn't paying attention and didn't see the truck pull up alongside of me. Its side-racks hit my wrist and smashed my watch. It had just been repaired and shipped back to me by my folks. I was lucky that was all that happened because the drivers were pretty careless. Right-of-way in Manila at that time was determined by how big your vehicle was and nobody was worried about insurance claims

It was during January 1946 that sensational events happened in the Pacific which are no longer recalled, but which at the time shook government bureaucracy all the way to Washington D.C. Soldiers were very upset at the slowdown in rotation of troops home. This slowdown was caused because replacements could not be sent over fast enough despite reducing the basic training cycle from 17 to 13 weeks. In Japan, for instance, by the previous December 9<sup>th</sup> there were 191,183 men sent home but only 53,973 replacements arrived. Secretary of War Robert Patterson had set a minimum of 790,000 total overseas troops by 1 July 1946. 375,000 of those would be in the Pacific: 200,000 in Japan and Korea, and 175,000 in the mid- and western-Pacific (70,000 of the latter in the Philippines). At that time – January 1946 – the forces in the

Philippines totaled 235,000 (down from 600,000 the previous October 1<sup>st</sup>). Patterson also halted the gradual reduction of points needed to go home. (Points were earned by war service.)

Angry soldiers, feeling that those in Washington had broken their promises, started mass rallies and demonstrations in the Philippines, Japan, and Hawaii. 20,000 attended the first mass rally on January 7<sup>th</sup> at Manila city hall. Banners read “Lincoln freed the slaves. Who will free us?” The band played “Show Me the Way to Go Home.” A speaker at the Honolulu rally pointed out that the average soldier is well aware of military commitments but doesn’t understand why friendly countries like China and the Philippines have to be occupied – and also Hawaii. A 5-point demand was sent to President Truman and Congress, which was:

1. A 10-point drop in the total required for demobilization by February 1<sup>st</sup>.
2. Start releasing all 2-year men by March 20<sup>th</sup>.
3. Receive point credit for months served since VJ-Day.
4. Full use of all available transportation.
5. A clear foreign policy.



Our barracks at RPD  
See my helmet hanging on the outside.

These mass rallies by US servicemen rocked Washington. President Truman hedged that the slow-down was necessary to fulfill America’s world commitments. But critics in Congress demanded a full-fledged investigation of the rotation program. Senator Edwin C. Johnson, chairman of a military subcommittee, was assigned to look into the matter. General Eisenhower and

Admiral Nimitz were called to testify before a joint session of Congress on January 15th. Johnson said he had been swamped with a flow of angry cables

and radiograms, many signed by numerous people. (My parents had sent my “No Boats, No Votes” envelope to Congressman Jack Anderson, their representative in Congress.) A soldier on Guam sent a prophetic warning to a legislator: “Don’t let the Pentagon become the center of American life.”

This series of demonstrations were short-lived, no more than a week or two as I recall. Chief of Staff Eisenhower, eventually issued an order that quashed them. Military newspapers were censored. Editors and correspondents of the *Pacific Stars & Stripes*, published in Honolulu, were forbidden to discuss any of the many problems in the land the Army occupies, such as discussing the Japanese Emperor, officials, or government. According to the *Chicago Sun*, “staff members declared [the *Stars & Stripes*] ‘has never enjoyed the privileges of a free press.’ ... that ‘through open and implied pressure,’ the paper had been forced ‘to delete, distort and play down news [in order] to serve the personal and professional interests of the Army hierarchy and in many instances the officers generally’.” After such statements the Allied Supreme Headquarters assigned the Inspector General to investigate.

I was new to Manila so I did not participate in these demonstrations. I did keep abreast of the events through the *Daily Pacifican* which is another Army newspaper published in Manila for soldiers in the Philippines. This paper provided detailed coverage of the demonstrations and

rallies. A section called “The Mail Bag” was a sort of letter-to-the-editor section in which angry GIs spoke their peace. But the Army clamped down on that publication in the same week that the *Stars & Stripes* was muzzled. Staff members who up to this time had complete autonomy in deciding what to publish now said their hands were tied. A public statement signed by 33 editors and writers said: “New restrictions on freedom of expression imposed from above no longer enable us to bring the full news and the full truth to our GI readers.” It continued: “We are compelled to announce that our hands are now bound.”

However short-lived these demonstration had been, in the long run they were successful if my case is any indication. In the following August I was discharged with only one month over two years in the Army. These events in early 1946 are scantily known today, and I presume that is the way the Pentagon likes it. It may also be why the Pentagon is so anxious to continue with the all-volunteer Army. This rebellion of sorts illustrates that civilian soldiers, conscripted to accomplish a certain task, get pretty impatient when that task is completed and they can’t go home.

As it turned out, Camp #2 and the downtown offices were just temporary. On February 9<sup>th</sup>, RPD moved to a former hospital area a little way out from Manila. This was an improvement. Everything was more consolidated. Our offices and sleeping areas were all on the same post. No more truck rides back and forth to work. No more sleeping in tents – here we had corrugated steel barracks with wooden floors which were once hospital wards. Being tropical weather, the top half of the walls were open which provided good ventilation.

Also on the post were our mess hall, an officers’ club, and enlisted mens’ club, a beer hall, a PX, the laundry, and medic offices. Everything was all together. Philippine Airlines was just starting to operate and they took off right over our barracks from Nelson Field. We used to kid that their tail wheel had snagged a towel right off from where it was hanging on a mosquito net frame. Nelson Field no longer exists. In its place now stands the modern Makati City suburb of Manila with its plush homes, modern high-rises, and gated & guarded streets. It is where the corporate offices of international businesses and banks are situated – a far cry from the poverty-stricken Tondo area which exists only a few miles away.



Me outside our administrative office building.

The location of our new RPD post was on Pasig Boulevard about a quarter mile southeast of Calle Samson. Pasig Boulevard is now named Shaw Boulevard and Calle Samson is now called Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue. All of the office buildings were corrugated steel sheds. Raised wooden walkways with railings connected the buildings.

After a few weeks the Lt. Col. we worked under went home and Major David G. Wilson took his place. Since I was on the administrative staff, my desk and the message center were in a small building which was also the office of the major and his executive officer, Captain Gruber. Carl King, the Sergeant Major and a good friend who hung out in the same group I did, also had his desk there. Betty Salingdong, a Filipina girl, was our secretary and worked directly under Carl. As I will discuss later, Captain Gruber in civilian life had a lot of “pull” and he organized several

special events for the men under him.

In the message center I had two US soldiers and a Philippine Army soldier working under me.



Bob MacGarva, me, and a Filipino boy at the C&B picnic.

Stanley Pordon (a.k.a. “Pud,” as in pudding) was my main assistant. Billy Cassano was the other GI. Antonio “Tony” Quimson was the Filipino soldier.

The night of February 16<sup>th</sup> was the first night enlisted men could get a jeep for recreational purposes. I believe it was Ollice Brewer that checked out the jeep. He, Bob MacGarva, and I went out together. Brewer, from Birmingham, Alabama, worked in a claims office in the same area I did. MacGarva, from Long Island, New York, was assigned to the RPD motor pool. Our evening ended in chaos when, as we were parked and standing still, another jeep driven by a drunk GI broadsided us. Brewer was driving and was not in the jeep at the time. MacGarva was in the back and I was in the passenger seat. I was bumped out of the jeep and landed on the ground. I could hear the jeep bouncing around above me but could not see for the dust. Between where our jeep was originally parked and where it ended up, another jeep could have been parked.

No one in our jeep was hurt seriously and the driver of the

other jeep was OK. A Filipina girl in the other jeep was knocked unconscious. We took her inside a bar and called the ambulance, police, and a GI tow truck. Later in the week we had to go to Bilibid Prison (the Metro police station which housed prisoners of war during the Japanese occupation) and make statements regarding the accident. The toll that night was staggering. A good percentage of the jeeps checked out by enlisted men were either wrecked or stolen.



Ollice Brewer and me at the fountain at Malacañan Palace.

On February 24<sup>th</sup> we had a big Fiesta at RPD to celebrate the new post. There were various kinds of racing contests (sack races, wheel-barrow races, etc.), dancing, eats, drinks, shows, and movies. It was a real fun day.

Captain Gruber arranged this picnic for the Claims & Benefits Branch at an old, deserted Spanish castle near the Barrio of San Clemente. Five of us had a jeep all to ourselves. Others went in a truck-bus. We had a great time swimming, and eating a real Filipino feast prepared by the natives themselves. I still remember a coconut jam that I thought was so delicious. We even saw a cock fight which I thought was disgusting. Long and sharp steel talons were attached to the roosters’ spurs and it was a fight to the death.

Another event was arranged for us by Captain Gruber – a visit to Malacañan Palace, which is the



White House of the Philippines and lies alongside the Pasig River. The pure crystal chandeliers and the rose-glass tables were particularly spectacular to me. I even sat in the president's chair behind the desk in the executive office. Almost thirty years later, in 1975, I visited Malacañan Palace again during the First Asian Ecumenical Conference. Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos ruled at that time and we had an audience with them. I even shook hands with the dictator and his wife.



Jeep window that I broke with my head. Steering wheel smashed by Bill Katona

Bob MacGarva, Ollice Brewer and I were in a worse jeep wreck on April 5<sup>th</sup>. Bill Katona, an American Indian and friend of Ollice from the “water point” on Leyte, had been assigned to a motor pool in another outfit located in downtown Manila. Katona picked us up that evening in a jeep that the mechanics in his motor pool had jazzed up. It had spring seats and a large steering wheel from some automobile, along with a fancy horn, fancy grill, chrome bumpers, radio and antenna, spot lights, road lights, wheel skirts, and a modified top. It was quite a vehicle.

I don't recall where we went that night but about 9:30 PM we were driving slowly down Heron Street in Manila. Some black GIs in a 2½-ton truck, stopped at a side street, yelled to us. We didn't understand what they said but kept on going.

Katona was driving, Brewer in the passenger seat, and MacGarva and I in the rear seat – Macgarva

behind the driver and me on the right side.

I sensed a vehicle approaching behind us and as I looked out the rear window I saw the grill of the truck right up to our bumper. The truck pushed us to a higher speed and then sideswiped us to the right. Katona was so surprised that he couldn't do anything until it was too late. We hit a steel power pole head on. I flew over Bill's head and smashed the driver's windshield, and then was thrown back and out of the jeep. I ended up on my back by the left rear tire. Had I hit just a little higher I would likely have fractured my skull on the windshield frame. Glass kept coming out of my forehead for months. I still have a very faint scar on my forehead and upper nose, and a slight depression in my skull under the scar.

MacGarva just went out the left side of the jeep. Brewer hit the windshield on the right side and was then thrown into the back seat. Katona smashed the steering wheel and remained slumped over it. My forehead was cut up with blood running into my eyes. MacGarva had a scraped up hand and a few bruises but neither of us lost consciousness. We tried to help the other two. Brewer had a cut forehead and a broken leg. Katona was unconscious and Brewer went in and out of consciousness. I rode in the ambulance with Katona to the surgical ward at the 4<sup>th</sup> General Hospital where he was given plasma and penicillin, and kept under observation for internal injuries. MacGarva went with Brewer to the 4<sup>th</sup> General Hospital where he had five stitches in his forehead and his leg put in a cast. MacGarva and I were both patched up and after the other two were settled, we hitch hiked back to our post.

Major Wilson was a great guy to work for. The next morning when he heard that Brewedr was in the hospital and saw me walk in with my forehead all bandaged up, he said: "Well, come over here and tell me all about it." So I did.

It seems that some of the motor pool guys who had been driving that jeep had made some enemies. The truck was driven by some black soldiers from a transportation outfit. They recognized the jeep and took after it. We were victims of racist revenge. Brewer and Katona eventually left the hospital but Brewer's leg was not properly set and he walked with a limp. Years later, after I had returned home and been discharged, I got a message from Katona requesting an affidavit explaining how he had been injured. The internal injuries apparently had complications and he was seeking compensation.



AFWESPAC EM Rendezvous Club and pool. Taken from bath house.

On April 28<sup>th</sup> I made a trans-Pacific telephone call home. I had made arrangements and paid for this call at the Manila phone company several weeks previously. Everyone was at the ranch waiting for the call. I waited at the phone company from 7:00 PM until 1:00 AM on the 29<sup>th</sup> before my call went through. Then I talked a little overtime and had to pay more, but I didn't have any money, which was normal just before pay day, so I gave them an IOU.

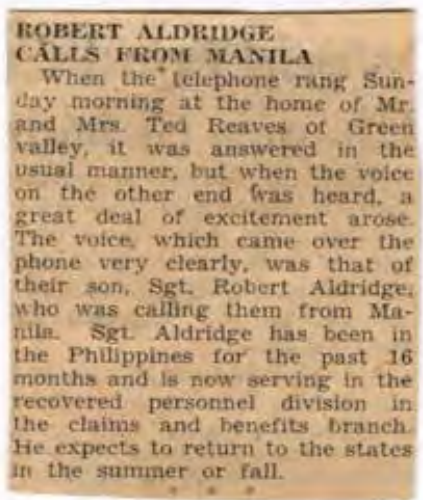
For some reason I went to Manila alone that night, not expecting to be so late. It was not our practice to be in town alone at night. It was real scary and dangerous walking through downtown Manila at that early hour of the morning. But I made it to Pasig Boulevard OK and then caught a ride in an Army truck. I was plenty lucky because Manila was a dangerous place in those days.

In May, AFWESPAC opened a really ritzy enlisted men's club in Manila. It was like a night club. Perhaps it was more like a real high class USO in the States. It was called the





Rizal Memorial Stadium grandstands and backstop.



Rendezvous Club. I went there for the first time on May 14<sup>th</sup>. There were tables, a dance floor, a bar, and a large outdoor swimming pool. Girls were brought in to dance with just like the USO's in the Sates.

This was a place we visited often, sometimes at night and sometimes during the day to swim. Once we took five lieutenants from our outfit to the club. They could take off their bars and pass as enlisted men. But when they took us as guests to their Officer's club occasionally, we couldn't wear bars as we'd be impersonating an officer. So we put some other sort of insignia on our collar and nobody seemed to care a bit.

There was also a golf course for both enlisted men and officers. It was called the Wack Wack Country Club. It was a lot of fun but I only went there twice. I eventually decided that golf was not the game for me.

On May 27<sup>th</sup> I was promoted to Staff Sergeant (three stripes and one rocker underneath). Carl King was promoted to Tech Sergeant (two rockers). Several others also got promotions. I believe "Pud" was promoted to corporal.

We had all been a little careless about sewing insignias onto our shirts. Some of my newer ones didn't have any. Major Wilson informed us of the promotions and congratulated us – of course it was him that put us in for the new ranks. After congratulating us he said that we deserved them and he thought that since we had worked so hard to earn them he would like to see us wear the stripes. It was a very nice way of saying it but it was an order. I got one of the girls that works in the office to sew mine on. She did a neat job with fancy cross stitching all around the insignia.



Bill Katona and me at the AFWESPAC EM Rendezvous Club

There was an active baseball league among the various military outfits in Manila. RPD had a team and many of the key players were in the group I hung around with. Bill Rush, from

Oregon, who worked in the same area I did, was the catcher – and a darned good one. Eddie Nicoden, from Dearborn, Michigan was the pitcher. He had been a professional pitcher in civilian life and had a traumatic experience when his wife was killed in an auto accident while he was overseas. Nicoden worked in the investigative branch and had to go out into the provinces to check claims. I recall that he was armed to the teeth when his squad took a jeep into the boondocks. This was the beginning of the Hukbalahap movement which rose after the war when they were denied promised seats in the legislature. Since the US had complicity in this denial, we American GIs were not too popular. The Huks developed into a sizeable anti-government guerrilla movement in the Philippines.

Back to the baseball team. The games were all played in Rizal Memorial Stadium, which I have mentioned before in this journal. I wasn't on the team but all of us friends of the players went to root for them. RPD did very well in the league. Bill and Eddie made a winning pair.

In the C&B branch there was a captain in charge of one of the claims sections – Captain Richardson was his name. He was pretty gung-ho in turning out the work. In order to get as many claims processed each day he waited as long as possible and then brought a big stack to message center for dispatch at about 15 minutes before quitting time. This was quite a hardship on us because it involved a lot of paperwork and then the claim folders had to be delivered to their destination. It always meant working overtime, almost every day.

I discussed the situation with Carl, the Sergeant Major, and he brought it up with Major Wilson. The major called us into a meeting and laid down ground rules that anything coming into message center after 4:30 PM would wait until the next day. I was happy about that.

The next day Captain Richardson brought over a large stack of folders at the last minute, as usual, and asked that they be dispatched immediately. I explained to him about the new rules and he didn't like it very much. The major saw that I was in an embarrassing situation so he sauntered over. The captain started to explain that the claims were ready for dispatch and the unit would look better if they got out today. The major said in his slow, drawn-out manner that he thought we looked good enough and that they could wait. That cast the new rules in concrete but I felt that Captain Richardson held a grudge against me.

The day came when Major Wilson got his orders to rotate home. Who do you think was appointed to take his place as commanding officer of C&B Branch – Captain Richardson. I thought my goose was cooked and that a good working environment was gone. I was wrong. The captain turned out to be a very nice guy. I learned that he respected someone who stood up for his rights. I could talk to him straight from the shoulder and he would pay attention. As I recall, he continued to enforce the 4:30 rule. One slack day I asked for the afternoon off to play golf and he even arranged for me to use his jeep. So one never knows.

With the number of GIs in our social group we decided that we should have a vehicle available every weekend. So we took turns requisitioning a weapons carrier, which had room for all of us. Each weekend there was one parked outside our barracks. We had several interesting outings – to Ipo Dam one day and to Los Banos National Park on another. The mess hall would pack a box of picnic provisions for us – bread, cheese, meat, cans of various things.

It was at Los Banos National Park that we had an enlightening experience on how bad poverty was in the Philippines. As we were eating a young Filipino boy came out of the brush, approached only to a safe distance, and then squatted there watching us. His clothes were torn and a large sore on his knee was infested with maggots. We offered him food but he would come no closer, and he would not let us approach him. He reminded me of a wild and hungry dog. When we departed we left everything laying there. At no more than 50 feet away I looked back and saw him gulping down our leftover food. That experience remained clearly in my mind from then on. I have written and told about it many times. I had seen much poverty in the Philippines, and more throughout the world in the years since, but that one person-to-person experience with severe impoverishment has had the most to do with my present compulsion against wasting things.



Picnic outside our barracks on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1946. Our barracks on far left. Weapons carrier in background.

I should mention one other person – Captain Vera Mankinen. She was a WAC and in charge of one of the claims units. She was also a lawyer in civilian life and seemed to take all of us under her wing. When we had jeep wrecks, she helped us prepare affidavits that told what happened without unintentionally incriminating ourselves. When some typewriters were stolen from our office, she helped the ones responsible for guarding them. Once the enlisted men's mess hall got a batch of beans which had maggots in them and the cooks decided to use them anyway. Someone told Captain Vera about it. She went directly to RPD headquarters, took the commanding colonel by the arm, and marched him to our mess hall so he could see personally. The beans got thrown out and we had something else hastily put together for lunch. Captain Vera married another officer while in Manila and we all celebrated with the couple.

We experienced a typhoon while I was in Manila. It ravaged the waterfront but did not cause any damage in our area that I recall. I can't remember the date but in checking the typhoon activity for 1946 it must have been Typhoon #1 which hit Luzon about April 1<sup>st</sup>. It was a Category-3 hurricane with winds over 100 mph. About all I remember about it was lying on my bunk and seeing the rain travel almost horizontally through the barracks. Since the top halves of the walls were open, the rain and wind blew in one side and out the other. I remember that as long as I was lying down I didn't get wet. But if I stood upright in the barracks I would be drenched in a second.

July 11<sup>th</sup> marked 17 months overseas for me. On that day some welcome orders came from the Tokyo headquarters for AFPAC (Armed Forces in the Pacific). All unit commanders were to prepare to send men with 24 months in the service on 31 July 1946 to the United States for reassignment on the first available transportation. That included me! On June 17<sup>th</sup> the civilian

employees in the office gave an after-hours party for those of us who would be going home. We had ice cream, cookies, cake, dancing, games, and a lot of fun. But things don't happen quickly in the Army. The days and weeks continued to roll by. We became more and more impatient.

Rotation was so near, yet it was proving to be so far away.

The Philippines were granted independence on the Fourth of July 1946. I wrote in my Overseas Journal: "This morning there was a big ceremony. General MacArthur, High Commissioner McNutt, Philippine President Roxas, and some senator spoke. Then the American flag was lowered by McNutt as the 86<sup>th</sup> Division band played the *Star Spangled Banner*. President Roxas then raised the Philippine flag to the Philippine national anthem. A 21-gun salute was fired by the US fleet in Manila Bay, and answered by a Filipino battery. Planes were flying around dipping their wings – B-17s, P-80s, etc."

Our gang didn't go to the ceremonies because we thought Manila would be pretty wild that day. Instead, we had a picnic outside our barracks. We could see and hear the planes and the gun salutes. Fireworks were popping all over town and at night there was a fireworks display over Manila Bay. Although we only had a picnic outside our barracks that day, all of us in the Philippines at the time of their independence were awarded the Philippine Independence Ribbon by the Philippine government.

We went into Manila about 4:00 PM to have dinner. Then we went to the Rendezvous Club for an enjoyable evening. This night we told Bob MacGarva goodbye as he was leaving in the morning for the Repple Depple for rotation home. Brewer had already left, still limping from the improperly-set broken leg.

On July 17<sup>th</sup> I finally got my orders to leave for the 5<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot on the 20<sup>th</sup>. It was quite a place – lines, lines, and more lines. The good part was that Bob MacGarva was still there and we were together again. Now the question was how long before we would get on a ship.

This is a short summary of my seven months in Manila. Additional information is in my Overseas Journal. Many more pictures and much more information are in my photo albums and scrap books.

## CALIFORNIA BOUND

So there I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot near Manila – this time to replace some civilian who will take over the occupation. I was also re-united with my old buddy, Bob MacGarva, in the final sweat-out before returning to "The States." After four days of processing, MacGarva and I got a pass for one last visit to Manila. There were no jeeps available to us here but hitch-hiking is a standard means of transportation as there were many Army vehicles and they always picked up GIs who were hitching it.

First we went to Nichols Field to have a nice steak dinner. Then we went into town to see Bill Katona for the last time. The three of us went around Manila for our final look – Bill worked in a motor pool so he could get transportation. Then we ate dinner at Bill's outfit, had a couple beers, and started hitching it back to the 5<sup>th</sup> RPD.

Both Bob and I were pretty jittery after being in two wrecks in which our jeep was totaled both

times. We saw an Army command car coming along and stuck out our thumbs. It stopped and we saw it was a Filipino civilian driving. Oh well, we hopped in anyway – I took the front passenger seat and Bob got in back. This guy was crazy. On the narrow, dirt road he was passing without proper clearance and exceeding the speed limit. I felt nervous so I made up a reason to suggest getting out. I turned around and asked Bob if we should stop to see Rosie one more time before shipping out. He knew what I meant but apparently wasn't as concerned as I was. He suggested we skip it.

We went on a little ways further. Then the driver leaned over toward me and said: "If the MPs stop us, you tell them I am your chauffeur." Oh oh! We didn't want to get into any legal stuff this close to boarding ship. I was wondering what to do when Bob tapped me on the shoulder and said: "Where is it that Rosie lives?" I said it was just around the corner and we asked the driver to stop there. We got out. Phew!

We waited until we saw a personnel carrier coming along very slowly. It looked like a safe driver so we stuck out our thumbs and got a ride. It was getting dark, starting to rain a little, and the road was very narrow. About two miles from the RPD we sideswiped another vehicle on a curve and had to stop to exchange information. Nobody was hurt physically but it really shook me up mentally. It turned out that our ride was also headed for the RPD and when we arrived the driver started asking us for our names as witnesses. None of that for us! Bob and I slipped away quietly and vowed not to leave the camp again until we left for the ship. Manila was just too wild for us at this stage in the game. To this day I am still nervous when riding with someone else. I would much rather be driving and feeling control over the vehicle. I think these wrecks – three in a matter of weeks – has made me a safer driver.

On July 26<sup>th</sup> we had our last physical and received orders to ship out the next day. On the 27<sup>th</sup> we arose at 3:00 AM and had a real wild ride down Dewey Boulevard to the ship.

Dewey Boulevard was (and still is) a beautiful, 10-kilometer-long drive along the waterfront at the edge of Manila Bay. It was named after Admiral George Dewey who on 1 May 1898, during the Spanish-American War, defeated the Spanish fleet in the battle of Manila Bay. That was the beginning of the US colonial period in the Philippines. Dewey Boulevard was later re-named Roxas Boulevard after President Manuel Roxas, the first elected president after the Philippines received their independence. Roxas was elected while I was in Manila. Years later, in 1977, when I again visited Manila, I drove along Roxas Boulevard with friends and it was just as beautiful as ever.

There were several truckloads of GIs in the convoy heading for the ship. The truck ahead of us got a flat tire – it must have been both dual tires as they were really flat – but the driver didn't know it. Our driver decided to pass him to tell him. Then we had to pass every other truck in the convoy to let the leader know because the disabled truck was not allowed to stop while in convoy. Every driver thought we were trying to race and did everything they could to cut us out before we could pass. It was a wild experience. When a convoy of 2½-ton trucks used Dewey Boulevard for a racetrack.

When the convoy finally did stop, the leader decided we would proceed anyway. We were then escorted by MPs in jeeps for the final dash. When we arrived at the ship the tires on the truck in front of us were smoking. The Manila Fire Department responded. But at that point we didn't



care – we had made it to the ship.

We boarded the *USAT Sea Barb* at Pier 5 at 10:00 AM. (USAT = US Army Transport) I was so happy I felt like kissing the deck. There was a farewell party and a band on the dock. The band played *Auld Lang Syne* and then *California Here I Come*. Most of our gang was on the ship – Carl King, Bill Rush, Eddie Nikoden ... Ollice Brewer had gone home earlier and Bill Katona was a little behind us.

Two piers away from us, Pier-7, the aircraft carrier *USS Princeton* had just docked. It was returning the body of Manuel Luis Quezon, beloved wartime president of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, who died in exile in the US during the war. There was a 21-gun salute for him.

There were about 2,800 men on this ship – 2,000 enlisted men and 800 officers. Of course the officers had separate quarters. Helen and some other Red Cross girls were also going home with us. I didn't know them very well but some of the other fellows had become acquainted. They seemed nice. Later I found out that there were five of us on the ship who had gone through basic training together and who came over together on the *Fond du Lac*. It was like homecoming week. It was actually like two weeks – I was on the *Sea Barb* for 15 days and 14 nights.

We weren't aboard very long before we were under way. We sailed at 11:30 AM and steamed out of Manila Bay toward the north. We would be taking the great-circle route to San Francisco which would take us right along the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. It was cold. I could hardly stand to stay on deck to watch the evening movies.

Sometimes the fog got so thick that the ship was stalled. On nice days we made good time. When the sea was rough it was often unsafe to be on deck but on nice days we enjoyed the sunshine. I took a roll of 127 film on the trip home. All of the pictures are in my photo album.

I noticed the cold a lot. On August 5<sup>th</sup> I wrote in my journal:

It's very cold today. I never realized that I would feel the cold this much. My blood is so thin from being in the tropics so long that I will probably freeze to death when I get back home.

We cross the International Date Line at approximately 2200 on August 5<sup>th</sup>. The next day I wrote in my journal:

This is the second August 5<sup>th</sup> I've had this year. We crossed the International Date Line late last night.



A typical warm day on deck.  
Taken by me on the *USAT Sea Barb*.



On the cold and foggy days I wore everything I had when I went on deck – my fatigue jacket over my field jacket. I would have been happy to have one of those nice wool overcoats we turned in at Fort Ord before going overseas. And, although there were rough and stormy days, on other days the sea was as smooth as glass. I noted seeing schools of porpoise off the side of the ship.

Even we non-coms had to pull KP duty. It was the first time in almost a year that I had to work in the galley. Another task was painting the entire ship. It was the *Sea Barb's* return to the states, also, and everyone wanted her to look pretty spiffy, which she did.

On August 8<sup>th</sup> we made our last time change for the voyage. We advanced the clocks 90 minutes and were then on Pacific Coast Time.

Another form of recreation aboard ship was a band put together from the talented passengers on the ship. They usually played every day on the forward deck. One very foggy day the ship was making slow headway. The fog horn was blowing repeatedly. A lieutenant who played a trombone in the band decided to help out. Every time the fog horn blew, he would mimic it with his slip horn. That caused the ship to change speed and travel slower and slower. The fog horn blew more frequently, then almost frantically. Each time, the trombone player would mimic it.

I guess the officers on the bridge were going nuts. The responses to their signals were not right and they didn't know what to do. I don't know if my memory is playing tricks with me now but it seems that I recall the ship even going into reverse.

Anyway, it was soon discovered what was happening and we were under way again. But the ship's officers didn't have much of a sense of humor. Next time we went through the chow line, that lieutenant was dishing out the grub.

On August 8<sup>th</sup> I wrote in my journal:

The sea is very calm and smooth today but as usual it's cold as the dickens. I'm still running around in a field jacket.

My hair is really long as the dickens. Just about the longest it's ever been. I'll probably have to braid it pretty soon. Oh boy, what it will be like to get a haircut, a hot shave and shower, and a soft bed with sheets. I'm going to go loco when I get back to civilization. All the little things that seem just part of everyday life will be the biggest luxuries for me. I've learned one thing in the Army and that is that the little things in life are what counts.

It's possible that in 4 or 5 days I'll be right back in my snug little home again. Words can't explain how I feel



Bob MacGarva



Me at Sea – August 1946

about going home. When you wish and dream of something more than anything for what seems an eternally long time – well, when it comes true it's just too good to be true. You just feel it inside and want to bubble over with joy. I looked forward to my homecoming as being the happiest day in my 20 years and 4 months of life.

I went up on deck for a while that night and saw more little things to appreciate. Later I added in my journal:

I went up on deck tonight and the place was really beautiful with the new paint, the calm sea, and the almost-full moon.



USAT Sea Barb docked at Oakland Army Base.  
11 August 1946. Note the list to starboard

The ship published a mimeographed newspaper every day entitled *The Barbed Wire*. It was extremely helpful in keeping us up to date on world events as well as progress by the ship. There were continual updates on the ship's position and how much headway it was making. It informed us of miscellaneous news like crossing the International Date Line, the ship's current location, time zone changes, and estimated time of arrival at San Francisco. There are copies of the paper in my scrap book.

We had a little outbreak of impetigo on board. We were afraid that if it became too well known that the ship might be quarantined when we got to San Francisco. So just a few of us went on sick call and received some penicillin ointment. Penicillin was very new at that time and not too much in use. This was the first time I had used it. Anyway, those of us who obtained the ointment would share it with others, thus cutting down the recorded number of cases. It worked.

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, a year after the bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, we learned that we would arrive at San Francisco the next evening and that all of us would be discharged at Camp Beale (now Beale Air Force Base). That would be our separation center. We also received our debarkation orders. Of course the 800 officers would get off first. But I would be the 245<sup>th</sup> enlisted man to leave the ship – not bad out of 2,000.

On the night of August 10<sup>th</sup> I stayed on deck watching for the Golden Gate Bridge – we would beat the motto of "The Golden Gate in '48" by a couple years. That night it was so foggy and dark we could hardly see from one end of the ship to the other and the ocean was rough. I was straining to see the bridge but to no avail. Then, out of nowhere, the lights of the bridge were directly above me. That was about 7:30 PM. Far different from the bright and sunny day when I last went under it, but it was a much happier occasion.

As soon as we were under the bridge and in the bay, the fog was gone and the moon broke through the clouds over the Bay Bridge. It lit up the bridge and glistened across the water. We could see the lights of San Francisco and Oakland shining in all their glory. What a view. What a feeling.

We anchored out in the bay that night. The next morning, August 11<sup>th</sup>, we were roused out at 3:30 AM to have breakfast and pack up. At 8:00 AM we docked at Camp Knight Oakland Army Base. Everyone crowded to the starboard side of the ship to see the pier. The deck listed so steeply that we had to watch our footing. But who cared?!

We debarked an hour later, at 9:00 AM. My family didn't know when the ship would arrive so they were not there.

After debarking, we were assigned sleeping areas in a large building that, as I recall, seemed like a huge gymnasium. The bunks took up the entire floor space and looked like an area for housing refugees.

To finish off the morning we went to an orientation lecture. Then we were given a huge meal of anything we wanted to eat. After that we were given a pass that was good until 2:00 am the next morning. It all seemed like a dream. I couldn't believe we were back on American soil.

In those days, prior to intense lobbying by the insurance/petroleum/automotive industries, there were beginnings of mass transit system. One such enterprise was a trolley line across the lower deck of the Bay Bridge. The eastern terminus of the bridge was only a short walk from our location.



Everyone crowded on the starboard side to see the dock.

Several of us decided to see Frisco on our first day ashore. I remember Carl King, Bill Rush, Bob MacGarva and probably Eddie Nicoden. So we hopped on the trolley and went across.

The first place we hit was a barber shop. I was awfully anxious to get my hair cut and have a nice shave. I went for the works – shampoo, haircut, and shave. What I was not used to was prices in the States. The bill almost wiped me out with only a couple dollars left with which to celebrate. But some of the others had a little more money and it

was always our custom to share. The score was evened up the next payday. So we were able to have a few beers but mostly we just walked around and had a bite to eat.

I called the folks from one place and told them not to bother visiting me here because we would be too busy and would be leaving for Camp Beale the next day. I'd keep in touch with them and let them know my discharge date.

We also stopped by the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, where the Red Cross girls were staying, to tell them goodbye one last time. By that time it was getting dark and as we walked along the streets we had an urge to get rid of some of the beer. There were no rest rooms around so we found a dark side street with some bushes and relieved ourselves Manila style.

We didn't stay out late because we were all broke by this time and there was nothing really exciting to do. So we walked back to the trolley line and went back to the base.





The next morning we slept in late but were on the train for Camp Beale by 12:30 PM. Things were really happening fast now. But not that fast. It must have been a slow milk train that stopped at every town because we didn't get to Beale until 8:00PM. I was assigned to Barracks 32 at the Separation Center. Lo and behold! – real spring beds with mattresses, clean sheets and blankets, hot water, the works. We ate and turned in.

At Camp Beale we stood in many more lines, had orientation lectures, got our records up to date,

turned in excess equipment and drew out new clothes for discharge. I met three more boys who went through Basic with me and accompanied me overseas on the same ship – Davidson, Farris, and Craik. The latter two were in the 25<sup>th</sup> Division, 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery with me. Farris and I were both in Baker Battery. Craik had become the “top kick (first sergeant) of Charlie Battery. Later I met two more of my old Basic Training and *Fond du Lac* buddies – Johnny Basher (who swam around the harbor in New Guinea with me) and Butrick.



On the 13<sup>th</sup> we drew out new uniforms and insignia. Then we had all the insignia sewed on our shirts and coat. I chose the 25<sup>th</sup> “Tropic Lightning” insignia for my right shoulder and the AFWESPAC patch for my left. Below those, of course went my sergeant stripes. Three overseas stripes (one for each six months) on my left sleeve and a meritorious unit citation (for RPD in Manila) on my right. Over my left pocket went the ribbons for the medals I had earned plus my sharpshooter medal. Over my right pocket was the discharge emblem of an eagle in a diamond – we called it the “ruptured duck.” Then we went for an interview to prepare our discharge papers and official records.

The days went like that – counseling, orientations, lectures, counseling, and more counseling. I was advised to file for a disability because of my hearing loss. We received our final pay and I did some shopping at the PX to get gifts for the family. Oh yes, there was also a talk urging us to sign up in the Enlisted Reserve Corps – No Thanks, I'd had enough of military life.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> we turned in our bedding and went to a chapel for the discharge ceremony. Mom, Dad, Skip, and Sonny came up for the occasion and to take me home. By 3:30 PM I was again a civilian and on my way home.

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## Chapter 17 – Nostalgic Memories

We veterans of World War II are dwindling to extinction – only 2-million left from the original 16-million and dying at the rate of 30,000 a month (September 2011 statistics). Many thoughts have gone through my mind over the decades. But the one contradiction that has perplexed me the most is why I feel nostalgic about my war experiences when I have dedicated my life to opposing war and violence. I have been compelled in my twilight years to look into the history of my old outfit – the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Was I still being deceived by the so-called “glory” of war? I couldn’t understand this compulsion so I started writing my War Journal as both a therapeutic exercise and a search for better understanding.

I have tried to re-live my war years in all the intimacy and detail that my memory will allow. Much of the chronological detail was provided by my basic training diary, training notes, overseas journal, photo album, and scrap book. I also went through my memories, describing everything in the most detail I could recall. All of my military events were tucked into my life between my 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays.

I have tried to relate these writings to the way I felt then, as best I can remember, and contrast them to my current feelings about war. The two seem much different, but perhaps not. It might be that I felt the same then but did not have the knowledge or experience to understand my feelings. I do know one thing is the same – the values I fought for at that time are the same as what I am struggling for today – the creation of a peaceful world. I think I have now discovered the real reason for my nostalgia. It is not for the military or it’s fighting units, not for the killing and the shooting. It is for the men and comrades who shared that hell with me. It was nothing more than a nostalgia for the bond built among all of us who were in the Pacific. We were all in trouble together, so to speak. We shared the pain and danger, and depended on one another for support. We really did try to help one another. We did terrible things. We maimed and murdered, but we acted in the way we thought we should at the time.

We also shared joys and pleasures. We enjoyed recreation together, we shared treats from home, we drank together and we laughed together. All of these shared events formed a bond that lasted a lifetime. I can now look at my experiences during World War II from a better perspective.

My deepest personal sorrow was losing my closest and oldest friend during World War II. My nostalgia for him goes back many years before the war. I have mentioned Bill Bottero earlier but I’d like to tell more about him here.

### BILL BOTTERO

On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1926, George Washington’s birthday, William J. Bottero was born. “Bill” was born 83 days before me. It would be about 3½ years before we would meet and I don’t remember that meeting. All that I can remember is that Bill had been my close friend for as far back as my memory reaches.

My Grandmother (Nana) lived at 232 First Street in Watsonville, California. That was on the corner of First and Locust Streets. You can't find it anymore because Riverside Road now runs over the approximate location where her house stood. Bill lived about half a block away on Locust Street. His parents were divorced and he was raised by his grandparents, Joe and Martha Romero. After my Dad was killed in an automobile accident in 1928, Mom and I lived with Nana. It was at that time that I met Bill. It was also at that time that Mom met and married my step-father, Ted (later we called him Pap and his grandchildren called him Pappy).

When I was about five we moved away from Nana's – first to Oregon Street and then to the "Packing House" at Maluhia Ranch on Amesti Road. Bill and I lost contact for a few years. I was in the third grade when we moved back to Nana's home for a little while. I remember meeting Bill again and being so excited about playing with him once more. We were in the same class at Radcliff School on Rodriguez Street. We walked to and from school every day and played together after school. Our route to school went along the railroad tracks of Walker Street and we picked up all kinds of goodies at the warehouses and packing houses we explored. We found some dried peas one day and put them in the ink wells at school. (I got into trouble for that.) We found pieces of wood used to make packing crates and used them for swords. We would duel with them until one of them broke – that one was the loser. Fortunately the flying, broken pieces didn't hit our eyes or stab us.

We moved back to Maluhia Ranch when I was in the fourth grade, but this time I still played with Bill when we visited Nana "in town." Another move came when I was in the sixth grade when we took up residence on Rodriguez Street, just a couple blocks from Radcliff School, on the corner of Sixth and Rodriguez. Bill and I were in the same class again and our friendship grew closer as we grew older. He would frequently come to my house after school to play. We were in the Boy Scouts together and cooked together on our first camping trip.

Bill was not an outgoing person. He never learned to ride a bike or to swim. He never got higher than second class in the Boy Scouts. He didn't invest in much equipment such as for hiking and backpacking. But he was an avid reader. He read anything and everything he could get his hands on. He also loved airplanes and knew every make and model of all the nations.



Bill Bottero 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

The two of us used our imagination to conjure up games to play. One that was our favorite from as far back as I can remember was "Army." We had our own imaginary army which we called "Poison Army." We had tin helmets – World War I style – adorned with skull and crossbones. We had play guns. At Nana's house we used to meet in the upstairs hayloft of an old barn on her property. That was our headquarters. We could also go out the extension of First Street and get out of the city into the lettuce-growing area. There we would play "Army" and also float boats in the irrigation ditches and sometimes build dams in them.





Bill and me playing "Army."  
1937

On Rodriguez Street we continued our fantasy after school and on weekends. We had no idea that someday we would be fighting side by side, just a mountain range away, in a real war in a far-off land.

Elementary schools in those days only went to the sixth grade. After that we went to something called a Grammar School. That is where we went for the seventh grade. It was on the other side of town and farther away. We would usually walk part way home together and Bill frequently came to my house after school.

1939 was the first year that we camped at the Government Camp at Arroyo Seco. We stayed there about two months and Pap would drive down on weekends. One time he brought Bill down with him to spend a week with me. Bill always wore his hair pretty long and it was so hot that summer that Pap felt sorry for him and offered to give him a haircut. Well, when Pap does something there are no half-way measures. Bill got a real 'Butch cut.' That earned him the title of "Baron" because he looked like a typical German baron.

Another nickname that Bill was called by was "Bottles." I can't remember how that one evolved but I presume it had something to do with his last name – Bottero.

After the seventh grade, the school district closed down the old



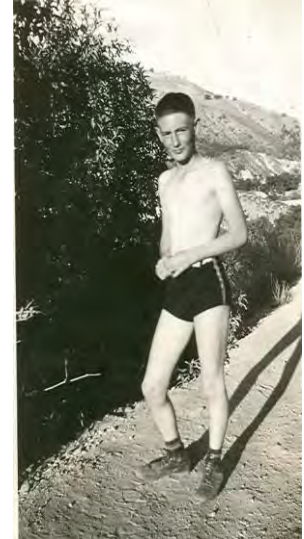
Bill and me hauling fire wood at Arroyo Seco.  
1939

Grammar School and opened the EA Hall School to handle the seventh and eighth grades in Watsonville. That was even farther across town. I frequently rode my bike but often walked it part way home to keep Bill company. Sometimes Bill's grandmother provided the transportation for him, and when that happened I also got a ride.

It used to be, in Watsonville, that there was a

children's  
Christmas

parade every year during the first weekend in December. The Boy Scouts participated and helped in this event. In 1941, Bill and I were chosen to lead it. We carried the American flag and our troop flag at the head of the parade. It seemed that whenever one of us participated in something, the other one was also involved. Bill played a violin in the school orchestra and I played a trumpet in the band. We each had the same instructor and music director.



Bill with his "Butch" cut  
at Arroyo Seco. 1939

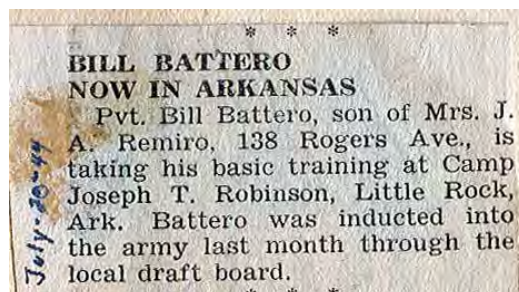


Me and Bill leading the Children's Christmas  
Parade. 6 December 1941



Bill in his junior year at  
Watsonville High.

Bill and I went through the first three years of high school together at Watsonville High. Then in his senior year he moved to San Francisco – I believe it was to live with his mother. Anyway, we lost touch with each other again for a couple years.



Watsonville Register-Pajaronian Clipping

Bill was inducted into the army in June 1944. He took basic training in the Infantry at Camp Joseph T. Robinson in Little Rock, Arkansas. He also had additional training at Gainesville, Texas. The time coincided with when I was at Fort Sill.

We met again at Fort Ord in January 1945, where both of us were preparing to depart for somewhere in the Pacific. We had a couple really enjoyable evenings together to renew our lifelong friendship. Then one night Bill told me he had been alerted. He said he didn't think he would ever be put in combat because his eyesight was so poor. He was nervous but held up pretty well when we parted. We promised to try to locate each other overseas. The next day he shipped out, and a few days later I did the same. That was the last time I saw Bill. I found out later that he was assigned to the 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division.

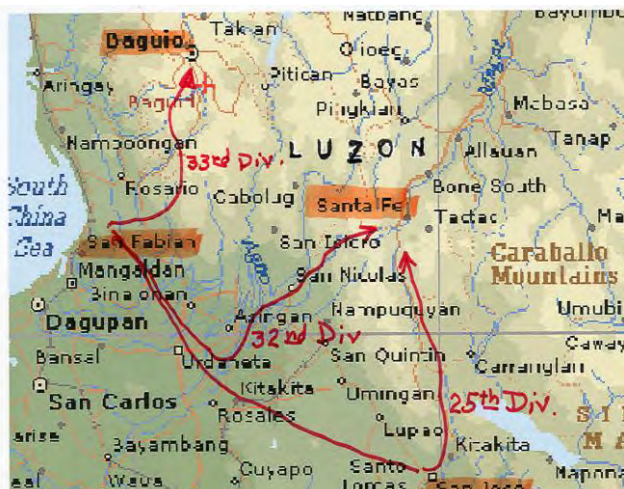
#### MASSACRE ON THE VILLA VERDE TRAIL

The 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division has had more than its share of stand-up fights without proper support. After the Japanese advance through the Pacific was stopped in the Solomon Islands, America went on the offensive. General Douglas MacArthur first invaded New Guinea. Elements of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division, raw from the States, were flown in by air on 16 September 1942. They had no training in jungle fighting and they lacked artillery support. Their supplies barely sufficed for the 12 days until they were joined by other elements of the 32<sup>nd</sup>. Called the Red Arrow Division because it has always pierced every line encountered, it fought many campaigns on New Guinea for about two years. Following that, the wearers of the Red Arrow patch (a line shot through by a red arrow) landed on Leyte on 14 November 1944 and engaged in bloody hand-to-hand combat in taking Limon and in piercing the Yamashita Line. Then, with only three weeks of rest between campaigns and severely depleted in personnel from months of jungle fighting on Leyte, they were sent to Luzon where they landed at Lingayen Gulf on 27 January 1945. In describing the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division I will quote and draw heavily from two documents:



32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry  
Division Insignia  
Red Arrow  
Division





Derks, Tracy I.; "Taking the Villa Verde Trail," published in February 2002 issue of *World War II*. (Cited as "Derks.")

*The 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division in World War II*  
 "The Red Arrow," Part 12 – "Luzon: The Villa Verde Trail." (Cited as "Part 12.")  
<http://members.aol.com/Sarge000tb/32-ww2e.html>

I Corps' Thrust Northward into the Caraballo Mountains. I have explained in previous chapters that I Corps of the Sixth Army was responsible for stopping the main contingent of Japanese forces on northern Luzon from attacking US forces advancing on Manila. (110,000 Japanese combat troops were estimated to be on Luzon at that time.) Although critical to his strategy, mountain fighting was not a high priority for MacArthur. I Corps was only allotted three divisions to accomplish this task – the 33<sup>rd</sup>, the 32<sup>nd</sup>, and the 25<sup>th</sup>. The 33<sup>rd</sup> Division was on the left flank guarding Lingayen Gulf and the road to Baguio. The 32<sup>nd</sup> was in the center blocking the Villa Verde Trail – indigenously called "The Goat Trail in the Clouds" – which stretches from Santa Maria in the Central Plain to Santa Fe at the south end of the lush Cagayan Valley. The 25<sup>th</sup> was blocking Highway 5.

"Japanese positions on northern Luzon were located on a triangular perimeter encompassing the most treacherous reaches of the Caraballo Mountains, which protected the Cagayan Valley, a breadbasket for the Japanese. [Sixth Army commander] Krueger instructed [I Corps commander] Swift that his corps' first objective was to pry open the door to the valley, thereby cutting off the Japanese supplies at the source." [Derks] The 32<sup>nd</sup>, moving up the Villa Verde Trail, and the 25<sup>th</sup>, moving up Highway 5, were to accomplish this task and meet in Santa Fe.

When Sixth Army Commander, Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, changed I Corps' mission in late February, the Red Arrow Men had a two-fold mission as they started northward from the plains into the mountains. One was to go up three river valleys on the left part of their operation zone to support the 33<sup>rd</sup> Division's push toward Baguio. The other, by far the most difficult, was to open the Villa Verde Trail to Santa Fe by cracking the mountain bastion of Japanese troops. Along with the 25<sup>th</sup> Division's advance up Highway 5, this would capture the "crossroads town" for Japanese supply routes and open the door to the Cagayan Valley. The battle for Manila was still raging and only the 25<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Divisions were available to push the enemy back to the Balete Pass-Santa Fe-Imugan area which was the key to Japanese defenses guarding the routes to the Cagayan Valley. It was in this area that the Japanese organized their defense in depth and kept their main reserves for reinforcing their forces along the Villa Verde Trail and Highway 5.

"Originally a foot and carabao path pioneered in the 1880s by a Spanish Priest named Juan Villa Verde, the trail leads from the Lingayen Gulf area over the Caraballo Mountains to the lush Cagayan Valley of northeast Luzon. From Santa Maria, where it begins, the trail twists and turns for 27 miles (43 kilometers) to cover the 11-mile, as-the-crow-flies, distance to Santa Fe. Before

the start of World War II, the trail had been improved to handle cart traffic for about 9 kilometers from Santa Maria, but this section was only a 10 to 12 foot width of ungravelled clay. ... most of the rest of the trail was simply a footpath over a 4,800-foot high Salacsac pass to Imugan, where it joined the road to Santa Fe.” [“Part 12”]

In late February 1945, the Trail was guarded by elements of the Japanese 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Division, all under Major General Haruo Konuma who commanded the Bambang Branch of Japan’s Fourteenth Army. Konuma was in turn under General Tomoyuki Yamashita who commanded Japan’s Fourteenth Army and all Japanese forces in the Philippines.

Konuma “layered his defenses by burrowing into mountainsides and embedding artillery along what came to be known as Yamashita Ridge. The ridge was a prominence north of the trail commanding [views of] long stretches of the American lines. From these positions the defenders could rain down harassing fire, blast apart attacks, and rend supply lines. Close to the trail, Japanese spider holes harbored soldiers skilled in sniping and infiltration. These positions were Yamashita’s brainchild.” [Derks] Lieutenant General Krueger, Sixth Army commander, wrote his assessment:

The enemy had made good use of its terrain which, with its sharp ridges and deep ravines, was ideally adapted for defense. He had dug innumerable caves, had provided defense positions on the reverse slopes of the ridges, and had established excellent observation stations that permitted him to use his artillery to best advantage. Repeated personal observation convinced me that the advance along the Villa Verde Trail would prove to be costly and slow. [Quoted in Part 12.]

“Costly and slow.” Against that backdrop, on 24 February 1945, the men of the 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment started the drive up “The Goat Trail in the Clouds.” One battalion reached the approaches to the two Salacsac Passes area on March 4<sup>th</sup>. Then the advance got real rough. It was to be a long, hard job for all the elements of the Division. “The trail hugged the sides of mountains 4,000 feet above sea level – mountains often shrouded in fog, drenched in downpours, or wrapped in stifling heat. Now the trail was the front. The deep draws carving the landscape near the Villa Verde Trail were too precipitous for maneuvers. The surrounding mountains were a trackless wilderness with hidden Japanese caves. The trail itself aided the enemy, its serpentine ribbon promising another gun emplacement around each turn. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Division was faced with frontal assaults against a well-entrenched enemy commanding the high ground and familiar with the battlefield. It was probably about this time that my lifelong buddy, Bill Bottero, joined the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division and was assigned to the 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. I don’t know what battalion or company he was in.

“The men fought for every yard, foot, and sometimes inch. The Japanese were dug in so well that artillery had no effect on their spider holes. Camouflaged bunkers could only be detected with human bait – the shriek of a .25-caliber bullet overhead or the whirl of the mortar cutting the air provided the only clues to the enemy’s whereabouts. A squad of GIs would then have to advance on that position, ramming a pole charge into the opening when they neared the cave. The explosion would seal the spider hole, though there was no assurance that the troops inside were dead or that there were not multiple openings to the cave.” [Derks.]

“The difficulties for the Infantry are plain enough. For the artillery, the problem of getting guns in and out of suitable firing positions, of finding and occupying observation posts, and of maintaining communications and keeping the guns supplied with ammunition – these were all

complicated by the rugged terrain and lack of roads.” [Part 12]

Other support units – quartermaster, signal, ordnance, and medical – were likewise handicapped. “Supplies became a sore point: the trail was too narrow to support motorized traffic, and Filipino carriers sometimes proved untrustworthy under fire. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Division relied on the equipment and bravery of the 114<sup>th</sup> Engineering Battalion to make the Villa Verde a passable road. What the 114<sup>th</sup> accomplished under constant fire became known as ‘the little Burma Road.’ Later, captured Japanese orders showed that the 114<sup>th</sup> was on their army’s ‘must destroy’ list.” [Derks.]

Volume I of *Engineers of the South Pacific* commends the Engineers on the Villa Verde Trail: “Here the engineers had to move with the forward elements building a road to support the main movement against circumstances that continually seemed to make further effort futile. All along the Villa Verde Trail, under increased sniper fire and against heavy artillery of all types, they used armored dozers to break their own way and to open up new firing positions for tanks. Their dozers held first priority on the destruction ‘Must’ list issued in captured enemy documents. But they built their 18-mile road against all odds and the most important element of the I Corps movement was assured successful completion.” [Quoted in Part 12.]

A drive to attack the enemy from the rear by going through the wilderness was begun on March 11<sup>th</sup>. It was a disaster. Lack of supplies because of too few carriers, poor communication because of atmospheric conditions and mountains, and orders being delayed or lost caused Division commander, Major General Gill, to order a withdrawal on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. Since they started up the Trail, the 127<sup>th</sup> had over 100 men killed, some 225 wounded, and another 500 hospitalized for illness, including a disproportionate number with combat fatigue. On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, with the Regiment counting only 1,500 combat-ready men, Major General Gill started relieving the 127<sup>th</sup> and replacing it with the 128<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

The 128<sup>th</sup> continued up the Trail while the 126<sup>th</sup> Regiment tried to tie down the Japanese on Yamashita Ridge so the 128<sup>th</sup> could push through the passes. On April 10<sup>th</sup> it was thought the first of the two Salacsac Passes was captured but then Japanese rose from the ground out of caves and spider holes, and beat the Americans back. Finally, on April 16<sup>th</sup>, the first pass was declared secured. At this time Lieutenant General Krueger, Sixth Army Commander, visited the front.

[Division commander] Gill, worried about the slow progress against seemingly impossible odds, expressed pessimism to Krueger about the Division’s ability to secure the trail. “Gill complained that the Division was battle-weary and under strength because there were no replacements. The trail was heavily fortified by elite troops of the Japanese Fourteenth Army. There was no room for maneuver in the rugged Caraballo Mountains through which the trail wound. It was all bloody head-on assaults.” [Derks.]

Krueger concurred with Gill, and said: “I’m fully satisfied that your division has done and is doing all that is humanly possible under the incredibly difficult terrain conditions and resistance facing it.” [Quoted in Derks.] Krueger then told Gill to continue with what he had, and said there would be no replacements because he had none to give. In other words, Gill was instructed to continue sending those 18- and 19-year-olds into the valley of death while MacArthur focused his main forces on more sensational areas that enhanced his career and reputation.

Under such impossible orders Gill could only resort to rotating his front line regiments. At this time he retired the 128<sup>th</sup> for some R&R and sent the 127<sup>th</sup>, with my buddy Bill Bottero, back onto the killing fields. The battle continued against Hill 508 on the Yamashita Ridge, which was the backbone of Japanese defenses of the Salacsac Passes area. Once in late April a company from the 127<sup>th</sup> took the summit of Hill 508 but was immediately surrounded by Japanese who emerged from caves and spider holes.

“For the first two weeks in May, the ‘Kongo Fortress,’ as the GIs dubbed Hill 508, was a cauldron of death. The landscape itself suggested a vision of Hell – the trees blasted into stumps, the ground scorched from flame throwers used to burn out spider holes. Soldiers of the 127<sup>th</sup> died in the attacks, in foxholes, and in secured rest areas. Men of the Red Arrow Division who had suffered through Buna, survived Aitape, and braved Leyte, were killed and wounded on the steep slopes of the Kongo Fortress.” [Derks.]

One of those killed was Private First Class William J. Bottero. On May 5<sup>th</sup> a Japanese sniper rifle cracked and a Red Arrow man fell. Bill was dead. Our game of ‘Army’ had turned into the real thing. Where was all the fun and glory now? A 19-year-old life was snuffed out. My closest friend gave everything in this game of war. He was just another pawn on the military chess board.

On May 28<sup>th</sup> the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division met up with the 25<sup>th</sup>. The capture of Santa Fe was complete. The Villa Verde Trail was open to the Cagayan Valley and so was Highway 5. On 2 September 1945, General Tomoyuki Yamashita, highest Japanese commander in the Philippines, surrendered to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division on Luzon.

“After the war, General Gill was asked if the price paid by the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division for that goat path in the clouds had been too high. Gill answered: ‘The Villa Verde Trail cost us too high in battle casualties for the value received. In other words ... I believe the supreme commander [MacArthur] and ... his staff violated one of the great principles of shopping. ...’ Gill clarified that statement by explaining that MacArthur had paid too much for what he got. The 32<sup>nd</sup> had gained too little for the men it had lost.” [Derks.]

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On April 4<sup>th</sup>, a month and a day before Bill was killed in action, I wrote my first and only letter to him overseas. Little did I know that he was just over the next ridge to the west and that our two divisions were working together in a pincer movement to cut off the Japanese Army in the Caraballo Mountains. I didn't know his address but I was sure he had probably gone through the same "replacement" camp on Leyte that I had. I knew the Army Post Office (APO) number for that camp so I addressed the letter there. I knew it would be forwarded until it eventually caught up with him. It never did.

Philippine Islands.  
April 4, 1945

Dear Butties,

We all here are, both in the same place. I wonder what outfit you're in now and if you're in combat yet. I imagine you are.

I'm in the 25th Division and my address is on the envelope. I'm still in the Artillery and I'm up at the Front now giving old Tojo a headache with our little 105.

I was at APO-703 about a month ago and then I was at APO-70. I wonder if we could possibly be in the same Division. That would really be swell wouldn't it?

I hope we'll be able to get together somewhere sometime. That would really be nice. When were you at APO-703? I wonder if we could have been there at the same time.

Well Bill, be sure to write soon and let me know all the news.

Your Old Buddy  
Bob.



I don't remember now whether someone sent me news of Bill's death or if I found out when my letter was returned. At any rate, it was a great shock when the letter, marked "DECEASED" on the envelope came back to me. It was hard for me to adjust to this very bad and very sad news.

## MEMORIAL DAY 2005

In the last few years there has been a spate of building War Memorials in communities throughout the nation. If I am not mistaken, there is a gentle urge from the Pentagon to erect such edifices. True, they do list all the dead and honor them, and glorify the fact that they died for their country. Anyone who has watched a soldier die knows there is no glory in such carnage. The real purpose of such memorials is as the name implies – a memorial to war. The real glorification they elicit is for the military. Their purpose is to invoke "patriotism" as an unquestioning eagerness to get out and fight for the American ideal, however that may be perceived. As long as this mentality persists, youth will continue to be sacrificed – our children will continue to be conceived, birthed, and raised for cannon fodder.

On Memorial Day 2005 I wrote these words:

Today I have been besieged by the most curious compulsion. All morning I felt I wanted to visit Bill Bottero's grave at Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno. I couldn't explain it. I thought it would pass. It didn't.

After we finished eating lunch I told Janet that I would like to visit Bill's grave. So we went. Since it was Memorial Day there were flags on each of the thousands



and thousands of graves. I had been to Bill's grave once before and I had a map. We found it right away with little trouble.

Janet and I just sat on the grass by Bill's grave for a while. Bill was only 3½ months past his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday when his life was snuffed out by a sniper's bullet. So now he is hailed as a hero on this Memorial Day. Great! I think Bill would have much rather lived a longer life.

As Janet and I sat there we glanced at other tombstones around us. Boys in their youth killed in World War II and Vietnam. There were even some from World War I, but they survived and died later. Then as we gazed out over the cemetery, all we could see was a landscape of white tombstones, and small American flags, spread out for acres and acres. All of this was a testament to war – a display of military pride where nothing is more paramount than death. We continue to hail it as glory, and give our utmost for our country.

Something is happening within me lately. I feel a compulsion to relive the days I spent in war. In 1945 I was in combat with the feelings and motivation that I was doing what I should do. Today I feel differently about war and maybe I have to relive those experiences in my present frame of mind. I am just starting to compile, and relive, my war journal. I am trying to write down every experience and feeling I had, and I had many.

I do very much want to be proud of my country again. I have dedicated my life to doing whatever is possible to make my country the true American dream.



The Glory and Gratification of War – The Profession of Death  
Golden Gate International Cemetery 22 July 2005

## LAMENTS FROM THE PACIFIC

Servicemen overseas during World War II were subject to loneliness and depression. That is true in other cases, too, but my experience was in World War II. One outlet for this loneliness is to write, and often they would write poetry. This chapter is a collection of poems which I collected while on a tour of duty in the Pacific.

I will start with a poem written by an infantryman in the 25<sup>th</sup> Division. The legend behind it, as it was told to me, is that after an area on New Georgia, of the Solomon Islands, had been secured by the 25<sup>th</sup> Division, a landing craft full of Marines came up onto the beach. The ramp dropped and cameramen hopped out to set up their equipment. Then the Marines came out as if taking a beachhead while the camera's rolled. One soldier on machine gun guard is reported to almost have sprayed them with bullets, just to make them jump. This was apparently only one of several instances where Army soldiers fought for certain objectives and the Marines got the credit. According to the tale I heard, the 25<sup>th</sup> came to dislike the Marines so much that they were never put together in combat again. And, at least for World War II, they never were. Here is the poem:

## THE MARINES HAVE DONE IT AGAIN

The latest news from the South Pacific,  
The latest rumor in the air,  
Is that the 25<sup>th</sup> Division  
May be somewhere over there  
It may be in the Solomons,  
Somewhere up New Georgia way,  
Where the Navy Air Force and Marines  
Are known to hold full sway  
When you hear that the Marines have landed  
In hostile foreign lands.  
The Army never leaves them stranded,  
Or the situation in their hands.  
We tag along to insure ourselves  
That their efforts are not in vain,  
So that the world may hear the news,  
The Marines have done it again  
The Navy gives us transportation  
To mountains bare and bleak.  
The Marines provide a toehold.  
We only scale the peak.  
We have heard a thousand stories  
Of battles lost and won.  
But no mention of the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry,  
35<sup>th</sup>, or 161.  
The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division  
Has passed the acid test,  
Through mud and rain and tangled jungle,  
To prove themselves the best.  
Jungle fighters without peers,  
They are real, and not a myth.  
Yet they may fade from history,  
With the censored 25<sup>th</sup>.  
Teamed with the 25<sup>th</sup> Artillery,  
That registered on the Japs,  
Who know the 25<sup>th</sup> is out there,  
When the shells are falling in their laps.  
The 64<sup>th</sup>, the 90<sup>th</sup>, the 89<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>,  
Have fought and won out not to fame,  
For no one called the shots they made,  
And yet they made them just the same.  
The battered, muddy jungle trails,  
That strain the lower gears,  
Speak plainly of the labor,  
Of the 65<sup>th</sup> Engineers.  
We have mopped up through the jungle,  
Until the last small Jap was slain,  
And the net results show on the scoreboard,

The Marines have done it again.  
The latest South Pacific victory,  
Was won by quick decisions,  
The Marines have captured New Georgia,  
With three Army divisions.  
What price all this fame and glory?  
That's not the thing we're fighting for.  
Let others win the headlines.  
We're here to win the war.  
But when you hear the Marines have landed,  
Captured something anywhere,  
You'll know the 25<sup>th</sup>, or some Army Division,  
Must be somewhere over there.  
We have spent months out in the jungle,  
Months of mud and heat and rain.  
While we were out there you may rest assured,  
The Marines have done it again.  
(Written by a Doughboy of the  
27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the  
25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.)

Yes, there is bitterness. Servicemen often felt acrimonious over there. Another poem given to me, probably written by someone in the Army or Navy Air Corps, expresses much resentment against the corporations who profit from war. Prior to World War II, the Japanese were buying shiploads of scrap metal from the US to build up their war machine. Even if we claim we didn't foresee the eventual war with them, we could see the atrocities the Japanese Army was committing in China and Korea, and know we were contributing to that. Apparently other corporations were selling supplies to Japan. This is the very bitter poem:

THE VAGARIES OF FATE  
I've been waiting a long time, my Darling,  
Till we'd meet in the valley someday,  
But heaven will see our next meeting,  
I've been shot down in Manila Bay.  
The Shikis roared out of the darkness,  
With Delaware powder in each shell,  
May God up in heaven take vengeance,  
And burn all the DuPonts in hell.  
There are sky blue planes in the heavens,  
Pratt & Whitney engines in each one,  
And Hamilton props do the driving,  
For the ball that means the Rising Sun  
The high test fuel in their gas tanks,  
Was drilled in a Golden State well,  
Let's pause and set down one more black mark,  
For Standard, Union, and Shell  
The shrapnel picked out of my comrades,



Was junk from Seattle shipped to sea,  
I wonder if the men who made the money,  
Knew what their scrap iron would be.  
Years ago on the far western prairies,  
When the Indians weren't shooting for fun,  
Our soldiers, with muskets and sabers,  
Faced Winchester's best repeating guns.  
Let's hope that someday we'll take warning,  
Not sell out to our foes o'er the foam,  
And a soldier shot down in battle,  
Won't feel like the lead came from home.

Yes, there was a lot of rancor in that one. And, unfortunately, we have not taken warning. Or maybe we have taken warning and just don't care. Profiteering from war has reached new heights today.

Amid the hostility there sometimes rose a sprig of hope for the future. Some desire and expectation that World War II would set some kind of example of what we want to avoid, and truly bring a peace sponsored by people who have learned the lesson. I don't know who wrote this one but it begs for mass insight and understanding for the future.

#### UNKNOWN SOLDIER

The morning after the surrender,  
We were trooping o'er the hill.  
The sound of tramping, tired feet,  
Broke the unaccustomed still.  
The weary eyes of men that morn,  
Saw a scene not soon forgot,  
Of broken guns, broken men,  
Whose bodies were left to rot.  
I saw the corpse of a youngster,  
Just a kid too young to die.  
One blackened, stiffened arm was raised,  
And pointing to the sky.  
Where are you pointing soldier?  
What message would you give?  
What are you trying to tell us,  
The ones left here to live.  
Do you point to the place called home,  
That lies beyond the sea,  
The land that meant so much to you,  
Which you never again will see?  
Or do you point to where you have gone,  
To that distant golden shore,  
Where men can live like brothers,  
Where there isn't any war?  
Or are you trying to tell us,

As o'er the hill we plod,  
To raise our minds from killing,  
And turn our thoughts to God?  
Well, we must march on and leave you now,  
Just a pile of flesh and bones.  
You may be better off than we;  
Our fate is still unknown.  
In twenty years when a maddened world,  
Is ready to fight again,  
We will remember that upraised, pointing arm.  
Perhaps, we'll hear your message then.

Yes, when doughboys express their feelings amid the violence they experience, they use earthy, bold words. They speak from the gut, and tell it like they feel it. There is no room for protocol or diplomacy in the cesspool of wartime emotions. There is no concern about the politically, socially, or ethnically correct. Sometimes a whiff of self-pity simmers to the top when they feel they are given all the dirty work and their efforts are not appreciated. That is the case of another poem, again anonymous, written in the Philippines.

#### THE PHILIPPINES

Down where there are no Ten Commandments,  
And a man can raise a thirst,  
Lies the outcast of civilization,  
Victims of life at its worst.  
Down on the gin-soaked islands,  
Are the men that God forgot;  
They battle the ever-present fever,  
The itch and tropical rot.  
Nobody knows they are living,  
Nobody gives a damn;  
Back home they are soon forgotten,  
They, soldiers of Uncle Sam.  
Living with dirty old natives,  
Down in the sweltering zone;  
Down by the Far East powers,  
Thousands of miles from home.  
Drenched with sweat in the evening,  
We sit on our bunks and dream;  
Killing ourselves with liquor,  
It dams our memories' dreams.  
Into Manila on payday,  
To squander our meager pay;  
We raise merry hell for an evening,  
And are broke as usual next day.  
Vermin at night on our pillows,  
Ills no doctor can cure;  
Hell No! We're not convicts!  
Just US soldiers on foreign tour.

There are also the cynical moments. In the feudal class system of officers and enlisted men, frustration frequently surfaces over the disparity of privileges the GIs have and those enjoyed by the officers, to say nothing about having to take orders from, salute, and generally grovel before the officers. This poem fantasizes about how things might be after the war.

#### THE RECONVERSION

When bugles sound their final note,  
And bombs explode no more,  
And we return to what we did,  
Before we went to war,  
The sudden shift of status,  
On the ladder of success,  
Will make some worthy gentlemen,  
Feel like an awful mess.  
Just think of some poor Captain,  
Minus his silver bars,  
Standing up behind some counter,  
Selling peanuts and cigars;  
And think of all the Majors,  
With their oak leaves far behind,  
And the uniform they're wearing,  
Is the Western Union kind.  
Shed a tear for some poor Colonel,  
If he doesn't feel himself,  
Jerking sodas isn't easy,  
When your eagle's on the shelf.  
'Tis a bitter pill to swallow,  
'Tis a matter for despair;  
Being messengers and clerks again's  
A mighty cross to bear.  
So, be kind to working people,  
That you meet where'er you go,  
For the guy who's washing dishes,  
May have been your old C.O.

Another familiar mood for the fellow overseas is loneliness – for a wife at home or a girlfriend. Day dreaming of that far-away love is a frequent event. Here is another poem by some unknown day dreamer:

#### LOVELY YOU

Remember when we said goodbye?  
You tried so bravely not to cry.  
There seemed so much we had to say,  
Before the train took me away.

Few words were spoken before our kiss.  
Your eyes were covered with a mist.  
Your tender lips were soft and warm,  
As I held you there in my arms.  
And as I kissed your fragrant hair,  
Your body trembled with despair.  
Through all these years you've been so sweet,  
A better wife I'll never meet.  
A love as strong as ours, my Dear,  
Will be steadfast through all the year.  
As soon the sound of war will cease,  
And all the world will be at peace.  
My life I'll dedicate anew,  
Just being nice to lovely you.

Another type of poem is generated from homesickness, or hope, or maybe just to express appreciation for the loved one left behind. It is something like a love song. Or maybe it was composed by the loved one at home, I don't know.

#### LOVING A SOLDIER

Loving a soldier is not all play,  
In fact, there's none of it gay.  
It's mostly having, but not to hold.  
It's being young, and feeling old.  
Loving a soldier is all milk – no cream.  
It's being in love with a misty dream.  
It's getting a Valentine from a southern camp,  
And sending a letter with an upside down stamp.  
It's hoping for leaves you know won't come.  
It's wondering if he'll ever get home,  
And when he does come, it's laughter together,  
Unconscious of people, of time, and of weather.  
It's hearing him whisper his love for you,  
And your answering that you love him too.  
And leaving a soldier goodbye at a train,  
And wondering if you'll ever see him again,  
And reluctantly, painfully letting him go,  
When inside you're craving for wanting him so.  
Then you watch the mail for word that he's well,  
And through a long, dragged out, no letter spell.  
And your feet are planted in sand, not sod,  
And your source of strength comes only from God.  
Loving a soldier is undefined fear,  
And crying until there are no more tears.  
And hating the world and yourself and the war,  
And stamping and kicking till you can't fight anymore.  
And then giving up and kneeling and praying,  
And really meaning the prayer you are saying.

And when mail comes, you babble with joy,  
 And you act like a baby with a shiny new toy.  
 And now you know he's an ocean away,  
 And you'll keep loving him more every day.  
 You're proud of the job he's helping get done.  
 You won't care anymore if loving is such fun,  
 And you grit your teeth and muster a grin,  
 You've got a job and you'd better help win.  
 And then comes your birthday, you're a year older today,  
 But you feel just the same as you did yesterday.  
 You're not. You're changed. You're wiser, more strong,  
 You can weather this war if its 20 years long.  
 You'll work and you'll sweat every hour of the day.  
 Your job will be hard, but you'll sure earn the pay.  
 You're tired and you're weary, but you're doing your share.  
 You're helping a soldier to win over there.  
 So, loving a soldier is bitterness, tears.  
 It's loneliness, sadness, unidentified fears.  
 It's nothing to take for a darned lot of giving.  
 No, loving a soldier is really not fun,  
 But it's sure worth the price when the battle is won.

Those are all the poems I collected and saved for over six decades. I did write a couple myself.  
 One I wrote just for the heck of it. Back home with my younger brother and three cousins I used  
 to play a make-believe game with them. It consisted of a family of monkeys. The youngest was  
 always getting into trouble and we called him Oskar. He had an older brother who tried to keep  
 him on the straight and narrow path. This is the poem I wrote.

### MONKEY BUSINESS

His name was Oskar, he was a monkey,  
 And quite a jolly little fellow.  
 He loves to chatter and play all day,  
 And was really full of the devil.  
 He'd eat bananas and coconuts,  
 And was quite fond of pork chops too.  
 But one thing he just couldn't stand  
 Was pickled monkey stew.  
  
 He had a brother called Cheapy.  
 Now don't ask me why they called him that.  
 But that's his name and it won't be changed,  
 So it's settled – that is that.  
  
 Oskar's mater and pater loved him too.  
 They were full of satisfaction.  
 But with all their love, there were the times,  
 That required disciplinary action.  
 Then he'd romp and rage with incessant vigor,

Because his bottom was quite sore.  
 And to his big brother Cheapy, he'd go,  
 And to him, his troubles he'd pour.  
 Now Cheapy was understanding and kind,  
 And hated to see Oskar mistreated.  
 But he'd admit in his own mind,  
 There were times when Oskar needed beaten.  
 Oskar's girlfriend's name was Mimi.  
 She was quite a gal to know.  
 Her face was pretty, her figure fine,  
 As monkey figures go.  
 One day Oskar went on a spree, you see,  
 Which ended just like that.  
 He came in bawling loud and strong.  
 And his tail was in a trap.  
 The result was very sad indeed,  
 For his tail was badly bent.  
 Now Oskar was a naughty boy.  
 Now Oskar will repent.  
 The doctor came in the nick of time,  
 And bandaged it nice and tight.  
 He put it in a sling, you see,  
 And left it there all night.  
 The doc prescribed some medicine,  
 Some stuff that was hard to take.  
 But Oskar took it anyway,  
 And got a tummy ache.  
 Now let this be a lesson to you.  
 Monkey business is very bad.  
 And if you do like Oskar did,  
 The result will be just as sad.  
 (– Bob Aldridge  
 Written on Luzon, Just for the hell of it.  
 April 1945)

There was one other poem I wrote while I was with the 25<sup>th</sup> Division. In the gun position we occupied during May 1945, I could sit outside the gun pit and look back down the valley. I used to enjoy doing this every evening, as a huge thunderhead cloud invariably formed at the valley's mouth. I believe those were the occasions that inspired this poem.



### EVENING

In the morning we arise  
To meet the coming day.  
Wondering what's in store,  
We're feeling pretty gay.  
All through the morning hours  
When the sun is shining bright.  
All through the afternoon  
We carry on the fight.  
But along towards evening time,  
When the sun sinks very low,  
There's not a single thing to do.  
There's no place to go.

The moon is rising slowly,  
Above the tree crowned hill.  
The stars are twinkling brightly,  
And the night is very still.  
My thoughts drift toward home.  
A place so far away.  
I dream and plan for the future,  
When I'm back there to stay.  
I have so many things,  
To be looking forward to.  
There'll be millions of places to go,  
And so very much to do.  
I think of all those things,  
The whole evening long.  
Then I hum a little tune,  
And whistle a little song.  
Until for the night I must retire,  
And pay my nightly call,  
To a lovely place called dreamland.  
So goodnight my friends to all.

(– Bob Aldridge  
Written on Luzon, Philippine Islands.  
May 1945.)

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## **PART 4**

### **Resuming Life:**

#### **San Luis Obispo and Watsonville**

## Chapter 18 – Readjusting

After the discharge ceremony at Camp Beale, Skip, Sonny, my folks and I hopped into old Betsy, our 1936 Ford sedan, for the long ride back to Watsonville. My mind was in turmoil. Jacquie had been adamant about not coming to Camp Beal to meet me. I had pleaded with her by phone for several days prior but to no avail. I couldn't understand why she wouldn't – or maybe I could but couldn't face reality. I had seen many comrades overseas get "Dear John" letters – one who had been married 14 years – but I was not yet ready to accept that it could happen to me. And I wouldn't fully accept it for another four months. In hindsight, I am glad she did it that way because had she told me while I was overseas it is hard telling what foolish things I might have done.

I can't remember any of the conversation on the drive back to Watsonville. I did ask Pap to let me drive a ways as I hadn't driven a civilian car for a long time. I wasn't used to an enclosed vehicle where one couldn't hear the tire noise and the motor rpm to judge speed, and I took one corner at the foot of Hecker Pass much too fast. It is fortunate that we didn't roll over. I would have to do some readjusting to civilian driving.

I had arranged with Jacquie to stop by her place on the way home and it was after dark when we arrived. She greeted me cordially but I sensed a difference from when we said goodbye so passionately at Fort Ord. I couldn't stay long as the family was waiting in the car, so I made the visit short.

I don't remember what happened the rest of that night. I did see Jacquie the next day and I remember her and me going to Seacliff Beach with Dan Leddy and Frances Lamont. Steve and others may have been there also. While we were basking on the beach I asked Jacquie if things were different between us. She said yes. I don't remember our conversation after that. It seems to me that we did go on another date or two but then she just wanted to call it off.

I was pretty depressed and I don't think I discussed it with anyone at the time except maybe Dan and Steve. Jacquie and I had been engaged for three years. We were very close and made many plans together for after the war when we could look to a future again. We thought we would like to have two children, ideally first a boy and then a girl. We would name them Jerry and Cheri. Jerry was the name of my brother who died as an infant and I liked the name. Cheri was just a name we both liked and probably chose it also because it rhymed with Jerry. I would have liked to use my brother's name for one of my sons but didn't because I felt I would be recycling it. Janet's and my first two children were a boy and girl in that order and we named them after my dad and Janet's mother.

Jacquie and I had also drawn plans for our dream home which we would build once the war was out of the way. Actually we made several sets of plans because it was fun dreaming. I kept myself faithful to Jacquie all the time I was in the army. We had agreed that we would remain virgins until our wedding night and I wasn't about to spoil that plan while overseas. We did some serious loving but never went "all the way." I respected Jacquie because she observed our pledge most scrupulously and it was often she that stopped things before they went too far. Such

restraint may sound unreal to a generation where high school kids are expected to hop in bed after two or three dates. But in my youth the morals were higher and the willpower stronger, at least for me they were.

Then the war was over and our dreams seemed close to realization. I was euphoric about returning to the states and getting discharged from the military because all obstacles to our future had dissolved. Then I got dumped!

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The week following my discharge Mom and Pap planned a week-long vacation at Clear Lake. Skip and Sonny also came along. We took the trailer to haul the canoe. At Clear Lake we rented a small bungalow at one of the resorts. I had a good time but wasn't in the best of spirits. Although it was far from being 100% successful, I did appreciate Mom and Pap's effort to cheer me up and get my mind off of Jacquie.

It was an interesting week. We used the canoe a lot in the lake and one day rented an outboard motor boat. Mom packed a lunch and we motored to an island far down the lake from where we were staying. On the island we beached the boat and had a picnic lunch. When we were ready to return we found the motor had flooded and we couldn't get it started. Luckily we had oars with us but, unluckily, we had to row all the way back. When we told the man who rented us the boat he did some simple thing and the motor started right up. We felt a little foolish but got lots of rowing exercise.

There was also a nice beach where we swam a lot and loafed in the sun. The water was pretty warm as I recall and the beach was sandy. I got a nice suntan. It may sound funny that someone just returned from the Pacific would not be tanned. The Atabrine we took turned our skin yellow and that pigmentation apparently resisted tanning. For the two weeks returning on the *Sea Barb* I tried but couldn't get a decent tan. It must have been the hot and dry climate of Clear Lake that sparked my tanning mechanism.

That is all I can remember of our week at Clear Lake. After we returned to Watsonville I met Dan Leddy one night. His girlfriend, Frances Lamont, had a summer job working in the office at Bud Antle's lettuce company. He said they were staying late that night to do some office cleaning so we went there and helped wash venetian blinds. The regular office receptionist was a brunette whose hurt finger had become infected so she couldn't get her hands wet. I didn't pay much attention to her as I was still pining for Jacquie. Afterwards the four of us went to Babcock's (I think it was) for a soda or ice cream. Her name was Janet Balvin. Her brother, Bill, was the office manager at Bud Antle's and Janet had come from South Dakota earlier in the year to take the job as receptionist. She finished high school at Watsonville Hi, Class of '46.

Only a couple days after returning from Clear Lake the five of us (Mom, Pap, Skip, Sonny and I) hiked up to Three Peaks Lookout to visit Chuck. We stayed one or two nights. I had previously been to Three Peaks when I worked for the Forest Service. At that time we went up on horseback and from the east side. This time we hiked up from Salmon Creek which is about ten miles south of Big Sur on the coast. It was a good hike from sea level to 3,275-foot level of the lookout. But it was a beautiful hike and along a trail which was new to me. We took our dog, Rip, but he took off after the first deer he caught a whiff of. Rip was a good hunting dog but only for one deer. For some reason he could never find his way back to us. We knew he would

be waiting by the car when we returned, and he was. Then he just about threw a fit because he was so happy to see us.

It was a nice outing and Chuck was real happy that we visited him. It was the first time I had seen Chuck in almost two years and it was good to talk with him again and in an environment we had shared together. I believe much of Mom and Pap's purpose behind these trips to Clear Lake and Three Peaks was to help take my mind off Jacquie. It probably helped a little but the outings were geared for fun, also.

I believe Dan and Frances arranged a few more double dates and I probably took Janet out on my own a few times but I didn't have any serious feelings for her. Dan had taken up flying and sometimes he would take us up in turns in a two-seater Luscombe airplane. Somewhere in the meantime Frances had broken off with Dan.

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Dan had a 1933 Ford V-8 coupe which he had overhauled and souped up somewhat. It had the lower half of the engine hood removed to display the engine. There were no front fenders and special smaller headlights were mounted on a crossbar forward of the radiator grill. He had



"Inky" when I first got her. 1946



"Inky" with fenders on. 1947

rebuilt the engine and bored it out .070" to make a real hot rod out of the car. Anyway, Dan needed money and I needed a car so I bought it from him. It seems we were always buying each other's cars. Later I replaced the fenders, original headlights, and lower half of the engine hood. Then I painted it with a substance I just rubbed on. It looked like ink so I dubbed the car "Inky."

While I was overseas Dan had completed his first year at Cal Poly studying aeronautics and had obtained his private pilot's license. When I returned home he started bugging me to learn to fly. I'll tell that story in another chapter. Dan was also twisting my arm to enroll in Cal Poly. I said I might look into it next quarter but that I had some adjusting to do before I took on anything new at right now. Nevertheless, he was relentless in his persistence.

Towards the end of August or early September Dan had to go to San Luis Obispo to complete the registration for his second year at Cal Poly. He had no transportation so I drove him down. It was planned to be a one-day trip.

At the college Dan got his paperwork complete and his dormitory room secured. We were finishing up with a representative from the Aeronautics Department when Dan, as persistent as ever, asked him if there were any openings left. There were. Then Dan proceeded to put me on the spot by telling the Aero Department rep that I would be a very good candidate. During the discussion that ensued I finally agreed that if I could find lodging I would enroll. That was about 3:30 pm and enrollment closed at 5.

The dorms were all full so I would have to find off-campus lodging. Dan said if we could find a room he would cancel his dorm reservation and room with me. As we left the tower building (that's the one with the clock and was the most prominent at the time) Dan saw a friend riding up the street on his bicycle. We asked if he had heard of any rooms to rent. He said a friend of his named Lou Guidetti, who worked at a clothing store in town (I forgot the name) had been talking about renting out an extra room. We rushed down there and Lou agreed to sign us on as renters. He lived in a little shack behind his parent's house on the other side of town near the airport. It had two small bedrooms and a longer room that served as a kitchen and dining area. We would have use of the kitchen and the dining area would be ours for studying and storing our books. Lou was a very nice person and later became a good friend. We were sometimes invited to special occasions in the main house with his parents.

Immediately after talking with Lou, and before we had a chance to look at the room, we rushed back to campus and I squeezed in as an aero student candidate during the last hour of enrollment. That is how I got into Cal Poly on the spur of the moment and by the skin of my teeth. I would later take care of the necessary paperwork to attend under the G.I. Bill of Rights. (I actually attended under another bill, Public Law 16, which provided better benefits for disabled veterans.)

But that wasn't the end. In high school I had not planned for a college education so didn't bother with some required courses. I knew from the time I graduated from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade that I wanted to be an aeronautical draftsman but had no aspiration toward an engineer – I just didn't think I would ever make it in college. I did take courses in high school that would help toward my draftsman – four years of math and another four of mechanical drawing – but I took no college prep courses and no language. Now, to get into Cal Poly there were some entrance examinations I had to pass. Our one-day trip to San Luis Obispo turned into three. The two critical exams were math and English – if I didn't pass them I'd have to take "bonehead" courses before qualifying for college level. I was very thankful for the College Algebra and English courses I took on Leyte under the US Armed Forces Institute (USAFI). I didn't get credit for them but they prepped me enough to pass the entrance exams.

I started studies at Cal Poly in the autumn of 1946. Cal Poly originated as a reform school for boys. When I started it was still called California Polytechnic School. While I was there the name was changed to California Polytechnic College. Much later it became known as California Polytechnic University. Also, it eventually became co-educational but while I attended it was for boys only. The Aero Department under which I studied has now been discontinued and aeronautical engineering falls under the Mechanical Engineering Department. Aeronautics is now all design engineering, no more maintenance and operations engineering.

Frances Lamont was attending college in Los Angeles. With her was another Watsonville girl, Elma McElroy who had been Bud Daugherty's girlfriend during high school years. Dan contacted Frances about a double date and it was set up for one weekend. We left in Inky immediately after classes on Friday afternoon. We were pretty carefree and decided we could



stand up to three traffic tickets so we could pull out the stops on making time. Somewhere along the way flashing red lights and siren came up behind us – fast. I had been driving pretty speedily so I was ready for the first ticket. As I pulled over the highway patrol car shot right past us. We breathed a sigh of relief. He was responding to another emergency.

We took Frances and Elma to see Ken Murray's Blackouts of 1946 at the El Capitan Theater on Vine Street in Hollywood. Marie Wilson was his co-star. It was a very popular Vaudeville Burlesque at the time. All of us had to squeeze into my Ford coupe. At the Blackouts we got a private box – one of those bubble-like balconies that protrude from the side walls of theaters. During one act Ken Murray actually came into our box to direct the show so there was a spotlight on us for quite a while. After that act we got into a conversation with him and mentioned something about Marie Wilson. He made a big show of calling her to our box to meet us. She did, still clad in her risqué stage costume.

After the show we went to a restaurant near Hollywood and Vine for refreshments. As we were sitting in our booth Wallace Beery walked in and plumped down in a booth next to us. We didn't have a chance to talk with him but he seemed just the same as in the movies. With all this unexpected exposure to celebrities we were able to impress the girls favorably on our evening out. I enjoyed the double date but things just weren't right. Three of our old foursome were there but I still missed Jacquie. Elma was a nice girl but it wasn't the same.



Some time during my first quarter at Cal Poly I established correspondence with Peggy Ross again – the girl I knew from Big Sur in 1942 & 43. She was attending Mills College in Oakland, California. I suggested taking her out for a date and asked if she could get a friend to go with Dan. She did, and it was for a Friday evening as I recall. Dan and I left Cal Poly after classes and drove directly to the Aromas quarry where Pap still worked as bookkeeper. There we switched cars and took Betsy, the Ford sedan because it had more room. We picked up Peggy and her friend and drove over to San Francisco – I believe we went to a dinner-dance somewhere. I do remember stopping at a restaurant for desert afterwards and being introduced to burgundy wine over ice cream. It was pretty late when we returned the girls to Mills College and even later by the time we got home. After a week of late studying at school and then a Friday night date I was very tired. At the top of Hecker Pass I had to pull over and let Dan drive. I slept the rest of the way home.

Dan and I occasionally bowled at the local alley. We weren't good but we had fun. One evening after bowling we went to a little hamburger joint across the street for a snack. It was small and everyone ate at the counter. This "Hamburger Haven," as it was called, was owned by a kindly woman who had one waitress named Evelyn Silva.. We did the usual amount of flirting but Dan seemed to take a more serious interest. We started going there every time we finished bowling

and soon we were eating almost all our evening meals there. We could get healthy chow at the school cafeteria but we were soon on a hamburger diet so Dan could see more of Evelyn.

Dan and I got the idea that it would be nice, just for old time's sake, to take Frances and Jacquie out dancing on a double date while everyone was home during Christmas vacation. I called Jacquie and he called Frances. We both got an affirmative answer. But when Frances and Jacquie compared notes they somehow got the story garbled. Jacquie called back and accused us of working one against the other to get a date. We had no intentions of doing that and it seemed so childish to make that accusation. It made me angry. I just told her to forget about the date and I would never ask again. Later she wrote me a letter thanking me for her "freedom," as if I had a choice. The melodrama of that letter infuriated me further. After that I was again a wolf on the loose. I was fed up with women and decided I would never take another one seriously.

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Our old buddy, Steve Duer, had just been discharged from the navy. He also served in the Pacific and took part in the first 1946 atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll, code named "Operation Crossroads." Steve decided to attend Cal Poly starting in the second quarter of that school year (January 1947), but because he had been an electrician's mate in the navy he chose electronic engineering as a major. A question on the enrollment applications asked for religious preference. Steve thought that was unnecessary for them to know so he wrote "Buddhist" in the blank. Later that year a school publication giving statistics on the boys enrolled listed so many hundred each of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews – plus one Buddhist.

The three of us wanted to room together but Lou Guidetti's place was too small. Cal Poly now had overflow rooming at Camp San Luis Obispo on the road to Morro Bay, so we got a room there. It was a very spacious room that had previously been officers' quarters in a military style barracks, and it had its own bathroom. The only problem was putting up with military rules which Steve and I abhorred. I won't go into that but we managed to cope without getting kicked out.

Our new quarters were closer to school and we all rode together in my car. Things proceeded well for the three of us. We were still on an unbalanced diet, eating at the "Hamburger Haven" almost every night. Evelyn fixed me up with a blind date with her cousin for one of the school dances. I took Evelyn to a show once just to aggravate Dan. Steve, Dan and I often went bar-hopping when we didn't have anything else to do, or when we got tired of studying. A couple times we went to a dance in Pismo Beach at the entrance to the pier. Dan couldn't hold his booze too well so Steve and I usually brought him home to bed and then went out by ourselves. One time the two of us tried to have a drink in every bar in town but we didn't make it. I shudder to think of how we used to drink and drive in those days. We were just plain lucky but, fortunately, we never even had a close call. It was ironic that when I was in uniform I could walk into any bar unquestioned. But after being discharged, at the age of 20 that was no longer possible. It was the same with Steve. But somehow we always managed to cajole the bartender into serving us.

At one time a navy recruiter came to Cal Poly. There were a lot of veterans studying under the GI Bill and he tried to talk them into joining the naval reserves. Steve and I thought it would be nice to spend a summer cruise together so we decided to join. In preparing the papers, however, the recruiter found out I had a service-connected hearing disability. He said he was sorry but I wouldn't qualify. I couldn't understand why because the disability didn't cause me to be

discharged from the army. I went to a doctor in San Luis Obispo to see if my hearing was bad enough to keep me from joining if I dropped the disability. After testing me he shook his head and said the disability rating should be higher. (It was raised twice at a later date) So I gave up on the navy and Steve wouldn't join without me.

The finale of the year came with the Aero Club initiation at Oceano Beach one evening. It was an annual ritual to initiate all freshmen into the Aero Club. The faculty also attended including Mr. Martinson who was at that time the Department Head. Each of us freshmen had to make a "whacker" for use as a paddle when we went "through the mill" on the beach. Don Jillie, another close classmate, smuggled a fifth of bourbon in the inside pocket of his B-12 jacket. We invited Steve to come with us. Dan was already a member so he didn't have to go through the initiation rite but Steve and I did. Nobody asked about Steve and so he became the only electronics major in the history of Cal Poly to be initiated into the Aero Club.

Meanwhile we were all sipping from the fifth Don kept hidden in his jacket. But true to form, Dan couldn't hold his liquor. He started blabbing and we couldn't keep him quiet. As we sat around a huge bonfire he started ridiculing, jokingly of course, the various faculty members. All took it in good stride until he came to bald-headed and strait-laced Mr. Martinson. I almost sank into the sand when he yelled out something like: "Hey Martinson, do you use a wash cloth to comb your hair in the morning?" Martinson later came up to me and suggested that Dan was being a little disruptive. I asked if we should take him home and he nodded assent. So Steve and I led him away, one on each side to keep him upright. We put him to bed and then the two of us went out to hit a few more bars.

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During one of the dates I had with Janet while in Watsonville she told me in late 1946 that she was going back to South Dakota. I thought she meant for good. One night, shortly after we got settled in the army camp in early 1947, I started thinking about her. I had enjoyed dating her and she was a good friend. I had no serious feeling about her but thought it would be nice to write her a letter to say hello and wish her a happy 1947. I sent the letter to the South Dakota address she had given me. A week or so later she replied, telling me she only went back home for Christmas and that she was now back in Watsonville. We started occasionally dating again on weekends when I was in Watsonville. I often think how the outcome of my whole life hung on that spurious impulse to write a note to a girl I thought I'd never see again. Had I not done so I truly would never have seen her again.

On one of our dates I told her about Jacquie and how we had once been engaged. I can't recall all the details clearly but I was pretty bitter. I did tell her something to the effect that I thought all women were fickle. I remember her response very clearly: "This woman is different." That simple four-word statement has stuck in my memory all these decades although I greeted it with cynicism at the time. I was determined that if I ever again got serious with a woman she would have to be a virgin, and I didn't think I'd be too lucky running across one.

My cynicism was shattered on another date when Janet and I went to a dance at Coconut Grove on the Boardwalk in Santa Cruz. It was getting late and as we danced we were making plans for the next day, Sunday. We were deciding on when I would pick her up and she said she'd go to 6 o'clock Mass so we could get an early start. I was dumfounded. She wouldn't get home until the wee hours of the morning and then she was going to get up before six so she wouldn't miss church. That seemed unheard of to a college student who cherished the Sunday sleep-in. As we

continued dancing I realized this girl in my arms was very special – a precious jewel who puts God before personal comfort or pleasure. I think I fell in love with her at that moment.

I think it was on our next date that we ended up parking near the sand dunes on a back road that connected Palm Beach with Sunset Beach. We must have been talking about her being a Catholic and me a protestant. I realized I was really in love with her. After much struggling with my inner turmoil I asked Janet if it were possible we could get married. I thought there may be an impediment because of our different regions. With my hearing problem I thought she might have refused. I was reluctant to ask her to repeat her answer but I did, and it was a passionate yes. Something inside me felt like enjoying life again.

I looked at rings in several jewelry stores in San Luis Obispo and finally found a decent one that I could afford. I bought it sometime in late April or very early May and saved it until Janet came down for the annual Poly Royal.



Janet and me at Poly Royal on May 3, 1947  
Inky and Betsy behind

Mom & Pap and Skip & Sonny came down for the Poly Royal on May 2-3, 1947 – a Friday and Saturday. Janet rode down with them. My family stayed in a motel and went home on Saturday, the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Janet had a room in a downtown hotel and stayed over to Sunday, the 4<sup>th</sup>. On Saturday night I took her out to dinner at the F&M Lounge. It was a sort of night club Steve, Dan and I sometimes went to and where I first tasted a B&B (Benedictine and brandy). It is no longer there but it was in this place on May 3, 1947 that

Janet and I became formally engaged – when I gave her the ring. We dined and danced and talked for hours and it was very late when I returned her to the hotel. But even with only a couple hours sleep she got up for early Mass at the mission, which was only a couple blocks away.

The plan for Sunday was that Dan and Evelyn (they were going steady by now) would meet Janet and me at Arroyo Seco for a picnic and swim. After the picnic I took Janet home to Watsonville while Dan and Evelyn returned to San Luis Obispo. It was very late on Sunday when I started south again. There was no freeway in those days and it was a good three-hour drive. The moon was shining brightly and south of King City the road followed the railroad tracks. The moon reflected of the tracks and the reflection followed along as I drove. I remember thinking that all I have to do is follow the moonbeam back to SLO.

There was still one obstacle to overcome. I was 21 years of age but Janet was only 18 and needed her parents' consent. Janet either wrote or telephoned her mother who said she'd talk to Janet's dad. I was nervous about the answer. But I was euphoric when her mother phoned back that after a lot of talk and contemplation her dad finally said: "Oh hell, tell her to go ahead." So now the coast was clear and we really could "go ahead."

Many times as we parked on the beach or some other romantic spot Janet explained various aspects of the Catholic faith to me. I had attended a mass in Manila once with Bob MacGarva, and was scared stiff at the time, and that was the only exposure I had had to Catholicism. Janet's explanations were a revelation to me. She taught me many beautiful prayers which I had not heard as a protestant. Somewhere along the line I decided that I would join her in her Faith.

I later wrote to Janet's parents, who I had not yet met, to thank them for their permission. I told them I loved Janet very much and would take good care of her. I also mentioned that I intended to become a Catholic after we were married.

Janet and I did a lot of planning from then on and set the wedding date for August 17<sup>th</sup>. We made several trips to San Jose to obtain our wedding attire and dresses for the bridal party. I worked the summer for Steve's dad, Burt Duer, roughnecking on his well drilling rig to save up for our honeymoon and start married life. Also during the summer I fixed up Inky for our trip to Lake Tahoe where we would spend our honeymoon. Besides re-installing the fenders, headlights and lower hood, I did some reupholstering inside and painted the exterior.

We wanted a wedding ring for each of us that would match Janet's engagement ring so the two of us drove to San Luis Obispo during the summer. At the jewelry store where I bought the engagement ring we found wedding rings to match. On the way home we stopped at San Miguel Mission where we bought our family bible.

I wanted to elope and bypass the big church wedding our parents were planning for us but I couldn't talk Janet into it. She had to be married in the Church or be excommunicated. I had a hard time reconciling to that. In addition, before she could marry a non-Catholic I had to take instructions and sign a promise that our children would be raised in the Church. Father Cummins, the priest who was going to marry us, turned out to be a nice fellow and the instructions weren't as bad as I anticipated, especially since I had already told Janet that I would become a Catholic later. I would still rather have eloped, however.

My bachelor party was the night before our marriage, after rehearsal at St. Patrick's Catholic Church. It was held at our Green Valley ranch. Steve was to be best man. Bob Quincy and Bud Daugherty were to be ushers (now called groom's men). Dan would have been an usher also but he had a cousin getting married the same day so he had to run back and forth between two weddings, but he attended my bachelor's party. I don't remember if there was anyone else. All in all the party wasn't remarkable and I think I was too nervous to appreciate it. Steve enjoyed joking about me going to South America with him to escape.

To fill in the rest of the bridal party, Pauling Budman (now Buchanan) was the maid of honor. Frances Lamont and Mary Scurich were bridesmaids.

The bachelor party was on August 16, 1947. I was discharged from the military on August 16, 1946 – one year earlier to the day. The date of my first post-army year coincided with my last year as a bachelor. I had a lot of readjusting to do in that time.

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## Chapter 19 – Flying

Before continuing with the narrative of my life I want to backtrack. For a while flying was a very important part of me. I will devote this chapter entirely to that adventure.

My good friend Dan Leddy had been interested in airplanes since he was a small boy. He started Cal Poly while I was in the army and had completed his first year when I was discharged. While at Cal Poly he periodically drove the 30 miles over Cuesta Grade to Paso Robles to take flying lessons. He had earned his private license by the time I was discharged. So it was only natural that he tried to interest me in flying.

One day, shortly after I returned home from the army, Dan and I decided to go to Arroyo Seco for a swim. I was anxious to see the place again. It was only a 1½-hour drive from Watsonville but we wouldn't be driving this time. Dan suggested flying. There weren't any planes available to rent in Watsonville so we drove to Hollister. There we rented a side-by-side Aeronca and took off for Arroyo Seco. On the flat above and behind Fred's Camp was a short, dirt runway. The approach was to fly up the valley from Soledad and then, at Fred's Camp, turn up the side canyon to Bat's Cave. We flew around Bat Mountain over the land Skip now owns, then over the upper and lower lakes. We had to judge our altitude because we couldn't see the runway until we came around over Big Rock Pool. Then we set the plane down on the dirt strip and moored it under the oak trees. From there we hiked down the hill to Fred's and jumped into the pool.

We enjoyed a nice swim and some basking in the sun. At that time Chuck was on Three Peaks Lookout way to the south of Hunter Liggett Military Reservation. It would be fun to buzz him, so we left the pool and went back up to the Aeronca. After we took off we had to circle several times in the wide valley to gain altitude because the canyon up toward Kings Hole and beyond rose faster than the airplane could climb, and it became too narrow to turn around in. So after gaining enough altitude we followed the road to the Indians. The military reservation was a no-fly zone so we skirted its edge over the Santa Lucia Mountains.

When we reached Three Peaks we buzzed the lookout and got Chuck out on the catwalk. He didn't have any trouble figuring out who it was. We flew around a bit and did some aerobatics. The air was pretty rough over the mountains and the plane bounced around a lot. The fuel gauge was a float in the gasoline tank with a rod sticking up through the cowling right in front of the windshield. As gas was used the float got lower and so did the portion of rod that was visible. We thought we had plenty of gas but on one bump the rod sank almost to the bottom. It had stuck and the bump jarred it loose. We immediately turned the plane toward King City which was the closest place to refuel. We again skirted around the military no-fly zone but I think we did cut a few corners.

At King City the wind was very strong. We had to use full throttle on the final approach because in a normal glide the plane actually moved backwards relative to the ground. But alas, they were out of gas at King City airport. The attendant told us of a small airstrip a little north (probably by Soledad or Gonzales). We took off again. As we climbed I looked down and we were



staying over the same spot while ascending. Anyway, we made it to the other field and bought enough gas to get back to Hollister.

That was an exciting day. We later made other flights to Arroyo Seco for a swim, sometimes having to buzz the airstrip to shoo animals out of the way, but that first experience remains indelibly fixed in my memory. I was more determined than ever to learn to fly. I needed an outlet for my reckless desperation, frustration and bitterness. It looked like flying would fill the bill. Mom tried her best to talk me out of it but I was determined. A pilot I would be.

Dan's urging me to fly coincided with the time I got dumped by Jacquie. I was in a pretty desperate frame of mind and taking to the air sounded like a good way to work out my emotions. Dan introduced me to Joe Reite and Bill Bonnema who operated the Jay-Bee Flying Service (Jay for Joe and Bee for Bill). Their logo was a blue jay and a honey bee, and they owned three light airplanes – an older Luscombe 8B, a newer Luscombe 8A, and an Aeronca Chief -- all with two-passenger side-by-side seating and 65-horsepower engines (a Lycoming in the older Luscombe 8B and Continental engines in the newer Luscombe 8A and Aeronca). The Luscombes were

controlled by a joystick and the Aeronca had a wheel.

Joe and Bill met while in the Army Air Corps. They became good buddies and decide to be partners in a flying service. Bill was a robust, outgoing person but very considerate. Joe was quieter and just as considerate. Joe must have suffered from PTSD because, as I learned later, he had suicidal tendencies. Many years later he did, indeed, take his own life.

These were my flying instructors. The first thing I learned was the pre-flight inspection. Check the fuel – in the Luscombes the fuel



The Planes in which I learned to Fly – Aeronca in foreground

tank was high in the fuselage right behind the cabin seats. It had a visible float-operated gauge like the old Model-A Fords. It was in the rear cabin wall behind the pilot and in the air I had to turn my head around to see how much fuel I had. The Luscombe's fuel was gravity fed to the carburetor. In the pre-flight inspection the fuel gauge had to show at least quarter full or the acceleration during takeoff would prevent fuel from reaching the carburetor. Engine failure during takeoff is the worst that can happen.

The rest of the pre-flight routine was check the oil and a visible under-hood check of wiring for fraying or loose connections, fuel lines for condition and leaks, and any other anomalies such as oil seeping or foreign objects. After buckling the cowling down tight again around the engine we walked around the plane to perform a visual inspection. Then we would pull the chock blocks from the wheels and were ready to go. The chock blocks are U-shaped and designed to fit in front of and behind the wheels.

Next we learned how to start the engine. The light planes I flew didn't have batteries or starters or generators. For ignition they had dual magnetos that worked together – two spark plugs for each cylinder. Starting the engine meant cranking it. This was done by “propping” it – turning the propeller – but that can be dangerous so rigid safety procedures must be followed. Someone other than the pilot had to do the propping. He would call “switch off.” The pilot after making dead certain the ignition switch is in the off position then calls back “switch off.” The one propping then turns the propeller over a few times to get some oil on the interior parts and to prime the carburetor. Then, after positioning the propeller in the proper position for a quick pull, the one propping calls “switch on.” The then pilot turns on the ignition switch and returns the call. Now everything is hot and ready to go, The one propping then hooks the four fingers of both hands over the top of the propeller blade well out toward the tip while at the same time raising one knee to almost waist height. He then pulls down hard on the propeller while swinging his leg and knee down and back so the momentum will carry him backwards away from the spinning propeller. During lessons the instructor “propped” the engine and then hopped in the empty seat. But the student sometimes had to do the cranking to learn how. The planes had dual control so the instructor could do everything from the right-hand seat that the student pilot could do from the left.

Next we taxied out to the end of the runway. Usually we held the stick back so the prop wash blowing on the tail elevator controls would hold the tail down. (These planes did not have tricycle landing gear. They had two main wheels and a smaller tail wheel.) The exception to holding the stick back was if there was a strong tail wind. In those conditions the stick was pushed forward to lower the elevator control so a wind blowing from behind would press the tail down.

At the end of the taxiway and just before pulling out onto the runway we had to stop for a magneto check. The engine had warmed up sufficiently by that time to run normally. We held both wheel brakes hard and kept the stick back. Then, with the plane securely pinned down, we opened the throttle to run the engine up to something like 1500 RPM. While holding it there we turned the magneto switch from “both” to “left.” If the engine didn't drop more than 50 RPM the left magneto was functioning well. After switching back to “both” we performed the same test for the right magneto. If either dropped more than 50 RPM we had to abort the flight.

According to my Pilot Log Book I first took off on September 1, 1946 with Bill Bonnema for my first flying lesson. We used the older Luscombe 8B whose Lycoming engine cruised at a higher 2350 RPM, thus causing more torque requiring more right rudder during takeoff. (The planes with Continental engines cruised at 2150 RPM) I believe Bill and Joe started students off in this aircraft to give them a better feel of the controls. The first lesson consisted of effectiveness of the controls, straight-and-level flight, and moderate turns. Lessons came in 30-minute bites.

Four days later I was in the air again with Joe in the instructor's seat to practice medium turns, straight climbs and straight glides. Two days after that Joe was teaching me climbing turns, gliding turns, and stalls. The lessons were getting more exciting. On another day Bill was drilling me on S-turns and figure-8s. He picked a stretch of road past the old Watsonville airport which was a navy blimp base during the war. I flew the figure-8s over that road and every time I crossed the road in alternate directions my wings were supposed to be parallel to the road. Sometimes my timing wasn't quite right and I could see I was going to cross the road at an angle, so I'd keep one of the rudder pedals depressed slightly to keep the wings at an angle – like

slipping the aircraft. Then when I got over the road I'd straighten the plane so that the wings were parallel. My instructors never caught on to the trick I was playing.

I learned how to get the airplane back on the ground under both normal and emergency conditions. Forced landing are an ever-present possibility for a pilot. The planes I was flying could not be restarted in the air if the engine quits. I had to practice "dead stick" (controlling the plane without power) landings. At any time the instructor might take control of the throttle and reduce the engine to idle. He'd say: "You just had an engine failure. What are you going to do?" I'd scan the ground below to pick out the area within gliding distance that would be the best place to set the plane down, taking into consideration the wind direction and nature of the terrain below. Then I'd glide to that spot and make a landing approach. When down to perhaps 50-100 feet altitude the instructor would give the throttle back to me and I'd pull out and start climbing. Then I'd get either a complement or constructive advice.

Landing the plane under normal conditions also took more skills in a "tail dragger" – that is, an airplane with a tail wheel. Today virtually all aircraft have tricycle landing gears with the third wheel in the nose instead of the tail. Flying a tricycle landing gear vs. a tail dragger is comparable to driving an automatic transmission vs. a manual gearbox. When landing with tricycle gear, at the moment of touchdown the pilot can move the stick or wheel forward to bring the nose wheel down to the runway and the plane will stick. Then if the pilot has to slow up before reaching the end of the runway, or to turn onto a taxiway, he simply applies the brakes to all wheels.

Once the tail dragger is firmly on the runway, reducing speed is more awkward and slower than with a tricycle gear. The pilot can't use heavy braking on both main wheels at the same time or the plane will nose over. Each main wheel has its own braking system and there are two brake pedals in the cockpit, immediately below the rudder pedals and operated by the pilot's heels. The braking is on one wheel at a time so the deceleration force makes the plane veer to the side rather than nosing over. By braking one wheel and then the other alternately the plane wobbles back and forth across the runway but does slow down.

Setting the plane down on the runway is also different with a tail dragger. I practiced takeoffs and landings consistently – from the approach pattern to the actual touchdown and deceleration. If I was coming in too high I learned to side slip the plane to reduce altitude faster. If there was a cross wind I learned to dip the windward wing to prevent the plane from drifting sideways. So far what I have described is the same for all planes whether their third wheel is in the nose or the tail. But at the point of touchdown everything changes. With a tail dragger the trick is to flare out of the glide at a speed just above stalling until the two main wheels touch the runway. Then the stick (or wheel) is slowly pulled back to bring the tail wheel down as the plane slows while rolling along the runway, but not too fast. If the stick is pulled back too sharply the plane will start climbing. Then the throttle must be opened to keep the plane airborne and the touchdown procedure repeated – repeated, that is, if there is enough remaining runway and if the plane hasn't already stalled out and pancaked on the asphalt. If there isn't enough runway to set the plane down again the landing must be aborted and the pilot needs to open throttle and fly around the landing pattern again for another approach.

It is tricky to know just how high you are above the runway when touching down. The pilot looks straight ahead to keep the plane lined up and centered on the runway. Looking out the corner of the eye can give some indication of altitude if a good sense of perception has been

developed. I discovered another trick that helped if conditions were right. If I were landing in the late afternoon at Watsonville the sun would be low and to the west. The prevailing wind dictated that most of our landings were in a southward direction. Out of the corner of my eye I could see the shadow of the airplane. When the shadow of the wheels reached a point directly beneath me I knew the wheels were almost touching and I could begin the flare out. I could really “grease” the plane onto the runway, as the expression went. My instructors were amazed at some of the smooth landings I made.

My main limitation on how much I flew was cost of the lessons. By the end of September I had racked up 4½ hours of dual flight. An hour of that time was in the newer Luscombe. By late October I had managed another 2½ hours of dual instruction. I got into steep 270-degree turns where the plane is held in a very steep bank for two complete revolutions, slow flying just above stalling speed, spins, recovering from a stall, and spin recovery; all of which were progressively more exciting. On October 22<sup>nd</sup> I was practicing takeoffs and landings with Bill Bonnema when he told me to stop on the runway. He opened the door and got out, saying “you’re on your own.” His last word of advice was to watch the landings as the plane won’t stick to the runway as well without his weight.

I was extremely excited as I opened the throttle and accelerated down the runway. I could feel the acceleration and exultation as I eased the stick forward to lift the tail. When flying speed was reached I eased back on the stick and could feel the plane almost leap into the air. What a thrill! My first solo! I was flying an airplane all by myself. I was in the air and not another soul was in the airplane with me. I truly was on my own. That exhilaration returned every time I lifted a plane off the runway solo.

On this first solo I would just do touch-and-go landings for 20 minutes to finish off a half-hour of flight time. So, after lifting off I climbed to 400 feet and flew around the landing pattern to make another approach. Everything seemed to be going well until the wheels touched the runway. The plane, being lighter, bounced back into the air. I added throttle to get straightened out and tried to set it down again. This time I bounced even higher. I still had enough runway ahead so I tried once again and bounced higher still. I had to abort the landing. I gave the engine full throttle and climbed back to 400 feet. This time while flying around the pattern I was not so cocky. After all, I did have to get this flying machine back on the ground. I kept reviewing in my mind what I might be doing wrong. I decided to just hold the plane a few feet above the runway until it slowed almost to a stall and then let it mush in. That worked. I don’t remember clearly but I think I made a few more touch-and-go landings before finally settling the plane down and taxiing to the hangar. I received congratulations from spectators but also a lot of kidding about my first solo landing attempt – bouncing higher each time. Nevertheless, I had racked up my first 20 minutes of solo flight.

Bill Bonnema met me as I climbed out of the plane. He asked me for a dollar bill. I dug one out of my wallet as he explained a custom that, whenever a pilot landed from a solo flight, any other pilots present can ask for his “short snorter.” Failure to produce it meant paying \$1 to all pilots present. I was a little bewildered as Bill signed the dollar bill and handed it back to me. That, he said, is my “short snorter.” When a pilot produces it if asked, the custom then is for all the pilots present to sign it. So, eventually, the “short snorter” becomes a sort of autograph book.

The next time I flew Bill went with me for a final checkout. He explained that since I was now more experienced I could start landing the Luscombes at 60 mph instead of 70. Speed in the air

is a safety net. If a pilot hits a downdraft or the wind ceases abruptly when close to the ground, the airspeed will drop and the plane might stall. So having an extra 10 mph can be a lifesaver. However, now that I could land at 60 mph I found the plane set down easier when I was solo. Anyway, Bill gave me a last 25 minutes of final dual instruction. From then on I could just hop in the plane, taxi to the runway, and be off. I didn't need any more checkout unless I was to fly a different type or make of aircraft. Then it was usually just around the flight pattern once to make sure I could handle it. However, I still only had a student's license and could not carry passengers unless it was another licensed pilot.

I continued to rack up solo hours flying locally at Watsonville and occasionally I'd rent a Piper J3 to get in a little solo time at San Luis Obispo while I was attending Cal Poly. The Piper also had a 65 horsepower Continental engine but the seating was tandem. In a way I liked that better because I could then control the joystick with my right hand, but all in all I thought the Luscombes were snappier airplanes. At the cruising engine RPM the Luscombes traveled about 90 mph air speed. The Piper, as I recall, was something less than that.

I had to also have a few hours of cross-country flying to qualify for my Private Pilot's License. First I would be checked out on cross-country with an instructor. Then I had to do one solo. We didn't have radios in the planes so all the flying I did was called "contact flying," which meant having visible contact with the ground, or ocean, at all times. That was the official name. It was more commonly called "flying by the seat of your pants." I never used a radio in an airplane, I never flew by instruments, and I never filed a flight plan. Things are much different today.

Two days before Christmas in 1946 I took off for my first cross-country flight. This was a dual flight and Joe was my instructor. It had to be a three point route of so many miles (I don't remember how many). Joe laid out the route on an air map. First I'd fly to Half Moon Bay, then to San Jose, and finally back to Watsonville. Before the flight we'd check the barometric pressure and set our altimeter accordingly. The altimeter works like a barometer but it has to be calibrated with the actual barometric reading in order to show the correct altitude. En route, I had to check actual landmarks on the ground with what shows on the air map. At each destination I had to coordinate the airport's elevation above sea level with my altimeter readings in order to interpolate the proper altitude at various points in the approach pattern, and so on for each of the three points on the route. The math was simple but it had to be accurate.

A few days after my dual cross-country I told Joe I'd like to check out in the Aeronca Chief as I'd never flown an aircraft with wheel control. So he took me up for a half-hour of dual. While we were flying at altitude I saw a buzzard ahead and heading straight toward us. I kept on course calculating a near miss. It was quite thrilling to see the bird coming at me and then passing under my wing just a few feet away. I don't know what Joe had been doing but he looked up just in time to see the buzzard pass under our wing. Did he come alive, or did he come alive?! He asked what the hell I was doing – wasn't I watching where I was flying? – didn't I see that buzzard heading right at us? I tried to explain that it was a calculated miss but he didn't give me a chance. He kept right on chewing me out: "Don't ever – repeat, EVER – pull a stunt like that again. " Well, he was pretty upset but he did let me continue with a half-hour of solo after I had been checked out.

At another time while at San Luis Obispo I checked out in a Aeronca Champion. As far as flying is concerned it was like the Chief I flew in Watsonville. It only took me five minutes to check

out in it – one quick trip around the airport flight pattern. Then I flew over Cuesta Pass to Paso Robles and back. I don't recall the reason for the trip but I logged a little more solo time.

I continued flying as I could afford it to release my emotions and rack up solo hours toward my Private Pilot's License. Once time when Dan Leddy and I were at the Watsonville Airport and wanted a cup of coffee but there was no restaurant at the airport. So we hopped in a Luscombe and flew to San Jose for a cuppa. Another time the shop needed a part for another airplane so we flew to San Jose to get it. They didn't have it so we flew to a small airport at Palo Alto but no luck there. Finally we hopped on to the Hayward airport and found what we were looking for.

When returning from one of the flights to San Jose we ran into fog in the pass of Highway-17. We were able to barely squeeze under it at the summit and then stay just under it and above the ground as we went down the pass on the Santa Cruz side. Had we been enclosed in the fog we would be completely blind and with no orientation of which way is up. That had been the fate of many pilots – some of whom we had known. Anyway, we managed to stay under it and not hit anything on the ground. We made an immediate bee-line for the ocean where we could follow the beach and land if necessary. At about La Selva Beach we turned inland to the Watsonville Airport. We were lucky that time.

One of the other rental services at Watsonville had a war-surplus primary trainer. It was a Fairchild PT-19 with an in-line 175 horsepower Ranger engine. It was low-winged, open cockpit, and tandem seating for two people. Although I did not pilot this one I went up in it once with Dan. (I did later check out in a PT-19 at San Luis Obispo.) I was interested in flying in the PT-19 because I'd never flown in an open cockpit and, more important, the PT-19 was capable on inverted flight. The smaller planes could not sustain inverted flight because the fuel was gravity fed and once the engine quit it meant a dead-stick landing. The PT-19, as I recall, had a fuel pump and even if the engine did quit the propeller would "windmill" and crank the engine.



Fairchild PT-19

So Dan and I took off and climbed to 4,000 feet for some aerobatics. It was a thrill to be in an open cockpit and feel the slipstream. We had no intercom so communication was with gestures. We did a few maneuvers and then Dan flipped the PT on its back. I let my head raise to look up (actually down) and could see the ground 4,000 feet below. It was thrilling to realize there was nothing between me and it, with only the seat belt to hold me in. Then there was a terrible falling sensation. The seat slipped and felt like it was sliding out of the airplane. Then it came to

an abrupt halt. The seat-height adjustment had not been securely engaged. Of course there was a safety stop to prevent the seat from coming completely loose but I had no time to think about that. The sudden falling sensation and then the abrupt stop scared the pie out of me. I could laugh about it later but at the time it was no laughing matter.

In the meantime, Dan and two of his friends who ran the shop at Watsonville Airport bought a war-surplus basic trainer. Designated BT-13 Valiant and manufactured by Consolidated Vultee, it was powered by a nine-cylinder radial, 450 horsepower, Pratt & Whitney Wasp Jr. engine. It cruised at 135 mph with a maximum speed of 180 mph and maximum allowable diving speed of



230 mph. Dubbed the Vultee Vibrator because of the tremendous vibration induced at slow speeds approaching stalling, it was like a streamlined brick if the engine failed. A placard on the instrument panel warned that intentional spinning was forbidden because of the difficulty of pulling out of a spin – the controls were so touchy that after pulling out of one spin it would go into another in the opposite direction, and so on until there was no more altitude left. Stalls were also frowned upon because of the ease with which they could go into a spin. An article in the July 2009 issue of *In Flight USA* says the Valiant taught every Army Air Force and Navy pilot during their basic training phase, and then reads on: “It is also overlooked in the history books that almost as many pilots were killed in training as in combat – and many in the BT-13 as this was the first time the students were exposed to intense military flight training.... The hectic training pace either moved you to the next stage of earning your wings, or washed you out – or killed you.” I used to fly with Dan in the BT a lot. The pilot had to sit in the front seat because when flaring out for a landing the forward visibility from the rear cockpit was zero. He would let me control the plane in the air, from the rear seat, but I couldn’t log any flight time until I had



This BT-13 is like the one we flew

actually soloed in it and done all the flying from takeoff to landing.

Besides having 450 horsepower instead of 65, the instruments and controls of the BT were more complex than the smaller planes. Instruments and controls are divided into two basic types: engine instruments/controls and flight instruments/controls. In the light planes the engine instruments were only a tachometer (to measure engine crankshaft

revolutions per minute, or RPM), oil temperature gage, oil pressure gage and of, course, a fuel gage. (Since aircraft engines are air-cooled, rather than water, oil temperature is used to monitor engine heat.) In small planes with a set-pitch wooden propeller the RPM was controlled by the throttle, which was monitored by a tachometer. The throttle was the only engine control except for a carburetor heater. Some carburetors tend to form ice inside during power-off glides, and sometimes in moist air. If the icing is allowed to continue it will plug up the carburetor and result in engine failure. The small planes I flew had no starter and the propeller would not “windmill” to crank the engine. Power failure of any sort resulted in a dead stick landing. A push-pull control (like the choke control on old automobiles) opened a baffle that allowed warm air from around the cylinders to heat the carburetor and melt the ice. It was not left on all the time because it reduced the engine RPM under normal conditions. Carburetor heat was always used during a glide. During level flight if the engine started losing RPM at a fixed throttle setting it was probably because of ice forming in the carburetor. If such a loss of RPM is experienced, and applying carburetor heat causes an increase in RPM, the cause is definitely ice.

(Under normal conditions applying carburetor heat will decrease RPM.) Carburetor heat must then be used until the ice had melted.

The BT was a little more complex. It had all the instruments mentioned above plus cylinder head temperature, manifold pressure, and probably a few others I don't remember. A fuel mixture control adjusted the fuel-air ratio reaching the cylinders. The proper mixture was determined by the cylinder head temperature. If the temperature got too high more fuel was added to provide a richer mixture (which had a cooling effect). Contrariwise, if the temperature was below normal the fuel is adjusted leaner. There was also a carburetor heater but the BT carburetor was not as touchy about icing.

The BT originally had a 2-position propeller – low pitch for takeoffs and landings and high pitch for cruising. Dan and his partners installed a governor on the propeller of their BT that gave it a variable pitch – it still had high and low pitch plus any position in between. Low pitch (like low gear in a car) was still used for takeoffs and landings or any maneuvers that would require immediate power. Higher pitches were used more for cruising. The throttle and propeller pitch control were coordinated to obtain the desired crankshaft RPM (1800 for the BT as compared to 2150-2350 for smaller engines) with the best pitch for maximum airspeed while not exceeding the allowable manifold pressure (drawing too much vacuum on the intake manifold could cause catastrophic engine failure).

Regarding flight instruments, in the small planes the basic flight instruments were an altimeter, an air speed indicator, a turn-and-bank indicator, and a compass. The turn-and-bank indicator indicated whether you were making a smooth banking turn (keeping the bubble centered) or slipping the turn which would move the bubble away from center. The BT had all those plus a rate-of-climb (or descent) indicator and instruments for blind flying. I never did any instrument flying although I always liked the gyro horizon as a supplement to the turn and bank indicator.

The basic flight controls for all the small planes I flew were the wheel or joystick (turning the wheel or moving the joystick side-to-side to operate ailerons on the wings and back-and-forward to operate the elevator on the horizontal stabilizer of the tail), rudder pedals (to operate the rudder on the vertical stabilizer of the tail), and of course brake pedals for taxiing on the ground. In addition to all of these the BT had adjustable trim tabs to hold the plane on a straight and level course. These were adjusted to compensate for various weather conditions so the pilot did not have to continuously hold pressure on the controls. Then, of course, there were wing flaps for taking off and landing. Flaps increased the “lift” of the wings, thus reducing the speed needed to stay airborne, by changing their surface area and/or curvature. On the BT they were operated manually by a crank along the lower left wall of the cockpit. As I recall, we used 15-degrees of flap for takeoff and 30-degrees or more for landing. I recall flying into the Hollister airport under full flap at one time to avoid power wires across the end of the runway. The plane was coming in so steep it felt like it was standing on its nose. I could look almost straight down at the runway through the front windshield. But the airspeed was so low when we flared out for touchdown that the plane used very little runway. It was like flying a kite. Of course that took place after I soloed the BT.

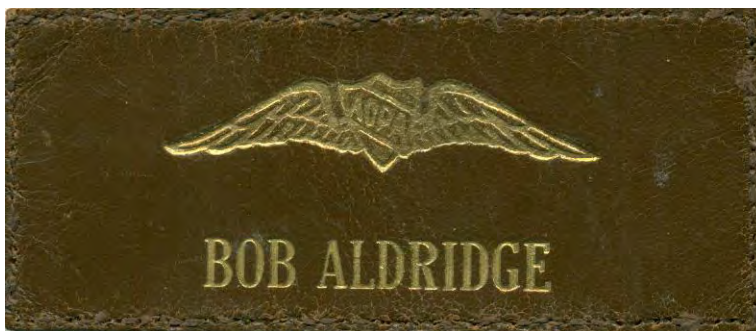
That actually happened on March 24, 1947. Dan was drilling me on takeoffs and landings with the BT. I sat in the front seat where I could see well for the approach but he wanted to do the actual touchdown. So he said that when the wheels were almost touching the runway I should drop my seat all the way (which meant I could barely see over the rim of the cockpit) so he could

see a little farther ahead from the back seat – talk about the flying blind. I guess I was doing OK on the approaches so Dan let me actually set it down. I did a couple more touch-and-go landings and then Dan said to pull out onto the taxiway. He got out and told me to take it around once by myself. I actually did it. What a feeling it was to take that 450 horsepower, 2-ton monster up in the air all by myself.

Dan told me later that as soon as he got out and I started taxiing toward the runway he was having serious misgivings. He said he went through torture watching me and really thought he had done a dumb thing. He had, but we were both lucky. At the time I had only racked up 15 hours of solo in a mosquito plane compared to the BT. I was still a Student Pilot and only half way toward qualifying for my Private License. Nevertheless, from that day on my logbook showed many hours in the BT that helped qualify me as a Private Pilot.

While going to school at Cal Poly, Dan and I usually always went home to Watsonville for the weekends. Sometimes we would fly back to San Luis instead of driving. The airport was an easy walk from where we lodged. That also meant we had to fly to school every morning because Cal Poly was clear across town from the airport. There was a dirt strip for the Aero students that was available for us. It usually worked out well but one day it had rained the night before. When we set down on the wet dirt the mud splattered all over. We stopped by the hangar and I got out. Dan told me to go on to class because he wanted to get the BT out of there. I said no, I would go with him. So I shoved my books back into the baggage compartment and hopped in. We started our takeoff run at full power and moved sluggishly down the runway. The suction of the mud didn't want to let us break loose and there were eucalyptus trees across each end of the runway. Dan applied more power and the manifold pressure zoomed up into the "red-lined" (danger, stay-out-of) area of the gauge. A dip in the runway allowed the wheels to break suction but we were still too low to miss the trees. With only feet above the ground Dan made a steep bank to the left, propeller whining in low pitch and the engine screaming. In a bank with the wings almost vertical I could see the lower wing tip miss power lines by inches. But we made it and got safely to the SLO Airport. Of course we had to hitch-hike back to school and missed a few classes but we felt very, very fortunate

It is beautiful flying down the Salinas Valley, especially at night when lights of all the towns I knew by heart shone brightly. At another time when we were flying south to SLO the weather was clear until we got to Cuesta Pass. Everything was socked in solid with fog south of the pass. We were above the fog and couldn't see a sign of the town below. We circled for a while and then gave up and backtracked to Paso Robles. After securing the BT at the Paso Robles Airport we took a bus to San Luis Obispo.



Leather AOPA Patch

The next day was beautiful – a great day for flying. Dan and I cut a class, got a ride to the SLO Airport, rented the Piper J-3, and flew to Paso Robles. I flew the Piper back and Dan flew the BT. Then we rushed back to Cal Poly before we missed more classes.

Lou Guidetti, the person we lived with in San Luis Obispo, worked in

a clothing store. Dan and I wanted a leather flying jacket so Lou gave us a good deal – genuine brown cowhide with a fur collar. We also joined the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association which was a sort of lobbying organization for aviation. We ordered a leather patch of their logo to sew on our new flying jackets. It was a little status symbol we enjoyed.

Formation flying is forbidden by federal regulations unless it is prearranged. In other words, you can't sneak up on another plane and fly in formation with it. One day Dan and I were flying over the beach between Watsonville and Santa Cruz when we spotted another BT. Dan recognized it as belonging to Chet Palmer who flew out of the Capitola Airport. We flew to the side of Chet, well out, until he turned and recognized us. Then he gave the signal to move in. So we did and tucked our wing behind his as we flew formation over the land and water of Monterey Bay. Chet and another pilot were later killed when his BT crashed shortly after takeoff from Capitola.

Dan and I made a bad pair to be flying together during the waning months of 1946. I had been dumped by Jacquie and Frances Lamont later dumped Dan. We were both pretty don't-give-a-damn reckless and we'd often take our frustration out in the air. We'd take the BT up and really wring it out. Dan was a natural pilot and he taught himself many aerobatics. The loop was one of the easiest. We'd put the BT in a power-off dive until the airspeed read 200 mph. Then we'd pull the stick back while feeding throttle to the engine as the plane climbed to the top of the loop. Then the throttle was cut while still holding the stick back and we'd go down and pull out for level flight at 200 mph. I use the plural "we" because I often followed the feel of maneuvers with my hands and feet on the controls.

The G-force was sensational. I felt pressed into the seat and my cheeks sagged. Once I tried to lift the intercom microphone to say something and had to tug to lift my arm. At that moment we leveled off and the G-forces suddenly dropped to normal as I was tugging to lift the intercom mike. My arm suddenly came up and the mike hit me on the mouth. At another time I slid open the canopy at 200 mph (a stupid thing to do at such a speed) and put my hand out to wave. My arm was immediately blown back and smashed against the open canopy.

We performed other maneuvers. The Immelmann turn is started like a loop but at the top the plane was rolled upright to be headed in the opposite direction. The slow roll is just what it says. While flying straight and level the plane is slowly rolled to the inverted position and then on around until it is upright again. The snap roll is much more dramatic – it is actually a snappy horizontal spin. A chandelle is a steep and sudden 180° climbing turn which in a powerful and maneuverable aircraft can put the aircraft in an almost inverted position before rolling out headed in the opposite direction. Dan flew all the aerobatics in the BT. I did loops, stalls, spins and moderate chandelles in the lighter planes but they were not made for the other maneuvers.

Of course we never put the BT into a spin because it was dangerously illegal and, if we survived, we could lose our flying license. Dan never made the BT stall, either, because of the danger of going into a spin. One day we were talking about that. I may have been goading him a little because he said: "You want to stall, huh? Well, OK, let's stall." We hopped into the BT, took off, and climbed several thousand feet. Then he said "hold on" as he cut the throttle and eased back on the stick. The nose lifted and the plane slowed. The slower it got the more it vibrated. The BT shook and shimmied all over as the wings clawed for air. Then, abruptly, we fell. Those 2 tons of airplane went straight down like a huge rock. The drop, on top of the vibrating, was more violent than any carnival ride I'd ever been on. Then my heart came up into my throat as I

saw one wing start to dip into a spin. Fortunately, there was enough airflow over the wing that Dan was able to pick it up again before things got out of control.

Later, when I wasn't with him, Dan did get into a spin. He tried to pull it out in the usual manner and went into a secondary spin in the other direction. As he later related it to me, he thought "alright, if I'm over-controlling I won't use the controls." Perhaps that awareness came too quickly for his brain to think and it was his sixth sense kicking in. Anyway, he was spinning to the right so he applied throttle. The plane gained some forward speed and the engine torque twisted the aircraft out of the spin. He pulled the BT out of a screaming dive and everything was OK. Later, Dan got into another spin over Pinto Lake and he didn't have much altitude. Luckily he was able to regain control in time.

At midnight of New Year's Eve in Watsonville it was custom for people to cruise up and down Main Street honking their horns. I used to love doing that with my parents when I was a kid. At midnight of 1946-47 Dan and I decided to add a new twist to the celebration. So we hopped into the BT and took to the air. The BT uses the low pitch of its propeller for takeoffs and landings when maximum power is desired, but it makes a terrific racket. Consequently, we tried to minimize the times we used low pitch so as not to disturb people on the ground. Also, federal regulations say you must not fly lower than 1,000 feet over a town or city. But, heck, it was New Years. We thought we could bend the regulations a little. So we flew down over the Elkhorn Slough area and turned back toward Watsonville, lining up with Main Street. We dropped to 500 feet and when we reached the lower end of Main Street we shifted into low pitch and buzzed the entire length of town out as far as Freedom. Then we made a U-turn and quickly landed at the airport before the plane could be identified. As usual after flying, we went to Landis's soda fountain in Freedom for a coke. (Landis is no longer there. The Green Valley Road extension goes through where it used to sit.) As we sat there sipping our drink we listened to conversations about the plane that almost crashed into them a few minutes ago. Other pilots knew who it was but others didn't have a clue.

Meanwhile, I was also flying the light planes racking up hours to qualify for my Private License – 10 hours of dual instruction and 30 hours of solo was required. Nana, my Grandmother, was living with us in our Green Valley home and I often flew over while she was outside. One time I saw her sitting in her wheel chair in the driveway so I decided to give her an air show. I did a loop and then went into a spin. But as I started the spin there was a loud thumping on the side of the fuselage that scared the devil out of me. I pulled out immediately and the thumping stopped. I then started a stall but as the plane started vibrating just above stalling speed that loud thumping came back. So I gave up on aerobatics and went back to the airport to practice touch-and-go landings. As I was approaching for one landing I saw the airport manager on the side of the runway flagging me down. I set the plane down and pulled over. He opened the passenger door, took a chock block off the wing strut and set it on the passenger seat beside me. He said: "Maybe you can fly better without this" and closed the door. I took off again and finished out my hour.

When Joe and Bill rolled the planes into the hangar at night they took the chock blocks from the wheels and hung them on the wing struts. In the morning when they rolled the planes out they placed the chock blocks back around the wheels. On this particular morning Bill had placed the chock block under the wheel on the pilot's side but then the phone rang and he ran to answer it. Meanwhile, I showed up and in my eagerness to fly I failed to do the walk-around inspection. The blame was with me because as the pilot it was my responsibility to make certain the plane

was airworthy. My loop must have been pretty good as the centripetal force kept the chock block on the strut. But in the stall and spin I was very lucky it didn't fall off and kill somebody. I learned a lesson that day – never take anything for granted as far as flying is concerned.

On another day Dan and I wanted to take some aerial pictures of Watsonville. So we talked Joe and Bill into taking the passenger door off one of the Luscombes. I would fly and Dan would take the pictures. (Bill said he'd never speak to Dan again if he fell out.) Our camera was not made for aerial photography. One had to look down into the finder to position the picture. That is hard to do bending over and pointing the camera down. Dan couldn't lean far enough over so he unfastened his safety belt to lean farther out. While trying to focus the camera the plane must have hit turbulence as he went off balance. Without realizing what was happening he nonchalantly grabbed the wing strut to push himself back in and went ahead taking the picture. It wasn't until we were back on the ground that realization hit us on how close Dan had come to falling. And to top it off, none of the pictures were any good.

On July 6, 1947 I spent 35 minutes in the air to make the 20-minute flight to Salinas for my Private Pilot test. I needed the extra time to complete the required 30 hours of solo. When I landed at the Salinas Airport I had logged the exact amount. I found the CAA (now FAA) inspector named Barber and he climbed into the plane with me, grumbling about how hard the Luscombes were to get into. The test took 40 minutes and he put me through the entire drill. First I had to spin the plane two complete revolutions. It always fascinated me looking out the front windshield to watch the earth turning beneath me. It felt as though I was flying straight and the world was turning – that's relativity.

I went through the stalls, steep turns, slow flying and all the other things I had learned. Then we came to the forced landing. He said he would operate the throttle to keep the carburetor cleared but I had to essentially make a dead-stick landing approach. I picked out a lettuce field. Lettuce and strawberry fields are OK but the landing has to be with the furrows, even if there is a crosswind (the ideal is to land into the wind as your ground speed is slower whereas in a crosswind you have to compensate for drift by dipping a wing into the wind). I was concentrating on the approach and really doing well. I was so focused on how I was going to set the plane down that I forgot this wasn't the real thing. The inspector said; "OK, that's good enough. Let's get out of here."

The final test was a spot landing. I had to set the wheels down on an exact spot. The inspector told me to touch down where the runways crossed. I made a good approach – good, that is, if I were setting down near the end of the runway. I saw that I was coming in too low so I tried to hold the plane in the air. We were skimming down the runway with the wheels only a few feet above the macadam and the controls were getting more mushy as we lost speed. Finally I reached the runway crossing and the plane literally stalled and pancaked the last couple feet to the surface. After touching down we only rolled a few feet. I thought sure I would get a black mark for stretching my glide, which is frowned upon in most cases. But he just said to get off the runway and I taxied back to the hangar. The inspector signed my Private License, offered congratulations as he handed it to me and got out of the airplane. I flew back to Watsonville in 20 minutes. I was really flying high.

After returning from Salinas with a Private Pilot License I only put in another 2 ¾ hours of flying. Janet and I were married the following month and I just didn't have enough spare cash to fly. Fifteen minutes of that time was to win a bet. Dan and Janet and I were at the airport talking



to Bill Bonnema one day and I happened to mention that the new Luscombe flew faster at cruising RPM than the old one. Bill didn't think that was true because the older one cruised at a higher RPM, and bet me a buck that it wasn't. He said we'd have a race. So I took the new plane and Janet went with me as an observer to guarantee I didn't exceed cruising RPM. Dan and someone else flew the older plane. We took off, and climbed a few hundred feet. Then I pulled into formation alongside Dan. But I saw I was overtaking him so I had to pull away and pass. We landed and Bill paid me a buck. I logged 15 minutes of flying time (free) and in the remarks column I wrote "Racing – Won a Buck."

After Janet and I were married I only put in one hour of flying. It was on Sunday, September 7, 1947, when we met Dan and Evelyn Silva (Dan's future wife) for the Airmen's Jamboree at Watsonville Airport. There were a lot of competitive events –most of them simple and fun things. I took part in the spot landing contest and the flour bombing. In the latter we flew low over a target area and dropped small paper bags of flour out the side window. They burst when they hit and made a white spot so we could see how close we came to the target. It reminded me of the time I was up forward with the infantry on Luzon and small planes were dropping supplies; which were supposed to land in a drop Area. But many went wild and hit in the bivouac area sending GIs scurrying for cover. I wondered if I could do better than those pilots. I couldn't.

Late in the afternoon I rented a Luscombe and took Skip and Sonny each for a short ride – then Mom Balvin, who had come out for our wedding and was still staying here with Bill. I could see she was a little nervous as I flew next to a cloud to get a better view of Monterey Bay, so I cut that trip short. Then I took Janet up and we did some aerobatics. I did some stalls and spins and that went well. Then I did a loop but didn't have quite enough speed and stalled out at the top. Janet says she didn't notice but I could feel myself fall down against the seat belt due to lack of centripetal force. I probably just wasn't used to doing loops with another person in the plane. Anyway, we made it around.

This was the first time I had flown an airplane since we were married. It was also the last time. My flying career lasted only one year and six days. That was probably good because at the rate I was going I likely would have become just another fatality in aviation history. Now I had a new life and, most of all, life again had meaning for me. I no longer needed an outlet for emotions and recklessness.

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Epilogue: In April 1952 Janet and I were driving east with Cres, Janie and baby Jim, for my first visit to South Dakota. We were traveling through Nevada on old US-40 somewhere between Reno and Winnemucca, when we had a blowout. I pulled to the side of the road to change the tire and then I saw something that astounded me. Across the road was a BT-13 standing on its nose. I inspected it further and discovered it was the same airplane I used to fly. Dan had told me they sold the BT and the fellow who bought it blew a cylinder. He had to make a forced landing somewhere in Nevada. Now I knew where in Nevada that occurred. It was quite a coincidence that our car blew a tire at the exact same spot on earth that the old BT blew a jug. (The cylinders of radial engines look something like a jug, and so the nickname.) Now we had both finished flying.

\* \* \* \* \*

Form ACA 348  
(Rev. 1-1-45)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
CIVIL AERONAUTICS ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON

AIRMAN CERTIFICATE NO. **666216**

This certifies that **ROBERT CRESTON ALDRIDGE** has been found to be  
properly qualified to exercise the privileges of **A PILOT**  
Address **ROUTE 1, BOX 188**

**WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA**

SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	WEIGHT	HEIGHT	HAIR	EYES
MALE	4-15-26	165	70"	LIGHT	BROWN

THIS CERTIFICATE is of such duration as is provided in currently effective Civil Air Regulations.

Date of Issuance **JULY 6, 1947**

By direction of the Administrator

*T. N. Barber*  
**T. N. BARBER**  
Civil Aeronautics Inspector

This certificate is not valid unless accompanied by a Medical Certificate evidencing compliance with the pertinent physical requirements, an appropriate Rating Record when required bearing the above number, and other evidence as required under the currently effective Civil Air Regulations. Any alteration of this certificate is punishable by a fine of not exceeding \$1,000 or imprisonment not exceeding three years, or both.

(Over)

Signature of Holder

*Robert C. Aldridge*

Form ACA 545  
(Rev. 1-1-41)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
CIVIL AERONAUTICS ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON

AIRMAN RATING RECORD NO. **666216**

This Rating Record is not valid unless accompanied by the appropriate certificate bearing the above number.

Name **ROBERT CRESTON ALDRIDGE**

Address **ROUTE 1, BOX 188**

**WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA**

**RATINGS WITH LIMITATIONS**

**PRIVATE PILOT - AIRPLANE SINGLE ENGINE LAND**

By direction of the Administrator:

*T. N. Barber*  
**T. N. BARBER**

(Civil Aeronautics Inspector)

**JULY 6, 1947**

(Date of Issuance)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE CIVIL AERONAUTICS ADMINISTRATION

## MEDICAL CERTIFICATE, STUDENT AND PRIVATE PILOT

THIS CERTIFIES that I personally examined

Robert Creston Aldridge

## STRUCTURAL PHYSICAL DEFECTS

List defects. If none, so state

(FIRST) (MIDDLE) (SURNAME)  
Address Rt 1 Box 188  
Watsonville Calif  
April 15 26 165 5'10" eyes Brown

Impaired vision none  
Impaired hearing slight  
Deformity none  
Limited motion none  
Muscular weakness none  
Amputation none  
Remarks:

(DATE OF BIRTH) (WEIGHT) (HEIGHT) (HAIR) (EYES) (X)  
and find him free from any disease that would be likely to cause sudden incapacity and, except as noted hereon, that he possesses no structural defect or limitation. I have forwarded the report of my findings to the Civil Aeronautics Administration.

Date Sept 28 1946

Place Watsonville

Signed Ellen Eulany

Degree MD State Board License No. A 0 13 10

Robert L. Aldridge

(SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT)

Any alteration of this certificate is punishable by a fine of not exceeding \$1,000, or imprisonment not exceeding 3 years, or both

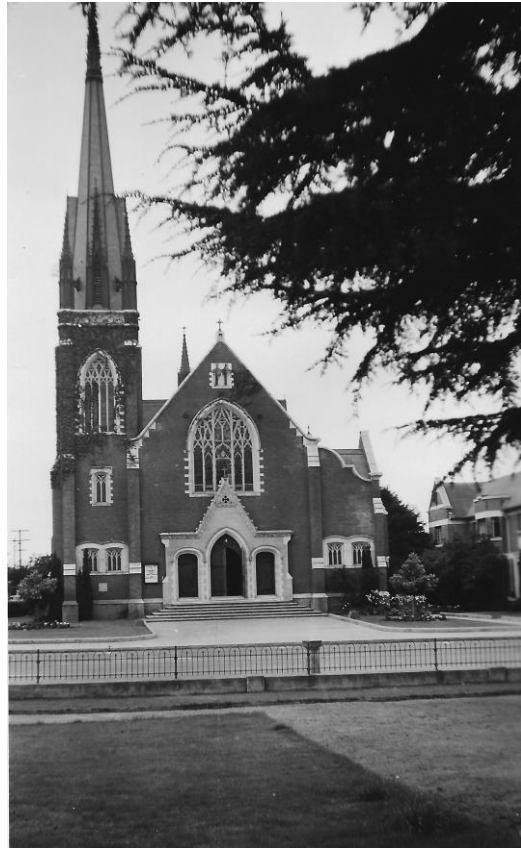
## Chapter 20 – Beginning Married Life

Steve, my best man, came out to our Green Valley ranch early on the morning of August 17<sup>th</sup> to help me prepare for the wedding. He was still jokingly urging me to escape to South America with him. After helping me into my new suit and showing me how to properly tie a modified Windsor knot in my necktie, he drove me to St. Patrick's Church for the ceremony.

Janet was gorgeous as she walked down the aisle. Her brother, Bill, filled in for her Dad in giving her to me. We knelt at the steps of the altar for a blessing (the bottoms of my shoes properly shined, as instructed, so they would look presentable), then made our wedding vows and placed the rings on each other's finger. After that I lifted the veil and gave Janet the first kiss of our married life. No pictures were allowed in the church so we hurried back up the aisle and down the steps to Bill's car which was waiting at the curb. We rode in the back seat and Steve drove us in a roundabout way, leading a caravan of cars, horns blaring, to the reception.

Our wedding reception was held at 15 Gonzales Street in Watsonville – up on "The Heights" as we used to call the location. It was the home of Everett and Doris Mollenhauer, old family friends. There was a lot of time taking pictures, cutting the wedding cake, and all the other usual formalities for the occasion. Finally it was time for us to make our exit. Janet started up the stairs, threw her bridal bouquet (I don't remember who caught it) and then went on up to change to her travelling clothes.

We had a plan to escape without a lot of people following us. Inky, with all our baggage in it, was parked heading out in the garage at Green Valley. Chuck's 1936 Ford was parked in Mollehauer's garage. We were able sneak down the back stairs to the garage and drive out through a back alley without being noticed. We then drove Chuck's Ford to the ranch where, after I checked to see that no cans were tied to the rear bumper, we got into Inky and drove off. Just to make sure we wouldn't run into someone who might have followed us we went up Wheelock Road and wound around to Casserly Road. From there we took Hecker Pass highway over Mt. Madonna and then north toward Oakland. (There was no Highway-17 at that time.)



St. Patrick's Church in Watsonville  
Where we were married





Mollenhauer House where our Reception was held

While driving north on US-101 everyone honked and waved as they passed us. We wondered what was going on because I had checked for “Just Married” signs and the like. When the honking and waving continued I decided to pull to the side of the road and check. There was an old leather moccasin dragging behind and tied by rope to the frame underneath the car. We learned later that it was Pap’s doings. He knew we’d check for cans and signs so he tried something more subtle. The moccasin and tether rope was

placed on the frame under the car where it wouldn’t show. But as the car jolted along the moccasin fell off and dragged behind. Being leather it was silent so didn’t attract our attention. His idea worked. I removed the moccasin and we saved it amid our wedding souvenirs.

I had reserved a room for us at Hotel Durant, just a block from Sather Gate at University of California in Berkeley. I tried to get one at the Claremont in Oakland but it was booked up. We arrived at the hotel about dusk. When we checked in the clerk looked somewhat confused. He had seen rice falling from our clothes and hair and said he wished we’d told him we would be on our honeymoon. Our room had twin beds. The hotel was full so we couldn’t switch and I was actually too embarrassed to ask.

Then the bellboy took us to our room. I was again embarrassed because I didn’t have change for a tip (a quarter or two was considered adequate at that time). I told him we were going out for dinner and I’d tip him when we returned, which I did. We walked down the street to a restaurant. I recall ordering a hamburger but was too keyed up to enjoy it. I did stuff it down and we returned to the hotel.

I won’t tell any more about our first night together but I will say this. We were both stressed out from the big church wedding and reception, the anxiety about making our getaway undetected, and the drive to Berkeley. Then on a day when I wanted everything to go perfectly I had goofed on the hotel reservations and I lacked the foresight to have change for a tip. Adding to that, we were nervous about coming together for the first time. To me at least, our honeymoon didn’t really start until the second day.

The next morning we started out on US-40 toward Sacramento, which was to be our second stop on the way to Lake Tahoe. I-80 didn’t exist at that time. Somewhere near Vallejo, just after crossing San Pablo Bay, we stopped at a little restaurant for lunch. The woman who owned the place could easily tell that we were newlyweds and brought a small bottle of Champaign to celebrate. Then we continued on to Sacramento and finally found a hotel in which to stay. It was Hotel Berry and just a little way from the capitol building.

We had a very special encounter between us at this hotel—a most intimate and exciting and novel experience. It was nothing extraordinary but something I have cherished all the decades of our married life. However, Janet says it is too personal to write about here so I’ll have to leave it at that.

The next morning we explored the capitol building and grounds, visited Sutter’s Fort, and stopped at the cathedral where we bought the crucifix that now hangs over our bed. Then we

again headed east on US-40 to Donner Pass. On the way up ol' Inky started to boil. I managed to nurse it to the summit and we finally arrived at Lake Tahoe. I had made reservations at Lake Chalets Motel in Tahoe City.

We had a room with a small kitchenette so we could prepare our own meals. The door opened into a large and beautiful patio area which was also visible from the window. It was an ideal place for a honeymoon and the "Do Not Disturb" sign hung almost constantly from the doorknob.

We prepared many of our meals and luncheons in our kitchenette. It was like setting up housekeeping on a mini scale. One day we went to the store to buy some groceries and the clerk asked if we were on our honeymoon. Again we didn't know how other people knew so we asked her. She said: "Oh, it just shows."

One day we paid for a ride in a speed boat that took us around the lake. That was fun but not like driving it yourself so we rented an outboard motor boat. We also purchased fishing licenses and a pole with some tackle. We had a lot of fun running around the lake but we didn't catch any trout for dinner. To offset that lack of luck we ate out one night and did have a trout dinner – heads, eyes and all.

Reno and its gambling establishments was a place I had always wanted to see. I had caught glimpses of the town's main street while going through on a train but had never actually visited. So we headed out one morning to see the "Biggest Little City in the World." Gambling didn't interest us very much and, in addition, we were on a very limited budget. I did try a "one-armed bandit" slot machine for silver dollars. Alleluia! I hit the jackpot and the silver cartwheels came tumbling out. We lined them all up on our desk back at our motel, along with some other souvenirs we bought. Later we distributed them among our children.



Motor boating on Tahoe

lot of basking. As we did everywhere else, we took a lot of pictures.

We spent a week at Lake Tahoe. Originally we planned on two but we were running out of things to do so we decided to drive down to Bass Lake. My folks and the boys were camping there



Janet in our kitchenette  
at Lake Tahoe



Shadow of Janet taking picture of  
me on Kings Beach



and we thought it would be nice to spend a couple days swimming in some water that might be warmer. Our plan was to go south along Lake Tahoe and that take US-50 east to Carson City. That is where Mom and Pap were married and I had never seen the place.

From Carson City we headed south along the eastern foothills of the Sierras to Mono Lake. I didn't know much about Mono Lake so didn't pay much attention to it. I now wish we had looked it over a little more closely.



At Yosemite



From Mono Lake we turned west up Tioga Pass to Yosemite. It was a long, hot climb for Inky. At almost 10,000 feet it is the highest highway pass in California. Water boils at considerably lower temperatures at that elevation and we didn't have pressurized radiators then. I was really afraid Inky was going to boil-over again and there was no water in sight. We were very fortunate, however. We made it to the top with the needle in the red zone but the radiator didn't actually boil. I could never understand why because it did boil on a cooler day at lower altitudes going up US-40. The Good Lord must have been riding with us.

After reaching the summit we dropped down into Yosemite Valley and eventually reached Yosemite Village. We found a nice, cool spring along the road to quench our thirst. We also stopped to feed a deer although I found out later that feeding them is forbidden for safety reasons. But we did quite well with the cute little creature. I believe we also spread a blanket and ate some sandwiches while resting on the valley floor.

After freshening up we started on the last leg of our journey. We headed south and out the south gate of Yosemite to Bass Lake. It was late evening when we reached our destination. It had been a long and tiring day and we looked forward to relaxing. That was not to be. Other campers told us the Reaves family had packed up and headed for home that morning.

What to do now? We had already covered about 290 miles of mostly mountain driving and were really tired. If we had sleeping bags with us we might have camped out for the night but we were not prepared for that. It was about another 180 miles to home but the roads would be straighter. We decided to do it. I was worried that one of the mechanical brake rods (Henry Ford was the last to come out with hydraulic brakes) might be pulling too much on one wheel but we made it. It was in the wee hours of the morning that we pulled into the ranch at Green Valley. And that was the last day of our honeymoon.

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I had to register for fall classes at Cal Poly so on September 8<sup>th</sup> we travelled to San Luis Obispo. Inky was loaded with our belongings. When Dan overhauled Inky he installed a weird exhaust system. The usual system for a Ford V-8 was a 4-cylinder manifold on each side of the engine

which were connected by a crossover pipe around the front of the engine. Then a single exhaust pipe and muffler ran aft along the passenger side of the car. Dan had split the left manifold so that the crossover pipe only connected one cylinder to the right side, making a total of five being exhausted through the original pipe. Then he added a second exhaust pipe on the left side which scavenged gasses from the three remaining cylinders. Twin Smitty mufflers were then installed, one on each pipe. Dan thought the sounds harmonized with three going through one smitty and five through the other. I thought it was a racket but it was too expensive to correct it when I fixed up the car.

A little south of King City on our way to SLO, a highway patrolman pulled us over and said the mufflers were exceeding the legal decibel limit. I opened the hood to show him the work it would take to fix the exhaust system but he looked like he didn't understand and continued to write the ticket. Previously when I drove back and forth between Watsonville and SLO with Dan and Steve we had been stopped for speeding (the highway went through every town – no freeway then) but this was a first for the mufflers.

We didn't have any place to stay in SLO so we rented a motel room with a kitchenette. I wrote the judge a letter explaining that I was a college student with limited money and was trying to fix up the car as I could afford it. He wrote back sympathizing with me but said the mufflers were illegal and had to be fixed. I had them fixed and inspected and sent the information back to the judge. He then sent the ticket back with "case dismissed" written across the front. At least I didn't have to pay a fine.

Cal Poly was setting up a trailer house village on the high end of the campus for married students, just below the Cal Poly "P" which was painted on the hillside. We were on the waiting list but they weren't ready yet. The motel room was too expensive for any length of time so we started looking for a room off campus. My friend, Don Jillie, also got married during the summer. He and his new bride, Olivia, had found a room on Santa Rosa Street with a community kitchen. They told us there was still a vacancy so we hopped right onto it. We got an upstairs room just down the hall from Don and Olivia.

Our room served as a place to sleep and study. We often visited back and forth with the Jillies and while Don and I were at school, Janet and Olivia had each other for company. The bathroom was at the end of the hall and the community kitchen was a little shack out in back that was partially screened. Each couple had assigned closets for their kitchenware and food. There was a refrigerator which we shared. Sometimes we rotated cooking and eating time with the other couples so we wouldn't all be in the kitchen together, and sometimes we joined together for a common meal.

One day at school I needed something from home and a friend drove with me to get it. He waited in the car while I ran inside. Janet came out with me and my friend caught a glimpse of her in all her gorgeous beauty. She was wearing matching slacks and blouse and had her hair put up. Back at school my friend started raving to the other guys about what a beauty I had married. In today's parlance she would be called "cool" (or maybe "hot"). He was really sincerely enthused when he said I was really lucky. I was proud of my darling bride and I was happy that others could see her beauty.

The Aero Club initiation is always scheduled during the first school quarter and it happened this year while we were living on Santa Rosa Street. The initiation of new freshmen members always takes place around dusk at Oceano Beach. Dan Leddy and Don Jillie were going, and

also Steve Duer, the club's only electronics major. They all promised Janet they would take care of me and bring me home safely. I think I stayed more sober than any of them (which may not have been saying much) but they insisted on fulfilling their promise. And they didn't think it was fulfilled until I was safely in bed. It was late and Janet had already retired when they barged boisterously into our room carrying me and then placing me in bed alongside her and tucking us both in. There wasn't much use arguing as it would have been futile. Janet went along with the charade but I'm not sure what she really thought of it.

It was while we were in this rooming house that Janet missed her period. We discussed it for a while and finally decided that we should find a doctor. The only one I knew was the doctor I went to for a hearing check when I was thinking of joining the naval reserves, Dr. Smith, so we went to him. After examining Janet we gathered in his office for a conference. He did some calculating and then said conception must have been about August 12<sup>th</sup>. I said: "Oh no, doctor, we weren't married until the 17<sup>th</sup>. He looked a little taken aback and recalculated his estimate. We figure that our baby had been conceived on the second night of our honeymoon, in Sacramento – the city of the Holy Sacrament.

Shortly after that Olivia discovered she was pregnant and decided to go to the same doctor we chose. Later she and Don were telling about their visit and said the doctor made a joke about another couple who got pregnant right after they were married. Looking back, I realize that shouldn't have bothered me but it did at the time. I didn't like the idea of a doctor discussing us with other patients so we changed doctors. We then went to Dr. Middleton who was older and I felt more comfortable with someone who seemed more experienced in obstetrics.

We and the Jillies kept bugging the housing office about when the trailer homes would be ready. Since those couples who were expecting got priority, and also bigger trailers, we let them know about our pregnancies. The Jillies moved in first and finally, in October, our number came up and we moved into the new Poly View Trailers subdivision. We were only a couple trailers



Janet and Me shortly after moving into our Silver Palace

away from Don and Olivia. Ours was number 217 and theirs was 207. We called our new home our Silver Palace.

Poly View Trailers was really community living. The community toilets and showers – boys on one side and girls on the other – were right behind our trailer. The Community laundry with coin-operated machines was right in front of our trailer with the clothes lines in between. We went partners with the Jillies to buy a small Sears Roebuck portable washer and hand-crank wringer to cut expenses. It also enabled us to wash when we wished without waiting for someone else to

finish. Just outside the laundry was the pay phone booth which provided communication for our block of trailers. Since we were closest to the phone it was up to us to answer it. Then we had to go to the appropriate trailer to call someone to the phone.

The trailer itself was 18 feet long with a rear storage space that opened from the outside. In that was the electric fuse box. To evenly distribute electricity we were allowed only one 10-amp

circuit. If we put a bigger fuse in and blew the master fuse on the pole we would have to pay for someone to replace it.

The trailer had a gasoline stove and oven which was very similar to a camp stove. The tank was removed and taken outside to fill, and had to be pumped up to maintain pressure. Janet got pretty good at baking delicacies in the gasoline-fired oven.

We had a kerosene heater which worked on the same principle as the old fuel-oil heaters. One-gallon safety cans were supplied for fuel, which were kept outside under the trailer. Centered in the trailer park were gasoline and kerosene pumps. We inserted a quarter to get a gallon of fuel.

A small ice box was used to keep food cold, and a 25-pound block of ice was delivered periodically. The ice man was a peculiar fellow. He liked to just open the door and pop in. If we wanted privacy the door had to be kept locked.



Us in our Silver Palace

I tried to light the kerosene heater once and almost burned the trailer house down. After that I removed it and made room for a table on which to eat and study. We bought a small 1300-watt electric heater. The brand name was Arvin so we called it "Little Arvie." It really strained our 10-amp fuse. We could only have one light bulb on when it was going. Turn on one more and we were completely in the dark with no heat. Rain or shine, daylight or dark, we then had to go outside to the rear of the trailer to replace the fuse. An ample supply of 10-amp fuses was always kept on hand.

On each end of the trailer was a couch that folded out into a bed. We used the one on the far end from the door for our bed and left it folded out all the time. The couch on the other end stayed as a couch unless we had a visitor, in which case it could be folded out for a bed.

The walkways between trailers as well as the area under the clothes line were covered with small pea gravel. The distance from the walkways to our door, however was just dirt. It got muddy when it rained. So I built a board walk up to our door. I laid two timbers cut to length from the gravel to our door about three feet apart. Then I nailed pieces of lumber across them to make the board walk. Some of the couples had small children and they loved to play in the gravel. After we built our board walk it became very popular with them. While their mothers were in the laundry the children were kept busy picking up the gravel and spreading it on our board walk. They apparently liked the hollow sound it made.



Don, Olivia, Janet and me

I also made a small outside storage shed against the trailer next to the door. It was

large enough to store our portable washing machine and other items that weren't needed inside.

Most of the families did some landscaping around their trailers. I planted a lawn all the way around. Then I built a fence so when our baby was born he or she could play safely outside.

One time several of us decided we would like a strawberry barrel because we had limited space



Our Front Lawn and Fence

to plant edibles. A local bakery (I believe it was) gave us some wooden barrels. We filled them with soil and drilled holes in the sides. Then we planted strawberries in the holes. It worked fine. We could also plant things in the top like the barrel was a large urn. I had already planted part of our yard in a vegetable garden.

It was pretty windy sometimes up there on the hill above Cal Poly. We would lie in bed at nights and the trailer

would rock and shake. I sometimes wondered if it would blow over but it never did. It seemed that our trailer might have been built better than the Jillies'. When we visited them on a windy night you could actually see the side wall push in from the gusts. Oh well, so goes life in a trailer house.

In December I started taking instructions to become a Catholic from Father Carriban at the mission downtown. There were some other people taking instruction and Janet always went with me, but we were still few enough to fit comfortably in Fr. Carriban's office. I used to park on the street right in front of the church and residency. Things are much different there today. I don't believe you can even drive on that street now, let alone park on it. And the residency is now part of the museum.

In February 1948 Mr. Martinsen, our aero structures instructor, told Don and me about a fellow in Centerville (south of Oakland) who had bought several TG-6 training gliders and converted them back to airplanes. His name was Fred Keyes. The story I got was that during World War II the military converted 2-place Taylorcraft airplanes to 3-place training gliders that were towed behind B-17 bombers. I don't know what they were training for but there is no doubt that these gliders existed.



Our Back Lawn and Strawberry Barrel

Don and I thought converting a glider back to an airplane would be a great school project. We could do the airframe work in the Aero Structures Lab and overhaul an engine in our Aero Engines Lab. We would also have to put in more hours on our own. So Don and I drove up to Centerville and made arrangements to buy one. Fred Keyes was a real nice fellow and helped us by loaning us welding jigs he had made for the engine mount, landing gears, and a new vertical fin; and the templates for new engine cowling. He also had some parts already made, like a gasoline header tank, engine firewall and various smaller parts, which we could buy very cheap. On top of that he gave us credit so we didn't need all the money up front. It worked out real well.

A few weeks later he delivered the aircraft to Cal Poly on a special trailer he had built when he bought the gliders from the army. In addition to loaning us jigs and special tools, Fred also loaned us a manual on the Taylorcraft plane the gliders were made from. It was an army liaison

plane designates L-2 (civilian version was Taylorcraft DC-65). Janet contributed to our project by typing a copy of the manual for us. I traced the pictures.

There was a lot of work cut out for us to do. Many parts such as the tail wheel had to be disassembled, cleaned and inspected. All primary control cables were replaced and secondary cables refurbished. The main landing gear was short and stubby and had to be completely renewed. We built it from scratch and used compressible neoprene donuts as shock absorbers rather than the clumsy bungee cord arrangement Taylorcraft had designed. A large vertical fin in the tail assemble had to be cut off and a new smaller one made with its leading edge offset to compensate for engine torque. An instrument panel with all the engine and flight controls was installed along with throttle and parking/braking cables. We build gasoline tanks for each wing which were installed along with fuel lines and the header tank just forward of the instrument panel. The cabin interior, floor boards, and baggage compartment had to be completely redone. Rear side windows and a windshield were installed. We bought and rebuilt a Continental 65 horsepower engine, welded together an engine mount and installed a new propeller.

We ran into some major problems we hadn't anticipated. One of the main wing spars was cracked and had to be spliced, as did a couple of capstrips on wing ribs. This set us back some schedule-wise but it was good experience.

I have a thick pressboard binder on this project which includes a log of all the structural and engine work accomplished, along with pictures, so I won't go into any more detail here.

Prior to the birth of our first child Janet and I spent a lot of time figuring out names. A girl would be named after Janet's mother and a boy would be the namesake of my birth father – Creston. However, the Catholic Church required that a child be baptized with a saint's name and there was no St. Creston that we knew about. So the middle name had to be that of a saint and we wanted one that was not common. Janet and I searched the Catholic Encyclopedia at the library in SLO and found a St. Gery that intrigued us. So that is the name we decided on.



TG-6 Glider Fuselage before Conversion



Don and Me with Glider at Cal Poly  
Note the Short, Stubby Landing Gear



The Finished Airplane



St. Gery was born of Roman parents at Eposium, France about the middle of the sixth century. He became bishop of Cambrai-Arras diocese in Belgium somewhere between 585 and 587. After 39 years as bishop Gery died on August 11<sup>th</sup> (his feast day) somewhere between 623 and 626.

Janet started having cramps toward the end of April in 1948 and the doctor said “any day now.” Janet’s Mother – later known as Grammy Balvin – came out from South Dakota to be with her daughter at the time she gave birth. But time dragged on and false pains kept arising. Sometimes when the pains came Janet called me home from class, but then they stopped. The doctor kept saying “any time now” or “maybe tonight.”

On May 12<sup>th</sup> Janet ate some lemon pie and went for a walk with her Mom. About 8:45 that night she started having pains and by 10:30 they were ten minutes apart and fairly regular. We had experienced so many false alarms that we wanted to make sure this time. We laid in bed together and timed each pain very meticulously. Janet’s Mom was sleeping on the fold-out couch at the other end of the trailer. She was also following the pains. In the early hours she asked how far apart they were. Janet told her about five minutes. Her Mom jumped excitedly out of bed and said we’d better get to the hospital. So, at 3:00 AM we headed for the County Hospital in SLO.

The nurses bathed Janet and got her to bed. The hospital was run by the books but Mom Balvin and I were allowed to stay in the labor room until it started getting daylight. Then the nurses said we would have to leave. When I balked they threatened to call the police. I still balked, wondering what my firstborn would think about his or her father getting arrested on the morning he or she was born. Then about 5:00 AM another pregnant woman was brought into the labor room and I decided it would be improper for me to remain any longer. Mom Balvin and I went to the waiting room and waited another very long and tense six hours.

At 11:02 AM on May 13, 1948 Creston Gery Aldridge was born. We were allowed to view him through a window of the nursery and he looked so small. He only weighed 6 pounds, 2¼ ounces at birth. There was an elliptical red mark on the side of his head where the doctor had used forceps. This worried me some but it also infuriated me that my son was treated so harshly. Then we were allowed to visit Janet for a while but she was still doped out from a spinal. After that privilege, visiting hours were strictly enforced.

In those days the usual hospital stay was four days but I was so disgusted with that hospital I didn’t want to deal with it anymore. I called Dr. Middleton and told him I wanted to bring Janet and Creston home. He asked rather gruffly who was going to take care of them. I said I would and that my mother-in-law was also staying with us. He said he would see how she is on his next visit and let me know. I think he knew what the hospital was like and the next day I got a call. At 2:00 PM on May 15<sup>th</sup>, only 51 hours from birth, an unheard-of short hospital stay in those days, I brought my wife and son home.

We had a large baby buggy which we used as a bassinette for Creston. We squeezed it in a space between the door and the fold-out couch. The weather was still chilly so we kept Lil’ Arvie going all night to keep the baby warm. We also had a small night light that we kept on for when we had to get up with Creston.



Grammy Balvin and Creston on the day of his baptism – 23 May 1948



Our Threesome – July 1948

Grammy Balvin was very attuned to Creston's needs and was right there when he whimpered. But one night Creston must have had a bad gas pain and he awoke with a sudden cry. Grammy Balvin jumped out of bed and pulled the light chain over the sink so she could see better. Pffft! All was dark and Lil' Arvie's fan wound down. That one extra light was too much for our 10-amp fuse. I think I had a flashlight but I had to slip on my shoes and go outside to the back of the trailer to change the fuse. Grammy was very embarrassed but we all had a laugh about it. The next day when my classmates asked the usual questions about how things were going with the new baby I replied: "Fine, except my mother-in-law blew a fuse."

Creston was baptized at Mission San Luis Obispo on 23 May 1948. Grammy Balvin was his godmother and his Uncle Bill was Godfather. Bill was unable to be there so a fellow student of mine, Arthur Genteman, stood in as proxy for Bill.

Janet and I were very proud of our new son and were anxious to show him off. His maternal grandmother, Grammy Balvin, had already seen much of him but he wouldn't meet Grampy Balvin until he became was years old. On June 9<sup>th</sup> we left for Watsonville to introduce Creston to his paternal grandparents. By today's safety standards it would have been criminal to travel with a baby the way we did in those days. In our 1933 Ford coupe Janet held Cres on her lap while I drove. The car was old and the engine burned oil, smoke from which came up from under the instrument panel to fumigate our baby as he lay on his mother's lap. Nevertheless, he slept through it all – a trait he would not maintain in later years when he would never go to sleep while traveling in a car. When we reached Gonzales we stopped and traded positions – I held Creston while Janet drove. (A few months later when my folks bought their 1948 Hudson sedan we inherited Betsy, their 1936 Ford. It was a sedan which gave us more room now that we had a family.)



Creston and Mimi  
July 1948



Nana and Creston  
June 1948

Mom and Pap were elated to meet their first grandchild. Mom always had a penchant for coming up with nicknames and she decided her grandchildren would call her "Mimi" and would call Pap "Pappy." Those names stuck from then on. Skip and Sonny, the new "uncles," also seemed to like their new nephew.

The next day we went to the care home where my grandmother, Nana (Emma Schanbacher Oksen), was staying. She wanted so much to live to see her great grandchild, and



Nana and Creston  
September 1948

she finally had that wish fulfilled. She died five months later.

Creston had four other great grandparents living at that time. There was my Grandma and Granddad Aldridge and my Gram and Gramp Durr (Pap's mother and stepfather). After Gramp Durr's death, Gram married Arthur Rexroad and became known as Grandma Rex).

On 18 June 1948 I had my last instruction session to become a Catholic. The next day, June 19<sup>th</sup>, I was baptized into the Church. I was baptized in the same font as Creston was – he was a Catholic before me. That font is now part of the display in the museum at Mission San Luis Obispo.



Creston with his Great  
Grandparents Aldridge  
28 January 1949

Our bed in the trailer house was in the back end. As I said, it was a fold-out couch which we left folded out all the time. Closet doors on each side of the passageway came together when opened to create a screen which gave us privacy in our bedroom. It was a convenient arrangement because our clothes closet was right there when those doors were open. Things changed when Creston was born. We now had his buggy (which he slept in), a chest of drawers for his diapers and clothes, and a bathinette for his daily baths. We decided to remove the folding couch which we slept on and make that area Creston's room. All of his paraphernalia fit nicely in there. We then slept on the fold-out couch at the other end of the trailer – we had to fold it out every night and fold it up every morning.

Soon Cal Poly's spring quarter for 1948 came to a close. I decided to sign up for the summer quarter. Besides getting some required courses out of the way I could put in some extra credits for aero structures and engine labs. Don Jillie and I made some good headway on our glider-to-aircraft project. At the hangar we fabricated many of the new parts needed and installed them. In engines lab I was able to complete the overhaul on the 65-horsepower Continental engine. Yes, we made very good progress during the summer of '48. (Note: When I left Cal Poly all the major work was accomplished. I wanted to get the project out of my hair so Don bought out my share. He put the finishing touches on the airplane and then sold it. I saw it once when it was finished. I got to get in it and run up the engine but I never flew it.)

Then we were in the fall quarter at Cal Poly. One Friday afternoon in late September Mom called saying that Nana was in the hospital with pneumonia. We packed quickly and headed for Watsonville. Nana improved after being given oxygen so on Sunday we headed back to SLO. However, Nana needed more care after several weeks in the hospital so she went to a nursing home. We visited her whenever we made a trip to Watsonville.

In November we went to Watsonville on Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving. I don't recall what I was doing that night but Janet drove Mom to visit Nana – I planned to see her the next day. When they were ready to leave Nana said she wished Mom would stay with her that night. This was an unusual request for Nana. But Mom told her she'd be in to see her the next day and then went back to the ranch with Janet.

At 7:00 AM the next day my Uncle Jim came to the ranch. He tearfully told us that Nana had a fatal stroke early that morning. I was shocked. Nana had virtually lived with us and taken care of me since I could remember. She had been my pal and companion. Now I would see her no more. Nana died on Thanksgiving Day 1948 – November 25<sup>th</sup>.



As the winter quarter of school wore on I decided I would leave Cal Poly. I wanted to get a job and live a life other than a student. I could graduate with a 2-year Technical Certificate – now known as an Associate Degree. I had enough theory and shop time to qualify as an airframe and engine mechanic if I could pass the CAA tests (Civil Aeronautics Administration, now known as the FAA – the Federal Aviation Administration). My aircraft and engines instructors, the head of the Aeronautics Department, and the head of the Engineering Division all signed a Certificate of Completion of CAA Requirements. Each license (A&E) had two parts – a written and a practical. I applied for the written in both licenses. They were four hours each. I drove to Hancock Field in Santa Maria to take the tests. I took one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. I was informed later that I passed them both and was now cleared to take the practical examination for each license. I would do that after we moved back to Watsonville.

When the winter quarter ended we packed our belongings and moved back to the ranch temporarily.

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## Chapter 21 – Back to Watsonville

I believe it was in January 1949 that we moved back to Watsonville. The three of us moved in temporarily with Mom and Pap at the green Valley Ranch. I had applied for work with Hiller Helicopters in Menlo Park and had a strong desire to work there. Helicopter technology was in its infancy at that time and I wanted to get in on the ground floor. However, I never did hear from them.



Cres & Janet by Betsy March  
1949

To pass the time while waiting I overhauled the engine of ol' Betsy. While we were still in San Luis, Mom and Pap had bought a new 1948 Hudson automobile and we inherited their 1936 Ford sedan – affectionately called Betsy. She was now our mode of Transportation. However, the engine was getting high in miles so I used the garage at the ranch for an overhaul shop.

I should note that the previous December (1948), when we were in Watsonville for the break between quarters, I took the practical tests for my Aircraft and Engine Mechanic Licenses at Salinas Airport.

The CAA inspector who tested me was named Hickenlooper. It would take two days – the first for the aircraft mechanic license and the second for the engine mechanic license. When I reported to Hickenlooper the first day he looked at me and said something to the effect that being fresh out of school I probably knew how to do all the work. I thought “Oh-oh. What am I in for?” Then he gave me one problem to work out. I was to do the weight and balance calculations on a Stearman bi-plane crop duster. These calculations had to cover two conditions of flight – one for cross country travel when maximum fuel capacity and minimum ballast is desired and the other for dusting crops when the maximum cargo (insecticide) and minimum fuel is desired. I had never had too much trouble with weight and balance problems so the test wasn't too difficult for me. There is a maximum takeoff weight for an aircraft and a range in which the aircraft center-of-gravity (CG) must fall to assure proper control and stability in flight. I just had to juggle cargo weight and location, fuel consumption and time in air, fuel weight and location, and the location and weight of any ballast that might be needed to keep the CG within limits. I worked out numbers for the two conditions and gave them to the inspector. That paper problem was all there was to my “practical” for aircraft work. I had expected to do some work in the shop – cover a wing with fabric, some welding, adjust the rigging, or something. I figured I got off pretty easy.

The next day I reported, with my tool box, for the engine practical. The inspector said we would go out to the shop and see what work they had to be done. When asked, the mechanic looked around and pulled a box out from under a bench. There were engine parts all jumbled in it. The mechanic said these parts were a Continental 65 horsepower engine. They needed to have them assembled. I couldn't believe my luck. I had just completed a major overhaul of the same engine for our Taylorcraft plane at Cal Poly. I knew that engine almost by heart.



Form ACA-1710 (1-48)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
CIVIL AERONAUTICS ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

**ALDRIDGE ROBERT C**

RT 1 BOX 188

WATSONVILLE CAL

HAS BEEN FOUND TO BE PROPERLY QUALIFIED AND IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO EXERCISE THE PRIVILEGES OF AIN/ MECHANIC WITH THE FOLLOWING RATINGS AND LIMITATIONS

AIRCRAFT  
AIRCRAFT ENGINE

THIS CERTIFICATE IS OF SUCH DURATION AS IS PROVIDED IN THE CURRENTLY EFFECTIVE CIVIL AIR REGULATIONS, UNLESS SOONER SUSPENDED OR REVOKED.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS  
WRITTEN NOTICE OF ANY CHANGE IN PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS MUST BE FURNISHED IMMEDIATELY TO THE AIRMAN RECORDS SECTION, CIVIL AERONAUTICS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C. AND THE NEW ADDRESS ENTERED BY THE CERTIFICATE HOLDER ON THE REVERSE SIDE HEREOF.

DATE OF ISSUE 12 04 48

BY DIRECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

DIRECTOR, AIRMAN SERVICE

Robert C. Aldridge

SIGNATURE OF HOLDER

ACA-1710  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.  
CIVIL AERONAUTICS ADMINISTRATION

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

IV ROBERT CRESTON ALDRIDGE

V 77 ARTHUR ROAD

WATSONVILLE CALIFORNIA

III

DATE OF BIRTH 4-25-26 WEIGHT 70 IN. 165 HAIR BROWN EYES BROWN SEX M NATIONALITY USA

IX HAS BEEN FOUND TO BE PROPERLY QUALIFIED TO EXERCISE THE PRIVILEGES OF MECHANIC NO. III 1130623

RATINGS AND LIMITATIONS

XII AIRFRAME  
POWERPLANT

XIII

VII Robert C. Aldridge

SIGNATURE OF HOLDER

VIII BY DIRECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

X DATE OF ISSUE 3-10-55

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF AVIATION SAFETY

However, I sure couldn't understand how any mechanic could just throw engine parts haphazardly into a box. The parts weren't even marked or identified as to position, and a CAA inspector was standing right there not saying a word. Oh well, I'd just put the thing together anyway. But when I picked up the crankshaft to mount on the engine stand I noticed the journals were scored. If it had been my engine I would have had that crankshaft "turned" (grinding the journals to a specific undersize diameter to remove the

scoring). I told the inspector that my training would not let me put that crankshaft into an engine. The inspector turned to one of the mechanics and asked what he thought. The mechanic picked up a piece of emery paper and said I could smooth the journals up a bit. I was flabbergasted but, after all, with a CAA giving tacit approval, what could I do? So I went ahead and assembled the engine. It was finished by quitting time.

I passed both tests and received my licenses. The first version of a mechanic's license I received was called an Aircraft and Engine (A&E) License. It was two licenses on one piece of paper. A certain amount of activity was required to keep each license valid – six months out of every two years working on aircraft for the aircraft license and the same time working on engines for the engine license. Some years later I received a letter from the CAA asking if I would like to have a new format license that never expired. Of course I replied affirmative. The new license is called an Aircraft and Powerplant (A&P) license. This turned out to be very fortunate because years later when I was working for my bachelor's degree in aeronautics at San Jose State University I needed a valid A&P license to graduate. Getting the non-expiring license relieved me from having to take all those written and practical exams over again.

Now we had moved back to Watsonville, I had my two mechanic's licenses, and I was hoping to hear from Hiller Helicopters as a prospect of employment. Dan Leddy, who had also decided to drop out of Cal Poly, and I also looked elsewhere for a job. We made the rounds of all the airlines but none were hiring. This was in early 1949 during the pre-Korean war recession and the airlines were laying mechanics off. Things were getting tight financially for us and I finally decided I'd better look for work somewhere else. In addition, I wanted to get away from being a burden on Mom and Pap living at the Green Valley ranch.





Creston in our front yard at  
Kelly Lake -- April 16, 1949



Pappy & Cres by our cabin at Kelly Lake  
April 10, 1949

Steve Duer's dad, Burt, had a water-well drilling business and he hired me as a helper. So I started roughnecking on a drilling rig but this was not what I wanted as a career. However, it did bring in a little money and we were able to rent a small cabin from Dr. Cutter on the shore of Kelly Lake, in what is called the Interlaken District. It was small but accommodated our family of three with a small living room, a bedroom, a small kitchenette, a smaller bathroom, and a tiny screened-in back porch. The entire cabin was not much bigger than our trailer home at Cal Poly. It was in this cabin that we discovered we were pregnant with our second child, Janie. She had been conceived at the Green Valley ranch.

I continued working for Burt Duer into the spring of 1949. Then in May, almost the beginning of fire season in California, Pap talked me into applying for a firefighter job with the State Division of Forestry. (Now it is the Department of Forestry but then it was a Division under the Department of Natural Resources.) Pap had been working for them since the previous year and was the foreman of the Corralitos Station. Les Gum was the Ranger in Santa Cruz County at that time.

So I called the county headquarters in Felton and made an appointment for an interview. A few days later I was interviewed by Associate Ranger Lou Reese and was accepted. I was assigned to the headquarters crew in Felton and reported for work sometime around the first of June. My employment was a temporary appointment and I could work no longer than six months. But it was an income for that time anyway.

In the meantime, I knew I was going to be on 24-hour duty five days a week. I didn't want Janet alone on Kelly Lake with no telephone, a small toddler, and another baby on the way. So, as much as I disliked doing it, we moved back in with Mom and Pap at Green Valley. We were again in the front, small bedroom with the bay window.

Being on duty 24 hours a day all week was hard on me. I didn't like being away from Janet and Cres. When my foreman discovered I was an aircraft mechanic he assigned me to work with the crew's fire truck driver in the garage. It was a big job doing the maintenance work on two fire trucks as well as all the other vehicles assigned to and visiting the county headquarters in Felton, but I loved the work. I should explain the organization in Santa Cruz County at that time. A Ranger headed the county and under him was an Associate Ranger and two Assistant Rangers. The Assistant Rangers were in charge of the six fire crews spread throughout the county. The

headquarters crew, in which I was a Forest Firefighter, was headed by a Forest Firefighter Foreman and the second in command was the Forest Fire Truck Driver. Those were the titles at that time. They have all been changed to paramilitary titles now.

I was also assigned as the #1 hoseman in the crew. When the foreman was on days off and the truckdriver was in charge of the Crew, I would have to operate the pump on the truck. I studied about the different types of pumps, the safety precautions for each, how to prime them and operate them. Sundays were usually devoted to training and the foreman had me instruct the crew on fire pumps. The associate ranger and other officials would often sit in on the class. After a month or so the crew's truck driver left for another job. There was no one on the civil service list at the time to fill the vacancy so I was given a temporary appointment as truck driver.



Cres in camp at Arroyo Seco - June 26, 1949

Janet had been to Arroyo Seco before but we had not camped there together. During the summer of 1948 she and Mom took Cres to the Government Camp to camp for a few weeks. Pap would go down on his days off and I would drive down on my days off. I'd get up very early on the morning I was scheduled back to work to arrive at Felton by 8 AM. There were only three days a week when Janet, Cres and Mom were there alone without a car. But we knew many of the other campers so there was always transportation in case of emergency.

Janet was not the only one for whom this was the first Arroyo Seco camping trip. It was also the first for Creston who was barely over a year old. He spent a lot of time in his playpen that first campout but he seemed to enjoy it. Although I went down to Arroyo Seco several times on my days off that year, there is only one incident that I remember clearly, and I remember it very clearly. One afternoon I was a little tired so I lay down on the camp cot under the oak trees.

It was also time for Creston's nap so I laid him face down on my chest. He seemed to like that and fell sound asleep right away. I also fell asleep but I still remember that real calm and peaceful feeling in the outdoor atmosphere with my little son curled up on my chest. I was very happy and very proud of him. That memory has lasted through many years.

Our dog, Smokey, also stayed at Arroyo Seco with my family. Les Gum's German shepherd had some pups and he gave me one which I took home for Cres. He was a cute little pup which we named Smokey after Smokey Bear. But alas, as has happened to so many dogs at the Green Valley ranch, he was later hit by a car.

As November rolled around Janet was getting close to term with Janie. (We didn't know the gender at the time.) Once when I was home on days off we thought the time had come and went to the hospital. But it was a false alarm and she came home again. That happened a second time and I was beginning to wonder if that stubborn little offspring of ours would ever decide to come out. Grammy Balvin had come out from South Dakota for the event and she was also delayed for her return. But Janie did come out in her own time. And what a time she picked!



Janet on Big Rock Beach with Smokey and Cres - July 27, 1949

It was late at night and I was already in bed in the crew barracks at Felton. The foreman was on his days off and I was in charge of the crew. I had neglected to make arrangements for someone to cover for me if Janet went to the hospital again. That was a bad mistake. As I lay there on my bunk I heard a tapping at the window above my bed. I knelt up on bed and opened it. Standing outside were Mom and Grammy Balvin. They had come all the way over to Felton to tell me Janet had gone to the hospital. They came over to get me because they knew I had no car. (My cousin, Sonny, was also working as a firefighter and we shared the car. He was home on days off.) It was a terrible decision to make but I couldn't abandon the station in the middle of the night. I was the only one to lead the crew and drive the fire truck. Mom and Grammy seemed pretty disgusted with me and returned to Watsonville. I couldn't go back to sleep that night.

The next morning before breakfast I headed up to the office and called home. Grammy Balvin answered and I asked how Janet was doing. I can recall almost her exact words. She said: "Bob, you have a beautiful baby girl." I was real excited. Janie was born at 3:45 AM on October 23, 1949 at the Watsonville Community Hospital. At that time the hospital was on the "Heights," on the corner of Monte Vista and Montecito Avenues.

I made arrangements for someone to cover for me. The office personnel bawled me out for not having enough forethought to make proper plans. I said it wouldn't happen again, and it didn't. As soon as Sonny returned with the car I was in it and zipping home to Watsonville. I went a little too fast through Santa Cruz and a police officer pulled me over. I explained that my wife had just had a baby and why I wasn't there at the time and how I was anxious to get there. He was an understanding person and told me to just slow down a little.

In Watsonville I headed straight for the hospital. It wasn't visiting hours but under the circumstances they allowed me in for a short



Janie – June 1950

visit. I believe I checked in with Janet first. Then I went to the nursery to see Janie but the shades were closed on the viewing window. I explained the situation to the nurse and she brought Janie out in the hall where I could see her. She was bawling her head off. I just touched her forehead and she quieted immediately. The nurse said: "The touch that soothes."

I don't remember what happened after that. I think I held Janie for a few minutes and then went back to see Janet. I wasn't allowed to stay long during non-visiting hours so I said I'd return later. I guess I then went to the ranch. It took many years for Janet to forgive me for not being there when Janie was born. She was right in saying that I should have given my family more consideration and made better plans.



Grammy Balvin, Janie, & Janet - November 6, 1949

We planned to have Janet's twin brother, Jack (later known as John), and Verla for Janie's godparents. Jack was still in the Air Force and stationed in California. With all the false starts in Janie's birth he was trying to keep track so he could arrange time off for the baptism. To do that

he periodically called person-to-person for Jane Aldridge. If she hadn't been born yet we would say she's not here and there would be no charge for the call. Finally he got an affirmative answer to his phone call. Janie was baptized at St. Patrick's Church in Watsonville on November 6, 1949. Jack Balvin was her godfather and Verla Balvin her godmother. We were very proud of our new baby girl.

Now with two children, a boy and a girl as we had hoped for, Janet and I wanted to get out on our own. I had a good permanent job as I had passed the civil service test for Forest Firetruck Driver and was assigned to Felton. There was no reason we couldn't get out on our own. I was still working 24 hours a day, five days a week but since Janet wasn't expecting to go to the hospital on a moment's notice it was safer for her to be alone with the children. So she started looking for a place to rent and found one on Freedom Boulevard not too far from the "Five Mile House." I was able to get transferred to Corralitos for the winter so I would be only a few miles away if there were an emergency. The place was simple but nice and the land lady also seemed nice and didn't object to two small children.

Janet started to move a few small things in while I was on duty. Then something else came up. My two cousins, Jimmy and Ralph had lived with us at Green Valley for a while until it became too much for Mom to handle. We found friends nearby who could board them but then they moved away. Jimmy and Ralph needed someplace to stay. Janet and I decided to have them live with us. Then a problem came up when we told our prospective landlady – she didn't want two boys that age living there.

That really burned me up. We told her to forget about us renting and decided to look for a place we could buy so we would be independent of landlords. There were two new subdivisions opening up and we really liked a house with a fireplace that was just on the outskirts of Watsonville. The financing was higher than we could handle, though, so we settled for a second location on Arthur Road between Watsonville and Freedom. It was an unincorporated area and had open fields all around at that time.

The payments were something like \$78.<sup>00</sup> per month but we needed a \$450.<sup>00</sup> down payment in order to move in. That was a big chunk in those days and my gross pay was only \$210.<sup>00</sup> a month. Chuck (Charles Herbert) was impressed with the overhaul job I did on Betsy. He also had a 1936 Ford and offered me \$200.<sup>00</sup> to overhaul his engine. I had done that so I had half the down payment. Chuck gave me a loan for the other half and we dug up the other \$50.<sup>00</sup> somewhere. We closed the deal. We now had our own very own home and were very anxious to move in.

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## Chapter 22 – 77 Arthur Road

We moved into our brand new home in March 1950. It didn't have the fireplace I had my heart set on but it was real nice. It was the first and only home we would ever buy first hand that hadn't previously been lived in. On all our records and business transactions we now changed our address to 77 Arthur Road.



Our new home at 77 Arthur Rd when we moved in.  
Betsy in driveway. 28 March 1950

Everything was bare to the south of our subdivision, which was only a row of houses on each side of Arthur Road. From our kitchen window we could see Watsonville with nothing in between.

The biggest trouble with buying a new house is that all the landscaping is waiting to be done. A fence around the back yard was the immediate critical thing with two

small children. Through my work in the Forestry I was acquainted with various loggers and mill operators. I was able to get redwood lumber fairly cheap. I hauled it home, sunk the fence poles, and put up the fence. It turned out to be a pretty nice job.

With two kids still in diapers and modern disposables not yet on the market a back yard clothesline was urgent. We had found a second-hand wringer-type washing machine but we needed to get those diapers dry. I went to a junk yard and found the necessary footage of used 2" diameter pipe. Then I hauled it down to Jeffson's welding shop to be put together as two sets of double poles with a crossbar. Les Jeffson had been the committee chairman for my Boy Scout troop so he gave me a pretty good deal.



Cres in back yard before fences and clothesline

It turned out that a gopher snake had crawled into the pipes and was in them all during the hauling, cutting, and welding. When I went to the shop to pick up the finished product they were leaning against the wall. I tried to pull one away but they both came. I looked up and saw a big snake looped from inside one of the pipe poles into another. It was only a gopher snake but that wasn't immediately evident and it created quite a panic in the shop. It was hard to tell where those pipes had come from.

When I got them home I planted the poles in concrete with the two sets about 50 feet apart. I drilled holes through the crosspieces for adjustable eyebolts to which five clotheslines were attached. As the lines started sagging from the heavy use we gave them I could tighten them up with the nuts on the eyebolts.

When we were living with Mom and Pap in Green Valley, Ranger Les Gum gave me a German shepherd pup which we named Smokey. Cres really liked him but he was hit by a car while still a pup. Now that we had a house of our own with a large fenced-in yard we decided to get another dog. I don't remember where we got the contact but we went to a ranch where the owners had some pups to give away. We picked out the one we wanted and named him Tuffy.



Janie & Cres with Tuffy  
February 3, 1952

Tuffy's mother was very interesting. She had been hit by a car and lost the use of both hind legs. She learned to walk around quite well and very fast on just her front legs. It was weird watching her perambulate around in that fashion.

We brought Tuffy home in a cardboard box fixed up like a bed. Janie was asleep in her crib when we got home. I put the box containing Tuffy on the floor by her crib to surprise her when she woke up. It surprised her alright. She stood up in the crib, holding onto the side. When she looked down and saw Tuffy she let out the most awful scream and kept it up. I felt bad because I thought she would like the new puppy. It didn't take Janie and Tuffy long to become acquainted, though.

We never did find out what breed, or breeds, of dog Tuffy was but he turned out to be a very good pooch with the children. Sometimes he would even growl at Janet or me when we were cross with Cres or Janie. We had Tuffy for something like 14 or 16 years, I can't remember for sure. He went with us when we moved to Santa Clara. In his old age he became stone deaf and eventually developed cancer. He was in so much pain we had to put him away. He is buried in our back yard on Kiely Boulevard.

Sunset State Beach was very close to us and we enjoyed visiting there. Many times we went to the beach in the evenings to barbecue supper. When I was growing up Sunset Beach was just a small area – sort of a roundabout parking lot with a clump of trees in the middle where our Boy Scout troop used to camp. It had a nice overlook of the ocean with stairs leading down to the beach.

It was probably in the 1950s that the state started a massive improvement. More land was acquired to the south and campsites were constructed as well as nice picnic areas. Trees were planted which, today, provide much shade for the camping areas. But in the 1950s those trees were just saplings and the entire area was open and very hot. Nevertheless, we enjoyed the beach very much and so did Cres and Janie.

The Santa Cruz County Fair every September was a big event in the community and that was also true for our family. We looked forward to attending and having loads of fun. Also every year the Forestry would provide fire protection for the Fair. In 1950 I was stationed at the Soquel station which was at that time located in the middle of downtown Soquel. Since this station only consisted of a truck driver and a firefighter at that time, it was usually one of the stations selected to do the standby duty at the Fair. The other was usually the tanker truck at



Janet and me with our little  
ones at Sunset Beach  
April 18, 1950



Felton. There were only two trucks in the county that carried 400 gallons of water – the “Big Jimmy” in Felton and the Mack fire truck in Soquel. Crew trucks only carried 200 gallons so the larger capacity trucks were desirable for the type of fires most likely at the Fair.



Firefighter Jim Rodgers, Cres (on fender) and me by the Mack fire truck at Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds.

Note the bulldog hood ornament which was the trademark of Mack trucks.

September 23, 1950

Meals were provided for us and we had a tent with cots to sleep in, which was located in the middle of the horse racetrack oval. Sometimes at night after the Fair was closed we truck drivers would let the firefighters practice driving the fire trucks around the racetrack.

One of the perks of being on fire standby at the Fair was that we could bring our family in free. But we had to drive them in the service entrance in an official car. Since it wasn't feasible that I drive the fire truck off the fairgrounds and load Janet, Cres and Janie in it, Ranger Les Gum let me borrow his official sedan to perform that task.

The Forestry also had a booth at the Fair where we had a life-size Smokey Bear with a recording to sing the Smokey Bear song. That was a big hit with the kids and of course they were all given a Smokey Bear button. It was also a good education project for them on fire safety.

Periodically, one of the overhead at the booth would relieve me from standby on the truck so I could see some of the Fair with Janet and the kids. All in all the County Fair Days were a lot of fun that we always looked forward to and then fondly remembered.

A few years ago, on March 31, 2007, I wrote a little blurb which I will copy verbatim here: Timmy has been on my mind today. Timmy is our child who we never knew – the one we conceived but never birthed. He (or she) would have made Mark #11. The time was early 1951 as I recall. We had just moved into our new home on Arthur Road the year before. Our two children – Cres and Janie – were thriving and so sweet. We found that we were pregnant for the third time. We were happy and kinda hoped we would have another boy. If we did, we would name him Timothy Patrick Aldridge – Timmy Pat, for short.

I don't know how far along the pregnancy was, it wasn't very far. One evening Janet started having cramps and didn't feel good. We called Dr. Barr, our obstetrician. He said it sounded like a miscarriage and there wasn't really anything that could be done. He said to save the fetus if we could as he would like to examine it. Then he made an appointment for the next morning to check on Janet's condition.

As Catholics we were very concerned about the baby's baptism. We understood that the unbaptized baby's soul would go to some lovely place called Limbo, but would not enter heaven unless baptized. I remember working in the kitchen during the early morning hours. I had a pot of water in the sink and I baptized everything that could possibly be a fetus. Then I packaged all the placenta and, I hoped, the fetus to take in to the doctor in the morning. We had already made arrangements for the fetus to be buried in a corner of the Catholic cemetery.

The next morning we took the package to Dr. Barr who examined it in another room. He returned looking a little concerned and told us there was no fetus in the package. We were horrified. Timmy must have gone down the toilet – and without being baptized!

Then we started rationalizing. Surely God is more merciful than to ban a baby from heaven. Perhaps our desire for the baby to be baptized would qualify as a baptism of desire. Or, since the fetus was in water, perhaps my words of baptism were valid. Timmy just had to be in heaven. We finally convinced ourselves that a merciful God had in some way stretched the rules. We told our children that they had a brother or sister in heaven to help them. I may have been negligent and not told some of the younger ones. I hope I did.

Later I became more free of the constraints of having spirituality interpreted for me by the fallacious logic of fallible humans. I now listen to God's message with my own ears and heart. And I don't have to rationalize that our child is in heaven, or the spirit world. I know!

I do believe in the communion of saints. My own father was killed before I could remember him. But I felt his presence guiding my conscience as I grew up. I always felt he was watching me and wishing the right thing for me. I believe that our family saint – Timmy – has watched over our family. I think that is a big factor in our family being so close, and loving each other so much.

Cres and Janie loved to visit Mom and Pap at their Green Valley ranch. The kids called them Mimi & Pappy. There was always so much to do. It was fun exploring the big house – except the front bedroom closet where Louie was kept. Louie was the stuffed monkey that Chuck gave me. (Louie now lives with Tammi and Shawn.) But it scared the kids when they opened the closet door and saw Louie clinging to the wall and staring at them with his big glass eyes. I named him Louie from a poem I learned in high school. It goes:

Louie was a chemist.  
Louie is no more.  
What Louie thought was  $H_2O$ ,  
Was  $H_2SO_4$



Janie & Cres with Pappy on Buck  
June 27, 1951

The climax of all fun things at Green valley was when Pap took the kids out to the corral to ride Buck. Pap just put a bridle on Buck and rode him bareback. Sometimes he took them one at a time for a little ride. At other times he put them both on Buck and led them around the yard.

One day, it was probably a few years later, there were several kids visiting Mom and Pap at “the ranch.” I believe Judy and Randy were in the bunch as well as Jim and Danny. Pap started putting the kids on Bucks back, adding them one at a time. I don't remember how many he loaded before Buck thought something didn't feel right. He gave a shudder like he was shooing off flies and at the same time took a step or two forward. The kids all slid off the back end, landing in a pile on the ground. No one was hurt but it frightened them. It's too bad we couldn't have recorded the chorus of bawling and howling.

July 4<sup>th</sup> has always been a big celebration time in Watsonville. I remember as a kid all the antics that used to go on. I often walked downtown from our house just to watch. A team of firemen dressed in fire hats and shirt, but only boxer undershorts, pulled an old fashioned hose cart up

and down Main Street. One year the city had a whiskerino. All the men had to let their beards grow to be prepared for the 4<sup>th</sup>. Anyone caught clean-shaven on Main Street on the 4<sup>th</sup> was apprehended and put in the hoosegow for a period of time. The hoosegow was a small cage located in the City Plaza.



Janie -- Princess of Watsonville  
July 4, 1951

On July 4 of 1951, the city held a baby contest at the County Fairgrounds. The winners would be the Prince and Princess of Watsonville. I was on duty with the Forestry and missed out on it but Janet didn't. Without letting me in on the secret she entered Janie in the contest for Princess. I can't relate what happened because I wasn't there but when I came home on days off I was surprised to find out that my darling daughter was the Princess of Watsonville. There was a big article in the paper about it. I was very, very proud of her. Ever since, she has been my Princess.



It was shortly after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration that we found out we were pregnant with Jim – of course we didn't know the gender at that time. I had advanced to fire crew foreman by that time and when fire season was over I worked 8-hour days and was able to go home at night. Things would be easier this time because Jim was due in March and I would be more available when the time came. I would also of more help to Janet during the pregnancy.

James Theodore Aldridge was born at Watsonville Community Hospital on March 23, 1952 at 3:12 AM. We called him Teddy at first but he later asked if he could be called Jim. Therefore, in this

story I will refer to him as Jim even in his early childhood. I understand that his brother and sister did a lot of teasing that caused him to request the name change.



Jim with Grammy Balvin  
on the day of his baptism.

At almost the same time as Jim's birth, Bill and Verla (Janet's brother and sister-in-law) also had a baby boy which they named Joey. Unfortunately, poor little Joey only lived a day or so. Grammy Balvin had not planned to come to California for Jim's birth but after Joey died she immediately came out for the funeral. Jim and Jeanne (another brother and sister-in-law of Janet's) also came up from El Monte, California, for the funeral. We had planned to have Jim and Jeanne for our Jim's godparents so we planned the



Jim with Mimi & Pappy on  
the day of his baptism





Jim with his  
Godparents after his  
baptism

baptism while they and Grammy Balvin were still in Watsonville. Jim was baptized on April 8, 1952 @ St. Patrick's Church. Jim & Jeanne Balvin were his godparents.

I enjoyed coming home every night to be with my family but that was not to last forever. A couple months rolled by and soon it was May and the beginning of fire season. I was back on 24-hour duty. 1952 was my second year as foreman of the Burrell Station. It was situated high up in the Santa Cruz Mountains, just a little way below the fire



Jim with his Dad & Mom  
April 8, 1952

lookout and observatory on Loma Prieta. It was not close to home as was Corralitos or even Soquel. But I enjoyed this station. I had helped to build it and I was real proud of it. I was the only foreman, so far, assigned to this nice new facility and I did a lot of work to get it up and running.

One morning, just before I left the station for my days off, Pap called from Corralitos, where he was foreman, and asked me to stop there on my way home. I did that and Pap told me Janet had been having some troubles being alone with the children. He told me that she should be first for my consideration even if it meant me giving up my job. He said if worse came to worse he'd quit too and we'd set up a woodshop together.

I can't remember all the details but when I got home Janet and I had a long talk in the bedroom while Mom watched the kids. And I don't remember exactly how we laid out what we would do but we did consult with our doctor and a priest. I decided I'd take a leave of absence from the Forestry for the rest of the fire season – until I could be home a nights again.

I set up a meeting with Ranger Les Gum and Assistant Ranger Bob Ford, who was my immediate boss. I drove to Felton for the meeting. After I explained my situation, Ranger Gum said a leave of absence under these circumstances was very unusual and didn't know if he could get it approved. I told him if it was not possible then my only other alternative was to resign. That changed the atmosphere and the leave was approved. In the meantime another foreman was assigned to the Burrell Station to take my place.



Janie and Cres on cabin porch -  
July 1952

The first thing on the agenda was to spend some time alone together. Mom agreed to take care of Cres, Janie and Teddy (as we called Jim at that time) while we went to Arroyo Seco for two weeks. We would stay in Chuck's cabin as he was on Pinion Peak during the summer months. We enjoyed being alone for a change but



Greenfield Church -- July 1952

soon became awfully lonesome for the kids. After a week we returned to Watsonville to bring Cres and Janie back with us for the second week. Jim was still an infant so he stayed with Mom – his Mimi. We had fun with the kids swimming and doing the

things we always do at the cabin. On Sundays we went to Greenfield to attend mass at the little church we went to for years. (The Irish priest there had such a strong brogue that we couldn't understand him.)

It was hard for me to stay still for two weeks when I didn't have a job. I was antsy to get started looking for work. I also missed the Forestry very much. While at Arroyo Seco I read a book about a fire in a US forest and it made me want so badly to get back into the firefighting work. But I had to adjust and that I did. After we returned home to Arthur Road, while we were lying in bed one night, I heard a siren going down Freedom Boulevard. I could recognize the pitch. It was the Corralitos fire truck on its way to a 904 (radio code for a fire). I wanted so badly to hop out of bed and follow it. Now I knew what old fire horses felt like after they were retired.

I found a job with White's Funeral Home, located on upper Main Street in Watsonville. I was hired as an all-around handy man. I assisted at picking up bodies and sometimes I watched the embalming. Besides helping to usher at funerals I also drove one of the limousines or the hearse. When there was nothing else to do I'd polish the vehicles and keep them filled with gas, do cleaning and dusting, water the garden – whatever needed to be done. I was usually on call during my off duty hours in case there was a body to pick up and several nights a week I'd have to stand by in the office to answer the phone and take care of any business that came up. I soon saw that my quality time at home was hardly better than when I worked for the Forestry. After two weeks of this I told C.C. White that the job just wasn't working for me, and quit.

I then landed a job with Tom Rosewall, a building contractor in Watsonville, as a laborer. It was a union job but I was able to dodge the union representative for the 3 months I worked there. Except for a few days helping to put a foundation under a house that had been moved to Broadview, a little community on Green Valley Road just east of Freedom, all of my time



Janet and Jim in Big Rock Pool  
August 15, 1952

working for Rosewall was on constructing a new cafeteria and music building at Watsonville High School. It was interesting work and I learned a lot about carpentry.

It was a real luxury being home every night and getting home on time during the week to have a barbecue dinner at Sunset Beach. We also went to Chuck's cabin occasionally on weekends. We first took Jim to Arroyo Seco when he was 5 months old and he had his first dip in the river in August 1952. He was a little waterdog from the word "go." It was very handy being able to use the cabin and it was only 62 miles to travel from our place. We could just pack up a few things and go, which we did at every opportunity.

After we got the clothes lines erected and the fence constructed, I focused on some play things for the kids in the back yard. I made a sand box and hauled sand to put in it. Then we saved enough money to buy some redwood 4"x4"s and a 2"x12" plank to make a swing set and see saw. We used chain for the swing and a piece of 2"x6" wood for a seat. It turned out the seat was pretty heavy and hard. While swinging it hit one of the kids on the forehead and left the imprint of the wood grain. But they soon learned to watch out for it. On one side of the swing I put another 4"x4" post with a pipe between it and one of the swing posts. The kids used this monkey bar to chin

themselves and do other gymnastics. On the side of the swing was the see saw. I shaped the ends of the plank as seats and used little horses heads with a wood dowel handle through them so the kids could hang on. I didn't have a saw to cut out the horses heads so I took them to a wood shop to be cut out. When I offered to pay for the job the man said "no charge." I guess he had kids of his own and wanted to contribute. Later when we moved to Santa Clara we took the removeable parts with us.

When Janet first moved to Watsonville in 1946 she met Pauline Budman and they became good friends. When Janet married me she chose Pauline as her maid of honor. Later Pauline married Blaine "Red" Buchanan. One day we were surprised to find out that they bought the house right next door to us. That was good for Janet, having her best friend right next door. But Arthur Road was a budding community of young couples with small children and a whole lot in common. It did not take Janet long to make many neighborhood friends and coffee klatches on the front lawns became very common. It was also good for the kids as they made many friends and shared a lot together. But Mike, David and Kathy Buchanan next door became the longest-lasting friends.

When Janet had her nervous breakdown I promised her we'd arrange a visit to her home in South Dakota the next spring. Although her mother had come to California for the birth of our three children, she had not seen her Dad or other friends for over six years. So springtime was now here. In April 1953 I arranged time off from the forestry (vacation, compensating time off for days missed, etc.) and we prepared for a trip. I knew ol' Betsy would never make it so Mom and Pap loaned us their Hudson. We planned on traveling about 600 miles per day so we could make it in three days and only two nights in motels. Our budget was very tight and we usually lived from payday to payday so we couldn't spend too much time on the road. We left home on April 18<sup>th</sup>, spent three days on the road each way, ten days at the Balvin farm, and were back home on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

We left home in the wee hours of the morning. While bypassing San Jose on what is now called "US-101" but what was then known as "the US-101 Bypass," a bright flash lit up the sky toward the southeast. It was a nuclear bomb detonation at the Nevada Test Site – this was 10 years before the Atmospheric Test Ban Treaty went into effect. We felt creepy as darkness closed in around us again and we followed our headlights in the pre-dawn blackness. That flash in the sky was my first encounter with a nuclear bomb. Little did I know how much that dreaded weapon would invade my life.

Later that day as we were breezing along US-40 (no Interstate Highways in those days) between Reno to Winnemucca, our left rear tire blew out. We were way out in the desert but there was a little roadside store across the road. Also across the road was an airplane standing on its nose. I looked closer and saw that it was a BT-13 like I used to fly. But a closer look astounded me. It was the very same airplane that Dan and I had so many adventures in. I had heard that the man who bought it blew a cylinder over Nevada and made a forced landing on the highway. Well, here it was. What a coincidence that a tire should blow out on our car at exactly the same place. There must be some significance to that but I have never been able to figure out what it is.



Janie on the see saw, swing behind her. November 8, 1952



That first day we travelled east of Winnemucca and spent the night at the Eagle Motel in Elko, Nevada. After we got our overnight necessities unpacked we walked to a little restaurant across the road for dinner. After looking over the menu we decided on Salisbury Steaks, which were cheaper and didn't strain our budget too badly. Jim was only a year old but Cres and Janie thought that sounded good because we didn't often eat steak at home. But they were in for a big disappointment. When the waiter set the plates in front of us the kids looked at them in astonishment. Then in a voice that could be clearly heard all over the dining room Janie exclaimed: "This is only hamburger!"

Up again in the wee hours of the morning to commence our second day on the road. Nothing eventful happened but we saw some interesting sights: the desert near Dugway, the Great Salt Lake, Salt Lake City, the Rocky Mountains, crossing the Continental Divide, and more. After Salt Lake City we jumped up to US-30 and continued on to Caspar, Wyoming, where we spent our second night in the Yellowstone Auto Court.

On our third day we continued across Wyoming and into Nebraska on US-30. About half way between Grand Island and Columbus we turned north on Nebraska Route 14 until we came to the



Ferry between Niobrara and Running Water  
20 April 1953

little town of Niobrara and the Missouri River. This was before Gavins Point Dam was built to form the Lewis and Clark Lake, and before a bridge was built between Niobrara and Running Water, South Dakota. When we got to the Missouri River the road ended. There was a wooden pier for some kind of boat. I believe we then saw a sign that said to raise the white flag on the pole to summon the ferry. Looking across the river we saw what looked like a river rat's raft with a stern wheeler for propulsion. Well, what the heck, we raised the flag.

The stern wheel began to turn and the "raft" edged its way across the Missouri. Finally it docked at the end of the pier. I don't recall what the fare was but the ferryman beckoned us to drive aboard, so I did. The ferry's engine fired up again and we chugged back across to the South Dakota shore and the road that led to Running Water, and from there to the Balvin Farm. We were glad to reach the end of our journey.

Grammy and Grampy Balvin were happy to see us. Grampy hadn't seen Janet for 6½ years and he hadn't yet seen any of our children. This was also the first time I had met my father-in-law. The kids and I were very taken to Grampy, as we had previously been with Grammy. It was a very happy reunion.

Cres and Janie were ecstatic with the farm visit. Jim was only a year old so he didn't get around much. There was the cab of an old Case tractor in the yard in which Cres & Janie played incessantly. I guess the Case tractor must have been huge to have a cab that size. It was big enough that the kids called the cab their "ranch house." Grampy also had an old McCormick tractor which, I believe, he had retired. It had a belt drive on one side so its engine could be used to run some other types of farm machinery, like a thresher. The McCormick was probably the first step ahead when the farming community graduated from using horses to provide its horsepower.



Balvin Farm, April 1953. L to R: Janie & Cres in old Case tractor cab, Grampy Balvin & Cres on John Deere tractor, Janie & Cres on old McCormick tractor.

The tractor Grampy was using at that time was a rubber-tired John Deere. He gave Cres & Janie rides around the barnyard. They also loved to sit on it and play like they were driving. But the item that really sparked their interest was that old Case tractor cab.

I guess Grampy took the kids for a tour of the barn and other outbuildings. I know that I explored all of them but they weren't places the kids could roam and play by themselves. There were too many ways they could be hurt.



Janet and Cres by the 1929 Chevy -- April 1953

Nevertheless, a barn is a most intriguing part of a farm. I recall all the fun I used to have in Granddad Aldridge's barn when I visited them.

Another thing on the farm left over from Janet's childhood was the 1929 Chevrolet sedan in which she learned to drive. I don't think it still ran but it was still on the premises to look at and recall nostalgic memories. Janet had told me lots of stories about the ol' '29 Chevy. Now I could see it for myself.

I was also much interested in the house in which my dear wife grew up. She gave me a complete tour. I saw the cellar where she and the family holed up when there was a tornado warning for the vicinity. The kitchen and living room had been refurbished since Janet left home and there was a single bedroom on the first floor where Grammy and Grampy slept. The water on the farm was so hard that it was undrinkable so they had a cistern to catch rainwater. Consequently, since there were no more livestock on the farm, the windmill was never used. There was a cistern pump outside the back door which was originally used to draw water. But Grampy had an electric pump and plumbing installed to provide running water in the house. When there was not enough rainfall to keep the cistern full, water was hauled in by truck to fill it. Running water in the house also brought an end to the need for an outhouse although it was still there.

The upstairs area was still as it was when Janet was growing up. This is where she and her brothers and sisters slept. At one time there was a full porch across the front of the house. The roof of that porch provided a balcony for the second story. By 1953 that full porch had been torn out and only a porch stoop existed over the front door. From the front windows it was possible to see the Missouri River.

During our visit we also made several trips into town – the town of Tyndall. On the way in I saw the Daisy Valley School which Janet attended through eighth grade. It was a one classroom facility and one teacher taught all eight grades. In town I saw the Tyndall High School that Janet attended for 3½ years – she did her last half year at Watsonville High School after she moved to California. We also visited a lady she boarded with while attending high school to eliminate a daily commute from the farm, especially in the winter months. I believe Janet introduced me to more people in Tyndall but that is all I can remember.

One evening all of us, including Grammy and Grampy, hopped in the Hudson and drove to Janet's Aunt Kate's house for dinner. It was a real stormy night. Cres was very afraid of thunder and lightning at that time. He and the other kids were playing on the living room floor when the first clap of thunder hit. I saw him stiffen and look up and around. We were able to calm him down somewhat but we did leave shortly after that. It was a stormy drive back to the farm with lightning flashing all around us.

Cres was not the only one frightened by a thunderstorm. I think I must have had a touch of what is now called PTSD – post-traumatic stress disorder from combat in wartime. I recall times with the mild thunderstorms around Watsonville that the booming and flashing would make me tremble. I used to visibly shake and I could find no way to stop. That is how I felt that night driving back to the farm from Aunt Kate's house, and after we arrived at the farm. I think we just put the kids to bed and then we retired. All was clear in the morning and I felt OK. I no longer have that problem but it took me many years to get rid of that malady.

I recall that we also had dinner one night with Janet's sister Jean and her husband George. George was in the navy during World War II and we exchanged some tales about the Pacific. He had another friend over for dinner to meet us but I don't remember who it was other than that he had been in the navy also. Deep frying had become popular in those days and Jean cooked French-fried potatoes for supper. Jean & George suggested another way home rather than having to cross the Missouri again on that ferry.

Then our visit to South Dakota came to an end. On May 1<sup>st</sup> we started back to California. Following Jean & George's directions we went west on State Route 18 and crossed the Missouri on a bridge. Then we continue west on SR-18 as far as Pine Ridge, where we turn south on SR-87 to get back on US-30 West. From there we just backtracked.

We went as far as Rawlins, Wyoming the first day and spent the night at the Sunset Motel. It was stormy the last part of the drive with lightning in the distance. It was late and I was happy to find a place to hole up for the night. But in the morning we discovered why April is not the best month to travel cross country. The Hudson was covered with snow.

After eating breakfast and scraping the snow off the windshield we started out again, but much slower. The highway was hidden by snow and we saw several cars in the ditch. We didn't want to end up that way. We made it to Elko, Nevada again and this time we stayed at the Cave Motel. One more day and we were home. We encountered a lot of snow on the way. Some roads had been cleared by a snowplow but on others we had to drive between stakes marking the edge of the pavement. I



Our Hudson at Sunset Motel in Rawlins, WY. 2 May 1953



suppose some people are used to this kind of driving, but for a Californian who luxuriates in balmy air and sunshine this was no easy thing to do. I was plenty happy to get home.



Jim in his Fire Engine  
25 January 1953

I never did forget the little red pedal racer car I had when I was very small. It brought back nostalgic memories when we bought Jim a little red fire engine. He seemed to like it and spend quite a bit of time in it.

After he had it a couple years we got the idea of converting the fire engine to a tow truck. I found a framework for the winch and put a pulley on it. Then I rigged up a crank to reel in a cable over the pulley. The cable had a hook on the end so Jim could hook onto a tricycle or wagon to raise the disabled end and tow it in for repairs. A coat of yellow paint with black trim and the logo "Ted's Tow Service" painted on the side finished

the job. He put his new rolling stock to good use for a few more years until he finally grew out of it.



Jim in his Tow Truck  
2 January 1955

About three months after returning from South Dakota Janet was in the hospital again ready to deliver another addition to our family. I was stationed at the old Soquel Forestry Station which was right in downtown Soquel. I could not return as foreman of the Burrell Station because another foreman had taken over when I took a leave of absence. So when I returned to work I was put in Soquel. It was a hole-in-the-wall station shared with the Soquel Fire Department. There were no grounds to speak of and I had only a truck driver and firefighter for a crew, but with days off staggered I only had both of them on duty one day a week. The only good part about this station was it being close to home where Janet and the kids could drive over a visit me occasionally in the evenings.

So I was in Soquel when Janet called one evening that she was going to the hospital. I had made arrangements this time for replacement if I had to take paternity leave. As it was, as I recall, the truck driver was on duty with me so I could leave immediately, which I did. When I got to the hospital the doctor hadn't even arrived and he only lived a few blocks away. I was furious and the nurses were upset, trying to stall the delivery. But Dr. Gillman finally showed up and Daniel Joseph Aldridge was born at Watsonville Community Hospital at 1:00 AM on October 19, 1953. We arranged for Janet's brother and sister-in-law (Bill and Verla Balvin) to be Danny's Godparents. I don't believe Grammy Balvin came to California for Danny's birth. Of course Mom and Pap were present when Danny was baptized on Nov. 1, 1953 at St. Patrick's Church in Watsonville.



Danny's first picture, taken after his baptism  
1 November 1953

Danny was the easiest of the children to care for when he was a baby. The main reason for that was that he started sleeping all night within a few days. That was a big help not having to get up



Janet and Danny  
11 April 1954

to change diapers and feed him. However, we now had four children living in a two-bedroom house and it was pretty crowded. I decided to convert the garage into a bedroom. At that time building permits and inspections were not required for the unincorporated parts of Santa Cruz County and we were just outside the Watsonville city limits. So that hassle was eliminated. While working for Tom Rosewall I was able to get a large window pretty cheap that matched the others in the house. I had to install the glass but that wasn't a problem.

I proceeded to remove the garage door which I was able to sell for \$25. After closing in the front of the house and installing the windows I finished the inside work of installing a door from the living room, constructing the floor and ceiling as well as closets and a built-in desk along one wall, and wiring for electricity. Pap helped me a lot. Part of the garage where the water heater and set tubs were located I made into a laundry room. This part already

had a doorway from the kitchen as well as a side door to the back yard. I used the 2"x6" lumber from a loft in the garage, that I had to remove, to make a picnic table for the back yard. We used that a lot and took it with us when we later moved to Santa Clara.

Next I ran into another problem. Now that we no longer had a garage I had no workshop area. Pap was thinking about tearing down the old chicken house at the ranch and told me if I helped to do that I could salvage the lumber for a workshop. That helped a lot and I was able to scrounge a door and a couple windows. I had to buy new lumber for the siding, material for the roof and a few electrical items but, all in all, I built it pretty inexpensively.

When we first moved to our Arthur Road home there was nothing but a cemetery and open lots between us and Watsonville. Consequently, when I built the fence I made a gate large enough to drive a car through. That came in handy for bringing in supplies for my various projects. It wasn't long, however, before the open space was subdivided and developed. The new H.A. Hyde School was also built to accommodate the many children of the young couples who purchased the homes. This was the era of the post-war baby boom. It was at Hyde School that Cres and Janie attended kindergarten. I don't remember the teacher's name but there was a retired part time helper – Miss Fayhee – who was my third-grade teacher at Radcliff School many years earlier. It was nice to meet her again.

I was now crew foreman and able to come home at nights in the off season, but 24-hour duty was still a hardship during fire season. We got our days off if there wasn't a big fire burning somewhere in the state but very often days off were cancelled because of fires. I have gone as long as a month working 24/7 without a day off. We did get compensating time of – a day for a



My workshop built in December 1954.  
Notice Tuffy's doghouse alongside,  
which I also built, and the clothes line  
poles in front.

day, no overtime – but it was still a strain on both Janet and me when we were separated so much and for so long. So in early 1955 I applied for the civil service position of assistant ranger. I thought I had enough time in to handle that job but the powers-that-be in Sacramento didn't agree with me. My application was turned down. I was determined that I was not going to go through another fire season of 24-hour duty so I started looking for another job.

I first checked with Tom Rosewall because I had worked for him during the summer of 1952. With the experience I had working for him along with helping to build two new Forestry stations (Burrell and Soquel) I thought I could qualify as apprentice carpenter. When I went to Rosewall's office for an interview his son, Tom Jr., who I had worked with on the high school job, was also there. Tom Jr. was gradually taking over his father's responsibilities and he thought pretty highly of my capabilities. They agreed to hire me as a 2<sup>nd</sup> year apprentice. I would still have to go to night school for two more years to become a journeyman carpenter and I would have to join the union. So we set a date when I could start work that would allow me to give the Forestry a 2-week notice.

In the meantime, a friend who lived across the street and worked for Suburban Gas Company told me his employer was looking for a new truck driver. That job appealed to me because I wouldn't have to go to night school or pay union dues. It would also be less stressful and have more novelty than being stuck on one jobsite. So at the last minute I cancelled the construction job and took the Suburban job. I gave the Forestry notice and started my new job in April 1955. I considered it temporary employment until I found something I really wanted to do. I didn't at that time know what that kind of work it would be but I felt certain something would appear.

My job at Suburban was to deliver propane and butane to rural and commercial customers in most of southern Santa Cruz County. It wasn't difficult to learn the ropes and it had the additional perk that I could plan my work to be home for lunch *every day*!! I really enjoyed that. Later I was allowed to drive the propane truck to and from work because we often had emergency calls off hours where someone was out of propane. That saved the expense of using



Kathy with Mimi and Pappy after her baptism on May 29, 1955

my own car. All in all it was a nice job but it was a no-brainer and not much of a challenge. But, as I said, I considered it an interim job so I just enjoyed the pleasantries while I worked there.

The month after I started work for Suburban our second daughter was born. She was considerate and made her debut in the early evening. I was probably called home from work early that Monday to take Janet to the hospital. It wasn't too long that Kathleen Rose Aldridge was born at 7:51 PM on May 16, 1955 in Watsonville Community Hospital. She was a little doll and Mom (Mimi) was so happy that Kathy had the same middle name as hers.

We asked Bill and Verla Balvin to be Kathy's godparents and she was baptized May 29, 1955 at St. Patrick's Church. I always enjoyed having a new baby in the house. It seemed like the novelty never wore off.



It was about this same time that I decided to be confirmed in the Church. I had to take instructions in the evenings. The notion of becoming a “Soldier for God” through confirmation, rather than just a child of God through baptism, appealed to me. I was still



Kathy one year old

pretty military oriented but for my state of mind in those years it was a good feeling. Nevertheless, Confirmation did seem to bring about some deeper degree of commitment to my concept of spirituality at that time.

We had a very painful decision to make during 1954-55. There was a surge of polio in 1952. It hit close to home when Assistant Ranger Bob Ford’s daughter died from the disease. Bob Ford was my immediate supervisor in the Forestry. In April 1954 a massive polio vaccination trial began in the US using Salk’s injected dead-virus inoculation. Janet and I struggled with the decision to have our children vaccinated but we had a strong gut feeling that the vaccine wasn’t safe. We held off but when Bob Ford’s daughter died we were really torn. Nevertheless, we continued to hold off.

In April 1955, as I was just starting work at Suburban, a case of paralytic polio was reported in an Idaho girl who had been recently vaccinated. More cases popped up with paralysis beginning in the arm that had been vaccinated. In May 1955 the vaccinations were suspended and the problem seemed to be with serum manufactured by Cutter Laboratories where production methods had not completely killed the poliovirus. Eleven had died from the vaccine and hundreds were paralyzed. It was tragic but we thanked God that we had not vaccinated our children.

Eventually our children were vaccinated, as were we, but I don’t recall when it was. Use of the Salk vaccine resumed after rigid quality measures were mandated. In 1960 the Sabin oral live polio vaccine came into use where a drop of the serum was put on a sugar cube and eaten. But 1954-55 was a time of mental turmoil for us in deciding what to do with the health and possibly the life of our children held in balance. It was a risk either way and we are still thankful that God helped us make the right decision.

I continued peddling gas. My route still had some old Butane customers. Butane liquefied petroleum (lpg) gas came on the market before propane lpg. It burns hotter but it also turns to liquid and will not vaporize at the freezing temperature of water. On a freezing cold morning a butane customer could not get the heaters or stove to work. That was a big disadvantage for the customer. The disadvantage to me was that propane cannot be put in the old butane tanks because of its higher pressure. To fill up the butane tanks I had to return to the Suburban plant, pump all the propane out of the 1,000-gallon tank on my truck, and load it with butane. Consequently, I tried to convert my butane customers to propane. My manager allowed me to offer what we called meter gas at no charge for installing a company-owned tank and meter. The customer would then pay for only the gas actually used according to the meter. It wasn’t long before I converted all my butane customers.



Kathy and Danny  
November 12, 1955

I eventually cleaned up my route to where I could cover it in three days. The manager then assigned me to do service work on the other days, which was much more interesting. This involved installing propane tanks and piping and fixing stoves and heaters, calibrating ovens, etc. Because of my carpentry experience I was the only one who could install floor and wall furnaces – I even did this work occasionally for the Salinas manager. I also converted a lot of engines from gasoline to propane. I did this on fork lifts, tractors, all the trucks at a cement plant, and probably more.

I was even offered a manager's position at another plant but this wasn't the type of work I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I did take the county civil service test for building inspector when Santa Cruz County started applying building codes to unincorporated areas. I passed both the written and oral interview but not high enough to get the job. Then events turned out as I had anticipated. After two years with Suburban the opportunity turned up that I felt would materialize but didn't know when, or what it would be. But I am getting ahead of my story. Another very important event occurred while I was working for Suburban.



Tuffy – June 28, 1957

Taken by Cres



Teri after her baptism

One afternoon I was peddling gas and returned to the plant to refill my truck. When I walked into the office the secretary cried: "Get up to the hospital quick – your wife is having a baby." I didn't have my car at the plant because we were using my truck to drive to work and back. So I hopped into my old propane truck and drove it up to the hospital on the "Heights." There was a vacant lot across the street from the emergency entrance and that's where I parked the truck as I ran into the hospital. Teri Jean Aldridge was born on January 23, 1957 at 2:26 PM in Watsonville Community Hospital. She was our sixth child. She was also the fifth and last to be born in this hospital.

John and Mavis Balvin (Janet's twin brother and his wife) were happy to be Teri's godparents. She was baptized in St. Patrick's Church on February 10, 1957. When the priest was filling out the baptismal certificate he asked who Teri's patron saint is. We told him St. Therese of Lisoux. Then he started to write "Therese" on the certificate but we stopped him, saying her name is just Teri, spelled T-e-r-i. He asked where we got a name like that, adding: "The rest of your kids have sensible names," When we picked St. Therese as Teri's patron saint we decided we wanted a more unique spelling of the name. Hence, Teri became Teri, and that was that.

Shortly after Teri's birth we heard somewhere that Lockheed was moving their newly-formed missile division to Sunnyvale, California. That tweaked my interest and I decided to look into it. I found out that Lockheed's employment office for the Bay Area had been set up on Lenzen Avenue in San Jose, so I went up there to put in an application. The person I talked to was very interested. He said with my schooling I should have no problem getting hired and then if I went back to college part time and completed my degree I would



Teri in Summer of '58



Teri -- Christmas 1958

advance pretty fast. He set up an interview for me with someone from the engineering department which at that time was located in the newly constructed Building 103, which was the only building constructed at that time.

Now we were at a decision point. On the one hand, this job would let me get back into the field I studied for and in which I yearned to work. On the other hand, we had a home in Watsonville where all our friends were – both ours and the kids'. We talked it over and prayed for the right decision. Finally we decided to cut the ties and move. We made one caveat. We made a promise to God that if we were successful and made a lot of money we would not let it go to our head. We would use it to raise a good family and help people in need. That promise we never forgot.

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## Chapter 23 – Forestry Adventures

Before moving on to our life in Santa Clara and my work at Lockheed I want to tell more about the six years I worked for the State Forestry. I'll start with a little history leading up to that time.

California established its first Board of Forestry in 1885 but it was short lived. A hostile political climate forced its demise in 1893. Later, on March 18, 1905, the California legislature approved a new Board of Forestry and the position of State Forester. The function of the State Forester was to motivate local communities to set up their own system of fire wardens and crews – the state provided no funding. This system prevailed until 1919 when the state did appropriate money to hire four Rangers. This number was increased to ten in 1920 and the process of dividing the state into Ranger Districts began. The number of Rangers and other specialized personnel (Inspectors and Lookouts) increased gradually over the next few years. By 1927 the State Forester had 28 Rangers, 7 Inspectors, 6 Patrolmen, and 9 Lookouts working for him. In 1927 the state created the Department of Natural Resources with the Division of Forestry and other divisions under it. The first state fire trucks appeared in 1929. Then, during the depression years of the 1930s until World War II the forestry infrastructure in the US increased dramatically and California reaped its share. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCCs) constructed some 50 lookout towers and numerous fire stations in California, as well as building hundreds of miles of fire roads and trails. In the early 1940s the state was divided into six administrative districts with a Deputy State Forester in charge of each. These districts were in turn divided into ranger districts, usually by county. The Forest Practice Act was passed in 1945 to regulate timber harvesting – logging and sawmill operators.

That was the organization that existed when I went to work for the Division of Forestry on May 1, 1949. I started as a firefighter with temporary appointment of six months. I was assigned to the headquarters crew in Felton. Bob Anderson was Foreman and Bill Davidson was Truck Driver. Bill worked exclusively in the large garage at Felton.

Being the county headquarters, there were quite a few vehicles to keep up and there were often visitors that added to the workload. The crew had two fire trucks. One was a large GMC tanker which carried 400 gallons of water along with an auxiliary engine and pump, hoses (hard rubber on a live reel and collapsible cotton), back pumps, and other firefighting equipment. This one we called "The Big Jimmy." The other was an older GMC that carried the crew. It carried 200 gallons of water and the pump was run by a power-take-off from the main engine and transmission. It also had a live reel, back pumps, and many types of hand tools for fighting fire – double-bit axes, Pulaskis, McClouds, Kerrick rakes, and shovels. This we referred to as "The Crew Truck."

Because of my background in mechanics I was given the permanent work assignment of helping Bill Davidson in the garage. I was also assigned as No. 1 Hoseman for the Big Jimmy. Only two people rode on it – the Truck Driver and me. But I had to learn to operate the pumps on both trucks, which I was anxious to do. Sundays were devoted entirely to training, barring any fire calls. One Sunday the Foreman asked me to instruct the crew on the use of the pumps, the

different types, how they work, how to prime them when drafting water out of a creek or cistern, and all the safety precautions for both the operator and the mechanical nature of the pumps. The Big Jimmy had an auxiliary engine behind the cab just to run the pump, which was the centrifugal type. The crew truck, which was an older GMC, had the pump mounted on the front of the vehicle in front of the radiator. It was driven by a power-take-off from the transmission. The same engine that powered the truck was used to run the pump. (New trucks that replaced these old GMCs all had auxiliary engines to run the pump.) I first gave a lecture on the pumps and then actually demonstrated to the crew how each worked. The Assistant Ranger for the northern area of the county, Del Curtis, and Associate Ranger Lou Reese were both in the audience and they seemed impressed with my presentation.

The crew barracks was in the area behind the county headquarters, as was the garage, warehouse, and other facilities. Fire calls for the headquarters crew came through the dispatcher in the front office. There was an intercom system between the dispatcher and the barracks, with extensions in other accessible areas. If there was a fire the dispatcher rang an alarm bell and the foreman went to one of the intercoms to get directions. Meanwhile, the drivers started up the trucks and the crew loaded aboard.

My first fire came at dusk one evening after dinner. I had just gone to the latrine and sat down on the john when the alarm went off. How awkward! I sorta wiped hurriedly and headed for the Big Jimmy. It was fairly dark and I hopped into the passenger seat. The regular driver was on days off and a younger foreman was supposed to drive the Big Jimmy. Then another person hopped in beside me. Thinking the foreman might not be aware of some regulations I told him there were only supposed to be two in the cab. Then I was very embarrassed. As we pulled out of the garage and under the yard light I saw that it was Ranger Gum driving – the person who had initiated that regulation. He just wanted a little excitement so he took over the fire truck.

The emergency was a truck fire on Highway-17 which at that time was three lanes total – one in each direction and a suicide lane in between for passing. The fire was a cattle truck. It had a flat tire which caught fire because the driver continued to drive on it. When we arrived the driver had already opened the gates to let the livestock escape. It was not a serious fire, however, and we confined the damage to the tire. I still wonder how that driver ever located all his cattle that were scattered over the countryside.

The first campaign fire I was on occurred in June at Bear Trap Canyon in Monterey County. Santa Cruz County was asked to provide a crew so a few people from each station were selected. I was one selected from the Felton crew. (Later the policy was changed so that when a crew went out of county it would be a full crew from one station because they were used to working together. Then a crew would be made up from the other station to cover the station vacated.) I put my bag together and rode on the back of a crew truck. We went south of Monterey on Highway-1 as far as the Little Sur River. There we took a private logging road inland to the fire. Our crew was assigned the night shift and we went on the fire line that evening. This excerpt from the Area Fire History compiled by the Midcoast Fire Brigade describes the Bear Trap Canyon Fire:

The summer of 1949 brought two fires to Bixby Mountain. In June a fire started at the summit in Bear Trap Canyon owned by Charles Vander Ploeg, and in addition to the mill it destroyed several cabins as well as trucks and other vehicles. It was of suspicious origin, but the suspect, a delinquent rich kid from Pebble Beach who used to hang out in the area, was never arrested. Altogether 123 acres of timber, 120 acres of new growth, 208 acres of brush and grass burned.

Two loggers burned to death in Bear Trap Canyon while trying to retrieve a new chainsaw that had just been purchased. They died in the creek bed, one man trying to shield the other from the flames. One of the men left a wife and two small children.

We learned on the fire that the two loggers didn't actually burn to death. They suffocated because the smoke was so thick. The next morning while we were hiking back to the fire camp after we were relieved from our shift, we cut across the bottom of the canyon where the lumber mill was. The smoke was still so thick that we had difficulty breathing. We went past the spot where the two men had perished in the creek. They were apparently trying to get some fresher air near the water, as well as keep cool. We spent several days on that fire. The canyon opens to the coastal fog and cooler air, and that helped to control it.

It wasn't too long after I started work at Felton that Bill Davidson got another job and left the Forestry. That left our crew without a driver and there were none available on the civil service list. Ranger Gum was authorized to make a temporary appointment. I guess my knowledge of fire pump operation along with my mechanical background and the fact that I was already taking care of and servicing vehicles made me the best candidate. I also had a valid chauffeur's license. So I was given the temporary appointment on July 1, 1949, only two months after starting to work, and was now second in command of the crew, under Bob Anderson.

Before I was appointed, however, Assistant Ranger Del Curtis took me for a driving test. We went in the smaller GMC crew truck which was so old it didn't even have synchromesh gears in the transmission. I believe it was a 1939 model. He took me up Felton Grade to show me how to split gears. The truck had a 5-speed transmission and a 2-speed rear end. By shifting the 2-speed rear end in synch with the transmission, the 5 speeds could be split into 10 gear ratios. He drove first and showed me how. Then I took the wheel and, after grinding gears a couple times, I got the hang of it. I drove clear to the top of Felton Grade splitting gears up and down the gear train on that steep and winding road. It was actually kind of fun after I got used to it. Well, I passed the test. Later trucks I drove had a vacuum shift rear end and a synchromesh transmission, and were much easier to manipulate.

My first fire call as a driver came at night. A little north of Boulder Creek a car had run off the road and caught fire. I hopped in the Big Jimmy with the firefighter assigned to me and we took off up Highway-9 with red lights flashing and siren screaming. Other units were also dispatched. We zipped through Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek until we reached the fire scene. I parked on the edge of the embankment and my hose man took the 1-inch live reel hose down to the vehicle. Soon the fire was squelched. As I was walking around the burned out car checking for hot spots or the cause of fire, a bystander told me he had heard a woman screaming from inside the car. I checked inside the capsized car but it was still too hot and smoky to determine anything.

Since the fire was now well under control, Associate Ranger Lou Reese told me to return to Felton to cover that station. So I did. Shortly after refilling the water tank on the Big Jimmy and fueling it, the rest of the crew and overhead returned. I found out that there was, indeed, a woman who perished in the fire. What made it more traumatic for me was that the vehicle was a 1936 Ford sedan just like the one we owned. Knowing, now, how easily they catch fire in an accident made me worry a lot about Janet driving old Betsy. I recall giving her many instructions and precautions to observe.

On October 4, 1949 I took the open California civil service examination for Forest Fire Truck Driver. I believe it was a District 5 examination, not statewide. District 5 at that time included



Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, San Benito, Monterey and I believe San Luis Obispo Counties. I waited for the results but they did not come before my temporary appointment ran out on October 31st. Felton had to lay me off. I don't believe I was home more than a week when I received the results. I had placed No. 1 on the civil service list. Felton called me up and on November 10<sup>th</sup> I was back at work doing the same thing I had been doing ten days before. I was really happy. Also, now that I was civil service I could wear the Forestry arm patch on my uniform.

Fire season was now over, however. There was no more crew and truck drivers were only kept on during the winter because of an agreement with the county to provide fire protection in the rural areas. So, indirectly, I was actually working for the county. But that was only indirectly as I still reported up the Forestry chain of command. What was bad was that I still had to be on 24-hour duty. That was different in Felton than in the outlying stations. After the headquarters office crew went home at 5 o'clock I had to fill in as county dispatcher. I even slept in the office -- in the dispatcher's bedroom -- to be close to the radio so that when crews were dispatched I could maintain contact with them. If it were something big, of course, I would call the regular dispatcher back to duty.



CDF Shoulder Patch

One day I was talking with Bob Ford, the Assistant Ranger for the southern end of Santa Cruz County. I asked him if there was any chance I could get assigned to Corralitos for the winter. That would put me only about six miles from home and Janet could visit me occasionally. It was also a local phone call so I could make occasional short contact with her. However, being a fire phone that privilege had to be exercised very judiciously. Bob Ford was always a very considerate person and my request was granted. I was very happy. I was also relieved to get away from the fuss and hubbub of county headquarters.

As I recall there was a structural fire and a few small fires in vegetation that I responded to. Much of my day was working with a crew doing construction work at the station. We constructed a new reinforced concrete, 25-man septic tank and a new concrete back porch as well as a concrete retaining wall. Using redwood poles and posts harvested by the California Youth Authority (CYA) crew at the top of Empire Grade, I built a rustic fence around two sides of the station property. When Jim Jolley, the state painter, came to refurbish some rooms I also helped him. One learns to be a jack-of-all-trades in the Forestry.

Corralitos was Pap's station so when the 1950 fire season rolled around I had to move somewhere else. It was against Forestry regulations to have relatives assigned to the same station. (There was always a little bitterness that Ranger Gum's wife could work in the same office as his but rank has its privileges, I guess.) I really wanted to stay in the southern end of the county closer to home and I asked Bob Ford if there was any possibility that could happen. He arranged for me to have the



Me by Dodge crew truck at the old Corralitos Station -- 1950

Soquel station. The station at that time was in the middle of town and shared a building with the Soquel Volunteer Fire Department.


Only a two-man crew was assigned to Soquel at that time – a truck driver and a firefighter. Johnny Parmenter was the firefighter assigned to me. We had a Mack fire truck which was a tanker comparable to the Big Jimmy in Felton. It also had an auxiliary engine behind the cab that drove a large Hale fire pump. I would be in charge of the station. On my days off a truck driver from another station would relieve me. That old Soquel station was a hole in the wall. I described it some in the last chapter so I won't repeat it here. I also had to answer the fire phone for the volunteer fire department, which set off a loud siren on the roof that was so loud I had difficulty getting the fire information on the phone so I could brief them on the location. If the fire was in the forest area I would also respond.

In July there was a big fire in the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Felton crew was on it. Our Soquel crew was dispatched to cover Felton in case of another fire. (Felton is the busiest station in the north county and Corralitos is busiest in the south. Soquel lies midway between and was the swing crew to cover either station if the regular crew would be out for a considerable time.) As acting headquarters foreman in Felton I also helped oversee material support for the Fire Camp. Vern Rylander, nearing retirement, we just called him "Ry," was the warehouse foreman and I worked with him on the supply aspect. He congratulated me one day on being promoted to foreman. I told him he was mistaken. I had taken the civil service exam for that position the previous month, on May 19<sup>th</sup>, but had heard nothing on the outcome. A little while



The Walking Bear Badge. This is the badge I was issued except mine was Badge No. 124.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA



DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Sacramento, July 19, 1951

Know All To Whom These Presents Shall Come:

That Mr. Robert G. Aldridge

Forest Firefighter Foreman

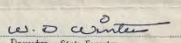
employed by

The California Division of Forestry

has been designated by the State Forester to perform duties as provided in the law enforcement policy established by the State Board of Forestry.

BADGE NO. 124

DATE EXPIRES Until Revoked

  
Deputy State Forester

Form F.C. 53

later I was summoned to the head office.

There I was told that I had passed the foreman's exam #2 in the district and that I had been promoted on July 5, 1950. I was amazed. In only 14 months I had gone from temporary firefighter to civil service foreman. When I saw Ry again he rubbed it in, saying: "Do you believe me now?"

The position of Forest Firefighter Foreman is a law enforcement position. After I finished my probationary period I was issued a badge and certificate that authorized me to enforce the Forest and Fire Laws and applicable sections of the Health and Safety Code. The badge pictured, known as the "walking bear" badge, was issued to Forest Firefighter Foreman starting in 1945. It stayed in service until 1970 when it was replaced with the bear top shield style badge and the title was changed to Fire Captain.

During my time in the Forestry I never wrote one citation. The few cases where I might have written one involved illegal burning. I found that trying to work with the person was more effective in gaining their cooperation. I first explained how their action violated certain fire laws and why it could be dangerous. I then allowed them to continue burning if it was safe and, instead of writing a citation, I wrote a burning permit to make it legal. In these cases the violator was always 100% cooperative in the future. I enjoyed developing rapport with the people in my area of fire protection.

The Forestry used FM (frequency modulation) radios in all its equipment. Each unit transmitted on one frequency and received on another. Consequently, the trucks and other units could not talk directly with one another. The reason for two frequencies was that FM travels line-of-sight, it will not bend around cliffs or over hills. A repeater station is used which was very similar to today's cell phone towers. The repeater for our area was on Loma Prieta. The repeater, being up high, receives on the frequency the units transmit on and then repeats the message on its transmitter which is the same frequency the units receive.

There were still blind areas where we could not transmit or receive. Some of the higher officials had AM (amplitude modulation) radios for this reason. AM does bend somewhat and it can usually get to the headquarters which also had an AM radio. Then the headquarters relayed any message to the field by FM. All radio operators had to have a license but I was just issued mine. I didn't have to take a test.

The frequency for the Forestry was the same all over the state so any unit could operate anywhere. A big problem was that the Division of Fish and Game at that time shared the same frequency with the Forestry. This problem was magnified when we had emergency fire communication. If someone happened to press their microphone button at the same time I did, both messages would be garbled and unreadable. One hot summer afternoon when a wildfire was raging out of control the Fish and Game were carrying out a sting to catch poachers. When the conflicting transmissions got bad Les Gum came on the air and said: "This is Ranger Gum and we have an emergency fire situation. Keep the air cleared of all routine traffic so the fire traffic can get through." There was rebuttal.

We used the 10-code and part of the 9-code to minimize radio traffic. The 10-code is universal in all agencies. All I can remember of the 9-code is that a fire is a 904 and when the fire is under control it is 955. At times when there were a lot of fires burning the air waves could get seriously jammed – everyone waiting to click their mike button to say something as soon as someone stops. It can be really hard to get in to give information. Suppose, for instance, that I was the Corralitos crew (radio call letters 5515) on a grass fire in Browns Valley. I get the fire under control and want to return to my station. If I can get on the air for just a couple seconds I can relay the information: "904 is 955, 5515, 10-19." I have said the fire is under control and the Corralitos crew is returning to its station (10-19 means return, or returning, to station). Felton has to merely acknowledge: "10-4, 5515." (10-4 means OK)

I believe it was later in July that a large fire started in the Trinity Alps in Shasta County of northern California. There was manpower (San Quentin, sawmill crews, and loggers) available to fight the fire but the Shasta ranger needed overhead and truck drivers. So I was chosen to go. A light plane and pilot at the nearby Capitola Airport were chartered and three of us, two truck drivers and myself, were flown to Redding. When we landed it was 115° in the shade. The assistant ranger who picked us up at the airport said we couldn't get to the fire camp at the

moment because it was surrounded by fire. The fire had burned 4,000 acres in 4 hours. What a scary arrival that was for us.

We went with the assistant ranger in his pickup trying to find an opening to the fire camp. The fire was burning through grass in the area of Igo and Ono – two little towns southwest of Redding which at that time consisted of only a few houses alongside the road. We travelled from house to house, saving one and then moving to the next. There was no water tank on the pickup but it did have some fire tools and a couple 5-gallon backpacks of water. We used those. I've always bragged since then that we saved the towns of Igo and Ono. There was a particularly obnoxious bystander that was giving us a lot of static. Finally the assistant ranger told him to get lost or we'd give him a shovel. When a fire is out of control a forest officer can draft anyone in the vicinity to help fight the fire. Anyway, the threat worked for this guy and he didn't bother us again.

We continued to drive around the fire and do what we could. We got out of the pickup on one road to look around. Then I heard a huge roar gathering in crescendo which I thought was several bulldozers coming down the hill. A wind started picking up which I thought felt good in that heat. The assistant ranger suddenly said: "Let's get out of here." Then it dawned on me that this was a crown fire racing toward us through the treetops. That was the first time I'd heard the roar of a really huge conflagration devouring a forest, or felt the strength of the wind as the fire drew air into the inferno to feed the blaze. We ran for the pickup and took off down the road. When I looked back through the rear window I could see burning branches flying through the air and landing in the grassy area where we had stood. The grass ignited like gasoline and in a second each new spot fire spread to a ten-foot diameter, and then kept spreading. I realized that I was going to learn a lot on this fire.

We eventually heard on the radio that communication had been reestablished with the fire camp and that they needed fuel for the equipment. We would go in with a stakeside truck carrying several 55gallon drums of gasoline and other supplies. My job was to ride in the back of the stakeside and brush off any burning embers that fell on the drums as we drove through the burn which was still pretty active. We eventually reached the fire camp about dusk and I was told to relax for the night and be ready to go on the fire line early in the morning.

I was awakened early the next morning well before daylight. After breakfast I was given my crew. It was from a plywood mill and, as I recall, there were about twelve men. An assistant ranger took us out to show me the sector I was assigned. It was along a creek. The fire was creeping slowly down the hillside toward this creek and our job was to stop it there and not let it jump across to swoop up the next hillside. A fire burns much slower when spreading downhill than when burning uphill. Also, the early morning hours are when the fire "lies down" and burns the slowest. The peak burning time starts in the afternoon.

There was plenty of work to do cutting brush and grass to make the creek a better fire stop. A crew of 20 inmates from San Quinton was on the sector behind us. We were working along when I noticed the leader of my plywood crew sitting down holding his chest. I rushed over to him. He told me he had a bad heart but didn't mention it because he wanted to do his share. I don't remember all the details but somehow we got him evacuated and the rest of us went back to our job. I was later told that the man was OK but wouldn't be back fighting fire.

I spent several 12-hour shifts on that stretch of line with my plywood mill crew. I also got to know quite a few of the men in the San Quinton crew. But, worst of all, my shoes were wearing

out. I couldn't spend a lot on shoes and this pair had seen better days. The soles were starting to flap loose. After a few days some burned-out trees started to fall. It was creepy walking out to the fire line in the early-morning darkness and hearing a tree start to teeter, then the increasing crescendo as it fell through the branches of other trees and finally crashed into the ground. Some were pretty close and in the darkness we couldn't see where they were or which way they were falling. We just held our breath and hoped.

When the creek line was well secured I was relieved of that sector. One morning I rode with an associate ranger to another portion of the fire. This area was brush. One whole hillside was covered with manzanita brush higher than my head. A dozer was widening a line from the top down through this brush when it threw a track. We were going out to assess the damage and determine the fix. We parked on the dirt fire road and hiked up the dozer trail to the crippled Cat. I don't recall what all was discussed with the dozer driver but soon we heard a roaring that was getting louder fast. I knew what it was this time. Someone yelled: "Let's get out of here." We ran full speed down the dozer trail with the fire on our heels – it burns hot and fast on manzanita. As we hopped into the pickup and sped out the fire was almost on us and the flames in that manzanita were at least twenty feet high. I had to roll up my window to keep out the heat. Yep, I was learning a lot on this fire. I never heard but I don't think the dozer was anything but scrap metal after that.

Early one morning I started out afoot with several other overhead. We climbed and climbed in an area that was completely unfamiliar to me. Finally we reached our destination high up on a ridge. A fireline had been cut from the top of the ridge to the creek below. I then recognized the area as one I had climbed up to from the creek a few days earlier and the fireline had been cut by the San Quinton crew. We had come up from the opposite side and that's why I didn't recognize the landmarks.

The fire was quiet in this area now but if a wind whipped it up again that flimsy fireline would never hold. Our task was to backfire from that line so there was nothing left to burn long before a wildfire could reach it. There are critical techniques to backfiring and they vary under different circumstances. Here I learned how to backfire from a line running vertically up the mountain. We started at the top and lit a fire along the line. When we had done this for a hundred feet or so, and it had burned a little way in from the line, we cut inward perpendicular to the line lighting fire for 20 feet or so. Then the fire would burn vigorously uphill to make a cleaner burn. One thing you don't want to do with a backfire is just scorch the fuel so that it burns better when the main fire gets to it. A clean burn is essential. Working one small sector at a time made it easy to extinguish any sparks that jump across the line. When that first sector had burned out we repeated the procedure, and kept repeating it as we worked down the mountainside.

Other methods of backfiring depended on the terrain and the roads available. If there was a road available it could be used to backfire from. That saved the time and energy of cutting a fire trail, thus allowing an earlier start to backfiring and saving acres from being burned. (using a road meant you did not have to build a fire trail far ahead of the fire in order to have time to build that trail.) In remote areas, if accessible to a bulldozer, a wide dozer trail is scraped along a ridge from which to backfire. This is the quickest and most efficient method but has the disadvantage of the backfire having to burn downhill which causes it to burn slower and sometimes not burn as clean. If the fire trail has to be cut by hand we would build it a little way below the ridge and on the opposite side from which the main fire is burning. The backfire should be lit as the main fire is swooping up the ridge. The rising hot-air draft from the main fire will create a draft to fan



the backfire and make it burn vigorously and clean. Then, ideally, as both fires reach the ridge from opposite sides they burn out all the fuel and go out. Of course mop up and patrolling is still required. Because backfires are tricky and dangerous, it is illegal for anyone except a forest officer to start them unless it is a case of life or death.

We spent the day backfiring on the Shasta County fire. Toward evening we were finished and were ready to head back to the fire camp. Most of the men headed back the way we came. I decided it would be closer if I went down to the creek, where I had been working the past several days, and followed it back to camp. That I did but I had a few qualms when I didn't remember seeing some places along the way. But I kept the faith and knew if I followed the creek downstream I would come out somewhere. I did. I came out right at the fire camp.

After a week the fire was under control. I was happy because I didn't think my shoes would last another shift. But at that time fires were burning all over the state. There was a particularly bad one on the Eel River. The Sacramento dispatcher, who controlled our movements now, wanted to send us (me and the two truck drivers) directly from the Shasta Fire to the Eel River Fire. The Redding ranger, however, refused to release us until we had 24 hours rest. He got us a hotel room downtown and we rested up and took in a movie. I was still worried about what I would do for shoes. But the next day all the fires were under control and we were flown back to Santa Cruz County.

At another time I was sent south as overhead on a fire. This time it was in San Luis Obispo County. The fire was in the mountains somewhere between Pismo Beach and Santa Maria. Three of us went down in a pickup. I was assigned a crew of 20 men from Soledad Prison. They were trustees, of course, but they just loved to get on a fire because they ate so well. In a fire camp it was nothing to have a T-bone steak and a quart of milk for a meal plus everything that went with it. Fire costs came out of the general fund and not each county's budget. The general fund was considered unlimited by the Forestry and there was no skimping. Of course fire camps then weren't like today. Everything was out in the open. There were no tents and no air-conditioned command center. We were given one blanket and we found a place on the ground to sleep. We just had to let the Camp Boss know where we were so we could be called early in the morning.

Because they eat so well on a fire the prisoners work very hard. I think they are the best firefighting crews I have worked with. Some get a lot of experience and become skilled firefighters. Prison crews usually consisted of 20 men and a supervisor. I was supposed to tell the supervisor what I wanted done and he would tell the men. It didn't usually work that way. Supervisors preferred to loaf around the fire camp than be out on the line. That was the case with this Soledad crew. Consequently I worked directly with the men, and many chats with them during breaks. They were anxious to tell about their life. Every prisoner I ever talked with had an alibi about how they were railroaded into prison.

The San Luis Obispo fire was not a raging inferno like the one in Shasta County. Here the fire was under control but there was a lot of mop up work to do. That is a tedious and dirty job. First we go completely along the edge of the burn looking and feeling for hot spots. I mean literally "feeling." We actually walked along the burn's edge dragging our hands through the ashes. One locates a hot spot very quickly using that technique. When we are satisfied the edge is cold we start working inward. Anything that is burning has to be extinguished. Hot coals are scraped off of logs and stumps and mixed with dirt. Coals mixed 50-50 with dirt will go out. Any standing



dead trees that are burning (called “snags”) have to be cut down. If we are unable to do it we call in a felling crew. This is a brief description of mop up work. My crew did a very good job. There is nothing more embarrassing than being called back to extinguish a fire you left as out. That was the thrust of our activity on that fire.

As I mentioned above, the Soquel crew was a swing crew, of sorts, to respond where backup or coverage was needed. When a fire started near the southern end of Hunter Liggett Military Reservation in Monterey County, the Soquel crew was dispatched to answer a call for assistance. I had a firefighter who had been a volunteer in the Capitols Fire Department and I heard continually about how they did it in Capitola. He and I headed south in the old Mack tanker and arrived at the fire camp about dusk. The fire was close and there was a small mountain (about the size of Bat Mountain by the lakes at Arroyo Seco) that the fire reached. When the fire did reach it there was a huge “SWOOOSH” as it consumed the mountain in a matter of seconds. My firefighter stood there in awe with his eyes bugging out. I couldn’t help saying “I bet you never saw anything like that in Capitola.”

We were immediately dispatched up a mountain road to start backfiring to stop the main fire. As we reached the summit there was an assistant ranger in a pickup waiting. He and the two of us were alone there to do the backfiring. When we stopped the truck to discuss the strategy a deer, fleeing the fire, stopped briefly a few feet away near the truck. It was so frightened of the fire that it wasn’t concerned about us. It is true that when animals flee a fire, predator and prey will run side by side to achieve safety.

We started backfiring from the road and worked throughout the night and the next morning. We were very successful and the fire was being controlled at the road. We continued working and watching for spot fires across the road into the afternoon, which is the burning time of the day when the fire picks up momentum. The assistant ranger got a call on the radio telling him the fire had slopped over down below and that we should evacuate the area. He called back to say we had stopped the fire at the road and that maybe we should stay with it. I will never forget the response: “Didn’t you understand? The fire is coming up below you. GET OUT OF THERE!!!” We did and had to drive through a lot of fire to get down through it.

Somewhere along the way the Mack developed a cracked fuel line and we were losing gasoline pretty fast. When we got down to the flats there was unorganized chaos. The fire had already burned a few thousand acres that afternoon. I spent the rest of the day driving from ranch to ranch to save the buildings. It was like Igo and Ono all over again. Every time we successfully saved a ranch house complex I had to beg 5 gallons of gas to keep the Mack going. The rancher was always happy to oblige. Then we were off to the next ranch in the fire’s path. That is the way it went for the entire afternoon.

By evening we had gone 36 hours without sleep and eating emergency rations carried on the truck. The fire boss didn’t want to pull us off the line so we were allowed to park at a ranch house that had been evacuated to spend the night. There we would be readily available if an emergency cropped up. I believe there was another tanker truck with us by that time. In the back yard we found some old steel cots and we went to sleep on them – right on the metal springs. It was very uncomfortable. In the morning we saw a pile of mattresses nearby but the previous evening we were too tired and sleepy to notice them.

Also the next morning, I saw a river of gasoline running down the driveway from the Mack truck. I radioed fire camp that the gas tank was almost empty and the truck needed repair.

Reluctantly, I was allowed to return to fire camp where the district mechanic installed another fuel line. But more important to me and my crewman was a hot meal and a chance to get some real shut-eye for the rest of the day.

By evening I was assigned a long section of cold line that had to be patrolled in case of a flare-up. It was in eastern foothills of Jolon Valley and part of the Hearst property, just over the mountain range from the famous castle. It was a rough road into the line and I had to park quite a way back and walk in. There were to be a contingent of soldiers from Hunter Liggett to patrol the line and I was to oversee the operation. I walked the entire length of the line and back again to familiarize myself with it before the soldiers arrived. They arrived with a lieutenant and sergeant in charge. I mentioned to the lieutenant that I'd like to drive our fire truck to the beginning of the fire line but he said only a four-wheel-drive vehicle could make it. So I dismissed the idea.

The lieutenant stayed with his jeep and sent the sergeant with me to distribute the men. I suggested intervals to space the soldiers but the sergeant said we'd all walk to the end and drop the men off at proper spacing on the way back. That way they would all have to walk the same distance. So that's what we did.

A little later I decided to walk the line again to see how everyone was doing. I ran into some cows and I walked through them clapping my hands to shoo them out of the way. Later I found out they were a herd of Hearst's wild cattle. Anyway, I walked the entire line and couldn't find a soldier anywhere. They were all in the bushes sleeping. When I got back to the beginning the lieutenant was in his jeep asleep. The situation seemed hopeless and I didn't know what to do. So I told my crewman we'd walk back to our truck and wait there where it was more comfortable.

We sat in the truck for a while but I couldn't stand being that far away from the section of line I was responsible for. So I told my crewman we were going to drive in. He jerked fully awake at that. I can't remember what he said but he questioned the wisdom of my decision. But I was the boss so we started in. It was rough going but we made it. When we pulled up behind the lieutenant's jeep I could see his wide-eyed look of startled sudden awakening as my headlights shined on his back window. He learned that sometimes a two-wheel-drive truck can surprise you. That is the essence of what happened on that fire. We were eventually released and went back to our station.

One evening I was called to a fire in the mountains behind Aptos. For some reason I was alone. The main part of the fire was up a steep slope and a logging company dozer had put a trail around it. They also had a crew mopping it up and water would help a lot, and I had 400 gallons on the Mack fire truck. The problem was that the dozer trail was too steep for the old Mack to climb. So they hitched me onto the dozer and it pulled me up. The tank was pumped out and the fire was pretty cold. Now all I had to do was get the Mack back down that dozer trail. I made it but it was a wild ride. Using the brakes in that soft ground, even in the lowest gear, caused the back end to fishtail from one side to the other. I was going a pretty good clip by the time I reached the bottom. At least the tank was empty or those 3,200 extra pounds in back would have made the Mack want to switch ends on the way down.

I won't describe the many structural fires I was on in detail. Often we were lucky and got there in time to save a building. At other times all we could do was keep the fire from spreading and save adjacent buildings. Sometimes we ran into hazardous chemicals. While returning from a

fire at Harkins Slough we discovered a packing house on the edge of Watsonville smoking from burning sulfur. We called the Watsonville Fire Department which had the proper masks and safety equipment, and whose area it was in. And once the entire crew had to be taken off a fire to receive emergency treatment for exposure to burning organic phosphates (parathion). I was dispatched to a military transport aircraft crash where none survived, and a crop duster forced landing where the pilot escaped unscathed but died later from exposure to parathion powder that spilled from the planes hopper. I've been on many vehicle fires and one fatal house fire where two men burned to death. After the fire had cooled down I helped the coroner put the remains in body bags. I'll let this one paragraph suffice for the structure/vehicle/aircraft fire experiences I had and concentrate my story on forest fires and other types of wild fires which are what we were really trained for and equipped to fight.

Now that I was a foreman I could go home at night when fire season ended. There were many jobs that foremen performed during the winter months. Many are small, such as maintenance and repair of stations, fire road upkeep, making signs to post along highways during fire season, phone line maintenance, and other sundry tasks. One entire week in the springtime is devoted to training where various experts are invited to teach their specialty. Sometimes there are large projects. I did spend a lot of time on phone lines and became pretty adept in climbing telephone poles and working up there. But the largest and most interesting jobs I participated in were constructing two new Forestry stations. Before I get into those, however, I want to tell about one more fire.

The normal fire season is in the summer months but a redwood forest does not always heed that rule. One February a fire started in Butano State Park in the Santa Cruz Mountains. It was quite large and burning hot. Redwood trees burn differently from most other kinds of trees. When fire burns through the foliage (crowns of trees) in a pine or fir forest it is called a crown fire. It travels from tree to tree like they were gigantic blades of dry grass. The sap heats and vaporizes and is very volatile. In the Redwoods the ground fire heats the lower foliage of the tree until it reaches the kindling temperature. Then it flashes instantaneously with so much heat that it burns vigorously all the way to the top. This is called a flash fire. A fire in the redwoods will cause the flashes randomly throughout the forest as it burns. The flashes also give off tremendous heat that dries out adjacent trees to make them flash easier and hotter. The Butano fire lasted many days but I don't recall how many. I went to work one morning expecting to be home for supper and Janet didn't see me for several days.

The three Forestry stations in southern Santa Cruz County were Corralitos, Soquel and Burrell. I have described the former two somewhat so I will now tell about Burrell. Burrell is situated high up in the Santa Cruz Mountains on the Summit Road a few miles south of the Highway-17 summit. It is just below Loma Prieta. Up to and through the 1950 fire season the Burrell Station was a temporary tent camp. During the winter of 1950-51 we constructed a brand new station on that site. It had one building for the crew barracks with a large bathroom and shower, a supply room, an office, and a recreations room. Another building was a dining room, kitchen, food storage area, and cook's quarters. Then on the other side of the property was a two-truck garage with tool storage and a work area. Alongside it was a small building with a gasoline pump and oil storage. Another small building at the back of the property was the pump house.



The New Burrell Station – 1951  
Barracks building to left. Kitchen/Dining Room to the right and behind. Garage in lower right corner is no longer there. New garage is at back of property.

We worked all winter constructing this new station. A state carpenter was in charge of the job and we Forestry personnel helped. Pap also worked here and we rode back and forth together each day. On the day we poured the concrete floors we worked until after midnight and it was stormy. On another day it started snowing and we finally wised up in time to realize we'd better get out of there before we were snowed in. It was on this job that I acquired a few scraps of pine wood to make the little Pullman stools ("climbers") for Cres and Janie.

For pouring the concrete floors we used a cement mixer that was shared within District

5. When we finished it was scheduled to go to Slack Canyon CDC Camp. This was a California Department of Corrections facility in Monterey County between King City and Coalinga – a little way off and south of Highway-198 on Peach Tree Road. It was a camp of prisoner trustees for doing forest management and firefighting. The Forestry oversaw the work projects. It was up to us to transport it down there. So we loaded the mixer on a flatbed truck and I was delegated to drive it down there.

I had to go through Watsonville on the way so I requested permission to take Cres with me. I picked him up on the way and Janet made a lunch for us. When I was a kid I used to love it when we stopped along the road to have a picnic so I did that with Cres. A little south of Greenfield there were a lot of eucalyptus trees along the road and that's where we stopped for our picnic lunch. (US-101 was only a two-way road at that time, not a freeway.) Then we proceeded south, turned west on Highway-198 at San Lucas, and then south again on Peach Tree Road to Slack Canyon.

When we arrived the Forestry Foreman invited us to the mess hall for a cup of coffee and refreshments. The cook and all the kitchen help were prisoners and they fell in love with Cres. They made him chocolate and a snack to eat. When we were ready to go out to unload the mixer, the cook asked me to leave Cres with him until we were finished. I was a little skeptical about that but the foreman said he would be OK. So, reluctantly, I did. A little while later when I went to get Cres he was having a ball. Those cons sure know how to spoil little kids. Cres was so tired he curled up on the seat and slept most of the way home.

I was really elated when Bob Ford (the assistant ranger I worked under) informed me that I would be assigned as the first foreman for this new station. The station officially opened in May of 1951. For the first time I would be in charge of a full CDF crew. There was a lot of work yet to do. We constructed a stone masonry incinerator and started some rock retaining walls and steps between the two ground levels. I asked for the welding outfit and some pipe to be brought up from Felton so I could weld together a flag pole. I requisitioned pine lumber to make bed tables for each crew member. Having participated in the construction of this station and now doing all the landscaping and putting on the finishing touches I felt really attached to the Burrell Station.

I wanted to set up a system to help us respond to fires faster. Since we had radio contact at all times I got permission to take the crew and become familiar with the area. We drove on all the roads in Burrell's fire protection area, clocking the mileage from intersections to mail boxes while recording box numbers and names. I got a really neat system set up so that anyone at the station would know exactly where to go and how to get there if there were a fire call.

Burrell was not a real busy station as far as fire calls were concerned. The location of the station, however, was right in midst of the forested areas so the response time would be very quick when a fire does occur. The primary responsibility of the Forestry was to protect the Zone-1 areas of the state which are the forest and watershed areas. We operated on the philosophy that forests and watersheds were much more expensive and vastly harder to replace than structures. Even though we might respond to only a handful of fire calls a year, many of those fires had the potential of becoming large conflagrations that cause massive damage and have very expensive suppression costs. Preventing just one of those huge fires easily offsets the cost of having a station and crew nearby.

My first fire at Burrell was an automobile right next door to the station. It was nothing spectacular except the auto was a complete loss. On another occasion the crew was in the dining room on coffee break. It was a stormy day and as we were looking out a window we saw a lightning strike deeper in the watershed area. Somebody said that Loma (the Loma Prieta lookout) would report that and we'll be getting a fire call soon. Then the phone rang and we were on our way, Code 3. We knew the general location of the strike but lightning fires often occur in very inaccessible areas. Visibility is not good on roads through the trees. So when we got near the vicinity I rolled the window down and kept sniffing for smoke. Pretty soon I got a whiff so I stopped and got out to look around. Finally we located the strike some distance above the road. We grabbed tools and climbed the hill.

When the lightning hit the tree it instantaneously heated the sap to cause the tree to splinter. The tree was smoldering and the litter on the ground had ignited and was spreading. This would have been a real bad fire if our crew hadn't been right there to snuff it out. We spent a few hours extinguishing all the burning material and making sure the fire would not flare up again. On the way back to the station a low branch knocked off our FM antenna on the top of the cab. We had to check in by phone to let the dispatcher know we were back. From then on I carried a spare antenna in the truck.

The 1951 fire season ended and we closed up the Burrell Station for the winter. There were no new stations to construct so this winter except that a large new "Butler Building" (prefabricated steel) was erected at Felton to house more equipment and supplies. Pap and I spent most of the winter working on a loading dock to hold the fire camp equipment where it could be readily moved onto a truck. Pap pretty much established himself as the Camp Boss for the county so it was his responsibility to keep the fire camp ready to roll. As I recall that was the main project that winter.

In May of 1952 I opened the Burrell Station again and had a good truck driver and crew. Some of the '51 crew had returned – firefighters who return were usually assigned to the same station they had previously unless there was some reason they didn't want to be. So I was getting things pretty well in shape when Janet had a nervous breakdown. I have already told about taking a leave of absence in the previous chapter so I will skip to the end of fire season and my return to the Forestry.

After returning from the 6-month leave of absence I spent most of the winter of '52-'53 working with other foremen replacing telephone lines to some of the lookouts. The early mode of communication with lookouts and outlying fire suppression stations was with a one-wire grounded telephone system, using #9 gauge steel wire. There were a lot of troubles with such a system so we were replacing large segments with a two-wire system using #12 gauge copper wire. I learned a lot about lineman work including erecting poles and guy lines, using spurs to climb the poles, tying lines to insulators and making transpositions. We had to take care not to "burn the pole" (have our spurs cut out and slide all the way to the ground). When we got pretty dexterous at maneuvering on the poles we sometimes played the game of "cut out." To do that you cut out your spurs and dropped two or three feet before digging them back in. More daring persons dropped more than that. The work was interesting but we had to be out in a lot of cold weather during the winter. If it was really raining we stayed in Felton doing other chores but there was a lot of inclement weather that made the work messy at times.

In February of 1953 I took the civil service exam for Forestry Trainee. This was a position to work into forest management, as opposed to fire suppression. It also automatically opened the door for taking the Assistant Ranger exam. I studied hard for this test, learning all the forest insects and tree diseases as well as all the other aspects of forest management. In April I receive the results and I had passed #6 in the state, competing against college students specializing in forestry or conservation. I was called to Monterey to be interviewed for a position in District 5, which was the district I was currently working in. After taking the test I had a lot of qualms about moving. In addition, I had seen where the Forestry Trainees were used as convenient errand boys, rather than get the training prescribed in the job description. So I decided I didn't want to commute to Monterey and I didn't want to do the dirty work for those who felt too important or too lazy to do their job. I told this to the District Forester and he was pretty mad but I didn't really care. My boss, Bob Ford, was surprised that I turned the opportunity down but seemed happy that I'd still be there as a foreman.

When the 1953 fire season began I did not get the Burrell Station back. I was assigned to the lousy Soquel Station again, which I really disliked although the crew was now increased to three – me, a truck driver, and one firefighter. When days off were factored in we only had a full crew one day a week and that day was used for training. But training was very limited at Soquel because there was no area to practice essential things like cutting fire trail and laying hose.

Another change to the station is that the old Mack fire truck was no longer at Soquel. We had the Big Jimmy tanker truck that formerly was in Felton. While I was on leave of absence in 1952 the Soquel crew went to assist Corralitos on a grass fire in the foothills. The story as I heard it was that the driver took the Mack as far as it was possible to go and left it parked on a sidehill in the burned out area while the crew went farther to fight the fire with hand tools. They were out of site of the Mack but when they looked back there was a gigantic tower of black smoke bubbling up. They ran back to the truck and found it engulfed in flames. The gas tank filler spout was on the downhill side of the truck and the cap leaked. Consequently a stream of gasoline flowed out on the ground. The truck was parked in the burn area and apparently a hot spot ignited the gasoline. Swoosh! The Mack was no more. I don't know if the bulldog radiator ornament was salvaged or not.

I believe it was about this time that the county (our Ranger District) turned in one of the old GMC crew trucks for a brand new 4-wheel drive Ford Marmon Harrington. I was happy it wasn't assigned to Soquel because I didn't like it. I had plenty of experience with 4-wheel drive



vehicles but this one had such a high center of gravity that going around steep side hills was iffy. It would be good for going straight up and down hills but sideways on a hill it would turn over much easier than the low profiled '39 GMC trucks. Those old GMCs also had a long-stroke engine that gave it better lugging power. It was a common joke at the time that you could nose the front bumper up against a tree with the engine idling and it would not kill the engine. The truck would just sit there with its rear wheels spinning. When following a fire line around the side of a steep hill the rear wheels would sometimes slip downhill but the truck would continue yawing along the fire line at an angle to the direction of travel, rear wheels slipping but still driving. I hated to see those old GMC crew trucks go.

Earlier, the Santa Cruz County Ranger District started getting Dodge crew trucks to replace old GMCs. I never did care much for Dodges and Plymouths and these did not change my opinion any. First of all, they had short-stroke, high-RPM engines that had no lugging power on hills. Even before we received them in our county there was a fatal accident in which the driver was killed. No other vehicle was involved – the front end merely collapsed. I saw the wreckage in Davis, California when I went there on other business and it was a mess. I had one of these at Burrell and Corralitos also received one. I once responded to a grass fire while enroute to participate in a control burn in the Central Valley. The grass fire was just off Highway-152 close to where it meets Highway-156. I started following the fire line around a hillside while the hoseman doused the fire. But I could see that the Dodge wasn't going to make it and I couldn't turn around on the hillside. The only choice was to back downhill to a level spot. As the truck started down in reverse it gained speed quickly. I applied the brakes gently but the momentum of all the water in the tank plus all the equipment on the rear caused the front wheels to raise off the ground. When that happened the front end started skewing around sideways, pivoting on the rear wheels. I had to release the brakes to bring the front end down so the truck would straighten out. I kept this up all the way down the hill – stepping on the brakes to slow the truck and then letting off to straighten it out. It was a wild and scary ride but I made it. I don't think I would have had any problem with the old '39 GMC crew trucks.

At another time I responded to an assist call from the Corralitos crew where the fire was in some peat soil. Peat soil is ground saturated with saltpeter, a commercial name for potassium nitrate which is an ingredient of gunpowder. The soil actually smolders and it goes deep. Peat soil fires are very difficult to extinguish, even when pouring tons of water on them. The Big Jimmy tanker was handy for hauling lots of water. The fire was in a little slough a short distance from our home on Arthur Road. I was making trips back and forth to the fire hydrant near our house to refill the Big Jimmy. It was such a long and tedious procedure that I spiced it up a little by picking up Cres and Janie for one of the trips. They got to ride in the fire truck and see how we pumped water on a fire. I wonder if they still remember that adventure.

The 1953 fire season went by and when it was over I got to go home at night. As I recall, Pap and I spent most of that winter working on the new pre-fabricated Butler Building at Felton. There were other projects which provided a wide spectrum of work experience. Sometime in the spring something came up that provoked Ranger Les Gum into one of his temper tantrums. He said the foremen were getting too comfortable and relaxed in having the same station year after year. He put us all on notice that the foremen were going to be shuffled into different stations for the 1954 fire season. Pap was reassigned to Felton, which he hated. It wasn't long before he took the civil service test for dispatcher and was given a position in Visalia, California. When a position for dispatcher opened in Felton he applied for the job but, unknown to Pap, his ranger

disapproved the transfer request. When the Felton position was filled and Pap found out why he didn't get it, he resigned, telling the ranger he wouldn't work for a person who was so selfish and sneaky.

Anyway, when I found out Pap was going to Felton I asked my boss, Bob Ford, if I could be assigned to Corralitos. My request was granted. I was sad that Pap lost the station he liked so much and the one he had specifically hired to manage. But that was not something I could do anything about so I was happy to have a station in an area I was familiar with and which was very close to home. Janet and the kids would be able to visit me frequently in the evenings. Also, Corralitos was the key station in the south end of the county and I felt honored that my bosses had confidence that I could handle the task.

We had a major fire in Santa Cruz County in 1954. Called the Ben Lomond Fire, it ran wildly through the populous San Leandro Valley. The threat to homes far exceeded what happened at Igo and Ono during the Shasta Fire. And it surpassed the menace to the scattered ranch house complexes during the Hunter Liggett Fire. This Ben Lomond Fire was an urgent save-what-you-can effort amid the dense population and the many homes in the fire's path. Each crew leader had to use his best instincts and judgment on what to do next. We had to work very fast while making our limited water supply go as far as possible. It was a true exercise in mobile firefighting for local fire departments as well as the Forestry crews that were participating.

I believe this was the only time I experienced the Corralitos crew responding to a fire in the north-county area. Every crew in the county responded. The smoke drifted south over Watsonville and Janet said the sun trying to shine through it created a red glow over our home on Arthur Road. When I arrived on the scene I joined the frantic effort warning people to evacuate and saving what we could.

For some time I had been having a problem with the Corralitos truck. It was one of the Dodges and would start OK when it was cold but would not start when the engine heated up. It would run moderately well when hot but if the engine was turned off it would not restart. I had taken it to the shop several times and thought we had finally got it fixed. That was not the case. We were in an open area amid several houses in Ben Lomond with the fire approaching fast. For some reason we had either turned the engine off or stalled it. We could not get it started. Another truck had to hook onto ours with a chain and give us a tow in order to get it started. This situation was not only embarrassing but very ill-timed when we needed every available piece of apparatus.

I drove back to Felton and went to a shop right next to the Forestry headquarters. That is where the Felton station took all its repair work and they were good mechanics. It didn't take them long to determine the problem was an interior crack in the ignition coil. When the engine was cold the crack was tight and there was no electrical leakage. But as the engine heated up the coil expanded and the crack got wider, thus leaking electricity. While starting a warm engine, when the starter motor draws a lot of current, most of what is supposed to go to the coil leaks out, resulting in a spark too weak to start the engine. It didn't take long to replace the coil and I was headed back into the fray.

My problems were nothing compared to those of the crew on the Ford Marmon Harrington crew truck, which was on another part of the fire. The fuel tanks on many trucks in those days were located behind the seat in the cab. The fuel gauge float unit was typically installed from the top of the tank with a plate and gasket sealing the opening. Forestry rigs were always kept full and

the gasket seal for the float was apparently leaking. In the heat the gasoline expanded and oozed out the top. When a spark from the fire blew into the cab the gasoline ignited. Nobody was hurt but the truck was a total charred loss.

The coil problem on the Dodge crew truck was not the only problem they experienced. These crew trucks also had an auxiliary engine to run the pump. One time we had two of these Dodges on a fire around the little town of Laurel in the Santa Cruz Mountains above Soquel. One truck developed a problem with the main engine and would not perform properly. The fuel pump went out on the auxiliary engine of the other truck and it could not pump water. I had to take the good fuel pump off the auxiliary engine of the truck that wouldn't perform properly and use it to replace the faulty fuel pump on the other truck. I vividly recall working underneath these trucks while the fire was burning around us. It took parts from two trucks to make one that worked. The driver of the other truck was told to get it out of the area pronto.

I wrote many fire permits at Corralitos but it was one I didn't write that got us into a lot of trouble. One day the lookout on Loma Prieta reported a smoke in the Harkins Slough area. We responded to the call and upon arriving at the scene found a county crew burning weeds in drain ditches. I told the person in charge that he needed a permit to do that. He replied that he had one and showed me one issued from Felton. I couldn't do anything but turn around and head back for the station. I was infuriated. It is totally improper for headquarters to write a permit in my area. And it made matters worse that I was not even informed about it. The truth is that I would not have written a permit for burning in the peat soil of Harkins Slough. As I explained above, the fire is extremely difficult to extinguish and will smolder deep into the ground to flare up again later. I vented my wrath to the Felton dispatcher but it was too late now.

Perhaps a week or more later we got a fire call in Harkins Slough. The fire had smoldered in the peat soil for over a week and now was burning in grass and brush and eucalyptus groves. The Soquel crew was also called and perhaps there was another crew that responded. We were on the south end of the fire where it was threatening a barn. It was pretty well under control and just smoldering in some leaves and short grass when I saw smoke billowing up to the north. There were several houses there and the situation was definitely more precarious than where I was. I told the rancher and his family we had to leave and to just use their shovels to go along the edge of the smoldering fire and throw the hot stuff back into the burn.

On the north end we finally got the fire under control and saved several houses but when I looked south I saw much black smoke billowing up. Somehow the fire there had reached the barn and it was destroyed. The rancher was angry that we had pulled out but the danger wasn't that bad and he should have prevented the barn from burning.

When we arrived back at the Corralitos station I got a call from Felton headquarters. I was told to send all the information I had collected to Felton and the headquarters would make out the fire report. This was a definite cover up for having written a fire permit that shouldn't have been written and also to cover up the county's liability and responsibility for the fire. A year or so later, after I had left the Forestry, the rancher who had lost the barn filed suit against the county. I was subpoenaed as a witness for the rancher and my testimony certainly didn't help the county's defense.

My year at the Corralitos station was a hot one with many fires burning all over the state. We worked a lot of overtime and I once went a full month without a day off. I had a few weeks of compensating time off to supplement my vacation at the end of fire season. During that winter I

helped to build a new Soquel station a few miles above Soquel on the Old San Jose Road. A civil service exam for Assistant Ranger came up early in 1955. I applied for it but was rejected because I didn't have a college degree and barely lacked the years of service to make up for it. Had I taken the Forestry Trainee position I would have qualified but I still had no regrets for turning it down. I was determined not to spend another summer on 24-hour duty. My family was too important to me to be absent that much. I told my boss, Bob Ford, that I'd be looking around. In May 1955 I resigned and started work for Suburban Gas Service, which I wrote about in the previous chapter.

Many changes have occurred in the State Forestry since I left in 1955. In 1961 the Department of Natural Resources was abolished and the Division of Forestry was put under a newly-created Department of Conservation. In 1977 the Department of Forestry was created under a Director of Forestry (not a State Forester). In 1987 it became the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection now known as Cal Fire, under the state cabinet level California Resources Agency.

The Department of Forestry headquarters is still in Sacramento but the state is now divided into two Regional Units, each headed by a Region Chief. The Northern Region Unit, consisting of 12 subunits, is headquartered in Redding. The Southern Region Unit, consisting of 9 subunits, is headquartered in Fresno. Each subunit is headed by a Unit Chief, which is equivalent to what used to be a Ranger. I assume the Deputy Unit Chief is what used to be Associate Ranger and it appears that Battalion Chief replaces Assistant Ranger..

Under each County Unit are many Fire Stations. The personnel in Fire Stations have also been renamed. The Forest Firefighter has been renamed as Fire Fighter I (temporary, seasonal) and Fire Fighter II (permanent). The Forest Fire Truck Driver is now a Fire Apparatus Engineer. Forest Firefighter Foremen have become Fire Captains. One more item – the trusty old Fire Truck is now an Engine. Cal Fire has more aircraft and helicopters now than when I worked in the Division of Forestry. Uniforms are blue that mimic urban firefighting personnel. Gone is the forest green that symbolizes the wilderness. Yet, even with all this “progress,” I have not noticed that the suppression of wildfires is any better. The old axiom still stands, and every forest firefighter knows it: “A large fire cannot be controlled until the weather changes to favor control.” Let's just hope that firefighters of the future will remember the techniques used when the end of their hose is reached.

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## **PART 5**

### **Settling in Santa Clara**

## Chapter 24 – 631 Kiely Boulevard

After we made our covenant with God I went to the Lockheed interview as scheduled and spoke with an engineering supervisor named Pappy Bojens. He had worked for Lockheed many years and had been a principle engineer in Lockheed's "Skunk Works," where many innovative and advanced designs were developed. He asked me some questions and tested me a little. Then he said he would like me to work for him. He told me if I go back to school part time and finish my degree I would have the run of the whole facility. (That turned out to be true.) He wanted me to start work the next week but I insisted on giving my present employer two weeks' notice. So we set a date of May 27, 1957 for me to start work as a Junior Engineering Draftsman. When I finished the interview Janet and I drove around some foundations that would become Building 102 (now demolished).

I gave Suburban notice and made arrangements to stay temporarily with Sonny and Gayle, my cousin and his wife, who were living on Frank Avenue in Santa Clara. Janet stayed in Watsonville until our house was sold and I commuted on the weekends. I didn't like that. It was like the old 24-hour duty in the Forestry. And the time stretched on as our house was not selling.

When I could not stay with Sonny and Gayle any longer I moved in temporarily with Mom and Pap who now lived on Heatherdale Avenue in San Jose – Pap had left the Forestry before me and was now in real estate with a job at Milpitas Manors in Milpitas. After several months of trying to sell our Arthur Road house we decided to try renting it. A woman Janet knew was looking for a place to rent. She and her husband had a retarded daughter and did not have a lot of cash to spare. We decided to rent to them for what our monthly payments were. They were happy about that and asked if they could have an option to buy, which they eventually did for the amount we had invested in the place. So we would not do too well in the business field.

Sometimes Janet and the kids would come to San Jose with me and, while I was working, Pap took her out to look at houses. They finally found one we liked on Kiely Boulevard in Santa Clara. And it had a fireplace!! We bought it and moved in just a few days before Christmas in 1957. A new life had begun for us and a new future lay ahead.



Our new home at 631 Kiely Boulevard in Santa Clara before we planted trees – Jim, Teri and Danny in front

Our new home is in the Mariposa Gardens subdivision. Mariposa is an American Indian word meaning Butterfly. The house was not quite two years old when we moved in. Originally the city had planted a Modesto Ash tree in front of each house. The people we bought from did not like the trees so they pulled it out. I like trees so I planted three Modesto Ash trees. It has been a mystery to the city how our house happened to have three. The city contracts to



have them trimmed occasionally and treated for disease such as wooly aphis when needed. In 2010 the tree on the south side of our driveway developed a huge split in the trunk and the city had to cut it down. They would not replace it.

When we moved in, Kiely Boulevard was four lanes, as it is now, but it was not pushed through all the prune orchards that still existed around us. It only stretched from Homestead Road to Pruneridge Ave. There was virtually no traffic. We could see the handwriting on the walls that this would eventually be a very busy street but in the late '50s the kids could safely play in the street to launch water rockets and pursue other activities. When the prune orchards were cut down one by one to lengthen the street and build more subdivisions, we were able to harvest a lot of firewood to burn in our fireplace. We did enjoy that fireplace.

Not long after we moved in the doorbell rang one evening. It was Pauline and Red Buchanan who had come to tell us they had just moved in across the street in Sykes Court. It seemed they were following us around – first right next door on Arthur Road and now across Kiely from us. Our kids were happy to have their old playmates – Mike, David and Kathy – to play with again.

In 1958 we made another trip to South Dakota to visit Janet's parents. We borrowed Mom & Pap's "Doodle Bug Traveler" camp trailer so we could camp along the way rather than spend money for motels. We had a black 1950 Hudson Sedan (shown in driveway in picture above) with over 80,000 miles on it to tow this trailer. That was a lot of miles in those days when cars were considered worn out at 100,000. We had six kids to take with us this time but the Hudson was roomy and seat belts were not heard of in cars then. So we all squeezed in pretty well for the 1800 mile trip each way. We left on June 28<sup>th</sup> and returned on July 11<sup>th</sup>.



Between Winnemucca and Butte Mountain on Highway 40 in Nevada 28 June 1958

We traveled quite a ways the first day and we spent our first night at Rock Creek Camp along the Snake River in Idaho. This was a historic monument where wagon trains traveling on the Oregon Trail used to stop to camp. It was unique and a nice little roadside camp for travelers. A



Rock Creek Camp along Snake River in Idaho  
29 June 1958

few other families had also stopped for the night and there was no fee. The kids had a good time. Besides monuments and plaques which explained the history of the campsite there was an old fashioned hand pump for obtaining water. They had a lot of fun working that and we were never short of water while staying at Rock Creek Camp.

Field mice were running all over the ground and that attracted the boys. They went on a mouse hunt which kept them busy for a while. We weren't really worried about them actually catching one and getting bit.



Jim & Dan hunting field mice at Rock Creek Camp  
29 June 1958

There wasn't much chance of that.

When I checked the car and trailer I discovered that the trailer hitch and back bumper were bent way down. The camp trailer put a lot of weight on the hitch and it was close to falling off. I wasn't sure what was the best thing to do but knew we weren't going to get it fixed out here in the boondocks. So we all loaded up and hit the road to Pocatello which wasn't too far away.

At Pocatello we didn't know where to go for help. It was a Sunday and no shops were open.

We drove down by the freight yards and saw a few men walking along. We asked them if they knew anyplace where we could get the hitch fixed. One of them wanted to see the problem and looked it over good. He said to disconnect the trailer and drive the car over the pit in a nearby warehouse. It turned out he was a welder who worked there. He crawled down into the pit under the car with his torch. He had cut out some triangular gussets which he welded all across the back frame after jacking the bumper and hitch back into position. It was a real strong fix and the trailer weight would give us no more problems.

When I asked this fellow how much I owed him he looked at his friends and then said: "Just give us a couple bucks to buy a few beers. I couldn't believe it because he had probably worked at least an hour. Although we were always on a tight budget I gave him more than he asked for. It was certainly worth it. I always remembered that good turn. In later years when I did work on the kids' cars and they asked what they could do for me I always said to just buy me a six-pack of San Miguel dark.

From Pocatello we went north to Yellowstone National Park where we spent the second night. When we stopped the car and got out I noticed that the brake lights were still on. The switch was on the brake master cylinder under the car. I wiggled under to where I could reach it and noticed it was very hot. After tapping it a few times with no results I disconnected the wire. We went the rest of the trip without brake lights on the car or trailer.

There were a lot of bears roaming the campground. Danny didn't like them at all. When he saw one lumbering down the road he jumped in the car and locked all the doors. Later when I had to walk down to the bath house I asked Jim if he wanted to go with me and hunt some bears. Being older than Danny, he was ready and willing. We didn't find any. I was a little worried about having food in the camp trailer in which we were sleeping but there was no trouble. Next morning all the garbage cans in the campground were overturned with the contents scattered about. Two young fellows camping next to us were sleeping on the ground. One told me he woke up at night and a bear was standing right over him.

The next morning we closed up the camp trailer and headed east. We went through Cody, Wyoming and the Palisades. At the town of Gray Bull we had a decision to make. We could take the steeper northern route through the Big Horn country or a southern route which was not so mountainous. The old Hudson had been heating up a little but it just kept running as the water boiled away. We had a 5-gallon water can in the trailer which I used to refill the radiator as needed. The easier southern route was tempting. However, Mom and Pap had made this trip in

1954 with this trailer and they talked a lot about the Big Horn country. I wanted to see it so I figured if they could do it so could we. The climb was rigorous for the old Hudson and it boiled like mad. The floor boards got so hot that a package of the kids color crayons melted. I kept stopping to refill the radiator but the can only held enough water for two refills. Yet, every time the can went empty there was a stream or some other source to refill it. Boy was I glad when we got to the top and saw a downhill highway stretching into the distance.



In the Palisades along Highway 20 in Wyoming - Janie, Kitty & Teri in window. 30 June 1958

We traveled on east in Wyoming through Sheridan and Woodcroft until we reached the Black Hills. It was at Custer State Park campground where we spent that night.

Next morning we reassembled our vehicles for the road and drove through the Black Hills, stopping for a while to view the faces on Mt. Rushmore. Then on to Rapid City where we stopped at the Reptile Gardens and the kids rode a giant tortoise. The remainder of the voyage was through the Dakota Badlands and across South Dakota until we arrived at "The Farm" near Tyndall.

We had a happy reunion with Janet's parents. Cres may have remembered our previous visit in 1952 but Janie was probably too young and Jim was just a baby. So it was effectively the first time for them as well as for Danny, Kathy and Teri. I don't remember too much of that visit except Jean and George came up from Wakefield, Nebraska to see us. They were living in Wakefield at that time and George was working with some egg



Cres, Jane, Dan, Jim and their Beringer cousins - Peggy, Connie, Dennis, Bobby, & Tom in sand pile July 4, 1958



Danny playing in sand pile July 2, 1958

business. George had some firecrackers for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Fireworks were legal in South Dakota and I enjoyed shooting some off – the first time in many years, since I was a teenager. Our children had fun meeting and playing with their cousins who also came with Jean and George. It was quite a yard full. There were six of our children and five of theirs.



Grampy & Grammy Balvin July 2, 1958



Grampy and Danny on the John Deere Tractor July 2 1958

The days passed quickly and soon it was time to head for home. The first leg of our journey was short as Jean and George had invited us to stop overnight with them in Wakefield. We did and had a nice barbecue on the front porch deck as a thunder and





Chicken Chasing Teri. Grammy's hens didn't lay good for a long time after our visit. July 2, 1958

lightning storm wreaked its fury around us.

We left Wakefield early the next morning and drove all day. That night we set up in a trailer park – more like a lot – in Laramie, Wyoming. That night Cres had terrific pains in his right side. He had had them before and we were afraid it might be appendicitis. Janet and I were almost in a panic. We were in a strange town far from home and knew nobody there. We didn't know what to do. I believe we kept cold packs on it and started for home early that morning.

Cres seemed to be better the next day but we decided we'd get home as soon as possible. I drove 800 miles that day. When we reached Winnemucca late at night we gassed the car and pulled to the side of the road to sleep a couple hours. The engine still heated up every time we came to a hill but I kept it filled from our water can. Fortune had it that every time the can went empty we were someplace I could refill it. We had made it over the Rockies all right but now I was worried about the Sierras. We made it over those OK also and, although the car ran hot across the Central Valley, we were safe at home that night. Cres' appendix didn't reach a critical stage this time. He did have it removed several years later.

1959 was a momentous year for us. Our seventh child and fourth daughter, Mary Susan Aldridge was born 11:42 AM on February 11<sup>th</sup> at O'Connor Hospital in San Jose. This was the first baby to come home to 631 Kiely.

We only had her home a few days and one night we had her on our bed. She started to cough – a deep, croupy cough but different. I recognized it right away because she sounded just like Jerry when he had pneumonia, and also the way I was when I had it. I was terrified. I had to go to work the next day but Janet took Mary to her pediatrician. She did, indeed have pneumonia and not only went back to the hospital but into an incubator so she would have plenty of oxygen. She had to remain in the hospital several days.

I can't recall if it was before or after she had pneumonia but Mary Susan was baptized in St. Justin's Church in Santa Clara on February 22, 1959. Marlene and Jack Dujmovic were her godparents.

In Watsonville we had Cres and Janie in the Catholic school but now that we were in Santa Clara we couldn't arrange that soon enough. So we registered them in Mariposa School which, because of the post-war baby boom, was operating on half-day sessions. We were very earnest about getting them into Catholic school and we



Mary Susan in her bassinette  
February 19, 1959



Mary Susan in her crib  
August 10, 1959



Mary in playpen on beach at Arroyo Seco  
June 27, 1960

eventually achieved that. We got Cres into Sacred Heart School in Willow Glenn and Janie into Notre Dame in San Jose. They both took the same transit bus. It went by both schools. Janie got off first and then Cres. They came home the same route. When Jim started school we got him into St. Clare's School in Santa Clara. He transferred to St. Justin's School for the second grade as it had just opened. Danny enrolled at St. Justin's for the first grade that same year.

When it came to high school it was the same spread out deal. Cres was in St. Francis High in Mountain View.

Janie was in Mother Butler in Santa Clara. When Danny got to high school he was in Archbishop Mitty and Kathy went to Mother Butler. It was while these last two were in high school and some of the younger ones in St. Justin's when I got the feeling that 1) the kids were too sheltered in Catholic School and 2) perhaps we were stuffing too much religion into their heads. I felt we should let them decide for themselves about religion when they got older and trust that God would help them make the right decision. Janet wasn't real thrilled about the idea but she went along with it.



Tunzi Cabin at Arroyo Seco where we spent our  
July 1959 vacation.

Later known as "Pop Jenner's Cabin"

Back to 1959, we wanted to go to Arroyo Seco in July but Mary was only five months old and we didn't feel like camping in the Doodle Bug trailer, as we had a few times in the past. Chuck told us about a cabin above his owned by a Mrs. Tunzi that we could rent cheap. So we did. We took our personal effects down in the Doodle Bug and parked it so it opened onto the cabin's patio. The boys slept in the trailer, one or two of the older girls and I slept on cots outside under the patio cover, and Janet slept in the cabin with the younger girls.

We had a good time and loaded all our swimming gear in the Hudson when we went swimming at the

Big Rock, including Mary's buggy. At that time we could drive down to the beach and park right next to where we set up. Janet and I never seemed to get a chance to swim together because one of us was always on shore watching the kids in the water. We never had any problems with our children but usually pulled one or two other toddlers out when they got in too deep of water. Occasionally we would tell the kids that Mommy and I wanted to swim together for a little while so all of them would stay on the beach and watch us swim.



Our favorite picnic spot at Big Rock Pool  
July 25, 1959

We had a lot of fun but we also had some pretty tormenting experiences. When we got back to the cabin after swimming we'd usually mix up a pitcher of Kool Aid. On this particular day Cres

reached up on the shelf to get the bag of sugar. Something bit him. We looked to see what it was and saw a scorpion. The bite stung quite a bit. Cres had been watching about scorpions on TV and he thought he was going to die. We were also really scared but didn't want Cres to see our worry as that would just increase his. So I told him it was probably just an earwig. That didn't fool him. He knew what had bitten him.

I decided to try a modified snake-bite treatment. I just barely cut the skin a little to cause it to bleed. The suction syringe we had was clear plastic. As I pulled up on the plunger we could see blood being drawn into the syringe. Then a white mucus-looking mass came out. The stinging stopped immediately. We kept a close watch on the wound and nothing more seemed to happen. We were very thankful. When we returned to Santa Clara our doctor was dumfounded that we hadn't seen a doctor. A couple days later Cres said: "Hey Dad, come here." I went to see what he was pointing to and he added: "Do you want to see what an earwig looks like."

It was late July and Arroyo Seco was pretty hot that year. The cabin got very hot so we usually ate our evening meal on the patio. We were sitting at the table one evening and I happened to look over at the driveway. There, only 10-15 feet from us, was a three-foot rattlesnake and it was crawling right toward us. I killed it and Chuck took it away in a box to dispose of it. Today I would not normally kill a rattler but there amid all the cabins I probably would if I couldn't relocate it. Anyway, having a rattlesnake try to join us for dinner made the kids pretty excited.

Teri was 2½ years old and she liked to sit in the shallow water at the pool and play. About half way through our planned two-week vacation Teri got a severe pain in her hip. Janet tried to take her temperature but the weather was over a hundred degrees and she couldn't shake down our mercury thermometer. All that night Teri cried in pain. The next morning we decided I would take Teri to a doctor while Janet stayed with the rest of the kids. Seat belts were unheard of at that time and I laid her on the front seat with her head on my lap as I was driving. That way I could watch her and pat her occasionally. It was tormenting to see my baby in so much pain.

We went to Soledad first but could not find a doctor because it was a weekend. I was told of a doctor in Gonzales who was on duty. So we drove a little farther and Teri was crying all the time.

The doctor was an older person and wasn't too communicative. He didn't know exactly what was wrong with Teri but gave her penicillin and advised us to return home to our regular doctor. The penicillin helped and soon she was calmer. We drove back to the cabin and I told Janet what the doctor had said. So we cut our vacation short, packed up the trailer and returned home. We arrived home late and Teri was calmed down considerably so we decided to wait until morning to see the doctor.

In the morning I stayed with the kids while Janet took Teri in. Our pediatrician called in a bone specialist who put Teri in the hospital immediately. The specialist diagnosed the problem as osteoarthritis but couldn't confirm it positively because the penicillin had killed the bacteria and a culture couldn't be obtained. He operated on her hip that evening to repair and damage. Teri was in a half-body cast for many weeks. It went from the waist to below the knee on the bad side and to just above the knee on the other. We were happy when we could bring her home again.

When the cast was eventually removed and Teri could walk normally the specialist was amazed. He said he'd never seen a case where the disease had advanced that far that a permanent



disability didn't result. I've always been convinced that Teri sitting in the river with water up to her waist every day for a week brought the infection to a head before it did any lasting damage.



The Lucky Seven - Christmas 1959

As I recall the rest of 1959 went smoothly and we enjoyed our second Christmas in our new home – the first one ever for Mary Susan. Then came New Year's Day and we were off on another decade.

Shortly after we moved to Santa Clara some people from St. Justin's Church stopped by to welcome us to the parish. They invited us to join and participate in the Christian Family Movement (CFM). There were meetings once a week rotating among the group members homes. We were happy to join as it sounded just like the type of program that we, as young

parents, would benefit from. We started in a new group so we were all in the same boat. It didn't take us long to get to know each other. The first year discussion book was called *For Happier Families*.

The program was action-oriented and was based on the Observe/Judge/Act technique. At a meeting we picked an issue – usually one of a selection in the book – to investigate. In the following week we observed everything we could on the issue. At the next meeting we compared notes and judged (analyzed) the situation. Then we picked an action to pursue either as a group or individually. When that issue was resolved or had run its course we picked another issue and followed the same technique.

We stayed in CFM for many years. Each year there was a new guide book on a different theme. The first year was focused on the family. In subsequent years we went into other issues such as politics, economics, and things of that sort. Many of our longest lasting friendships were initiated in CFM.

In January 1960 Janet's parents came to Santa Clara to visit us. It was the first time that Grampy Balvin had come to California since we were married. He had come out another time just before I met Janet but this was the first time just for us. Although Grammy Balvin had been out when we were married and when several of the kids were born, this was the first time she was at our Santa Clara home. Mary was just a year old and she was really Grampy's pet. He would hold Mary on his lap for hours at a time.



Mary on Grampy Balvin's lap  
January 22, 1960

Another sadder event happened in January 1960.

Chuck died at Arroyo Seco. He was working on the roof of his wood shed when he had a heart attack. Dr. Nuzz's wife found him there. The funeral service was held at Mehl's Funeral Parlor and then he was cremated. His ashes were sent to Hawaii to be entombed in the family vault.

He was supposed to have written a will but one was never found. Chuck's sister, Rosie, however, agreed that Pap should inherit the cabin. Later it became too much of a load for Pap so I suggested that he give it to Skip. I thought Skip was the one Chuck would want to have it. Pap wanted to make certain that was OK with me and I assured him it was. So Skip got the cabin but Pap made one verbal condition -- that the family would be able to use it.



Family in Jeep & Trailer at Big Rock Pool  
June 30, 1960

So the cabin was where we spent our 1960 summer vacation at Arroyo Seco and it is where we spent them for several years. Skip left his jeep at the cabin and we had the use of it to explore the back country and drive to the swimming hole. We hooked the trailer to the jeep and left all the inner tubes, life jacket, Mary's play pen, etc. in it. When swimming time came all we had to do was hop in the jeep and trailer and drive to Big Rock Pool. We could still drive right down to the beach and park beside our picnic spot so there was no problem carrying a lot of gear.

When I first started work at Lockheed, even before we moved to Santa Clara, I started taking night classes at San Jose State to obtain my Bachelor of Science degree. It turned out that the head of the Aeronautics Department was a Cal Poly graduate and was familiar with the courses I had taken at Cal Poly. Consequently I was able to get the maximum amount of credit for them toward a B.S. at San Jose State. I got a contract stating all the classes I needed to complete my studies. I didn't have a G.I. Bill to pay my way but Lockheed was very supportive of employees trying to further their education. It reimbursed most of my expenses.

I continued to take night classes for a few years until I had taken all the required ones I could get at night. Then Lockheed put me on a special hours schedule where I took early-bird classes and got to work late. Then I worked late to make up the hours. I was down to just two or three classes but couldn't get them on the early bird schedule. Fortunately, Lockheed started a swing shift for engineering at that time. I don't remember the reason for it but I got on it. Then I could go to school during the day and work swing shift. That is what I did to complete the courses for a degree.

Another requirement for the degree in Aeronautics I was seeking was that I had to have the Aircraft and Powerplant (A&P) mechanics licenses. It was fortunate that several years earlier when we were living on Arthur Road I received the new, non-expiring license. So in engines shop while the rest of the class was pursuing courses to complete their license I could study a little on jet engines and other such things.



Graduation from SJSU  
June 15, 1962

Finally in June 1962 I was ready to graduate. While I was making out the necessary paperwork at SJSU, a clerk looking over my records exclaimed; "Oh! You haven't been matriculated." That would not do in academia. All the "i"'s had to be dotted and all the "t"'s crossed. I spent one whole Saturday morning taking admission exams so I

could be officially admitted to the university. I've often wondered what would have happened if I had flunked some of the tests.

I had a high grade point average for my B.S. degree and graduated magna cum laude with special honors in aeronautics awarded by the Aero Department. The gradation was on June 15, 1962.



Janie & Mary in snow. Our 1955 Mercury station wagon in the driveway. January 21, 1962

Earlier in 1962, on January 21<sup>st</sup>, we had a freak snowfall in Santa Clara. It had been cold for several days and there was snow on the mountains around us. The night before, Janet and I had been making plans with the kids to take them to Mt. Hamilton the next day so they could play in the snow. But when we woke the next morning everything was white outside. The snow came to us instead of us going to it.

The kids had a ball. There was enough snow that they could have a snowball fight. I believe we rolled up enough snow

in the back yard to make a small snowman. The snow didn't last long after the sun came out but it was fun while it lasted. It was also a unique even to experience. In over a half-century while living here that was one of the only two times it snowed in Santa Clara. The other time happened in the 1970s and there were snow flurries for two or three days.

In 1963 Janet and I "Made our Cursillo." The formal name is Cursillos de Cristiandad which in Spanish means a little course in Christianity. The Cursillo movement started in Spain, on the island of Majorca (where Fr. Junipero Serra was born) in 1944 by a group of laypeople. It spread to North America in the 1950s.

I attended a men's Cursillo first and then Janet attended a women's. It was a weekend event, starting Friday evening and ending Sunday evening. It was a very intensive but inspirational experience. The follow-ups for the Cursillo were very short weekly meetings of a small group of cursillistas of the same gender to pray together and exchange experiences. Occasionally there was a larger gathering of cursillistas of both sexes called an Ultreya.

The Cursillo program of "Study, Piety & Action" complimented CFM's activity of "Observe, Judge & Act." The two programs played a major part in forming my spiritual awareness and enthusiasm.

At 11:32 AM on the morning of September 14, 1964 Diane Marie Aldridge joined our family. Our fifth daughter and eighth child was born at O'Connor's Hospital in San Jose. It seemed that I had to wait an awfully long time for Diane to be born and I was getting kind of worried. My relief was immense when the doctor came in to tell me that I had a new daughter. He said to wait a little while longer and someone would call me in to



Diane's first picture  
Taken in the hospital





Diane looking at her Daddy from the crib  
January 9, 1965

school but she really missed her Mommy. At that time Cres was going to St. Francis High School in Mountain View and I drove him to school each day on my way to work. When Diane was born I was on leave but I still had to drive him to school. While Janet was in the hospital I took Mary with me as it was too early for her kindergarten. At that time Caltrans was still working on Highway-85. On the way



Diane: my Peace Secretary stuffing  
envelopes - Summer 1971

home from Mountain View one morning we detoured to watch the construction. There was a curved walking bridge already built over the new freeway and I took Mary for a stroll on it. As we looked down at the freeway the only traffic was a Caltrans pickup. Diane was baptized on September 27, 1964 at St. Justin's Church in Santa Clara. John and Joan Gardner were her Godparents. As I recall, they gave her a baptismal candle for a present so she could light it every year on the anniversary of her baptism. John and Joan's son, David, was born very near the same time as Diane. Janet and I were David's Godparents. In 1966, with eight children and another on the way, we decided to add on to our house. Three bedrooms just weren't enough. At first we planned on just adding a building in the back yard that would be a dormitory for the three boys. But when we got to thinking about it, with just two more walls we could attach to the house and have a family room. So that is what we did. I figured I had enough experience to draw up the plans and do the carpentry work. I drew up the plans during my lunch hour at Lockheed where I had all the equipment necessary. I did it in so much detail that I knew every stick of lumber I needed. Then I got the plans approved by the city, obtained a loan on my veteran's insurance policy, and ordered the lumber. I started digging for the foundations in May 1966. We called it our East Wing Annex.

see them. While I was waiting the doctor was paged over the public address system. That got me to worrying again that something unforeseen might have happened to Janet or Diane. But shortly after that the nurse did call me in to Janet's room and I met my daughter, Diane, for the first time. Once again I was a very proud father. As soon as I returned home from the hospital I went down to St. Justin's School to tell Kathy and Teri they had a new sister. I was so excited I just couldn't keep the news to myself.

It was unfortunate that Janet was in the hospital when Mary started her first day in kindergarten. I took her to



Diane after a hard day  
April 12, 1965

home from Mountain View one morning we detoured to watch the construction.

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The only part of the work I didn't do myself was mix the concrete for the foundation. Jack Dujmovic borrowed the necessary forms from the house-moving company he worked for, and helped me put them in. When it came time to pour the concrete I ordered the necessary amount. Jack Dujmovic and Ray Beaver came over to help. I believe there may have been others but can't remember now. I borrowed some wheel barrows and removed the front of the fence on

the north side of the house so that the full wheel barrows could come into the back yard on the south side and return to the concrete truck for another load on the north side. That way we had an unobstructed route with one-way traffic both ways.

It always seemed to me that once the foundation was poured and the mud sills installed, things started going easier. I then installed the floor girders and piers. Then I was ready for the subfloor. That is the only area that I bought more lumber than needed. It was cheaper to buy it bulk – a couple thousand board feet – than to buy the exact amount. When the subfloor was all nailed down it was like a large deck out our back door. The kids had a ball playing on it.

Next came the wall framing. As I was putting that up I decided it would be better to divide the dormitory into two bedrooms with closet space between. I also added a small hall with a hall closet. I had it all framed in when the building inspector made his next visit. He didn't like the idea of changing the plans but after speaking his piece he accepted the revision.

The roof framing was more of a challenge. First we had to tie into the existing roof. We managed that OK but then I had to figure out all the angle cuts for hip and valley rafters. I knew the theory but had never actually done it. However, it turned out easier than I had anticipated and it wasn't long before the roof framing was finished. Now things were really beginning to take shape.

Next came the rood sheeting and then the actual shingles. Now things were moving faster. After finishing the roof we started the wall sheeting. For that I used a tarred insulation which was difficult to nail. The hammer head got coated with tar and became very slippery. I was always hitting the nail a glancing blow



Foundation ready to pour -- May 14, 1966



Finished Foundation -- May 20, 1966



Getting the Framing up. Jim, Danny and me putting up the ridge pole for the roof and tying into existing house -- August 7, 1966



All Framing complete and starting on the roof sheeting. Handing boards up to Jim. August 27, 1966



and sometimes it ended up hitting my thumb. I was happy to get that job done.

After putting chicken wire on the walls to hold the stucco all we had to do was install a door and some windows and we were ready for winter. From there we would work on the inside until the following spring.

After the chicken wire was nailed to the walls the building inspector said he was going to close the project out. I was happy about that because he wouldn't be rushing me so much. I would still need inspections for the electric wiring and for the gas line to the heater but those would happen when I was ready. So now the East Wing Annex was all closed in and we had Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners in our new family room, which we called the sun room.

I spent the winter installing the electric wiring and fixtures, the gas line and wall furnace, and installing sheet rock, ceiling tile and floor covering. I think I also got the bookcases built and painting done that winter. Jim had started school at St. Francis Seminary in Watsonville by this time so I lost one of my helpers. The girls pitched in on the inside work and painting. Kathy had a special project helping me install insulation tile on the sun room ceiling. Of course the older kids were already sleeping in the new bedrooms – camping out in them, so to speak.

The following spring I started stuccoing. A friend of ours worked at the Permanente cement plant and got all the plastic cement wholesale for me. At first I started stuccoing from the bottom but after I got a little on the wetness running down made it all slushy and it all sloughed off. I was inexperienced at this work and didn't know what to do. I watched some nearby construction projects to see how the experts did it. They started at the top! That way the wetness ran away



A Drinking Fountain for the Final Touch -- December 14, 1969

this valley was once so lush that there were artesian springs bringing water to the surface. I



Roof finished and Insulation Sheeting on Walls  
September 9, 1966



The Finished Job -- May 30, 1969

from the stucco already applied and didn't make it slushy. I tried that method and it worked very well. We got the new addition covered with stucco eventually. It isn't a real professional-looking job but it isn't too bad.

Mixing stucco wasn't all the cement mixing we had to do. I wanted to make the patio bigger and put a walk all around the yard. We did the patio and got part way around the yard. Then I was returning from a business trip and while the plane was flying over San Jose to land I noticed how the entire valley was covered with asphalt, cement, or houses. There were only a few lawns to absorb rainfall and feed the water table. I recalled that



stopped laying any more concrete and the walks ended where they were.



Baby Nancy on her baptismal day.  
November 27, 1966

I did make a drinking fountain for the kids, with a step stone so the smaller ones could reach it. It has had a lot of use. Then while Janet was in South Dakota the kids and I completed the job with a concrete porch by the patio door. I engraved the final completion date in the wet cement: "6-23-69".

We started the East Wing Annex in 1966 but a much more important event happened that year. Our 9<sup>th</sup> child was born. We had three boys and five girls so we thought it would be nice to have another boy. But we didn't really care that much and as it turned out our run on girls wasn't over. Nancy Joy Aldridge was born at O'Connor Hospital in San Jose at 2:33 AM on November 13, 1964 – four days after Janet's birthday.

I always enjoyed bringing Janet and a new baby home from the hospital. But when the time

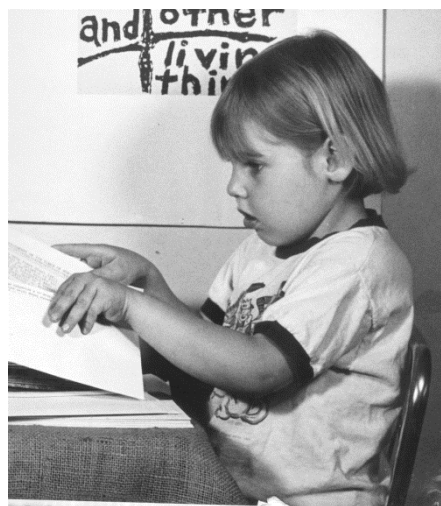


Nancy's First Christmas  
1966

came for Janet to come home Nancy could not come with us.

She was a little jaundiced and the pediatrician wanted to keep her for observation another day. It was a lonely ride home, just Janet and me, and a lonely night.

The next day Nancy was fine and we hurried to the hospital to pick her up. Now the ride home seemed more like it should be. All the kids



Nancy, my Peace Secretary  
Summer 1971

were waiting to see their new little sister and when we walked in the door they started singing: "Nancy Joy, shoulda been a boy." It was all in fun but we didn't really appreciate it. We were real happy with what we got and I know the kids were too. I think the idea came from their Mimi.



Nancy June 1979

Nancy was baptized on November 27, 1966 at St. Justin's Church, Santa Clara. Andrew & Pearl Blea were her Godparents. They were good friends of ours from CFM and very happy to be Nancy's

Godparents. Unfortunately, the Blea's moved away and when Nancy was older she felt bad that the other kids could see their Godparents occasionally but she couldn't. Janie stepped in and told Nancy that from then on she would be her Godmother. And that's the way it is today.

During the latter 1960s the Vietnam War was raging and was becoming very unpopular. After John Kennedy was assassinated Lyndon Johnson became president and he stepped the war up. I believe it was him that first started using B-52s to bomb North Vietnam and other places. One night Janet and I were lying in bed when we heard a steady roar growing in crescendo from the east. Soon it was overhead and very loud. It was the roar of engines from many B-52 bombers. They passed over our house and then the roar gradually diminished as the airplane faded over the Pacific Ocean to the west – on their way to Vietnam to carry out attacks on the “enemy” from 20,000 feet – the killing does not seem as messy that way. History has recorded the role those planes played in the conflict. But that night, as we lay in bed listening to the gradual dimming sound of those many engines fading over the Pacific, I had an eerie feeling contemplating the thousands of lives that would soon be no more.

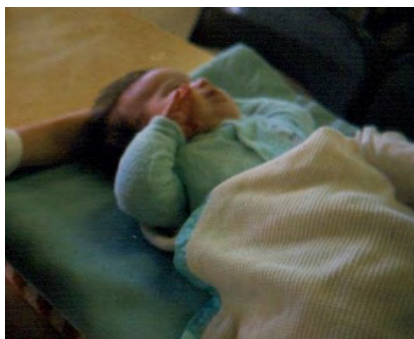
God finally gave us another son in December 1969. Mark Steven Aldridge was born at 2:15 PM on the 9<sup>th</sup>, at the original Kaiser Hospital on Kiely Boulevard in Santa Clara. He is our only child that was born in Santa Clara. We previously had three born in San Jose, five in Watsonville, and one in San Luis Obispo.

Mark was baptized on January 3, 1970 at St. Joseph's Church (now Cathedral) in San Jose. Bob and Virginia Keller were his Godparents.

After the baptism we went to the Keller's home for a meal and celebration. Mark slept through the entire affair.



Mark on the day of his baptism  
January 3, 1970  
Taken by his Godfather, Bob Keller



Mark at three months old  
March 8, 1970

I left work at Lockheed (to be discussed in another chapter) a couple years after Mark was born and Janet started working outside the home – first as a vision therapist and then as a language development aide with the school system. Meanwhile, I started doing research and writing at home. Consequently I was home alone with Mark while Janet was at work and the other kids were at school. Mark had to depend a lot on me for his needs. We developed a relationship that I never had the chance to develop with the other kids because with the others it was Janet at home and me away at work. Sometimes I had meetings and

gave talks locally. Mark went with me to all of those. I used to carry a small notebook in my pocket. While I was participating in a meeting or giving a lecture, Mark used my notebook and pen to draw pictures. Later he would explain to me what they were (it's a good thing too, because I would never have figured it out).

Janet and I helped form an alternative spiritual group called the Community of Renewal (COR



for short). We met at a different place every Sunday for a liturgy and communion. It was at one of these COR liturgies that Diane and Nancy received their First Communion. In addition to the liturgies we had meetings to plan the liturgies. It was a diverse group and sometimes our meetings ended up more as a debate than a discussion.

Two families we met in COR were the Masons (Roger and Lucille and their daughter Maureen & son Roger Jr.) and the Brennans (Ed and Phyllis and their two sons Evan & ???). It turned out that we all liked camping. Roger, especially, was very gung ho in planning campouts and



Mark and Nancy with their sister Kathy  
in San Francisco – March 11, 1973

making reservations. For a while we were going camping every other weekend. Sometimes we went to the mountains and other times to the beach.

Other families in COR often accompanied us on these family outings. Of course our kids loved it – both the camping out and the playing with other kids. We all had fun on these campouts – hiking and campfires and whetting our outdoor skills.

We and the Masons also enjoyed backpacking. Several times we took our children on short back packs at Point Reyes. There were two

beach campsites – Coast Camp and Wildcat Beach. There was also a Sky Camp up on one of the highest peaks. Another inland campsite was nice but not as spectacular.

Of all these campsites I believe Wildcat Beach was our favorite. The campground had plenty of space and it was just a few steps from the beach. There was also a little lagoon where a creek emptied into the ocean. A short hike down the beach was a waterfall coming over the cliff above the beach. It was an unusual site to see waterfall on the beach. I also hiked to Wildcat Beach with Mary once when her science class at Wilson Middle School (now the Adult Education Center) spent a weekend there on a nature campout.



Mark on his rent-a-horse – 1978



Pat Springs Camp where we spent  
our first night – June 16th

We and the Masons decided we'd like to go on a 45-mile backpack in the Santa Lucia Mountains of the Los Padres Forest. We did a lot of planning and took shorter hikes to get in shape. Then in the very late spring of 1972 we started out. We spent four nights and five days on the trail, from the



Hiding Camp on the Carmel River where  
we enjoyed an afternoon – June 17th

16<sup>th</sup> of June to the 20<sup>th</sup>. We took Kathy, Teri, and Mary with us. Roger and Lucille took Maureen and Roger Jr. with them, plus their Dalmatian dog, Ringo.

We started at Boucher's Gap which is at the end of the road in Palo Colorado Canyon, a short distance north of Big Sur. On the first day we hiked up Skinner's Ridge and made camp at a trail campsite called Pat Springs. It was a dry year and we were a little worried about finding campsites with water. But there was a nice spring there with very cold and refreshing water. The next day we hiked up toward the Ventana lookout and then dropped down to the Carmel River. We spent the afternoon relaxing at Hiding Camp along the Carmel River, which was just a creek at this point, and splashing in the water. We waited there until dark because there would



Washing up at Cienega Camp – June 18th



Lunch stop on the Pine Ridge Trail enroute to Cienega Camp – June 18th

be a full moon that night. When it came up we finished our day's hike in the moonlight to Pine Valley.

We spent our second night in beautiful Pine Valley.

The next morning we took a trail that climbed to reach the Pine Ridge Trail. It was a beautiful view of a beautiful country. Aside from meeting one rattlesnake on the trail the day went smoothly. That night we spent on the north fork of the Big Sur River, at



Janet with ankle bandage and cane, leaving Rainbow Camp – June 19th

Cienega Camp. On our fourth day we started out from Cienega Camp and up a steep trail to the ridge between the north and south forks of the Big Sur River. Janet sprained her ankle and we had to improvise an ankle support bandage to help her walk. On that ridge I cut a Manzanita branch to make a walking stick which helped her very much. She still has that walking stick.



Climbing divide between Big Sur and Arroyo Seco on South Fork Trail June 19th

Then we dropped down to the south fork of the Big Sur and spent a leisurely afternoon at Rainbow Camp, swimming in the river and basking in the sun. Later in the afternoon



Resting at Horse Bridge after a swim – June 20th

we finished our day's hike up the divide between Big Sur and Arroyo Seco. Our last night was at Strawberry Camp at the top of the divide. It was the only camp we had trouble finding water. But when we dug deep enough in the dry creek bed we got enough to keep us going.



The end of the trail at Arroyo Seco – June 20th

On our last day we hiked down the Willow Creek Trail and came to the Arroyo Seco River at Horse Bridge. We were so hot and tired that we just dumped our packs and jumped in the river fully clothed. Then we went the rest of the way to Arroyo Seco and the cabin along the Indians Road. The cabin sure

looked good to us. We rested the night on mattresses and drove home the next day. Jim and Dan had shuttled our car from Boucher's Gap to the cabin for us. That 45-miler was an experience we will all remember. We only covered about ten miles a day but that was good for us softies. Besides that, we weren't hiking all the time. We stopped along the way to have fun.

Throughout the years we spent many summers and enjoyable weekends at Arroyo Seco. Our family has also camped and hiked at other locations. The outdoors was a big attraction for Janet and me and our children. I believe all of the kids grew up to realize the beauty of God's creation.

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## Chapter 25 – Lockheed: Underwater Launch

On May 27, 1957 I reported for work at Lockheed Missiles & Space Division for the first time. As expected, I was assigned to Pappy Bojen's section. He had two engineering groups under him. One was led by Al Schroeder and the other by Joe Kise. I was assigned to Schroeder's group. He was a brilliant engineer and a great guy to work for. I learned a lot under him.

The drafting room was like a big bullpen. I was given a table next to a senior engineer named Harry Ritchie. At that time Lockheed still used the old aircraft-style drafting where the assembly drawing and all its detail drawings were on one sheet of paper. It was not unusual to see a rolled up drawing 42 inches high and perhaps 20 feet long. Harry was working on such a drawing and, because I still only had a "confidential" security clearance, he had to keep a lot of secret parts covered up. It took several weeks for my "secret" clearance to come through. In the meantime I studied the drafting manual and was assigned little odd jobs to keep me busy.

One of my first real drafting jobs was to detail the *jetelevators* for something called FTV-1 (Flight Test Vehicle #1). Later I found out that this was the first of several Flight Test vehicles. The FTVs had four nozzles on the back of their rocket motor and to each would be attached a jetelevator. This was a device that would swivel and dip into the nozzle stream to steer the missile, similar to the way one can put their finger over part of a hose stream to deflect the stream of water. The devices used to steer a missile are called a *Thrust Vector Control System* (TVC system). That simply means to control the direction of rocket motor thrust as one would turn the wheels of a car to change the direction of travel. So I learned my first lesson in rocketeering. Later Lockheed would steer with four canted nozzles by simply rotating the nozzles, and that led to a single, large gimbaled nozzle that swiveled in any direction to change the direction of thrust.

Eventually, as I became more familiar with the work I learned that I was working on the first Polaris missile that would be launched from underwater by a submarine. These FTVs were merely to gather some preliminary data. That really excited me. I felt like I was working on the cutting edge of technology, and I was. To keep all of us geared up and enthused, every time there was a missile launch by the US we were all summoned to a conference room to watch a short video of it. The first Polaris Missiles were designated A1. The first series of really experimental vehicles to define the concept were simple designated AX ("X" for experimental) and launched from a pad at Cape Canaveral.<sup>1</sup> After the concept was solidified there followed more experimental missiles designated A1X – the first few were also launched from a pad at Cape Canaveral. Following the series of pad launches were the launches from submarines – first with the subs on the surface and later submerged. When the experimental testing was completed and the missile went into production they were designated A1P ("P" for production).

Barely over four months from the time I started at Lockheed, on October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union put Sputnik-1 in orbit. This first artificial earth satellite was very simple and appeared to be more of an effort to be first in space than anything else. Nevertheless, all hell broke loose at

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<sup>1</sup> Cape Canaveral was later changed to Cape Kennedy but eventually went back to being called Cape Canaveral to avoid confusion with the Kennedy Space Launch Center nearby.



Lockheed. Security was clamped down and we went on a 58-hour work week – ten hours on weekdays and eight on Saturday. I sure appreciated 18 hours/week overtime as it allowed us to clear up our doctor bill from Watsonville and to pay off a second mortgage on our home. But it was hectic. In addition to long hours at work I was also going to school three hours a night for several days a week.

My largest project in Pappy Bojen's section was the assembly and detail drawing, all on one long sheet of vellum paper, of a Special Test Vehicle (STV). This was a full scale replica of the first Polaris only made from ½-inch steel with concrete instead of solid rocket fuel. The weight and balance of the STV had to replicate the future Polaris. This STV was to be used for practice launches – both surface and underwater. After each launch the boiler-plate missile would be fished out of the drink and used again. I became an expert on boiler-plate missiles.

On September 9, 1958 I was promoted to a senior draftsman. I was no longer at the bottom of the pecking-order. I had only moved up to the second rung but it was something.

The first AX missile was launched from Cape Canaveral on September 24, 1968. There was a lot of attention centered on this very first launch of a Polaris concept. The programming on this early missile was to shoot it straight up and at a certain height it would first roll to orient the missile's azimuth north and south. Then the TVC system was supposed to tip the missile on its ballistic trajectory out to sea. What happened when the missile was launched is that it went up, and up, and up – straight up. The range control officer sat there looking up into the nozzles and decided that what goes up must come down, so he pushed the "destruct" button. The destruct system was an explosive cord that was supposed to rip open the motor case causing the missile to explode. When the button was pushed the explosive cord only caused a few holes in the motor case. The missile was like a wounded snake and looked like a Fourth-of-July pinwheel as it floundered around the sky. It actually went inland and crashed into a lagoon behind the Polaris Motel where a lot of Lockheed and Navy brass were staying. Obviously, there was a lot of redesign in store.

I can't remember the date when there was reorganization and I became part of the Underwater Launch and Model Group under the Ballistic Shell Department. Hank Bollinger, a prince of a fellow, was the group engineer and my immediate supervisor. His aid as lead engineer was an equally nice fellow from England named Ken Gilroy. (A few years later when Hank left, Ken became the group engineer and my supervisor.) The Ballistic Shell Department had responsibility for designing the structural part of the missile. Other departments handled instrumentation, equipment, ground handling, reentry vehicles, etc. The rocket motors, guidance package, thrust vector control hydraulic packages, and a few other items were subcontracted.

The Underwater Launch and Model Group was just that. We were responsible for developing the underwater launch capability of the missile. As such we were drawn in on every aspect of the missile that was affected by the heat, ejection, decompression, and whatever other phenomenon was associated with underwater launch.

We were also responsible for designing, ordering parts and materials, providing engineering coverage during manufacture, and shipping for models associated with the Polaris Missile System (PMS). We built 1/5<sup>th</sup>-scale models for underwater launch in a special tank Lockheed built adjacent to our design building. Agitators in the tank could simulate various wave heights and other ocean conditions that would affect the launch of a missile. We also built wind tunnel models to study the airflow around the missile and other aerodynamic characteristics. These

models were sent to various wind tunnels for testing, including the one at Ames Research Center in Mountain View and the supersonic tunnel at Tullahoma, Tennessee.

It was about this time I met John Grenat who became a good friend. We worked together in the same group, attended some classes at San Jose State together, and even had babies born on the same day. He had a son born on the same day as our Mary. That story has a sad ending, however. His son accidentally killed himself with a rifle when he was 13 years old. Anyway, John and I worked so well together that Hank usually assigned a project to both of us together.

In early 1960 Lockheed started a new job category called draftsman specialist. As soon as this new category was announced my supervisor, Hank, put John Grenat and me in for it. I became a draftsman specialist on May 23, 1960. This was more than acquiring a higher rank. I was now what was called a “salaried employee” rather than “hourly.” It was no longer necessary for me to punch the time clock to justify my time at work.

Jim Freshour was a design engineer in our group with whom John Grenat and worked closely on several projects. One was to design a rocket sled to test a second-stage motor at China Lake, California. I gained a lot of knowledge on that project. One bit of information I acquired was how to design a water brake for a rocket sled using the momentum exchange principle. At the end of the run there were trenches of water along the sled’s tracks. We built U-shaped tubes to mount on each side of the sled. The opening of each tube faced forward. At the end of the run the track rails were build lower to the ground so the bottom ends of the tubes scooped up water from the trenches. The sled is still travelling at tremendous speed at this time. The water is scooped up and forced through the U-shaped tubes to be ejected forward. This so-called momentum exchange doubled the reverse force of the drag of the scoops through the water. Thus, the sled decelerated faster. Videos of the test are quite dramatic when the water is sprayed from the tubes. This principle is used on airplane jet engines to slow the plane after it touches down on the ground.

A few of the first submarine-launched AIXs were when the sub was surfaced. Ballast was shifted so the sub listed to one side in case the rocket motor didn’t ignite after the missile was ejected. The missile would fall back into the water rather than on the submarine. And that is exactly what happened on one of those launches. It fell back into the water and broke in two. Then the second stage motor ignited. The missile could be observed “flying” around under the ocean. Since solid rocket fuel contains both the fuel and the oxidizer it will burn underwater.

The first underwater launch of a Polaris A1X missile from a submerged submarine took place on July 20, 1960 off the coast of Cape Canaveral in the Atlantic. At 12:39:50 PM the A1X was ejected from the *USS George Washington* (SSBN 598)<sup>2</sup>. It broached the surface at a sharp angle but abruptly straightened when the first stage motor ignited and the missile



First Launch of a Polaris Missile  
from a Submerged Submarine  
on July 20, 1960

From Lockheed *Star*, August 2, 1960

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<sup>2</sup> Definition of SSBN: SS designates a submarine. B means it carries ballistic missiles. N means it is nuclear powered.

was on its way. As programmed, the first stage separated after a minute. After approximately another minute the second stage burned out and separated, and the heavily-instrumented reentry vehicle was headed for the target area. A little while later the scenario was repeated when the *George Washington* ejected a second A1X. The *George Washington* went on strategic patrol on November 15, 1960 armed with the first sixteen operational Polaris A1P missiles.

Design on the follow-up Polaris A2 began before the A1 was finished testing. Many of the advances in weapons contracting come from unsolicited proposals by the weapons makers. To increase the range from 1,200 to 1,500 nautical miles more propellant was added to the first stage motor of the Polaris A2 by adding three feet of length. The first stage motor was still constructed of steel with four nozzles controlled by jetevators, but the second stage pioneered a filament-wound fiberglass motor with four rotating nozzles. The warhead was still a single 800 kiloton Mark-1/W47 bomb.

My work on the A2 was pretty similar to what it had been on the A1. We lengthened the boilerplate missiles to accommodate more concrete and the model work was simply scaling up to a longer missile. The first submerged launch of an A2X was conducted from the *USS Ethan Allen* (SSBN 608) on October 23, 1961. The first sixteen production A2Ps went to sea on the *Ethan Allen* on June 28, 1962.

In June 1962 I obtained my Bachelor of Science (BS) degree from San Jose State University. I graduated magna cum laude with honors in aeronautics. As soon as I received the degree my supervisor, Ken Gilroy, put me in for promotion to design engineer.

In the early 1960s NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center was conducting studies on lunar mobility after a module had landed on the moon. Lockheed and six other companies participated in this study which eventually ended up as the Lunar Roving Vehicle (LRV), otherwise known simply as the Lunar Rover. Our section supervisor, Wally Hobart was somehow tied into this study. Had Lockheed been awarded the bid to develop the Lunar Rover, Wally would have headed up the project. He had six of us lined up to go with him if that happened. As it turned out another company got the bid and that opportunity didn't happen. If it had my career would have taken a different course away from nuclear missiles and into space vehicles. I guess I was supposed to stay where I was. Nevertheless, Wally was transferred to other responsibilities but before he left he wrote a commendation for the six of us and made certain it was posted in our personnel files.

Of course the next step was the Polaris program was the A3. There were more changes in this bird. It would have a 2,500 nautical mile range instead of 1,500 due to advances in propellant and lighter motor cases. Both motor stages were filament-wound fiberglass with four nozzles each. The first stage had rotating nozzles and the second stage nozzles were fixed with some sort fluid injection to divert the thrust. The "payload" for each missile was three 200-kiloton Mark-2/W58 warheads designated Multiple Reentry Vehicles (MRVs). They all went to the same target but detonated in a triangular pattern to more "efficiently" distribute the destruction.

Later in 1962 I was assigned as lead engineer for the Underwater Launch and Test Design Group (mechanical). A person by the name of Bob Farr became my supervisor. In this capacity I was assigned certain design and test work and had a crew of engineers and draftsmen to perform the tasks. There was no more model work and in this case the Special Test Vehicles (STVs) were actual missiles with inert propellant. One was assigned to the "Peashooter" facility at Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard in South San Francisco. The other was at the "Pop Up" facility at San

Clemente Island with the shop work performed at Long Beach Naval Shipyard. I will explain how these tests worked.

The “Peashooter” was a launch tube that ejected the missile from the dock, above water, to simulate a surface launch. Since this STV was not a boilerplate missile it would break apart if allowed to fall back into the water. So a “skycatch” mechanism was designed to stop the missile in mid-air. Nylon straps were attached by an intricate design to the sides of the missile and these straps were in turn attached to two cables. The cables went over two beams of a huge bridge crane at Hunter’s Point. The other end of the cables were attached to the pulleys of a modified aircraft carrier arresting engine which was originally used to stop aircraft quickly after they touched down on the flight deck. This arresting engine reeled in the cable as fast as the missile was travelling out of the launch tube and up. When the missile reached its highest point and stopped, the cable reel-in also stopped and caught the missile right there in mid-air. Then the missile was slowly lowered down to the dock and onto an erector trailer.

The “Pop Up” facility at San Clemente Island operated in a similar manner except the missile was launched from underwater and a single cable went over a very high crane on a barge. This system was called “fishhook.” My responsibility in all this was to generate the design of the missile for each test, requisition materials, get the parts built, and see that the test base received all the information, paperwork, and materials needed. I also had to provide liaison with manufacturing, coordination with other departments, see that activities at the test base were covered, and have engineering oversight during all tests. After the tests I had to generate all the necessary paperwork and reports.

On October 26, 1963 the *USS Andrew Jackson* (SSBN 619) fired the first A3 missile from a submerged submarine. The Polaris A3 became operational aboard the *USS Daniel Webster* (SSBN 626) on September 28, 1964.

Other submarines were subsequently refitted with the A3 missile. A new submarine, the *USS Stonewall Jackson* (SSBN-634) was commissioned on August 26, 1964 at Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo, California. Apparently the crew made a training cruise to Pearl Harbor. We had designed Active Inert Missiles (AIMs) for submarine crews to train with. AIM vehicles were functional except they were loaded with concrete ballast instead of solid rocket fuel. At Pearl Harbor, while attempting to remove an Aim vehicle from the *Stonewall Jackson*, the missile became stuck in the launch tube. For some reason the Navy decided to send the *Stonewall Jackson* through the Panama Canal to Charleston, South Carolina, on the east coast for repair. That trip was expected to take a week or so. In the meantime, I was assigned to determine how to get the stuck missile out of the launch tube.

John Surovic, one of the engineers in my crew, and I were given budget, facilities, and manpower to solve the problem but we had to have everything ready to go in Charleston when the *Stonewall Jackson* arrived in port. We set up shop in the high bay of Building 181 which had a huge hoist that traversed the ceiling of the high bay. With that we could do all the tugging and pulling necessary to simulate pulling out a stuck missile. We ordered parts and tried one scheme that didn’t work. Then we got more aggressive and used a core drill to put a hole down through the center of the concrete-filled motor case. With a specially-designed shaft and fasteners we were able to pull up hard enough to do the job. We then had to write up a procedure, pack up the repair kit with parts and special tools, and ship everything to Charleston as well as arranged for a concrete core driller to be there. John Surovic flew back east to meet the submarine. Everything

went smoothly as planned and the AIM came right out. The *Stonewall Jackson* then headed right back to the Pacific to complete its Demonstration and Shakedown Operations (DASO) which allowed each crew to fire a live missile from the submarine. These were completed successfully, the submarine went on strategic patrol as scheduled, and the Lockheed-Navy team got a letter of commendation from the admiral in charge of the whole fleet ballistic missile program.

In 1964 the Polaris A3 program was winding down and there was no go-ahead for the next generation of Polaris. Someone told us – maybe it was our department manager – that if a way could be found to launch a missile from underwater while the submarine is traveling at 10 knots (10 nautical miles per hour) the navy would be real happy. It was possible for a submarine on the surface to launch a missile at that speed but if submerged the drag from the water would shear the missile in two before it was completely out of the launch tube. Consequently the sub had to stop perfectly still and that is hard to do. A very noisy “hovering” system comprised of small jets squirting in different directions to keep the sub upright and properly positioned had to be used. This was very noisy and compromised the stealth and security of the submarine.

So three of us set to work on it. I don’t know where we got the budget – we must have bootlegged it. We came up with a design where a half shell was strapped onto the missile which would fit into the space of the stowage/launch adapters. We called this a “Speed Pack.” In way of explanation, stowage/launch adapters were placed around the missile in the launch tube at three locations – forward on the missile, in the mid-section, and aft. These cushioned the missile like packing material while it was bouncing around the ocean in a submarine. They also provided a seal – like piston rings in a gasoline engine – when the steam-gas generator popped (pushed) the missile out of the tube.

Speed Pack used the space of the stowage/launch adapters on the side toward the rear of the submarine. In the missile nose fairing area the Speed Pack was wider and enclosed tubes that opened at the top and were bent so that the other end opened lower down on the side of the Speed Pack. Thus, as the missile is being ejected the Speed Pack initially provides a strong back to prevent the missile from sheering off. Then as the missile gains speed the tubes scoop up water at the top and eject it out the side, using the momentum exchange principle to keep the missile upright and headed toward the surface. As the missile broaches the surface the Speed Pack separates and falls off.

We drew up plans and had them evaluated by the loads, stress analysis, and hydrodynamics groups. Finally we arrived at a design that would theoretically work. Then the navy lost interest. The three of us who initiated the design felt a little deflated but decided to file a patent with the Lockheed patent attorney according to our employment agreement. As it turned out it could not be patented because of national security – the design was “classified.” But it was filed away in case the technology was ever declassified. I guess our patent is still pending.

Soon we began getting small chunks of budget for concept definition studies for the next generation Polaris missile. Lockheed had a penchant for naming its products after stars. In aircraft there were the Orion, Constellation, Vega, Sirius, Altair, Lodestar, Starliner, Shooting Star, Starfire, Hercules, Tri Star, Starlifter, Jetstar, Galaxy, and Quiet Star. When Lockheed got into the missile business they named it Polaris. So when we started looking at a successor to the Polaris A3 we thought it would be designated A4. That was not to be. Kennedy was assassinated and Johnson was now in the White House, and he wanted his own mark on the new missile. He followed the Air Force custom of naming missiles after Greek gods. The new Fleet

Ballistic Missile would be called Poseidon – the Greek counterpart of Neptune, ruler of the mighty deep. And instead of being designated A4, it would be C3. So I was assigned to perform trade-off concept studies for both surface- and underwater-launch of the Poseidon C3 missile.

Somewhere in that time our department accepted a job from the Reentry Systems department to investigate and perform layout work on the feasibility of mounting the Mark-17 nuclear depth bomb on C3 missiles. John Grenat and I were given the task. We had to coordinate with Reentry Systems and use some of their drawings. In the process we found several errors in their design which could have been pretty serious. My former supervisor, Al Schroeder, was now manager of Reentry Systems and he was quite grateful and impressed with our work. I believe that had something to do with me being transferred to Reentry Systems later.

I was promoted to Senior Design Engineer on February 13, 1965.

The details are somewhat fuzzy with me now but, probably because of a bureaucratic reorganization, our Missile Design department was abolished in 1965 and I wound up working for some other group, in which I was not too happy. I had also just quit smoking at that time and my patience wasn't too great. However, shortly after that reassignment I was loaned temporarily to the Research and Development division which was in an outlying building in Mountain View. My assignment was on the Viper anti-tank weapon proposal for the army. It was a shoulder-fired, recoilless rocket similar to but larger than the World War II bazooka. Some scientist had come up with an idea on making the thing fly a line-of-site path to eliminate the uncertainties of a ballistic trajectory by using combinations of gyros, rotating nozzles and other instrumentation. It was not too different from the control of a Polaris missile during its powered flight phase. As James Michener once wrote, scientists come up with ideas and engineers make them work.

There was only one mechanical design engineer on the Viper task force and I was replacing him. The toughest part of my assignment was the rocket motor design. I felt a little out of my element but the engineer I was replacing did a good job of briefing me. I learned about the specific impulse/burn rate of propellant and how to design the casting of the propellant in the rocket motor case. (The core down the middle of the propellant has to be shaped like a gear so the surface area of burn remains constant as propellant is burned away. This results in the same thrust throughout the missile's flight.) I also had to figure out the size and shape of the nozzle. With a little research I was able to sit down and crank out a layout for what I thought would work. I was still a little uncomfortable but, to my amazement, the supervisor liked it. I continued there for several weeks making adjustments to the design as it was reviewed for loads and stresses, aerodynamics, materials behavior, etc. It turned out to be educational for me but I missed the Polaris/Poseidon work.

My memory is a little foggy on exactly how I got transferred to Reentry Systems. I think I must have been loaned temporarily and then requested a permanent transfer because I was unhappy where I was. Howsoever it happened, I did get transferred. Then, shortly after the transfer went through, the Viper people requested that I be loaned to them again. I was very interested in putting my effort into my new job and told my new supervisor that. I requested that if it was at all possible that I would not be loaned out. That request was honored and I settled down to understanding what happens on the other end of the missile's trajectory. But I will save that for the next chapter.

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**LOCKHEED**



**MISSILES and SPACE DIVISION**

## Commendation

This is to commend **ROBERT CRESTON ALDRIDGE**

This is to commend the continuing exemplary performance of Robert Aldridge. His conscientiousness, skill, and initiative are considered to be outstanding. In all the responsibilities which he has been assigned in the PMS Special Test Vehicles Design group, he has demonstrated a high degree of ability. He consistently earns complimentary remarks directed to his supervision and, in spite of his comparatively low classification, has become one of the most valuable members of the Special Test Vehicle Design Group. He can be justly proud of his work.

Date 10 February 1961

Supervisor

Manager

R. E. Foster  
R. E. Foster

Employee Number 600572

Organization Number 81-61

Posted to Employee's Kardex by D. Allen

FORM LMSD 5910-2

J. E. Sherlock	R. D. Jones	81-61	153	1	8 February 1963
E. Hardy, Jr.	S. C. Cox				
R. C. Aldridge	J. E. Grenat				

W. E. Hobert	81-61	153	1	2-7351
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**COMMENDATION**

Upon my transfer from Ballistic Shell, I should like it to become a matter of record that your service and support have been outstanding and greatly appreciated by me and, I know by the other supervisors and by Mr. Foster. Your leadership has helped make a good reputation for Ballistic Shell throughout the PMS organization.

I wish you the best of everything in the pursuit of your career.

*W. E. Hobert*  
W. E. Hobert  
Supervisor, A1/A2 & Special Vehicle Design  
Ballistic Shell, 81-61

WEH:mjl

cc: Personnel File 81-02

*Lockheed*  
MISSILES  
& SPACE  
COMPANY

18 December 1964

Mr. R. <sup>C</sup> Aldridge  
Lockheed Missiles and Space Company  
Organization 81-61, Building 153  
P. O. Box 504  
Sunnyvale, California

Dear Mr. Aldridge:


Subject: COMMENDATION AND APPRECIATION FOR EXEMPLARY SERVICE

Rear Admiral I. J. Galantin, U.S.N., Director, Special Projects, has personally commended the excellent responsiveness of the Navy/Contractor members of the POLARIS team for the well-conceived and well-executed task of extracting a damaged AIM missile from a Fleet submarine without delay to important operations of that vessel. Captain M. A. Prager, U.S.N., Bureau of Naval Weapons Representative at Sunnyvale has also added his appreciation for this effort.

I am most happy to relay these sentiments to you, a participating member of this particular team, and to add my appreciation and commendation for your valuable contribution to this operation.

Continued performance of this nature in present programs is the best assurance of participation in those programs of the future. Keep up the good work.

MISSILE SYSTEMS DIVISION

  
S. W. Burriss  
Vice President and General Manager

A GROUP DIVISION OF LOCKHEED AIRCRAFT CORPORATION  
SUNNYVALE, CALIFORNIA





DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
BUREAU OF NAVAL WEAPONS REPRESENTATIVE  
(SPECIAL PROJECTS OFFICE)

LOCKHEED MISSILES AND SPACE COMPANY

P. O. BOX 504

SUNNYVALE, CALIFORNIA 94088

1 LMSC A443327

IN REPLY REFER TO:

SPL-31-TCW:WW

1600

Ser:15827

DEC 3 1964

DEC 3 13 45 '64

From: Bureau of Naval Weapons Representative (Special Projects Office),  
Sunnyvale, California  
To: Lockheed Missiles & Space Company, P. O. Box 504, Sunnyvale,  
California (Attn: Mr. W. A. Stevenson and Mr. C. C. Pearson,  
Dept. 80-01)

Subj: Removal of Damaged A3 AIM-01 from SSBN-634

Ref: (a) SP-00 TWX 301416Z Nov.

1. Reference (a) is quoted for appropriate action:

"1. The successful removal of A3 AIM-01 from tube No. 3 of SSBN 634 on 16 Nov 1964 was an excellent example of the responsiveness of the Navy/Contractor members of the POLARIS team. The well-conceived and well-executed removal plan accomplished the task of extracting the damaged AIM missile without interfering with the commencement of DASO operations or replacing the entire launcher tube during PSA.

2. The Director, Special Projects extends a well-done to the participating members of the Navy/Contractor team for this excellent example of the type of response which has become the hallmark of the FBM program.

I. J. GALANTIN

2. The Representative adds his sincere appreciation and thanks for a job "WELL DONE".

- CC: W. A. Stevenson 80-01  
C. C. Pearson 80-01  
J. S. Blais 80-40  
J. F. Mullen 82-01  
R. Fuhrman 81-01  
G. Etabrook 81-06  
J. Maguire 81-70  
M. Gailey 82-70  
J. Kise 82-71  
R.M. FILE MSD FILE

Routed by msd corres control 80-10 12-7-64mp

*M. A. Prager*  
M. A. PRAGER

## Chapter 26 – Lockheed: Reentry Systems

I don't recall exactly how I transferred to reentry systems. I was probably on loan to them and requested a transfer. Anyway, at some time during the latter half of 1965 I started working on the other end of the missile's trajectory – rather than getting the missile out of the submarine and on its way to the target; the reentry body, or reentry vehicle (RV), carries the bomb back down through the earth's atmosphere to detonate on the target. This is where all the destruction takes place and I saw a different aspect of the "romance of missilery." I was now in Department 81-22 of the Missile Systems Division (MSD) of Lockheed Missile and Space Division (LMSD). That was in 1965. Later in 1971, in the midst of the C-5A scandal and other business failures, Lockheed was seeking a \$250-million bailout. To get a government loan guarantee for that amount Lockheed had to put up collateral. Its Missiles and Space Division was the only profitable sector of the corporation so they split it off as a separate company to put up for collateral. Thenceforth, that former division has been known as Lockheed Missile and Space Company (LMSC).

As I pointed out in the last chapter, we were then working on the Poseidon C3 missile. I had an idea what the missile would be like but I had never had an inkling of what lurked in the super-secret area under the nose fairing. Now I would find out. The Poseidon would carry not one RV, nor three MRVs, but fourteen Multiple Independently-targeted Reentry Vehicles (MIRVs). "Independently-targeted" meant that each one of those fourteen MIRVs – designated Mark-3 reentry vehicles – could be sent to a separate target but those targets had to be within a prescribed area called the missile's footprint.

Poseidon could carry fourteen MIRVs, each containing a 40-kiloton<sup>1</sup> W68 hydrogen bomb, but to go the maximum 2,500 nautical mile range the "payload" had to be reduced to ten MIRVs. MIRVs allowed the US to drastically increase the number of warhead deployed without building more missiles.

The MIRVs are attached to a section of the missile called the "post-boost deployment platform" but what we simply called the "bus." Then the MIRVs are covered with the missile's nose fairing. After the last motor stage burns out and separates, and the nose fairing peels off, this bus maneuvers to drop of its first passenger for the first target, After that it maneuvers again to line up the second MIRV for its target, and so on until all the MIRVs are released. Helping to develop these MIRVs – first on Poseidon and later on Trident – would be my job for the next eight years.

During the design phase of Poseidon the US and Soviet Union started negotiating the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, SALT-I. There was an attempt by the Soviet Union to ban MIRVs with the treaty. Lockheed initiated a task force dubbed CAFÉ (I can't remember what that stood for) to produce a list of options in case MIRVs were banned. An option discussed verbally, not in writing, was how we might be able to cheat on the treaty if MIRVs were banned

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<sup>1</sup> A kiloton is the equivalent explosive power of 1,000 tons (2 million pounds) of conventional explosives. By contrast, the Hiroshima bomb was estimated at 14 kilotons and the one used on Nagasaki at 20 kilotons.

by SALT-I. We never had to exercise that option because MIRVs were not banned.

Back to 1965 – I was no longer a lead engineer when I transferred to reentry systems but I was soon given “task leader” status for a project to design and oversee fabrication of RVs and partial RVs for Weapons Effect Tests (WET). WET specimens were exposed to radiation during an underground nuclear explosion at the Nevada Test Site (NTS). The purpose was to test their survivability from a nuclear interceptor missile. The first two tests (called “events”) that I participated in were code-named “Midi-Mist” and “Umber,” which took place only three days apart. Midi-Mist was detonated on June 26, 1967 in a tunnel drilled into Rainier Mesa and used a bomb (called a “device”) of less than 20 kilotons. Umber took place three days later – on June 29, 1967 – in a vertical well with a 10-kiloton device. In the capacity of task leader I first had to work up a budget for both material dollars and man hours. To accomplish that I had to get quotes from other departments and vendors that were to be included in that budget. Then I had to coordinate the design with other Lockheed departments and AEC (Atomic Energy Commission – predecessor to the Department of Energy) agencies. I also had to perform engineering liaison with manufacturing, vendors, and test agencies. At the end of this chapter is a chronological list of all the “events” in which I participated.

I believe it was about this time that our engineering department went through one of its periodic reorganizations. I became part of a newly-organized Advanced Design Group of which Clark Guffey became supervisor. I would remain in that group with Clark as my supervisor for the remainder of my time at Lockheed. He was a nice fellow and I enjoyed working under him. This new group was responsible for the design of the Mark-3 reentry vehicle for Poseidon. This included the RV shell, nose tip, aft end closure, and antenna installation; as well as testing these designs in static tests, underground nuclear tests and flight tests. EMP (Electro-Magnetic Pulse from nuclear explosions which could fry solid-state electronics) was becoming a concern at that time and nuclear interceptors would certainly create an EMP. So we also had to shield against EMP in or design.

I continued as task leader for underground weapons effect tests. I was responsible for fielding full reentry vehicles along with assembled nose tip sections and aft frustums of the shell with closures and antennas installed. Usually one of each type was mounted in several stations in the pipe. Designing a method of mounting them without introducing unwanted phenomena into the test was also a challenge.

The next WET event was code-named Door Mist and it took place in a tunnel drilled into Rainier Mesa. The tunnel complex in Rainier Mesa consisted on a main tunnel which went about a mile or more into the mountain. Spurs were drilled off to the side for tests. In that spur was constructed a large, horizontal steel pipe with various stations for mounting specimens. The bomb is at the far end of the pipe from the main tunnel. The station closest to the bomb receives the largest dose of radiation. Subsequent stations farther away receive radiation doses reduced by the square of the distance. Nuclear bombs – the devices – are unpredictable as to exactly how many kilotons they would yield, and the higher the yield the greater the radiation. Consequently, each station is heavily instrumented so that after the test we knew exactly how much radiation the specimens were exposed to. When the test has been completed, and all specimens and instrumentation has been retrieved, that spur of the tunnel is sealed permanently along with its contents which remain highly radioactive for millennia.

It was also tricky to expose specimens to radiation only and not the shock wave (blast) which



would blow them to bits. A system was devised to do this. Radiation travels at the speed of light and the shock follows much slower at the speed of sound. A crimping charge is placed around the steel pipe a given distance from the bomb. The timing was precise so that the radiation went down the pipe but the crimping charge choked off the pipe, and also the tunnel, before the blast could pass. That's the way it's supposed to work.

It didn't work properly on Door Mist. Some of the blast also went down the pipe and seriously contaminated the specimens. All of the stations were so radioactive that it was months before crews could get in to recover what was left of the specimens. The "event" took place on August 31, 1967 but crews couldn't get in to retrieve the specimens until the following January. I made my first trip to NTS on January 4-5, 1968 to inspect specimens I was responsible for, but I didn't get to Rainier Mesa which is in a part of the test site called Area 12. The specimens had already been brought back to Mercury so that's the farthest I went on this trip. Mercury is a military town just inside the entrance gate to the test site. A secret clearance is needed to get through the gate so Mercury is a classified town.

Before entering the test site, or Mercury, we had to check in at an office just outside the gate. My security clearance was checked and I was issued several badges to monitor various kinds of radiation as well as a dosimeter. My badges were kept there for me and I had to pick them up every time I arrived. That was so a continuous record could be kept of the amount and type of radiation I had been exposed to at the site. The badges were disassembled periodically and tested to determine how much radiation they absorbed. A cumulative record of all exposure was kept for each person. The dosimeter gave an instantaneous reading of radiation exposure if needed while on site but was not as accurate or discriminating. In addition to all these badges I also had a film badge from Lockheed which was changed and recorded periodically. In Mercury we had rooms in a barracks to sleep in which were reminiscent of bachelor officers' quarters in the Army. There was also a cafeteria for meals but which also had a more luxurious "Steak Room" for a higher-class evening meal.

The WET specimens were in a special closed area where radiation-safe suits were required. These rad-safe suits consisted of coveralls, rubber boots over our safety boots, and leather gloves over surgeon's gloves – all cuffs, pockets and zippers duct-taped to be completely air tight. Then a hood and gas mask, all taped tight. Had we been in the forward area this outfit would have been topped off with a hard hat. When leaving that room we stepped on a paper-covered floor to remove all this gear. Then we carefully stepped over a line to a clean area. All of this was carefully supervised by AEC personnel. We were then checked from head to toe with a Geiger counter before moving on to the shower room. After showering we were again checked with a Geiger counter before we could dress and leave. I was a little concerned when the Geiger counter stepped up its tempo as it passed over my chest. I thought I may have accidentally inhaled some radioactive substance. But the one checking didn't pay any attention to it so I presumed it was OK.

Such was my first visit to the NTS. The two biggest hazards in my work were radiation and beryllium, which is very toxic. Since the RVs were made from beryllium I encountered it during manufacturing, again at NTS, and still again when we performed more disassembly at either Sandia or at Lockheed. The machining was accomplished in a secret and specially ventilated room. Vacuum hoses were over each machine tool to suck up any dust or fumes that might contaminate the air. At NTS it was particularly dangerous as it was partially vaporized from radiation and the dust particles permeated the air. The disassembly work at Lockheed was

accomplished at a facility designated IMF. I don't recall what IMF stood for but it was a secret area equipped to handle radiation and beryllium contamination. I was required to periodically report to the medics for a "beryllium physical." Radiation exposure was monitored by film badges, dosimeters, and badges of other sorts but the beryllium physical was a joke. All it amounted to was blowing into a peak flow indicator. If my peak flow indicated a decreased lung capacity it would be pretty late to do anything about it.

Following Door-Mist was Dorsal-Fin which took place on February 29, 1968. I made one trip to NTS prior to the test to check the experiments. The next test was Diana-Moon on August 27, 1968. It was a test in a vertical well with the bomb at the bottom and only one station at the surface. This was a test devoted exclusively to developing the Mark-3 MIRV and the only one in which I was at NTS when the bomb was detonated. It was a special test for me and I will devote the next chapter to it.

There were two lead engineers under Clark. The one I worked under was a real congenial fellow and also very smart. His crew really liked him a lot. Unfortunately he developed cancer and was on sick leave for quite a while. When he did come back he needed a less demanding job. Clark picked me to take his place as lead engineer. That was real difficult stepping into the shoes of a person so well liked but everything seemed to work out OK.

As a lead engineer I was now Chief Experimenter for full reentry vehicles in underground nuclear tests and also for the Development Warhead (DW) on all flight tests from Cape Canaveral and submarines. The DW fully represented the operational MIRV except for an inert bomb. (Other design sections used prepared RVs with instrumentation and those that would telemeter data while in flight, as well as separation systems and penetration aids.) I also had the task of assigning work to engineers in my crew and shared, along with the other lead engineer, overseeing the structural design of the Mark-3 MIRV for Poseidon, as well as lots and lots of paperwork – budgets, schedules, quotations for design effort, attending task force and coordinating meetings, preparing procurement orders and follow-up, weekly activity reports for my crew, and assuring use of all available resources to aid and improve the design effort. Our group was also responsible for the design of reentry vehicles to undergo accelerated aging and other vehicles and specimens involving explosives and pyrotechnics to be tested at Lockheed's Santa Cruz Test Facility way up in the Santa Cruz Mountains at the end of Empire Grade. I still had to travel to various places, including NTS, but more and more I had to delegate other engineers to do that work. Sometimes I had so many engineers in the field that it was hard for me to keep enough on the drawing boards to meet design milestones. Then when Clark was gone for one reason or the other I rotated with the other lead engineer to be acting supervisor.

I took many courses that Lockheed offered to improve my supervisory techniques and engineering ability. I learned FORTRAN (Formula Translation) computer programming and how to program for Lockheed's huge Exec-8 computer to which the entire Building 102 was dedicated. I qualified as a Lockheed computer programmer. Another course was Nuclear Radiation Physics which, although I didn't know it at the time, delved into quantum mechanics. The course on trajectory control of Polaris and Poseidon Missiles was interesting as was another on supervisory techniques and decision making that got into logic diagrams and problem solving.

In Ming Vase, an underground weapons effect test, took place on November 20, 1968. We had minimal participation with just a few specimens. I assigned another engineer to do the design work along with the pre-test and post-test inspections at NTS. It was necessary for our

specimens to be carefully inspected after they were fully installed for the test. It was equally necessary to inspect them again as soon as the radiation level would allow us to get into the test station. I also liked one of my engineers to witness removal of the specimens.

In 1968 I was a lead engineer on the SCARS Task Force which was engaged in a major redesign of the Mark-3 MIRV. I can't recall what SCARS stood for but, as I recall, the underground nuclear tests were showing too much damage from radiation exposure at the level they were supposed to withstand. A shield to absorb some of the radiation had to be designed. We came up with a laminated carbon covering for the MIRV until it started reentering the earth's atmosphere. In space, above the atmosphere, is where it is most vulnerable to radiation from a nuclear interceptor. At first we called this outer layer a damper because it would dampen the radiation to a level the MIRV's beryllium shell could withstand. Damper, however, was too descriptive of the secret purpose. We settled on calling it a "jacket" because it fit the MIRV like a jacket. Two companies were vying for the jacket contract: HITCO (H.I. Thompson Company), and Union Carbide. When it came to developing acceptance criteria I had to make a list of all the aspects the jacket design should be graded on. Then I had to attach a "weighting" to each aspect. (For instance, some items may be three times as important as others.) I then participated in the grading. The HITCO design was far superior and HITCO got the contract. After that I had to make numerous day-flights to their office in Gardenia, Calif. to coordinate the design and help work out manufacturing problems.

It seems that I became the Lockheed expert on the Mark-3 jacket. I wound up coordinating deliveries for every static test, flight test, and underground test in which the jackets were used. Production of the jackets wasn't quite high enough to comfortably meet the demand so I made a huge flow chart on which I balanced the manufacturing schedule with needed dates for every jacket delivered to Lockheed. It was a harrowing job trying to keep everyone satisfied while trying to push HITCO to produce faster. But management backed up my decisions. I think we did meet every test date and if any did slip because of not having the jacket on time they were the ones of lowest priority.

In July of 1970 the jacket was nearing production status and I gave a full presentation on all its aspects to a production/manufacturing coordination group which was attended by the Navy. One of the attendees was George Butters from the Special Projects Office (SPO) in Washington D.C. He was a civilian representative of the Navy with a lot of clout and an abrupt demeanor. He requested that I go to D.C. to make my presentation to other Navy brass at SPO. That I did on July 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> with the SECRET view-foils in my attaché case. The SPO is part of the Pentagon but the actual office location is in Crystal City just across the Potomac from D.C. I checked into my hotel room which was on a high floor in Crystal City with a good view. The weather was real hot and extremely muggy and I really appreciated the air-conditioned rooms. The least exertion caused me to break out in sweat. That night there was a terrific thunder storm and then the weather was more bearable.

The next day I walked to the next tower where the Special Projects Office was located on the top floors. A security clearance was needed to go up that high in the elevator but I had already been cleared. George met me at the elevator and took me to his office which overlooked the Washington National Airport (now renamed Reagan National Airport) across the river. When the hour arrived for the meeting he led me to a conference room filled with Navy brass. It was rather intimidating but I got through my presentation OK and George seemed to be happy. He asked for my view-foils, saying he wanted to make copies. I had been thoroughly indoctrinated

in security and all the paperwork and controls necessary to reproduce classified material. Each copy had a unique identification number. I thought the copies should be sent to him through the necessary channels and pointed this out to him. George just said “pshaw” and waved his hand in dismissal of such red tape. He took the view-foils to a copy machine in the hallway, made a set of copies, and gave the originals back to me. I worried all night about what would happen if someone checked on the copies with the same identification number as the originals I had.

I had a late flight home the next day so spent the day looking around Washington D.C. and visiting legislators, carrying secret material all the time because I couldn’t check it in a locker with my baggage. Later when I asked Clark about the copies that were made he just said: “Well, they’re the Navy and they make the rules.”

Then we started having problems with the reentry vehicle aft closure. I chaired an ad hoc working group to solve the problem. It involved aluminum brazing of beryllium to beryllium. I was never happy with the solution but it was accepted by management and went into production. Later, after Mark-3 MIRV were deployed in the fleet and the aluminum brazing had been subjected to a constant force for several years, failures occurred and became more numerous. Had the missiles been launched they would not have been able to release the MIRVs properly. Some admirals wanted a complete fleet recall of the Poseidon missiles but the public relations faction of the Navy won out and they were fixed a few at a time. This problem was never generally known to the public and can be chalked up as another of many cover-ups.

In October 1969 I went to Cape Canaveral to witness assembly of the DW and other reentry vehicles to the C3X-8 test missile. I stayed at the Polaris Motel and was at the Cape from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>. There was a hurricane brewing in the Gulf of Mexico and it was uncertain whether it would head for Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, or turn east toward me in Florida. The weather was drizzly and muggy. I had the last room in the motel which was at the edge of the Atlantic beach. At high tide the surf came right up to my porch. I wasn’t sure what the evacuation plan would be if the hurricane came across Florida but I kept a wary eye on the weather reports. In a few days it spun itself out in the middle of the Gulf.

I had to drive into Cape Canaveral every day to cover the work being done on the missile assembly. There seemed to be a hold on the test so the technicians were dragging their feet and killing time. I had to stay at the Cape longer than anticipated. While waiting, one of the Lockheed personnel assigned permanently to the base showed another fellow and me around. He took us to the pad and gantry where C3X-8 would be launched. We climbed up several stories in the gantry where there was a door opening to a small balcony on the outside. The balcony didn’t go anywhere, it was just there. While we were standing on it enjoying the view of all Cape Canaveral I hear a click as the door blew shut. I said: “I hope that door doesn’t automatically lock when it closes.” If it did we would be stranded with no one else in sight. One of the fellows gingerly took hold of the doorknob. It turned. Wheww! We all breathed a sigh of relief.

Finally the go-ahead for the flight came through and the technicians came to life. They assembled the reentry vehicles to the missile in very short time and I could return home.

I always worked on a team with engineers from other departments when putting specimen’s in nuclear tests. We were a task force for that particular “event.” In late 1968 and early 1969 I was part of the “Cypress” task force. The Cypress test was scheduled to take place on February 12, 1969. One person I worked especially close with was Walter Osaka in the advanced materials

group. Reentry systems work is always pushing the technology in materials that will withstand the heat, erosion, forces, and other phenomena associated with reentering the earth's atmosphere at hypersonic speed. Consequently Walt and I worked close together and made many trips to NTS together. I only had one problem with Walt and that was getting him past Las Vegas. He was a compulsive gambler. I always tried to be the one who rented the car at the airport. That way when we left the test site for the airport we could leave a little time to stop at the casinos. I then had to set a timeline for Walt to play the tables and then we would leave for the airport. Even then I almost had to drag him to the car.

We went to NTS together on January 18-21 of 1969 to set up specimens for Cypress. This was a tunnel test in Rainier Mesa so we stayed nearby in Camp 12. Camp 12 is more Spartan than Mercury. It is more like a mining town and that is what it really is. A great percentage of the people staying there were the miners who bored the tunnels. The lodging was in prefab shacks and sometimes two people shared a room. There was a sort of Post Exchange (PX) and the chow hall was more like an Army mess than a cafeteria – you more or less took what was served.

Our time frame there gave us two full days to work in the tunnel and set up our experiments. I only recall working at one station. Specimens are mounted around the circumference of the pipe at each station, leaving the center of the pipe unobstructed so radiation can pass through unimpeded to the next station, and so forth. On some of the experiments we had to shield portions from radiation. We did this by building a damper of various densities of tape – first lead and then a layer or two of aluminum tape, and finally some carbon foam over that. We had to figure out what we'd needed before the trip and pack a kit of materials to take with us.

Carbon foam is messy to work with, especially if you have to cut it. There is always black carbon dust left behind. In this case it was left behind on the inside bottom of the pipe when we left for the day. The next day we really got chewed out by the safety personnel who also monitor air quality a mile underground. They told us to never leave something like that which can pollute the air. All we have to do is tell them and they'll vacuum it up but never, never just leave it. We learned our lesson. It doesn't matter who you are. When you're in the tunnel you follow the rules.

The test went on schedule February 12<sup>th</sup>. The radiation had cooled enough to get to the specimens by the 27<sup>th</sup>, when I again went to NTS. I was with another colleague from another department, Bob Colligan. Bob was a bomber pilot during World War II and spent some time in one of Germany's Stalag prisoner-of-war camps. He was a staunch Catholic and on that level we agreed pretty well. But politically he was an avowed redneck and we had some interesting discussions. But, like Walt Osaka, he was a very good friend and we made many trips to NTS together.

For some reason we rented separate cars on this trip. We decided to stay in Mercury and drive to the forward area in one car, which we did after checking into our rooms. Entering the tunnel wasn't scheduled until the next day but we wanted to meet with the test personnel to get filled in on the schedule. We did that and then we went back to Mercury for a meal in the "Steak House" room of the cafeteria. During the night I developed stomach flu or some kind of food poisoning. I didn't think it would be good to get suited up with a gas mask and all the paraphernalia when I might have to barf at any minute. So I instructed Bob on what to look for in my area of interest and then drove back to the airport to fly home.

On June 28, 1969 I was promoted to design specialist. That was a relief because I had design specialists in my group working for me. There was never any animosity from them about working for someone of a lower rank, so to speak, but I felt better being at least equal to the engineers working for me.

The Mark-3 MARV was well along in development and weapons effect testing was not needed as often. The next “event” that I participated in was about a year later. It was called Diana Mist and it took place on February 11, 1970. I went to NTS on January 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> to check things out. It looked like the test would go well and then a new design requirement was identified. We didn’t know if the specimen in this test complied, and it was already mounted in the pipe. Clark said he wanted me, personally, to find out. This was mid-afternoon on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and I had to leave immediately because if we had to take the reentry vehicle out of the pipe for modification we only had a week to do that and get it mounted back in the pipe. The “device” was already installed in place and ready to go. I believe it was Walt Osaka who went with me.

I didn’t have time to drive home for a suitcase so I called and Cres answered the phone. I asked him to throw my safety boots and hard hat into a suitcase and meet us someplace we would pass on our way to San Francisco. I think we missed the flight we wanted but were able to get on another. It was dark by the time we landed at McCarran International Airport by Las Vegas. We rented a car that had been reserved and drove the 70 miles north on US-95 to Mercury. After picking up our NTS security badge and radiation monitoring badges outside the gate we went on in to Mercury and secured our rooms. I put on my safety boots and we drove another 45 miles through Frenchman and Yucca Flats and past the huge Sedan crater (from an Operation Plowshares test when atmospheric explosions were allowed) to Rainier Mesa. We parked outside the tunnel and caught a ride on one of the mining trains that traverse the main tunnel. The pipe wasn’t radioactive yet so we didn’t have to suit-up.

It was very late when we entered the pipe at the station our MARV was mounted. I don’t recall what we had to do but it wasn’t necessary to dismount the specimen. Walt went out for a while to get something and I sat down inside the pipe to wait. It was midnight and black as pitch when I turned the flashlight off. Here I was a mile underground sitting in a pipe which in a few days would be zapped with radiation that would vaporize me. I peered into the darkness where a few thousand feet up the pipe a hydrogen bomb equal to those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was mounted and ready to go off. I can’t describe the feeling exactly but I later wrote an article about this experience for *The Agitator* (publication of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker). I believe the title was “A Meditation in the Presence of the Bomb.”

The “event” went off on schedule on February 11<sup>th</sup> and five days later we could retrieve the specimens. There was only the one reentry vehicle in the test so I was the only person from Lockheed that went for the post-test inspection. Three fellows from Sandia were going so we all went together. It was after dark when we landed and I rode in a car they rented. As is often the case, they wanted to stop in Vegas to try their luck. The “strip” and downtown were all glitter



and tinsel. On the plane the stewardess often hands out complimentary chips for one of the casinos. I played a little black jack and lost them all. We walked around town a little and got something to eat. Then we drove to Mercury.

When we got to the badge office outside the gate the officials there couldn't find a record of my security clearance. They said to check in the morning and gave me a temporary pass to get into Mercury – but it was not good for the forward area. In the morning I checked again and they still couldn't find a record of my clearance. The three Sandia fellows had to get up to the tunnel to be there when the pipe was opened. It had been snowing on the Mesa so they got a 4-wheel drive government vehicle. They gave me the keys to the rented car so I'd have transportation. So, there I was – stranded.

I kept bugging the badge office and finally I was cleared. What should I do now? If there was a lot of snow I only had a 2-wheel drive sedan. I thought what the heck – I'm not doing any good sitting around in Mercury. I hopped in the sedan and started for Rainier Mesa.

It was a good road all the way and the snow on the road to the tunnel had been cleared. I parked outside and looked around. There wasn't a person to be seen. I didn't know what the radiation level in the tunnel was or if I should be wearing protective gear. I decided to chance it and started hiking into the tunnel. When I had gone about half a mile a mine train was coming in on the tracks. I'd find out soon how safe I was because if the driver was suited up I'd be in big trouble. But he wasn't and I breathed a sigh of relief. He stopped to pick me up and gave me a ride the rest of the way.

When I reached the spur where the test took place I suited up in the "mud room." When I walked in to the pipe the crew was just removing the reentry vehicle with a hoist. I got there just in time to see the nose tip of the RV glance off a flange of the pipe. It was fortunate that I witnessed that as there was some damage and I could testify that it was inflicted post-test.

There were two more "events" in May 1970 that I was involved in – Diana-Mist on the 11<sup>th</sup> and Hudson-Moon on the 26<sup>th</sup>. There were no full reentry vehicles fielded for those, however, and I didn't think my personal presence at NTS was necessary. I assigned another engineer to cover the pre- and post-test inspections.

By late 1970 the Poseidon missile was well along in development. The *USS James Madison* (SSBN-627) launched the first Poseidon from a submerged submarine on August 3, 1970 while on its Demonstration and Shakedown Operations (DASO). But there was a problem with the carbon nose tip on the MIRVs. Management struck up the idea that the nose might absorb moisture sitting in the submarine while it was out to sea and submerged. They theorized that the moisture in the carbon might cause a steam explosion during the terrific heat generated while reentering the earth's atmosphere. It was decided that one reentry vehicle would be removed from a missile still in a submarine that had been to sea for a while. That submarine would be the *James Madison*.

I was given the task of formulating a procedure for removing a reentry vehicle from a missile while it is still in the submarine. Removing the diaphragm at the top of the launch tube that kept seawater from flooding the tube when the hatches were opened was not a problem. That is always done before a missile is loaded or unloaded. Getting to the missile's nose fairing off is a little more difficult and some special tools had to be designed. Likewise for detaching and grasping the RV. I also worked with an engineer from materials to work up a procedure for determining the moisture in the RV's nose tip.

During November 11-15, 1970, three of us flew to Cape Canaveral to accomplish this task. I went to oversee the removal of the RV and disassembly of the nose section. The materials engineer went to oversee the measurement of moisture in carbon; and my department manager went to make any management decisions that might be necessary. The *James Madison* came into port at the Cape and was waiting for us.

On the morning we were to remove the RV we drove to the waterfront area and parked. We walked out on the dock and up the gangway of the big black submarine. The sentry at the door of the conning tower (the hatchway in nautical terms) asked what our business was. We told him we came to remove one of the reentry vehicles. He really looked perplexed and said he knew nothing about it. I couldn't believe it – the Navy couldn't have communication this bad. Then one of the others asked if this was the *James Madison*. The sentry said no, we were on the *Daniel Boone*. Then he pointed out the *Madison* a little farther down the dock. Missile submarines have no numbers or identification painted on them and they all look alike -- black.

When we found the *Madison* everything went smoothly. I took a couple hours to remove the RV. This was the first time an RV had ever been removed from a missile while it was in a submarine. Ever since the 1990 Drell Report (Report of the Panel on Nuclear Weapons Safety) the officially mandated procedure is to load the missile first and then install the RVs after the missile is in the submarine. For removal the RVs are removed first and then the missile is extracted. There are doubts that the Navy actually follows this procedure.

The RV was then taken to a secret work area to disassemble the nose assemble. The nose assemblies weren't really meant to be disassembled. Inside the carbon cap is an intricate system of springs and wedges to firmly support the cap. We called it the 40-piece nose. To unscrew the cap with all the wedges deployed and held firmly in place with springs could cause chipping and damage. As I recall, one of these nose assemblies was worth about a million dollars. I explained all that to Gordon Knight, my manager, but he said to go ahead and disassemble. I decided to do it myself rather than supervise a technician. I was able to unscrew the cap but couldn't catch all the springs and wedges which scattered on the floor. Gordon's job didn't allow him to become too acquainted with the details of some designs and he was amazed at all the parts. What really mattered, however, was the carbon cap and I got it off in one piece and undamaged. That was what would receive all the testing.

There was an office of the national Bureau of Weights and Measures at the Cape and we enlisted their help. They would get a precise weight of the cap and then put it in an oven to dry. At intervals they would weigh it again until there was no more change in weight, signifying there was no more moisture to dry out. The difference between the initial and final weights would be the weight of moisture that was in the cap. Knowing that, the experts back at Sunnyvale could determine if it was enough to cause the problems hypothesized.

We had to wait at the Cape until the drying process was complete. In the meantime, the skipper of the *James Madison* invited us aboard for a tour. The Lockheed representative at the Cape went with us. First we met with the skipper and executive officer to one of the boat's conference rooms. After they explained some of the details of running a sub we had the tour. We walked between the missile tubes which were nicknamed "Sherwood Forest." Some of the crew took their blankets and slept there. At the very aft end of the missile compartment was the reactor room. It was all welded shut so no one could enter. In fact, no one was supposed to linger too long in that area. So we got to see a little of what life on a submarine is like.

At another time the Lockheed rep arranged for us to go aboard the USNS Observation Island for a tour. It was a ship that official observers stood on to watch underwater launches of Polaris missiles from submarines. President Kennedy watched an underwater launch from it a few days before his assassination in 1963. It had been fitted with launch tubes and the first Poseidon tube-launched missiles were from this ship. Today it is part of the US missile defense system and carries the Cobra Judy phased array radar. It is designated as T-AGM 23, a missile range instrumentation ship.



USNS Observation Island (T-AGM-23)  
Formerly designated MA-28, YAG-57, and  
E-AG-154, *Empire State Mariner*  
Source: Wikipedia

I never liked being away from home so long and was very happy to fly back to California when our task was completed. On March 3, 1971 the *USS James Madison* left port for its first strategic patrol loaded with sixteen operational Poseidon C3 missiles – each equipped with 10-14 nuclear bombs of 40 kiloton each.

Clark's group was an advanced design group and in early 1971 we moved on to new concepts. We didn't actually have a contract for another missile but there was budget for some preliminary design studies on a new RV we designated as a Mark 200. The EXPO task force was established to investigate a new generation Poseidon missile of longer range but still fit into existing submarines. It would be designated C4. Greater range would be achieved by more energetic propellant, lighter structural materials, and adding a third-stage motor under the nose fairing in the middle of the reentry vehicles. EXPO is an acronym for EXtended-range POseidon. I was a lead engineer on that task force with a desk in the task force area and my usual desk in our design area. I had to split my time between the two, and also my design crew. I was appalled at

the proposals Lockheed was making to the Navy when we didn't have a material in existence to make a reentry vehicle nose cap that would stand the atmospheric reentry heat for the speed and shallow reentry of a 4,000 nautical mile trajectory. The materials group was working on an advanced graphite but it required something like an 18-month cure time so we wouldn't know if it would work for over a year. Lockheed management just gambled that it would and if it didn't they would decide what to do then.

We had a concept designed for a 4,000 nautical mile range Poseidon C4 missile and presented a "Grey Book" to the Navy that outlined the proposal. But the Navy had been busy too and they had conceptualized the Underwater Long-range Missile System (ULMS). ULMS would compete with the Air Force's Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and would be a much larger missile which would require a new fleet of submarines. We were instructed to bury the Grey Book and not mention the C4 because if Congress saw that avenue open it would not approve a new fleet of submarines. ULMS was later known as Trident.

In the meantime a friend of mine, John Gardner who worked in Space Systems Division of LMSC, and I started thinking of new ways to use our engineering knowledge for a more beneficial purpose. He gathered a few interested engineers from Space Systems and I found some interested in Missile Systems Division. We started meeting after work a couple times a week. We'd go to a nearby pizza joint, order a couple pitchers of beer, and brainstorm ideas we could follow up on. One was to contact the Oakland Naval Hospital which was handling all the amputees from Vietnam. We thought bioengineering would be a promising field. The person in charge of the prosthetics department at the hospital was very interested in our enthusiasm. We had several meetings at night at the hospital and even made some field trips with him to other places that were doing bioengineering. This activity went on for a month or more and then a contract came through for Lockheed. All at once everyone was too busy for any more meetings of our Ad Hoc Group of Engineers, as we called ourselves. The group dwindled back down to John and me. In the whole process I did get an offer to go to work for the National Institute of Health but we would have had to move to Washington, D.C. Janet and I decided that would not be a good choice.

Our advanced design group started layouts for a Mark-400 reentry vehicle. Both weapons laboratories – Livermore and Los Altos – sent catalogs of various shapes, sizes, and yields of nuclear bombs to make trade-off studies on what would work in the Mark-400. As everyone now knows, the Mark-400 evolved to the 100-kiloton Mark-4 MIRVs deployed on Trident missiles.

At this time we were still using slide rules for quick calculations and the computer available for engineering use occupied a room as large as a classroom. Cards had to be key-punched to feed into this computer and the printouts were stamped out on a line printer (that printed an entire line with one impression). When Hewlett Packard came out with a hand calculator we talked management into buying one for each design crew. I had one for the entire crew to share.

Meanwhile, Boeing had years earlier used computer graphics to design its 727 airliner. A former Boeing engineer was now working at Lockheed's aircraft division in Burbank. He was setting Burbank up to use the same computer graphics that he used at Boeing. Our Missile Systems Division decided to look into it. I was assigned as the design engineering representative on the task force to investigate feasibility. On August 17, 1971 (our 24<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary) we all flew to Burbank to be briefed on how the system works. The other fellows were very considerate in wrapping up discussions early so I could fly home in time to take Janet out to dinner.

Eventually four terminals were installed at LMSC. They were placed in a room in our secret design area and connected to the main computer in Building 102 by secure cables. Although I knew the concept on how these graphics worked, I and several other engineers took the course on the intricacies of operating the system. In addition to my other responsibilities I was the overseer of the computer graphics room.

Before the pad launches of a new missile commence at Cape Canaveral the early concept of reentry vehicles have to be flight tested on what are called Supplemental Flight Tests (SFT) vehicles. For the Poseidon program these SFT vehicles were cobbled together from short-range rocket motors. They were launched from Green River, Wyoming and impacted at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. One time the trajectory of the SFT was miscalculated and the RV landed in Mexico. Lockheed was able to retrieve it but not many people know that the US once fired a Mark-3 warhead at Mexico (inert, of course).

The longer-range Trident required a longer-range SFT missile. They would be launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base and Impact at Kwajalein Atoll. The Atlas missile emerged as the best candidate. Atlas was manufactured by Convair Division of General Dynamics. So on February 22, 1972 some engineers from other departments and I flew to San Diego to shop for a missile. We were to investigate the electrical and mechanical interface and other requirements to put the Mark-400 RV on an Atlas missile. Atlas missiles were eventually bought for SFT flights but I was not involved with them after that.

There was one more underground test I was involved in. That was Misty North which took place on May 2, 1972. I think it must have had some Mark-400 specimens in it. Since it would be the last time for me to visit NTS I decided to do the pre-test inspection personally. I had never taken Janet on a business trip of this sort and thought it would be nice if we went to Las Vegas together.

On March 22, 1972 Janet and I flew to Las Vegas. This time, instead of staying in Mercury or Camp 12, I made arrangements to stay at the Villa Roma Motel in Las Vegas. When we landed at McCarran Airport we got our rental car which turned out to be a Ford Pinto – what a lemon. Then we checked into the motel. Janet had to stay there while I drove out to the test site – 115 miles each way – to check on the test specimen. I made short work of the inspection although

the technicians there wanted me to stay longer to help them figure something out. I declined and drove back to Vegas.

Neither Janet nor I were much attracted by gambling so we just visited the various casinos and had a few drinks. Then we went to dinner. There used to be a tower in Vegas where the top platform was a dining room. The dining room rotated so that while eating the view was continuously changing. We were always looking in a different direction. I don't remember too much of what we did to amuse ourselves in Vegas but it was a different experience for both of us. The next morning we had breakfast and flew home.

Several months earlier my main job had shifted from working on the Mark-400 MIRV to design responsibility for a MAneuvering Reentry Vehicle (MARV) designated to Mark-500. It was patterned after the British Chevaline with a bent nose and truncated base. Lockheed had for some time been working on a Special Reentry Body (SRB) of the same design using independent development funds. Independent development funds are awarded by the government to enhance a company's technological base and are not to be used in connection with any contract work. So I was now assigned both tasks – the SRB and the contracted Mark-500. To keep them separated I kept the SRB data in one drawer and the Mark-500 information in another.

In this capacity I had to review many secret reports on maneuvering technology that had taken place in the past. It was in reading these documents that I became aware that the US was interested in acquiring a precision accuracy that was not needed for the announced deterrent policy of retaliating only after a Soviet first strike, and then against sprawling and vulnerable urban/industrial (cities and manufacturing areas) targets. The accuracy I could see being sought was only useful against hard targets like missile silos and command posts, and those would have to be destroyed in a first strike.

Learning that my country was trying to acquire a first-strike capability was a major turning point in my career at Lockheed, and eventually led to my leaving that employment. I'll discuss that in the last chapter. In the next chapter I will tell about the Diana Moon nuclear test. But before I leave this chapter I will relate one more bit of information I learned from my former colleagues after I left Lockheed. After the new Trident submarine construction program was well underway the Navy pointed out to Congress that it would be several years before they were available. In the meantime the sea-based leg of the nuclear triad was depending on aging and unreliable Poseidon C3 missiles. Out comes the Grey Book to show Congress how an interim C4 missile with longer range and better capabilities could be used in existing submarines until the new Tridents came on line. Congress was persuaded and the EXPO design went into production but not as a Poseidon C4. Henceforth it would be called the Trident C4, or Trident-1. When that program was squeezed of all its profits the Trident D5, or Trident-2, came along. Lockheed and the Navy had their cake and ate it too.

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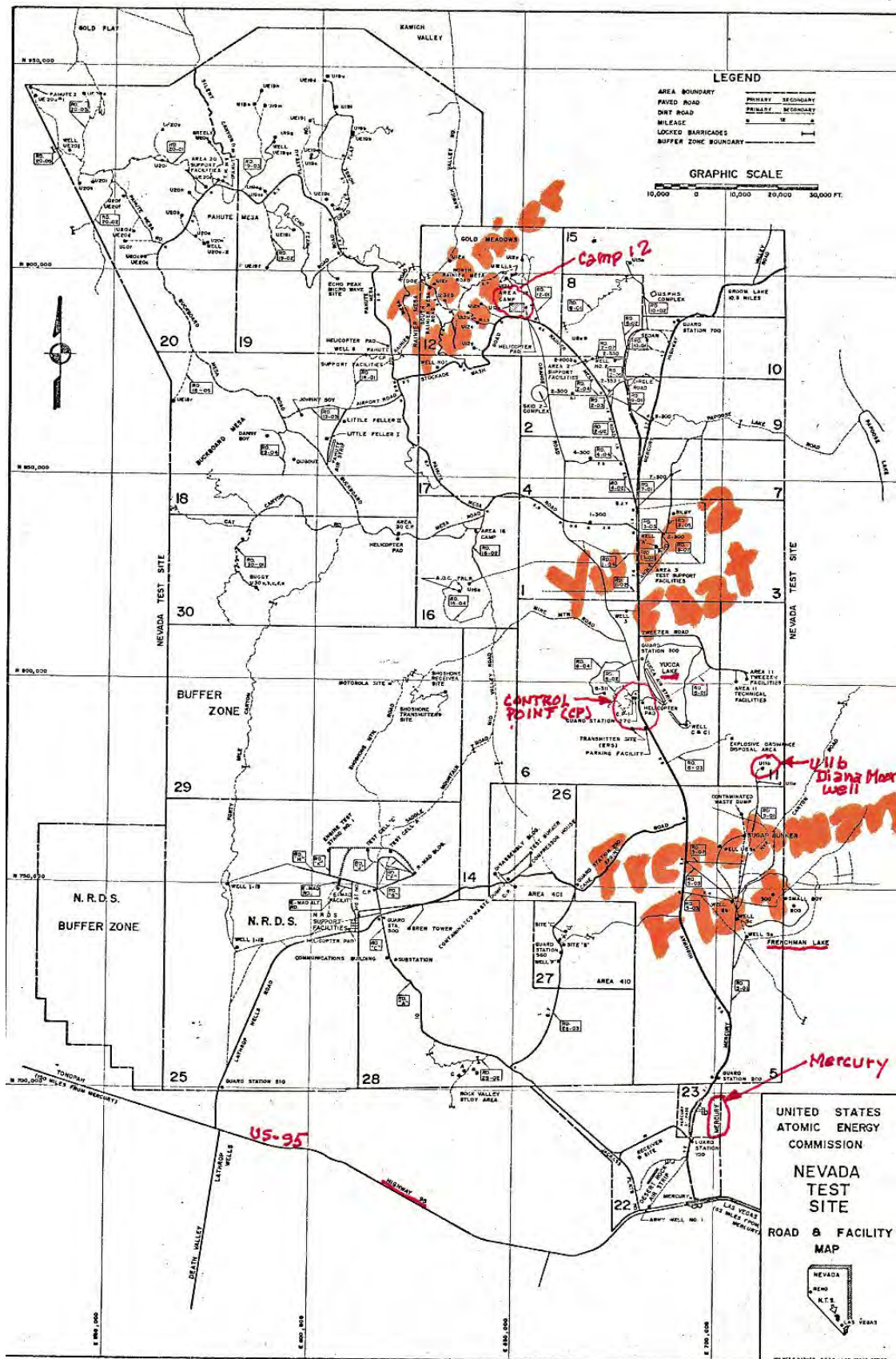


## UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TESTS IN WHICH I PARTICIPATED

Midi-Mist	<20 kiloton	June 26, 1967	Tunnel	Controlled release of radioactivity detected off-site
Umber	10 kiloton	June 29, 1967	Well	Accidental release of radioactivity detected off-site
Door-Mist*	<20 kiloton	Aug. 31, 1967	Tunnel	Accidental release of radioactivity detected off-site
Dorsal-Fin*	<20 kiloton	Feb. 29, 1968	Tunnel	
Diana-Moon*	<20 kiloton	Aug. 27, 1968	Well	Accidental release of radioactivity detected off-site
Ming Vase	<20 kiloton	Nov. 20, 1968	Tunnel	
Cypress*	<20 kiloton	Feb. 12, 1969	Tunnel	
Diana-Mist*	<20 kiloton	Feb. 11, 1970	Tunnel	
Mint-Leaf	<20 kiloton	May 5, 1970	Tunnel	
Hudson-Moon	<20 kiloton	May 26, 1970	Tunnel	Accidental release of radioactivity detected off-site
Misty-North*	<20 kiloton	May 2, 1972	Tunnel	

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\* Events in which I was physically at NTS to inspect the specimens before and/or after the event. Diana-Moon was the only test that I actually witnessed at NTS.



21653

LOCKHEED AIRCRAFT CORPORATION  
INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

*Guffey*

RS 8120/257

TO Distribution DEPT./ ORGN. BLDG. PLANT/ FAC. DATE 14 July 1967

FROM D. M. Tellep DEPT./ ORGN. 81-20 BLDG. 154 PLANT/ FAC. 1 EXT. 27290

SUBJECT: COMMENDATION ON DOOR MIST AND DORSAL FIN EFFORT

The attachments reproduces a commendation directed to the Navy Special Projects Office and IMSC by Major Robert H. Hansen, Technical Director of the Door Mist and Dorsal Fin experiments. Major Hansen's commendation has been acknowledged by Rear Admiral Levering Smith, Director of the Navy Special Projects Office in Washington and endorsed by Captain M. A. Prager, Representative of the SPL Office at Sunnyvale.

Those of you who are familiar with IMSC's association with DASA will recognize that it has been a long, hard effort to win the respect and confidence of this segment of the vulnerability community. The fact that the commendation was prepared by Major Hansen, who is recognized for his technical and administrative abilities in the field, adds significance to this accomplishment.

It is noteworthy that Major Hansen credits the cooperative attitude displayed by IMSC personnel as a major factor in the progress achieved. There is obviously a message in this statement - any other attitude would have been to our mutual disadvantage.

The recognition achieved in these commendations was earned by individuals throughout IMSC, but many personnel from 81-21, 81-22, 81-23, and 81-24 played and are playing prominent roles in this effort. Our R&D support has also been a vital element in these programs. Congratulations to those of you who have participated in this effort. It is an accomplishment to take pride in, and a record to maintain.

*D. M. Tellep*  
D. M. Tellep, Manager  
Re-entry Systems Engineering

DMT:dmw

Distribution:

81-2X Managers  
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81-23 Personnel  
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A. Levy 55-24

Commendation Page 1



- C O P Y -

1. Letter from Major Robert H. Hansen to CDR D. Piraino, Navy Special Projects Office:

"My staff and I are increasingly optimistic that the DOOR MIST and DORSAL FIN events will provide the information needed by the Navy. As you know, these two experiments are among the first underground tests designed almost exclusively for a particular system, and their planning has therefore been somewhat different from that associated with phenomenology-oriented tests."

"A major portion of our optimism has been generated by the cooperative attitude of Lockheed Missiles and Space Co. (LMSC). The LMSC personnel assigned to DOOR MIST and DORSAL FIN have consistently worked to improve these tests, and have taken our questions and comments as straightforward efforts to field a better experiment. LMSC's responses to such questions and comments have themselves been straightforward and timely, a fact which has made our common job much easier and which my staff and I appreciate a great deal."

"Although it would be possible to single out some of the LMSC people who have been so cooperative, I feel that credit is due as much to a fine corporate attitude as to the efforts of any LMSC individual or group. I would appreciate your passing my thanks to SPL and LMSC."

(signed)  
ROBERT H. HANSEN, Maj. USAF  
Technical Director  
DOOR MIST and DORSAL FIN

2. Letter from Rear Admiral Levering Smith to LMSC.

"The Director, Special Projects is pleased to add his appreciation for the efforts of Navy Plant Representative, Sunnyvale and Lockheed Missiles and Space Company personnel. The difficult task of planning and coordinating with other agencies is being accomplished with a high degree of success. This effort has substantially improved the probability that these tests will be successfully accomplished, and that the required information will be obtained in a timely manner."

(signed)  
LEVERING SMITH

- C O P Y -

*Commendation Page 2*

- C O P Y -

3. Letter from CAPT M. A. Prager to LMSC:

"The Representative notes with pleasure the recognition accorded personnel of the Lockheed Missiles and Space Company who, as a corporate entity, have participated so unstintingly in contributing to the success of these programs. I'm sure the results of the tests will bear out these expressions of confidence in the cooperative abilities of the joint services and contractors involved."

(signed)  
M. A. PRAGER

RUSH _____	RETURN _____	
FILE _____	ROUTE _____	
SIGN _____		
	ACT	INFO
R. ALDRIDGE		✓
H. BRAMM		
G. GROTEBECK		
J. STEWART		

Comments: *Bob - This includes you & your guys. Thank you, Clark*

H. C. GUFFEY, SUPERVISOR

- C O P Y -

*Commendation Page 3*



# MEDICAL REPORT

EMPLOYEE NAME (last, initials) <b>ALDRIDGE</b>		R.C. # <b>600572</b>	
ORGN (NAME)	(NUMBER)	BLDG	FACILITY
	<b>81-22</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>1</b>
SOCIAL SECURITY NO.	BIRTH DATE	SHIFT	TEL. EXT.
<b>566-32-7675</b>	<b>1-15-26</b>	<b>#3</b>	<b>25578</b>
		HOURLY OR SALARY	
		<b>Sal.</b>	

RE-EXAMINATION DATE \_\_\_\_\_

STATE CONDITION or EXPOSURE PROMPTING REQUEST FOR MEDICAL EXAMINATION  
(For exposures, specify agent, operations, and any special tests required)

Agent: Alpha, Beta, Gamma radiation, Fission Product Dust.

Operation: Observe work on irradiated materials in IMF Bldg. 103.

\*A\* Badge issued 11-27-67  
Permanent radiation work. Permanent badge list  
REQUESTED BY W.C. Kossack July 17, 1967  
(Requests for Special Physical Examinations must be signed by Safety & Industrial Hygiene Engineer) DATE SIGNED

## PHYSICIAN'S DETERMINATIONS

☐ PLACED ON PROLONGED ABSENCE FOR \_\_\_\_\_

☐ WEEKS ☐ MONTHS LAST WORK DATE \_\_\_\_\_ RETURN DATE \_\_\_\_\_

(check applicable category) ☐ Pregnancy ☐ Occupational ☐ Non-occupational

EXAMINATION PERFORMED		NOT CLEARED	LIMITATION(S) and/or SPECIAL PHYSICAL EXAMINATION GROUP(S)		TEMP. ORARY	BADGE CHANGE			
Date	BY (Physician Signature)	(✓)			(✓)	No	Yes	BY (I.D. Unit repr.)	Date
27 July 67	James R. White M.D.	✓			✓	✓			

## SPECIAL PHYSICAL EXAMINATION GROUPS

~~XXXX~~ A - Radiation  
ASL - Radiation (with slit lamp)  
A4 - Radiation (with AEC-4)  
B - Beryllium  
C - Chemicals

D - Noise  
E - Explosive (Truck Driver)  
F - Laser  
G - Space/Flight Environment  
(See Below)

## LIMITATIONS

I - No hazardous machinery  
II - No heavy lifting (men-25 lbs.; women-10 lbs.)  
III - No unguarded elevation  
IV - No harmful contact or exposure.  
V - No walking or standing in excess of 50% of working shift.

VI - Special & Miscellaneous  
VII - No harmful noise exposure  
VIII - No work requiring lifting of 25 lbs. or more, or frequent unnatural work position.  
IX - No work requiring color differentiation.  
(See below)

Explanation & Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

The above information has been posted to the employee's Kardex record and the supervisor informed.

(Signature - Orgn. Mgr.) \_\_\_\_\_

Orgn. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date signed \_\_\_\_\_

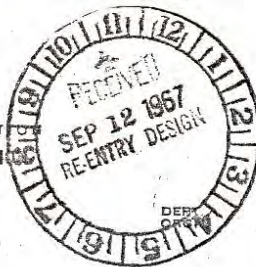
## DISTRIBUTION:

WHITE - Medical Unit  
YELLOW - Employee Orgn. Notification  
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BLUE - Safety & Ind. Hygiene (suspense/follow-up)



LOCKHEED AIRCRAFT CORPORATION  
INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION



*Smith*

TO Distribution

BLDG.

PLANT/  
FAC.

81-23/WETR/128  
DATE 7 Sep 67

FROM J. Chulick

DEPT./ ORGN. 81-23 BLDG. 154 PLANT/ 1 EXT. 20337

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WET PROGRAMS AND THE  
SAFE HANDLING OF BERYLLIUM DUST AND OTHER BERYLLIUM COMPOUNDS IN THE  
IMF.

The following discussion and recommendations, concerning the hazards and safe handling procedures associated with beryllium, and beryllium compounds were taken from

LMSC REPORT #TIC-72  
Beryllium Toxicity and Handling  
Buchanan, R.L.  
August, 1965

Recommendations concerning IMF modification were obtained from the implementation of the post-test evaluation plan for Midi Mist test specimens.

The physical effects of Beryllium poisoning range from granuloma, granule-like nodules in the skin, to death caused by inhalation of dust or fumes of Beryllium or its compounds. Acute pneumonitis, inflammation of the lungs, and chronic granulomatosis, in lungs and in other organs, is caused by exposure to excessive amounts of Beryllium dust over a relatively short period of time. The disease occurs fairly rapidly and is sometimes fatal. Berylliosis, the chronic disease, results from long term exposure to lesser amounts of airborne Beryllium dust. Berylliosis can take as much as 10 years, or more to become apparent but has a rather high mortality rate. Slowness of healing and granuloma is incurred through implantation of Beryllium in open wounds. Ingestion is not very serious since the compound is usually eliminated before it can cause much damage. In general ulceration will occur from soluble compounds while granuloma will occur from insoluble compounds. By far the most hazardous working conditions occur when airborne Beryllium dust and fumes are present. Every precaution must be taken to eliminate such conditions.

In order to insure that there will be no compromise, in safety, to the IMF personnel the following precautions are required, by LMSC safety standards.

To eliminate Beryllium contamination of areas adjacent to the working area:

- A. Isolate the processing area.
- B. The processing area must be maintained at a negative pressure.
- C. Prevention of unnecessary access to area by personnel.
- D. Use of equipment for Beryllium processing only.

*Beryllium Page 1*

In addition the following safety precautions are required to insure the safety of the personnel directly associated with the material processing:

1. Surgeon's gloves, coveralls, shoe covers, respirators, caps, and safety glasses must be required wearing apparel during vehicle disassembly.
2. A washing, showering, and clothes changing room must be provided as an entrance room into the working area.
3. The air velocity must be a minimum of 200 ft/min. through all portions of working area. The exhaust must be through an absolute filtering system.
4. A portable sniffer will be used to continuously monitor the air in potentially contaminated areas.
5. Vacuum equipment for floors and walls must be readily available.
6. No eating, drinking or smoking can be allowed in any contaminated area.
7. An individual with cuts, bruises, or abrasions of the skin will not be allowed to work in the IMF.
8. The maximum allowable atmospheric concentration by A.E.C. standards will not exceed  $2 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in working areas. The maximum allowable concentration for continuous exposure shall not exceed  $0.01 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ .

Above and beyond the safety requirements a periodic medical examination, supervised by a physician, must be required of all workers exposed to beryllium and its compounds.

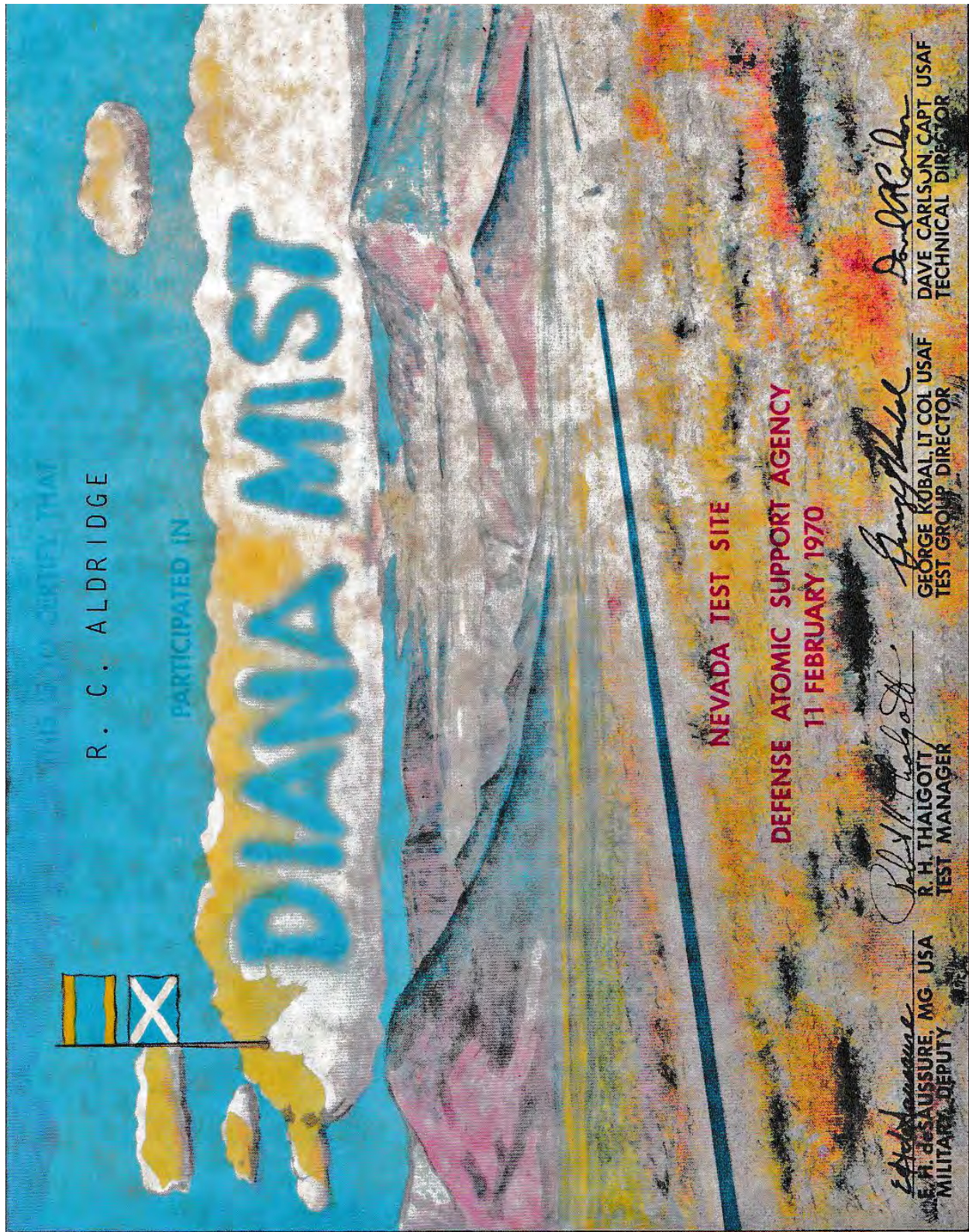
At this time it is felt that the IMF director has done all that is possible to implement the WET programs and insure the safety of the personnel under the conditions available to him in the IMF. However, the IMF was not built to adequately implement the WET programs or safeguard against health and contamination hazards from large objects which must be worked on in unsafe areas in the present IMF. In order to bring the IMF up to LMSC Safety Standards, and implement the handling of WET specimens, it is suggested that the IMF be modified to satisfy items #2 and 3 above. This requires that a walk-in-hood with cutting tools, crane equipment and sample preparation facilities be built. In addition a washing, showering, and clothes changing facility be provided as an entrance room into the hood.

*J. Chulick, Jr.*  
J. Chulick, Jr., Supervisor  
Weapons Effects Test Requirements

JC:RM:rr

*Beryllium Page 2*







**NAVAL MESSAGE**  
OPNAV FORM 2110-28 (REV. 3-61) S/N 0107-705-4000

*Bob Aldridge*

RELEASED BY		DRAFTED BY <b>R. C. ALDRIDGE</b>		PHONE EXT NR <b>2-5578</b>		PAGE <b>1</b> OF <b>1</b>	
DATE <b>28 OCTOBER 1970</b>		TOR/TOD		ROUTED BY		CHECKED BY	
MESSAGE NR	DATE/TIME GROUP (GCT)	PRECEDENCE	FLASH	EMERGENCY	OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE	PRIORITY	ROUTINE
		ACTION					
		INFO					

**FM: NAVPRO (SSPO) SUNNYVALE**

**TO: DIRSSP, WASH**

**UNCL**

**LOCKHEED MISSILES & SPACE CO, SUNNYVALE REP REQ TO VISIT**

- 1. LMSC/D169049, G. T. KNIGHT 8122 SENDS TO SP-205**
- 2. PURPOSE OF VISIT - TO WITNESS SINGLE RB EXCHANGE AT SUBMARINE FACILITY AND ALSO TO INSPECT CONDITION OF EQUIPMENT SECTION SUBSEQUENT TO DASO CONTROL.**
  - A. ROBERT C. ALDRIDGE, DESIGN SPECIALIST, (8122) RE-ENTRY SYSTEMS DESIGN**
  - B. D.O.B. 4-15-26**
  - C. EMPLOYER - LMSC, SV**
  - D. UNIT OF VISIT - SSEN 627**
  - E. DATE OF VISIT - 2 NOVEMBER THRU 2 DECEMBER 1970**
  - F. NEED TO KNOW CERTIFIED FOR - TOPSIDE, LAUNCH TUBE, MSL UPPER LEVEL, CONFERENCE AREAS IN SSEN**
  - G. SECURITY CLEARANCE - SECRET 9-20-57 (CNMDI)**
  - H. PERSON TO BE CONTACTED - CO SSEN 627**
  - I. METHOD OF TVL - COMLAIR**

DISTRIBUTION: **GTK:RCA:r**  
(PAGE ONE ONLY)

**cc: Manager 81-01**  
**Manager 81-73**  
**Manager 81-20**  
**D. Rathbun 80-74**  
**M.S.P.**  
**C.C.C.**  
**File 81-22**

**LOCKHEED MISSILES & SPACE COMPANY**  
**MISSILE SYSTEMS DIVISION**

*g/t/k*  
**G. T. KNIGHT, MANAGER**  
**RE-ENTRY SYSTEMS DESIGN & TEST**

**UNCLASSIFIED**

DATE/TIME GROUP (GCT)

## Chapter 27 – Diana Moon’s Deadly Dust

I have saved the story about the Diana Moon underground nuclear test for a separate chapter as it was a nuclear test dedicated solely to the Mark-3 reentry body I was working on. I was the engineering design representative on the Diana Moon task force as well as the chief experimenter for the three full reentry bodies that would be in the test. In addition, I want to make some comments on nuclear testing and the efforts to achieve a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

My activities on the Diana Moon task force started on April 10, 1968 when I attended the 7<sup>th</sup> Joint Test Subcommittee meeting at the Livermore National Weapons Laboratory in Livermore, California. Besides Lockheed personnel there were people from the Livermore Lab and Sandia as well as Navy representatives. Sandia personnel had prepared an inert bomb, very representative of the real thing, which they wanted to test in one of the MIRVs. It was more than a dummy. On June 17<sup>th</sup> I went to Livermore again to meet with the Sandia people to work out the assembly procedure for that particular reentry vehicle. Because of nuclear secrecy, production MIRVs with real bombs would be assembled at the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC – forerunner to the Department of Energy) facility at Pantex, Texas. It was decided that this particular MIRV for Diana Moon would also be assembled at Pantex.

In the summer of 1968 I went to Pantex which is a short distance from Amarillo in the panhandle of Texas (Pantex is an acronym for Panhandle Texas). The AEC facility is built underground and the various buildings are connected by tunnels. They are not actually underground but are covered with earth and from the outside look like a field of giant mole hills. This is where live nuclear bombs are assembled and the conventional explosive formed and machined to fit in the bomb case. The various work areas are widely separated and everyone has an assigned buddy at all times. When working on explosives or assembling a real bomb only two people are present. That’s so a lot of people won’t get killed or wounded if there is an accident. Transportation inside the facility was by bicycle. There were strict safety rules because so many bikes speeding through the tunnels create a serious hazard.

I was at Pantex several days to witness the assembly. My motel was in Amarillo and I drove back and forth each day. On my last night in the motel there were severe weather warnings of tornadoes around Amarillo but I didn’t actually see any. Finally the MIRV was assembled and packaged for shipping to NTS. I returned home.

I spent August 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> at the Nevada Test Site assembling the other two MIRVs for the test. My supervisor, Clark, and Walt Osaka were with me. We roomed in Mercury and worked all day and far into the night in a bunker somewhere on the edge of Frenchman Flat, not too far from the Diana Moon well. The nights on the desert remained hot but they were nice. At one time I had to pick up the inert bomb by hugging it with both arms and lifting. I wasn’t aware of the hazard from the depleted uranium case. After two long work days we had everything the way we wanted it. Now we just had to wait for the test which was scheduled for August 27<sup>th</sup>.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of August Bob Colligan and I flew to NTS and settled in Mercury. We would witness the test the next day. I had an article published in *The Nation* magazine on February 10,

1979 in which I described this test. The following narrative is the text of that article with minor corrections or additions as needed.

Mercury, Nevada is no ordinary town. It is more like an Army post with no family residences. Situated 70 miles northwest of Las Vegas along US-95, it is the main entrance to the Nevada Test Site, where nuclear weapons are developed. Only those with appropriate security clearance and a valid need-to-know are allowed within its guarded entrance. Although I had made numerous trips to Mercury and the NTS, this was the first time I would actually be present for a nuclear test. It was code-named Diana Moon.

August in the desert is really hot. The gray morning of August 27, 1968 was not much cooler than the evening before as I nosed the Pinto north from Mercury and deeper into the test site. At the last guard post before entering the “forward area” red lights flashed their warning that a nuclear “event” was in the final stages of countdown. I then negotiated the hilly pass which eventually opened onto Frenchman Flat. The narrow two-lane road unkinked and stretched like a ribbon across the desert to a low saddle in the hills twenty miles away. Even at that distance I could see the flat group of buildings known as the Control Point. They overlooked Frenchman Flat to the south and Yucca Flat to the north.

As I started across Frenchman Flat I noticed another road forking off to the right. It led straight to the Diana Moon “well,” where today’s test would take place. The Bunker where Clark, Walt, and I assembled some specimens was just a little way up that road. On the right of the road farther up was the remains of a simulated town which was built to see what would happen if it were exposed to a nuclear blast. I recall seeing that test on our black and white TV back in the 1950s. First the radiation hit the buildings and they began to smoke and flame. Then the shock wave hit and most of the buildings were just blown away. Manikins to represent humans in the buildings did not fare too well. It was all history at this point but it was scary in the 1950s.

My immediate destination today was the Control Point, not the road that forked to the right. The entire area of Frenchman Flat was being evacuated as H-hour drew nearer.

Twenty minutes later I pulled into the Control Point parking lot. It was a beautiful morning but the day was shaping up to be a scorcher. Not a whisper of a breeze could be felt. I hurried to Building CP-1 where I would witness the test on closed-circuit television. H-hour was set for 8 AM. Inside CP-1 I met the test director who assured me that everything was A-OK except for the wind. We would have to wait for a little breeze to dissipate and radioactive leakage which might occur. H-hour had been postponed until “oh-eight-thirty.” If a breeze comes up in the meantime the test would go. If not, there’d be another 30-minute hold. He pointed to a TV monitor on the wall. The picture showed ground zero and two flags draped limply about a pole. They were Navy signal pennants for the letters “D” and “M” – standing for Diana Moon. “Keep your eye on those flags,” the director said. “When they start rustling we can proceed with the test.”

Small tests like Diana Moon take place in a well drilled a couple thousand feet into the desert floor. A pipe is lowered into the hole section by section and sealed at each joint to make its entire length airtight. The bomb is placed at the bottom and the test specimens are placed over the top. A bell jar-type cover is then placed over the specimens and sealed onto the pipe. For the test the entire system is pumped down to a vacuum to simulate space. In this test the main specimens were the three Poseidon reentry vehicles designed to carry the hydrogen bombs back down through the earth’s atmosphere to their targets. They were being tested for resistance to



radiation from hostile nuclear explosions in space.

When the bomb goes off at the bottom of the well, the radiation travels up the pipe at the speed of light to zap the specimens. The blast shock wave follows at a slower velocity. The idea is to allow the radiation to reach the test specimens but to crimp off the pipe with a charge of TNT before the blast pressure escapes. That keeps the specimens from being blown to bits and helps contain the radioactive material.

I stared at the TV monitor, watching the bell jar that covered the Poseidon warheads. The above-ground portion of the test chamber was mounted on skids. A cable stretched from the chamber to a winch 100 yards away, but not visible on the screen. Laid out on the ground between the well and the winch was a path of airstrip matting for the skids to slide on – the interlocking steel type mats used for temporary runways during World War II. Within a couple of minutes after the test, an explosive charge would separate the test chamber from the pipe and then the winch would pull the chamber safely away from the well. Many practice runs were performed to make certain the system would slide smoothly. The slightest jerk could damage the specimens suspended inside.

At 8:30 the test was delayed until 9, and then again until 9:30. Still no wind. In the meantime I explored the observation room, which was merely a glassed-in balcony above the control center. On the wall of the center were three TV monitors and a few charts. Two of the monitors showed ground zero from different angles and the third displayed up-to-the-minute weather conditions.

One of the charts was captioned MILK COWS, presumably to indicate any cows pastured downwind. They would have to be considered because milk readily absorbs radioactive iodine particles which fall on the grass that cows eat. Fallout can be especially heavy if close to an underground test, and more often than not there is radioactive leakage. Whereas atmospheric nuclear tests would rise high into the atmosphere and cause worldwide fallout, leakage from underground tests travels along the ground in greater concentration. It reaches population areas before many of the shorter-lived radioactive isotopes have a chance to decay.

At 9:30 the test was again delayed but at 9:45 a faint movement of the flags was noticed. The control center immediately came to life. H-hour minus ten minutes was announced. Everyone sat erect. H-minus five. The air was charged. H-minus one. Backs stiffened. Eyes darted from clock to monitor.

“H-minus thirty seconds,” continued the monotone over the intercom. I wasn’t certain what to expect. The blast would be nine miles away, but would we feel the shock? “H-minus ten seconds, nine, eight, seven, ...”

My heart was pounding. I thought of the craziest things. How about the radar terminal down the hall – what would happen if a plane flew over? Would they call a “hold” if someone should appear on the TV screen right now? Could they?

“... four, three, two, ...”

My knuckles whitened. I crouched forward – eyes riveted to the tube.

“... one, ZERO!”

At first nothing seemed to happen. Then the TV image rocked like an earthquake in the movies. In a few seconds all was quiet again except for the black, sooty smoke coming from a pipe atop the bell jar. Another underground nuclear explosion had taken place in Nevada.

My first impression was disappointment. This was nothing like the sensational fireball and mushroom cloud. Then my attention focused on the black smoke which was the remains of the carbon foam we used to cushion the experiments. Some of the blast must have leaked up the pipe and pulverized that foam, forcing it out of the vent pipe. That meant the smoke was radioactive. It became obvious to me that there is no such thing as a clean test.

Ideas raced through my head about the wind carrying those radioactive particles to contaminate milk that children drink, but my attention was soon directed to a puff of smoke directly beneath the test chamber. An explosive cord had separated the chamber from the pipe. The cable tightened as the winch began pulling the test chamber away.

But the bell jar did not slide smoothly as in practice runs. It jerked and skipped. I could visualize the suspended vehicles inside clanging like bell clappers. "Hey! Did someone forget to grease the skids?" quipped a voice a few seats down. "Murphy's Law wins again," chimed in another. But they didn't have the responsibility for those experiments. As chief experimenter, my sentiments were not so cavalier.

Hardly had the test chamber been pulled clear when dust billowed up, momentarily obscuring the picture on the screen. As it settled a huge crater could be seen at ground zero. Subsidence had taken place and that was why the test chamber was pulled quickly to a safe distance. What happens during an underground explosion is that the tremendous energy and heat carve out a huge molten cavern filled with very hot gases under extreme pressure. As the gasses cool and contract, or leak out through underground fissures, the pressure drops and the column of earth above the void caves in, or subsides. But there is still plenty of pressure down there and if it breaks through the surface it will erupt like a huge radioactive geyser.

Within two hours after the blast I was at ground zero clad in a radiation-proof suit. My task was to examine the effects of the instantaneous gamma and neutron radiation on the specimens before they were removed. At this point, however, we only had to worry about alpha and beta contamination, which are particles our rad-safe suits are designed to keep away from our skin and lungs.

Alpha particles are actually ionized helium atoms. Helium has two protons and two neutrons in the nucleus and two electrons in orbit around that. Ionization strips off the outer layer of electrons which, in the case of helium, leaves only the nucleus. That is called an alpha particle. A sheet of paper will stop it and soap & water will wash it off but the hazard is more severe if it is inhaled or swallowed. Plutonium emits alpha particles as it decays.

Alpha radiation is one of the most dangerous cancer causers. Outside the body it can cause skin cancer. In the bloodstream it seeks the bones and can cause leukemia. And, most dangerous of all, the tiniest particle of plutonium inhaled causes lung cancer. Plutonium remains lethal for a quarter-million years. From a human standpoint that is forever.

Beta decay, on the other hand, ejects electrons. This takes place when the nucleus of an atom is adjusting for an unstable neutron/proton ratio. Beta decay from various elements such as radioactive iodine, cesium, and strontium continues from a few minutes to thousands of years. The ejected electrons are energetic and fast. They can penetrate the living cells of our skin and give the appearance of burns. The radioactive substances – in some cases ashes – clinging to our hair, skin, and clothes bombard our bodies with radiation externally.

When these unstable atoms get inside our bodies they are even more dangerous. This happens

when radioactive particles pollute the air, water, and food we breathe, drink, and eat. Once inside the body they cannot be removed, and subsequent exposure adds to the accumulation. Iodine concentrates in the thyroid. Strontium settles in the bones. Cesium seeks the muscles and nerves.

Alpha and beta radiation tear away the electrons from atoms in their paths. If those atoms are in living tissues it means disruption of the chemical's that make living cells. A single radioactive emission has the energy to break 100,000 chemical bonds. A gram of radium, for instance, generates 37 billion radioactive emissions each second. This injures the chromosomes that direct cellular growth. Such injury can take place by altering the chemistry of a single gene so that it conveys improper information to the chromosomes, or by breaking the chromosome itself. If the cell is not killed outright it may continue to live with its self-regulatory powers impaired and reproduce its radiation-induced error.

Cell damage affects the body in several ways. It may lead to uncontrolled cell growth such as cancer and leukemia. It may cause physical and mental problems in future generations. Or it may contribute to disease and shorten life to an extent that science is only beginning to appreciate. There is evidence that the interaction of disordered genes plays a part in arteriosclerosis and subsequent heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, and early senility.

Back to Diana Moon. By late afternoon my test specimens had been inspected and packed for shipment. Bob Colligan and I left the scene at 5:00 PM. We drove back to Mercury, showered and then went to the "Steak House" for a leisurely supper. While we were eating, one of the recovery crew came to our table and told us we got out just in time. Fifteen minutes after we left the Diana Moon well, the tremendous pressure of radioactive gases burst through the surface like a huge fountain. Highly radioactive dust and debris spewed into the air and then settled on unprotected people as they scurried for cover. Water wagons were called to hose off contaminated equipment and office trailers. A fleet of transit-mix concrete trucks was pressed into service in an attempt to seal off the leaks with concrete. Later, an insignificant article appeared in various newspapers announcing another underground nuclear test. No mention of a radioactive leak into the atmosphere was reported. I could see there was no assurance that what isn't reported in the newspapers didn't happen. In following the news about the Fukushima meltdown and cover-up today I can see the same omission of problems and tranquilizing language being employed in material intended for public dissemination.

Bob Colligan and I returned from the NTS on August 28<sup>th</sup>. The MIRV that was assembled at Pantex was shipped to Sandia in Livermore. Walt Osaka and I traveled there by car to assist in the disassembly and inspection of internal components as well as make a closer inspection of external areas. The other two MIRVs were shipped to the IMF building at Lockheed's Sunnyvale facility. In both cases we were again suited up in rad-safe attire to observe and participate in the disassembly.

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Now I want to make a few comments about nuclear testing. When President Kennedy reached an agreement with the Soviet Union in 1963 to ban atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons, the resulting Limited Test Ban Treaty was eventually signed by 106 countries and it appeared that a meaningful step towards nuclear disarmament had been made. But that was not the case. The United States was immediately ready for sophisticated underground nuclear testing and the Soviets were not able to continue testing until the following year. During the ensuing decade the

US conducted 255 publicly-announced tests and the Soviet Union set off at least ninety. Although all tests are not announced, American officials tout this country's program as being 2½ times more active than the Soviet Union's. This has given the US a significant lead in miniaturized warheads for MIRVs and in developing such ingenious devices as the neutron bomb. Dominance in nuclear weapons was a significant contribution toward the emergence of the US as the world's sole superpower.

Most of America's underground nuclear testing has been conducted at the Nevada Test Site. Simple ones like Diana Moon took place in wells dug in Frenchman and Yucca Flats. More complex tests with many arrays of experiments took place in the tunnel system of Rainier Mesa. But tests in the megaton range took place in very deep holes in Pahute Mesa.

Pahute Mesa is a 200 square mile section in the northwest corner of the Nevada Test Site. There was some question, however, regarding the wisdom of setting off explosions greater than one megaton there. The preliminary United States Geological Survey report stated that "... the geology dictates a maximum test depth of 4,500 feet." That means, because of the complex nature of the volcanic rocks and the numerous faults that run through those rocks, a 1-megaton device is the largest that can safely be detonated at that depth. But the final document had been altered to read: "... tests have been conducted to a depth of 4,600 feet." Subsequent blasts have gone off as deep as 6,500 feet, which would accommodate a 6-megaton bomb. It appears that our leaders were gambling with public safety in order to continue testing.

Tests have also been conducted below water level with resulting contamination. As water percolates through the soil there is some filtration of radioactive particles but many isotopes, such as tritium, will dissolve and go anywhere the water goes. In 1968, Hughes-Nevada Operations sent a memo to Dr. Donald Hornig, President Johnson's science advisor, calling attention to the danger of contamination. The memo pointed out that wells used to monitor contamination draw water that has percolated through the soil, and no samples were being taken along faults where water flows faster without filtering. The report also stated that drinking water wells in neighboring Clark County were not checked at all and that radiation monitoring of the Colorado River and Lake Mead was inadequate. The latter two supply water to Los Angeles and other places.

Contamination problems can only be eliminated by stopping underground tests. A brief history of attempts to achieve a comprehensive nuclear test ban provides an understanding of why efforts have not been fruitful. The position of the United States in 1963 was that it would agree to a complete ban only if suspicious seismic (ground shock) signals that might have been caused by a nuclear explosion could be investigated. American negotiators figured this would require about seven on-site inspections per year. The Russians claimed that seismological technology was adequate for verification but finally conceded they might agree to three annual inspections. This was not acceptable to the US so the 1963 treaty did not outlaw underground testing.

In 1968 Britain again attempted to expand the Limited Test Ban Treaty. It proposed that a committee composed of seven members – three from the nuclear powers that signed the 1963 treaty, three from non-aligned countries, and one named by the United Nations Secretary General – be created to simply determine if inspections are, in fact, needed. The Soviet Union rejected that proposal on the same grounds as before.

On April 1, 1969, Sweden proposed that the country in which suspicious seismic events occurred should invite an on-site inspection but that no penalty would be imposed if the invitation were

not forthcoming. The Russians countered with a proposal that would not require inspections of suspicious seismic signals greater than 4.75 on the Richter scale because there would be no confusion between explosions and earthquakes above that intensity. In addition, the Russians proposed a moratorium on all tests that fell below that level. That offer was promptly rejected by the United States, which was at that time testing low-yield (40-kiloton) bombs for the MIRVs on Poseidon missiles as well as developing miniaturized nuclear warheads.

In August of 1970, Sweden and Canada issued working papers showing that the addition of fourteen long-feeler seismic sensors (making a total of twenty five worldwide) would make it possible to detect explosions down to 10 kilotons. Such a capability opened up the possibility of test-ban verification without inspections. It had previously been assumed that a 100-kiloton explosion was the smallest that seismographs could distinguish. But the Soviet Union and the United States still could not agree.

After the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) was signed in 1972, it became clear that the single most effective measure to restrict the superpowers' quest for more sophisticated weaponry was a comprehensive test ban. By that time the obstacles to such a treaty were more political than technological – a fact highlighted during Senate hearings at which it was determined that all tests down to 10 kilotons could be detected by both the United States and the Soviet Union. In addition, seismic verification could be improved to pick up most tests down to 5 kilotons. Some advocates of continued testing argued that the seismic signal could be muffled by conducting tests in huge underground caverns, but a complete series of tests necessary to develop new warheads would be impossible under such conditions.

The growing evidence that seismologic sensitivity is adequate for verifying a comprehensive test ban became an embarrassing dilemma for the US because by continuing to press for on-site inspections implied that it is deliberately justifying continued testing. On the other hand, agreeing to a ban would effectively stop development of miniaturized warheads. A desire to bolster credibility for on-site inspections could very well have been what prompted two nuclear scientists from Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, O.C. Kolar and N.L. Pruvest, to publish an article outlining a scheme whereby the Russians might disguise low-kiloton tests as earthquakes. They conceded that single explosions do not have the same seismic “signature” as an earthquake but that the rumbling effect of earthquakes could be duplicated by firing eight explosions ranging from 3 to 100 kilotons over a 6.3-second interval. The actual test explosion would be one of the eight. Kolar and Pruvest further contended that placing these shots under a riverbed would conceal construction activity and would hide the tell-tale crater from satellite observation.

While this theory may have sounded convincing to the general public, it had some profound weaknesses. Even if the Russians did conduct their tests under a riverbed they could not hide the necessary excavation and preparation from America's sophisticated spy sensors. There would also be revealing evidence of a nuclear explosion because contamination would be carried from the river to the sea where a rise in radiation level would be easily detected. That is precisely how French underground tests on the Faungataufa Atoll in the Pacific had been monitored by inhabitants of neighboring islands.

Even more to the point, however, faking an earthquake in any manner completely sidesteps the need for a series of tests to develop a weapon. How would one explain so many earthquakes? The Kolar-Pruvest theory is no more credible in this respect than any of its predecessors. We must conclude that failure to negotiate a comprehensive nuclear test ban cannot be excused by an

inability to verify compliance.

On July 3, 1974, at the Nixon-Brezhnev summit conference in Moscow, the Threshold Test Ban Treaty was signed. It limited underground test explosions to less than 150 kilotons, but was not scheduled to take effect until almost two years later – March 31, 1976. It was obvious that the delay was to allow each country to complete specific tests. And, because of the trend toward precise “mini-nukes,” there would be no need for testing over 150 kilotons after that.

It was a week to the day after signing the threshold agreement that both the US and Soviet Union set off underground explosions. The Russians were apparently rounding out the testing for their new generation of missiles that became operational the following year. American weapons laboratories were working diligently on the 350-kiloton Mark-12A warhead for the Minuteman missiles and the 200-kiloton bomb for cruise missiles. In June 1975 the Nevada Test Site announced that testing was being stepped up to complete certain tests before the new treaty became effective. From that time until the effective date the US held at least twelve high-yield nuclear tests. The Soviets conducted a minimum of three.

When the effective date did arrive the treaty had still not been ratified by the US Senate because it only limited *weapons* tests. High-yield explosions over 150 kilotons for peaceful purposes were not restricted, and the Russians had developed an interest in such detonations. Although a tentative agreement for on-site inspections for anything over 150 kilotons was reached, the technical details could not be resolved in time. Negotiations dragged on in spite of the fact that on May 26, 1976 the Soviet Union finally agreed to limit even peaceful blasts to 150 kilotons.

In his first press conference after taking office in 1977, President Carter said he wanted to “eliminate the testing of all nuclear devices instantly and completely.” Six months later the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union began discussing the possibility of a comprehensive test ban that would outlaw explosions of *any* nuclear device for *any* purpose. In October formal talks began and chief US arms negotiator Paul Warnke expressed optimism.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Soviet President Brezhnev proposed a halt to nuclear explosions for *both* military and peaceful purposes. The Carter administration hailed that announcement as “a major step toward a comprehensive test ban agreement.” It now appeared that all sides were thinking along the same lines, which made the outlook for a meaningful treaty look bright.

When the third round of talks began in January 1978, Paul Warnke said he expected completion of the treaty in four months. But there is still no agreement. What is the trouble?

The stumbling block at that time was the zero-yield debate, a euphemism for the vested-interest opposition to a complete ban. The Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon concocted all sorts of bizarre arguments on why some testing was still needed – many of which are, ironically, economic rather than related to national security. They knew how to muster public support and the military journals were avidly publishing their trite exercises in bureaucratic self-perpetuation. The Department of Energy was also fighting the ban. Dr. Harry Agnew, then director of the Los Alamos weapons laboratory, said “I am forced to admit that we would not be able to maintain a viable stockpile over the long term under a comprehensive test ban.” Reducing the stockpile, however, was the stated aim of the Carter administration, and if the US was forced to reduce its stockpile there would be a like effect on the Soviet Union.

Nor was the military-industrial complex in Congress silent. Then House Armed Services



Committee chairman Melvin Price resurrected the old argument about verification and the ability to disguise nuclear explosions. Another committee member, Representative Dan Daniels, played the good guys/bad guys tune, saying: “We must safely assume that the Soviets would continue to test up to the limits of detection, while the United States would not.”

Most Americans do not realize how close they were to stopping further development of “The Bomb.” But that opportunity slipped away. Opposition to the ban was too strong and the public was too uninformed. Public opinion has proved to be strong in stopping weapons system when it makes itself heard. Examples are the neutron bomb, Pershing-2 missiles, and ground-launched cruise missiles. But public support for a treaty was not heard and the opportunity to achieve that first crucial step toward nuclear disarmament was lost.

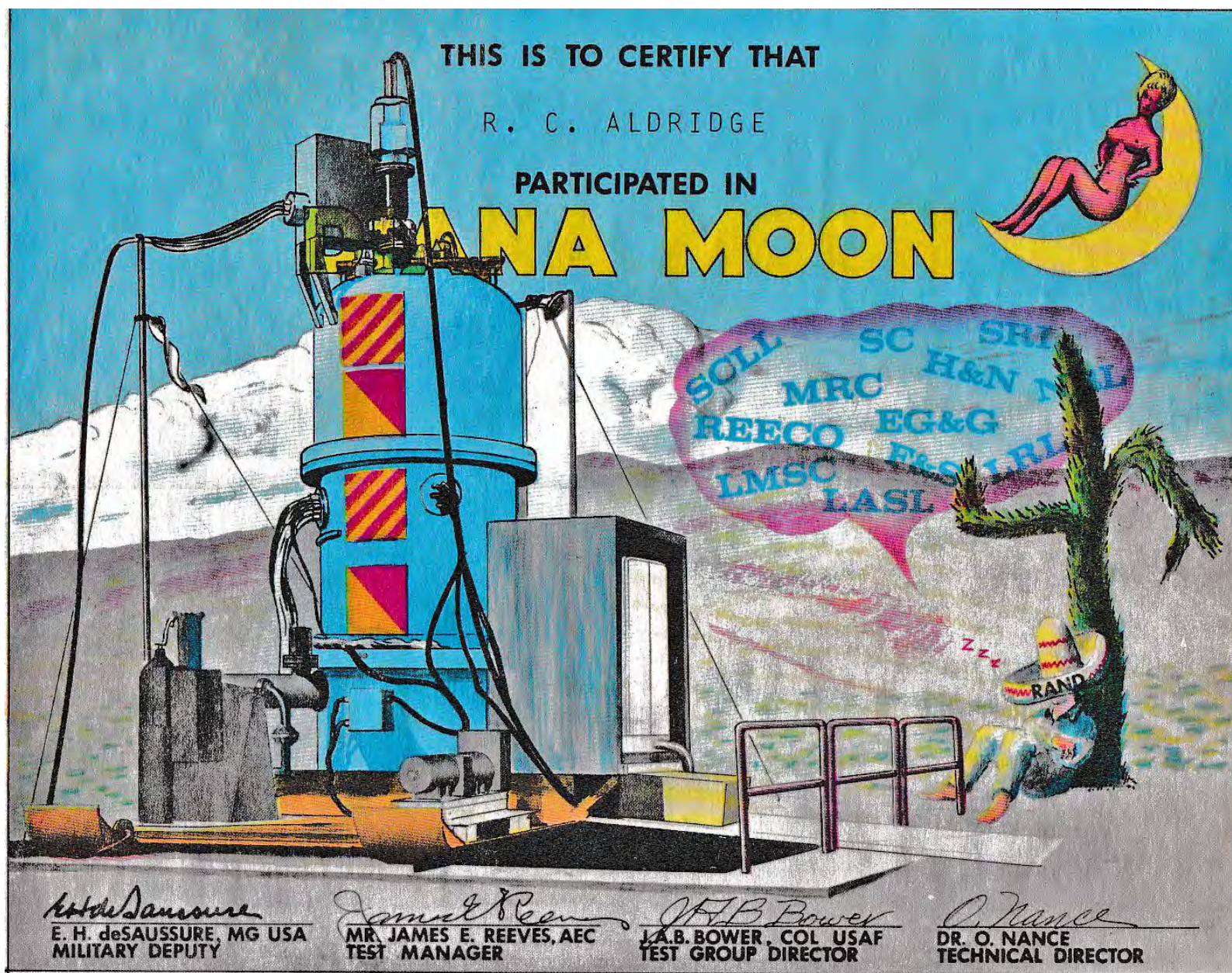
Today there is a voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing and that is good. But the US has found another way to do the nuclear testing it wants. It is known as The National Ignition Facility. Here is what Wikipedia says about the NIF:

The National Ignition Facility, or NIF, is a large, laser-based inertial confinement fusion (ICF) research device located at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in Livermore, California, USA. NIF uses powerful lasers to heat and compress a small amount of hydrogen fuel to the point where nuclear fusion reactions take place. NIF's mission is to achieve fusion ignition with high energy gain, and to support nuclear weapon maintenance and design by studying the behavior of matter under the conditions found within nuclear weapons. NIF is the largest and most energetic ICF device built to date and the largest laser in the world. As of October 7, 2013, this facility is the first to produce more energy from fusion than absorbed from the lasers.

Nevertheless, the option is still open to continue underground testing whenever the US administration decides to do so. We are farther from nuclear disarmament than we were in the 1970s. Those are depressing words but they are true.

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# Fleet Ballistic Missiles that I Helped Design and Develop



## Chapter 28 – Changing Our Lifestyle

In the early 1970s Janet and I became more involved in protesting the war in Vietnam. At first we worked with Dan and Rose Lucy lobbying for a new Department of Peace in the federal government. In July 1970, as described in a previous chapter, I travelled to Washington, D.C. for Lockheed. On my last day, July 17<sup>th</sup>, I had a late flight home so I took in some of the museums around the Mall. I also used a lot of that day to visit Senate and Congressional offices to lobby for a Department of Peace. I also visited the national office of National Catholic Council to find out where they stood on a peace department in the federal government and to muster their support for one.

A massive peace demonstration was planned for April 24, 1971 with major marches on the east and west coasts and smaller supportive demonstrations in other areas. The March on the west coast was down Geary Street in San Francisco and culminating at the polo field in Golden Gate Park. Our four youngest children – Mary, Diane, Nancy and Mark – went with us to join the march. We pushed Mark in his stroller a mile or so down the middle of Geary Street. The massive demonstrations on April 24<sup>th</sup> were credited with changing President Nixon's mind about using nuclear weapons in Vietnam.

Later we joined the National Association of Laity (NAL – a layperson organization working for reform in the Catholic Church). We wanted to see the Vietnam war brought into the discussion on Church reform because if institutional religion spoke out more against killing it would create a tremendous transformation. Then as it turned out Janet and I became the Peace Program Coordinators for NAL.

NAL planned a national convention in June of 1971. Janet and I had been in constant contact with all the chapters nationwide in our capacity as peace coordinators. We suggested that the second day of the conference be devoted to the Peace Program as it had become an energetic activity within NAL. Our suggestion was approved and we, along with others including Dan & Rose Lucy, Roger & Lucille Mason and Ed & Phyllis Brennan, spent many weeks preparing for the event and lining up speakers. Everyone participating in the conference planned to fly back to New York except us. We decided to take a little more time, rent a camper



Peace March down Geary Street  
April 24, 1971



Rally at polo field in Golden Gate Park  
following the march



Mary, Diane, & Nancy with Janet at the rally

truck, and take the six youngest kids for a tour of some of the states. We found a nice 11-foot camper to rent at Mel Cottons and got a good deal on it. The three oldest kids would sleep in the part that went over the cab. The benches on each side of the table folded up into bunks. Two more of the kids would sleep in the top ones and Janet and I used the lower ones. We made a little bed for Mark on the floor between us. We also rented a small portable chemical potty which we put in one of the closets and made that the lavatory. This worked out quite well as the kids could go when they had to and we didn't have to make a lot of extra stops.

The day of departure came – June 14, 1971. We picked up the camper, loaded all the things we were taking with us which we had stacked in the garage, and started out. It was a rather late start so we only planned to get across the Sierras and drive as far as Reno that first day. We had a window that would open between the truck cab and the camper shell so we could communicate with whoever was riding in back and pass food, etc. back and forth. Janet and I took turns driving.

We stayed at a KOA (Kampgrounds of America) camp just outside Reno that night. The next morning we started very early before everyone was awake and travelled a couple hundred miles before we stopped for breakfast, which we fixed in the camper. Janet and the older kids took turns getting up early with me and riding in front to keep me company – and awake. We drove by Winnemucca and Elko in Nevada and then crossed the Salt Lake Desert to approach Salt Lake City along the east side of Salt Lake. There, again, we stayed at a KOA camp. Our camper space had a picnic table on which we ate dinner with a beautiful view of the snow-capped Rockies.



Our camper at a roadside campground near Kimball, Nebraska. Snake River in the background – June 16<sup>th</sup>

It was the same routine the next day and we went as far as Kimball, Nebraska. We were fortunate to find a beautiful roadside campground along the Snake River where the kids had fun swimming in the river and lots of room to romp around. We were back on the road again the next day, June 17<sup>th</sup>, to cover the final distance to the Balvin Farm in South Dakota. We stayed a few days there visiting with Janet's folks and her relatives in and around Tyndall. We had arranged to leave the three youngest (Diane, Nancy & Mark) with Janet's sister and brother-in-law, Jean and George. It was hard leaving them behind but they had much more fun there than travelling with us. We did call frequently to see how they were doing.



Janet at her childhood home. June 20<sup>th</sup>

On June 21<sup>st</sup> we left Tyndall and continued east. That night we parked at Shabbona Camping Resort at Morris, Illinois. The next day we stopped for gas somewhere south of Detroit. We had planned to go straight east to New York. But at the gas station we met some people who convinced us we shouldn't miss the opportunity to go a little north and then along the southern edge of Canada to Niagara Falls. They said it was beautiful and we would be glad we saw it. (We were.)



So we changed our plans and started north. We crossed into Canada over the Detroit-Winston Bridge and later had a peaceful picnic lunch at a rest stop in the province of Ontario. That night we reached Niagara Falls, Canada and found an RV place to park. After dinner we drove downtown to see the sights and explore a new area. I guess we were lucky to get our parking space back when we returned because the lot was filling up and there didn't seem to be any system of assigning them. Anyway, it worked out well and we had a real nice evening.



Janet driving our camper—June 22<sup>nd</sup>



Friendship Bridge between US and Canada  
taken from *Maid of the Mist*- June 23<sup>rd</sup>

The next day, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, we spent in Canada. It was fun exploring a strange town in a new country. The days events included a river ride on the *Canadian Maid of the Mist* which took us along the bottom of the falls. It was pretty wet and we wore raincoats and hood to prevent getting soaked. The boat tour also took us to the Friendship Bridge between Canada and the United States.

Late in the afternoon we crossed that bridge back into the US and explored the Falls from that side. Then we got a motel in Buffalo, NY, which had a swimming pool and the three kids had a ball.

We had one more day to get to Fordham University. On June 24<sup>th</sup> we made it to Fordham after passing through the Catskill Mountains. The convention went well and afterwards we spent a day with the Masons exploring New York. We left the camper parked at Fordham and took the subway for transportation. A ferry took us to see the Statue of Liberty, into which we went up in as far as the crown, or tiara. The smaller passageway up into torch was not open.



Mary, Kathy, Janet, Teri, and me by  
the Statue of Liberty – June 27<sup>th</sup>



Eating lunch on the Capitol grounds -  
June 29<sup>th</sup>

On June 28<sup>th</sup> we reloaded the camper and headed south on the New Jersey Turnpike, headed for Washington D.C. North of D.C., just across the border in Maryland, we settled in a National Park campground which was quiet and peaceful with other campers enjoying the outing and campfires. We didn't have a camp to set up so after dinner we drove into D.C. Before it got dark we went to the top of the Washington Monument. We went up in an elevator but walked down the stairs – it was a long way.

We spent a couple days touring D.C. and seeing the sights. We visited our Representative, Don Edwards, and I believe the kids were impressed. They sprawled over the floor of his office just like they were at home. There were many museums to check out and we had a picnic lunch on the Capitol grounds. For the evening dinner I took them to a seafood restaurant by the waterfront that I had been to on a previous visit. It was an enjoyable time and we were plenty tired when we arrived back at our campground.

Early on the morning of June 31<sup>st</sup> we headed back to South Dakota. I don't remember much about the return trip except we were in a hurry to get back to our other three young'uns. The sightseeing was over. We did go through Pittsburgh and spent one night on the road. On July 1<sup>st</sup> we were back in Tyndall. It was good to see the kids and Nancy & Diane seemed real happy to see us back. Mark was another story. I guess he was still mad about being left behind because he would have nothing to do with us for a while.

We spent a few days in Tyndall again, including the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, and then left for home real early on the 5<sup>th</sup>. When we got to the Badlands the kids were just waking up. We stopped and went for a short hike on the Fossil Trail. Then we had Breakfast and moved on the Mt. Rushmore in the Black Hills.

After seeing the sights in the Badlands and at Mt. Rushmore we were pretty tired. We drove on to Custer, SD and found the Flintstone Campground to spend the night. That night we were out in the open and on top of a little knoll. Maybe we got up a little earlier that morning to be on our way again. There was some lightning and I was a little concerned about being a good target. Maybe we got up a little earlier that morning to be on our way again.



Flintstone Campground where we spent the night – July 5th

We left Flintstone Campground on July 6<sup>th</sup> and drove on west through Wyoming. We decide that we'd once again like to see the Big Horn country. This time we approached it from the East side and had a vehicle that doesn't heat up. We really enjoyed it.

Down on the other side we again went through Cody, Wyoming and by Buffalo Bill Dam. At Yellowstone we parked for the night.

When we started out in the morning we decided to stay to the north and see some of the upper states. Our route took us through Montana and Idaho. A little west of Spokane we found a nice campground to stay for the night.

The next day, July 8<sup>th</sup>, we went a bit south and crossed the Columbia River into Oregon. Then we followed the Columbia River toward Portland. On the way we pulled into a rest stop to fix some refreshments. There were a bunch of sea gulls there begging for food. One gull was really crazy. It bobbed around and ate anything we threw out. I was afraid it would kill itself swallowing a lot of trash so we quit feeding them and moved on with the camper.

There was nothing in Portland that looked interesting to explore so we moved on west to the



Mark, Mary, Diane, Kathy, Janet, Nancy and Teri on Fossil Trail in Badlands, SD – July 5, 1971



Janet with five girls and Mark at Mt. Rushmore, SD – July 5th



Feeding seagull at rest stop along in Oregon July 8th



ocean. After being inland for so long we thought camping at a state beach would be fun. We found a nice one and parked our camper to fix supper. Then it started to rain in torrents. There were eight of us stranded inside the camper. We never did get a chance to explore the beach that night. Instead the kids played games and pounded on the table together to relieve the tension. We could see why Oregon always looked so green.

The next morning was bright and sunny. We didn't start out in the wee hours of the morning as we were ahead of our planned schedule. So we took the coast route south and stopped at various beaches. It was a leisurely day and we spent the night at a campground along the Avenue of the Redwoods in northern California.

Finally, on the morning of July 10<sup>th</sup>, we loaded into the camper and headed for home. We were a day early but another night on the road didn't appeal to us. However, when we arrived at 631 Kiely we were sorry we didn't take that one more day.



Rained in in Oregon, in our camper – Mary, Kathy, Diane, Janet, and Teri. Mark & Nancy must be hiding up above - July 8<sup>th</sup>



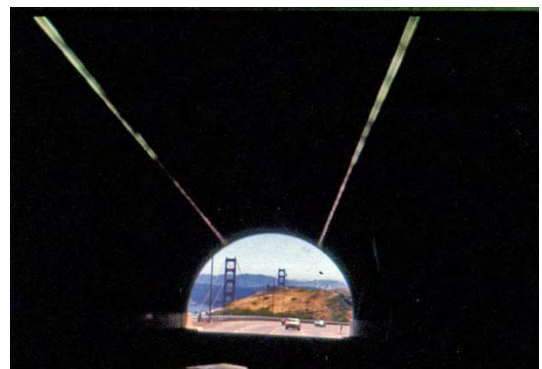
Lunch at Nickel Creek Cove – June 9<sup>th</sup>

The older kids still living at home stayed by themselves while we were gone. Danny had been working on his car in the garage and had dirty grease all over the garage floor. But that wasn't all. He had been walking in that grease and then tracked it all over our living room carpet. He was very surprised to see us and we were infuriated. He explained that he didn't expect us until the next day and had planned to shampoo the carpet before we arrived. Well, he got busy scrubbing it right away. Fortunately the grease stains came out and soon

we were settled back to a normal way of life.

At the Fordham NAL conference we met Catholic school teacher Jim Albertini from Hawaii, as well as many other inspiring people, most of whom had been on our NAL Peace Program mailing list but now we had the chance to meet them in person.

Janet and I were anxious to get away from missile work and into something we could enjoy and that would be in harmony with our conscience. We put together what we called our *Escape Plan*. This plan is still in my den, on the shelf in the cabinet over the closet, so I will not detail it extensively here. On the first page we first set out our goal which was to redirect our occupational efforts as a husband/wife team that will (1) improve the quality of life for ourselves and others, (2) compliment but not necessarily parallel each other's efforts, and (3) provide a livelihood for our family. On the second page we outlined definitions of the requirements we set forth in our goal. Then we worked out a timeline on when and how to



Golden Gate Bridge on way home – July 10<sup>th</sup>

escape from the weapons industry. That was all in the first section of our plan. Following that we made separate sections for each of the items on the timeline: (1) define a plan to achieve our goal, (2) training and preparation, (3) partial involvement in a new lifestyle, and (4) full involvement in our new lifestyle. In each of these sections we kept notes, ideas, things to investigate, people to talk to, reports on activity – anything and everything pertaining to that category.

As part of the step in *partial involvement*, Janet took employment with an eye doctor and started working in vision therapy. Later she changed to employment with the school system as an aide working with educationally handicapped children. For a short time when both of us were employed outside the home we hired a Chilean woman (who could hardly speak English) to take care of our youngest ones during the day. I, in turn, took over some of the household tasks and started some evening courses in writing. Things seemed to be moving along pretty well and then came the *Hickam-3*.

In March 1972, Jim Albertini and two others – University of Hawaii professor Jim Douglass and macadamia nut farmer Chuck Giuli – entered Hickam Air Base and poured blood on top secret electronic warfare files. Hickam was the operations and targeting center for the Vietnam air war which was raging at that time. They were arrested and their trial was scheduled for August 1972. Janet and I arranged to travel to Hawaii as representatives of NAL at that trial.

Through an organization called COPRED (Council on Peace Research, Education & Development – or something like that) I had previously made the acquaintance of George Kent, a social science professor at the University of Hawaii. George arranged for us to use a house in Manoa Valley that belonged to friends of his who were travelling. The trial was scheduled to begin in Honolulu's federal courthouse on August 8<sup>th</sup> so we flew to Honolulu on the 7<sup>th</sup>. George met us at the airport and furnished most of our transportation while we were in Honolulu. We used public buses when he was tied up in class.



Janet by the house we used in Manoa Valley



Vigil in front of courthouse before trial

Every morning before the trial there was a vigil in front of the courthouse. The three defendants were at the vigil when they could make it but much



The Hickam-3 -- Jim Albertini, Jim Douglass and Chuck Giuli

of their free time was taken up with legal advisers and press conferences. The trial itself was educational and went on for several days. Dan Berrigan testified as did a local official and, as I recall, someone who had once been stationed at Hickam. Judge King presided. He was formerly a family law judge and this was his first criminal trial. The defendants had no illusions that they would be acquitted, and they weren't. The whole strategy was to bring Hickam Air Base's key

role in the Vietnam war to public attention. In that effort the Hickam Three were very successful.



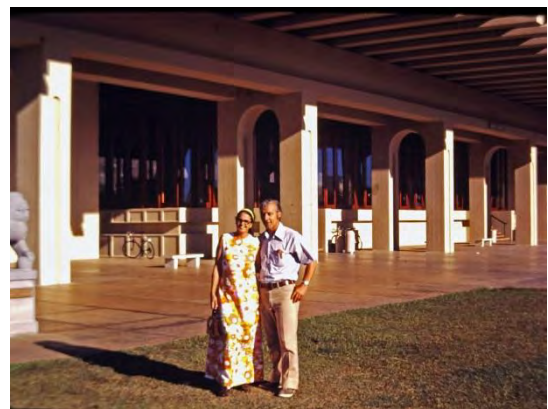
Noon Rally & Lunch on Iolani  
Palace Grounds across the street  
from the courthouse

Each noon we would eat our picnic lunch and have a rally on the Iolani Palace Grounds across the street from the courthouse. There was a public address system set up and various people, including the defendants, gave short talks. It was here that Janet and I were able to get acquainted with Jim and Shelley Douglass, and their son Thomas Merton Douglass – a friendship that has now endured over forty years.

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, Nagasaki Day, instead of going to the Iolani Palace grounds during the noon break we went to the Alo Moana Shopping Center. In the mall there we held a memorial service with talks and interpretive dancing. I was taking pictures and some of the participants who didn't know us thought we were FBI, until someone informed them differently.

Each evening a symposium was held in Spaulding Auditorium at the University of Hawaii. On various nights there were retired service officers, international-law attorneys, and sundry other experts on the speaking panel including Dan Berrigan. I was on the panel as a speaker one night but I felt really pushed into a corner having to talk to a hall full of people working for peace while I was still designing reentry vehicles for Lockheed. I don't recall what I said but it was very short.

I was on the panel with Mary Kaufman, an expert in international law and a former Nuremberg war crimes prosecutor. It was at these symposia that I learned about the Nuremberg Principles and the definitions of *War Crimes*, *Crimes against*



Janet & Bob in front of the East-West Center,  
Univ. of Hawaii



Bob on panel at Spaulding Auditorium,  
University of Hawaii

*Humanity*, and *Crimes against Peace*. I learned that *Crimes against Peace* were not just initiating and carrying on a war of aggression, but also planning and preparing for such a war. With the knowledge I had acquired at Lockheed that indicated the weapons we were designing would become part of a disarming and unanswerable first-strike capability, I could see that we were helping to “plan and prepare” for a war of aggression. We were complicit in a *Crime against Peace*. My conscience really started bothering me and I could see that we were going to have to accelerate the schedule of our Escape Plan.





Janet at H.A. Baldwin Park Beach on Maui

When the trial, or some activity surrounding the trial, was not taking place George Kent drove us around to see places of interest in Honolulu and at the University of Hawaii. We went snorkeling at Hanauma Bay and to dinner with him and his wife, Joan. He suggested that we rearrange our travel plans to visit one of the other islands. So we went to the United Airways office and scheduled a flight to Maui. We only had to pay one way because our itinerary was changed to return to the US from Maui, rather than

Honolulu. George and Joan drove us to the airport to say goodbye.

We had a good time on Maui. We rented a car and our hotel was close to the airport. The water was nice and warm for swimming. We toured the island and ate out at various places. Sometimes we bought food-to-go and had a picnic in a park. When our time was up we flew back to Honolulu to catch a connecting flight to San Francisco. It was a pleasant trip meeting good people who wanted the best for this world, enjoying a short vacation by ourselves, and having ample time to think and meditate on our plans for the future.



Bob at Iao Valley Park on Maui

One thing was clear to us – we had to set the date to leave Lockheed, and we did. Immediately after Christmas vacation I would give my boss a three-week notice that I was resigning. Things got a little scary after that decision and there were times we wondered if we could go through with it. The unknown haunted us. We prayed for guidance and strength to do what God wanted us to do.

We arrived home in time for our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Janet and I went out for dinner. I think the kids sponsored that for us



Cutting our anniversary cake.

because there was a Mariachi Band that played a song for us while we were eating. I think the dinner was a setup to get us out of the house because when we returned there was a surprise party waiting for us. Besides our own children there were many of our close friends and relatives there. They included my cousin Marlene and her husband Jack Dujmovic, my cousin Sonny Oksen and his wife Gayle, Bob & Virginia Keller, Randy and

Thelma Riley, next door neighbors Andy & Dorene Maranta, Cres's wife Vicki, my work colleague Jim Freshour and his wife, Mom & Pap, and a couple of Janie's friends.



We were surprised when we opened the front door.



Having a good time.



Mark eating his cake at our anniversary party.

The house was decorated with streamers and there was a table covered with a white tablecloth that held a punch bowl and our anniversary cake. It was a great surprise and we enjoyed the party a whole lot.

It was only August and we still had 4½ months before we burned our bridge behind us. I continued with night classes and Janet continued with her work as a vision therapist. We still had the Chilean lady to take care of “hombre,” as she called Mark.

As the weeks and months rolled on we became more and more nervous. But we were determined not to change our focus. We summoned up all the courage we could to maintain our faith that God would see us through.

As Christmas approached, Janet and I wondered if the kids really understood what we were planning to do, why we were doing it, and how it would affect them. We came up with the idea of having a family retreat between Christmas and New Year's. A good friend of ours, Bill Cane, had a cabin in the Santa Cruz Mountains near Boulder Creek. We arranged to rent it for a few days. All of the kids who were still living at home came with us to the mountains and some of the older ones visited while we were there. We had asked all of them to list all of their concerns and fears, and also to bring some readings, songs, or whatever to share. We spent those few days delving into all the aspects that our change in lifestyle would bring. All of the kids decided they agreed with our decision although the older ones had qualms about a reduced standard of living. The younger ones, of course, didn't really understand all the repercussions we might feel. Nevertheless, we left that retreat determined to go through with our decision to not depend on weapons of war for our livelihood.



Boulder Creek cabin we stayed in

On the second of January 1973 I was back at Lockheed summoning up the courage to enter Clark's office and cut the strings holding me to Lockheed. When I did, I explained how I felt and that I couldn't continue to do this kind of work any longer. He listened thoughtfully and then said something like: “You may be right, Bob. I've thought about those things too, but I keep telling myself this is just a game we are playing. We aren't really going to use these weapons and if we don't do the work someone else will.” That pretty well epitomizes how many people in weapons work justify their lifestyle. I did it myself until I just couldn't stand the double standard anymore.

I found out there was going to be a layoff which management didn't want to announce before Christmas. I suggested to Clark that I could volunteer for the layoff and save someone else from being fired. He agreed and that's the way I left Lockheed. I also found out that I received better termination benefits than if I'd simply resigned, and I was convinced we'd need all the breaks we could get in making this lifestyle change.

During the remaining three weeks I was able to discuss my feelings with fellow employees. I found that many agreed with me and some even congratulated me for biting the bullet and leaving. Two other engineers I worked with also volunteered for layoff but not for exactly the same reasons. They were just tired of the rat race. One was selling his house and buying a

mobile home so he and his wife could just travel for a while. The other was going into business growing worms for fish bait at Clear Lake in northern California. Several of us were talking and kidding one day when another engineer made the remark: "It seems like the only ones around here who are happy are the ones getting laid off."

The final days rolled around fairly fast. I went through security de-briefings and made out all the required paperwork. I was reminded of all the provisions of the *Atomic Energy Act* and the *Espionage Act*. It was in this de-briefing that I found out the law doesn't make it a crime to reveal secret information. What is a crime is to reveal information detrimental to the security of the United States. There is a lot of politically-classified material that is secret for the single purpose of keeping the people ignorant. In the subsequent writing I tested the content of my writing with this question: "Would it be possible for the government to prove this would hurt the United States?"

My last step on my last day was to report to security and turn in my identification badge. The room was quiet and deserted with only one person on duty. I handed him my badge and he motioned to a door that opened to the outside. As I turned toward the door I heard my badge clank on the bottom of an empty waste basket. I opened the door to the outside world. As I stepped through it on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February in 1973 the self-locking door closed behind me with a resounding slam. Such was the end of my Lockheed career. The sun was shining brightly. The air was crisp and fresh. I felt a heavy burden lift from my shoulders.

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## Conclusion/Afterword

I have stopped the story of my life at the conclusion of my Lockheed career. My children know pretty well what I have been doing since then in both peace work and my research & writing under the aegis of Pacific Life Research Center (PLRC). My research led to writing and that led to speaking and lecturing.

Records of my speaking and lecturing trips are in the file cabinet in my den. Likewise for the articles I have written for magazines, newsletters, and newspapers. Copies of books I have authored, co-authored, and co-edited are on the bookshelf in the archive room. Books with chapters I have written are also on the bookshelf in the archive room and some are in the file cabinet in my den. There may be other copies of books and articles in other places in the house and attic but I believe a copy of everything is either in the archive room or in the file cabinet mentioned above. Calendars kept since 1972 are in the cabinet above the closet in my den. They have all the dates I traveled and the engagements I've had. So, I believe my life since leaving Lockheed is pretty well documented.

I hope *Bunky's Worldline* is interesting and useful to my family.

I love you all, Bob Aldridge

# Appendices



## Appendix A

### Homes and Schools, 1931-1942

	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942
Nana's Home at 232 First Street	-----	--			----								
545 Oregon Street		-----	-----	--									
Packing House at Maluhia Ranch				-----	-								
Big House at Maluhia Ranch					-	-----	-----			-----	-----		
301 Rodriguez Street								-----	-----	-			
Green Valley Ranch											--	-----	-----
*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****
Minte White School (Elementary)			-----	---									
Amesti School (Elementary)				--	--	-	-----	-----					
Radcliff School (Elementary)					---			---					
Grammar School (Jr. High)								--	---				
E.A. Hall School (Jr. High)									--	---			
Watsonville Union High School										--	-----	-----	-----

## EVENING

By Bob Aldridge

In the morning we arise  
To meet the coming day.  
Wondering what's in store,  
We're feeling pretty gay.  
All through the morning hours  
When the sun is shining bright.  
All through the afternoon  
We carry on the fight.  
But along towards evening time,  
When the sun sinks very low,  
There's not a single thing to do.  
There's no place to go.

The moon is rising slowly,  
Above the tree crowned hill.  
The stars are twinkling brightly,  
And the night is very still.  
My thoughts drift toward home.  
A place so far away.  
I dream and plan for the future,  
When I'm back there to stay.  
I have so many things,  
To be looking forward to.  
There'll be millions of places to go,  
And so very much to do.  
I think of all those things,  
The whole evening long.  
Then I hum a little tune,  
And whistle a little song.  
Until for the night I must retire,  
And pay my nightly call,  
To a lovely place called dreamland.  
So goodnight my friends to all.

(Written in the Carabello Mountains of northern Luzon, Philippine Islands. in May 1945, during the battle for Balete Pass)