



From Poverty to Peace – Part 4

By : Bill 'Smokey' Stover

Civilian at Last – A New Adventure

My name is William E. (Bill) Stover. I am 65 years old. I am the husband of Paulette (Hawkins) Stover. We were married by Judge Frank Pack in the Court House in downtown Los Angeles, CA on May 25, 1965. Judge Pack's Secretary was the only witness to our wedding. At the time of our wedding, Paulette was a College Student at Bakersfield, CA and I was a Petty Officer in the United States Navy stationed aboard the USS Brinkley Bass DD-887, a Destroyer and Fighting Ship home ported in Long Beach, CA and assigned to duty in the Pacific with the Seventh Fleet. As I write these pages, Paulette and I have been married for almost 42 years. We are the very proud parents of two great sons and four fantastic grand children. Paulette and I came from very similar backgrounds. Separately, we struggled with poverty though our childhoods and together we have continued our struggle for 42 years in our ascent from 'Poverty to Peace'.

This is the fourth in a series of books that tell the story of my life. My first book covered my life from birth in 1942 and the 13 years in Earlimart, CA to the day I ran away from

home in 1959. The second book covers my run from Earlimart, CA to Texas and on to Phoenix, Arizona. This book covers my four year enlistment in the USAF and specifically the last 15 months on a 'Spy Base' in Northeastern Turkey. The third book is about my life during a four year enlistment in the USN and the last three years aboard the USS Brinkley Bass DD-887 and specifically the 13 months in the Viet Nam War Zone, the South China Sea.

Transitioning from one 'Story/Book' to the next is a simple process. The last chapter of each book is the first chapter of the next book in the series. Although the last chapter of this fourth book will end the day I finish writing it, the final chapter of the series can be written only after my death because that is the time that this story will end.

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The Last Homecoming

USS Brinkley Bass DD 887

USS Brinkley Bass DD 887 returned to the Port of Long Beach at the end of another West Pac Cruise, it's second tour of duty in the waters of the South China Sea, just off the coast of Viet Nam. This was to be my last voyage aboard this old destroyer and War Ship of the United States Seventh Fleet. The Brinkley Bass had seen action many times during the Korean Conflict as well as two 8 month tours of duty across the Pacific in the South China Sea, off the coast of Viet Nam. The Bass had been fired upon many times in both Korea and Viet Nam. The old ship had taken a hit in Korea and survived. In February 1966, while I was aboard, off the coast of North Viet Nam, the Bass drew fire from shore batteries and then a few days later ended its tour of duty in the South China Sea when she collided with the USS Waddell, a guided missile Frigate from the same Flotilla. After extensive repair in Long Beach, the Bass returned for it's second tour in Viet Nam waters and its last foreign tour of duty. This last tour was pretty easy compared to the first. We spent long hours and days shelling the Viet Cong. When not firing our 5 inch 38 guns at the enemy, we spent many days and nights on plane guard, running with one of many carriers on Yankee Station. The hardest part of the second cruise was just getting home to liberty and reunion with wives and families. It always took 2 to 3 weeks to get home after a tour of duty across the Pacific. We had to pull in often, to refuel, replenish and rest the crew. After a few days in the Philippines, we traveled to Guam, and after 2 days in Guam, it was back to the open seas. We traveled with 2 other returning destroyers and a carrier and at least one replenishment ship. On a number of occasions, we pulled alongside either the replenishment ship or the carrier to take on fuel and supplies. The rendezvous always took about 2 to 4 hours and they served to break the monotony of the shipboard routine. We spent four days in Hawaii. This gave each crew an opportunity for liberty. While in

the Port of Pearl Harbor, we were commissioned to paint the ship so that it would be presentable when entering our Home Port of Long Beach. The paint crews were a little slow and at least 2 side painters were still dangling over the side, painting around the anchor weighs as we pulled out of Pearl. The painters finished painting and were pulled onboard as we picked up speed after our slow taxi toward the harbor exit point. The officers in the pilothouse charted our course and the Captain barked out his commands, 90 degrees left rudder and full speed ahead. After about 30 minutes at that speed the Captain commanded to go to 2 thirds speed and continue on course. We would finish the cruise in a fairly calm sea and at 18 kmph. On the forth night, as I climbed up on the Gun Fire Director, to start the mid watch, I saw the lights of Los Angeles and Long Beach. We slowed to about 5 kmph and took up station about 10 miles from the entrance to Long Beach Harbor. For navigational purposes, naval ships usually entered or departed to and from the harbor during daylight hours. For this reason we stood down until morning. After our normally lousy breakfast, at seven o'clock sharp, the entire ship's crew assembled at muster for final instructions as we prepared to bring the ship into port. Even though line handling and other porting duties were very dirty jobs, all crewmembers with duties on or above the main deck turned out in the dress white uniform. Just as we were getting ready to break muster, the 1PA system screeched and squelched as the Captains voice broke the silence. The Captain growled just as the crew had heard on so many occasions. This Captain was rough and angry and he had punished the crew many times while he was drunk and vindictive. The Captain rebuked the crew for it's slow response in the painting of the ship in Pearl. He advised us that the ship would not make pier today because we would drop anchor in the harbor for 3 days and thus the crew would be restricted to ship and would not be allowed liberty for the 3 days. This meant that men could see their wives and children on shore and their wives and children could see them on board, but they could not have their reunions for at least 3 more days. We broke muster and every sailor hurried to each of their duty stations to facilitate the bringing home of the Brinkley Bass. In the quiet and stillness of those minutes, you could feel the broken spirit of 300 displaced souls. The old ship creaked and growled as she crept toward the harbor. The breakwater levy jettisoned about a half mile out into the open waters at the northern end of the harbor. Many years before, the Corps of Engineers had built a small Park with trees and grass and picnic pavilions with tables, patio roofs, water, and BBQ facilities. The Mole, as it was called, had parking enough for a number of cars. It was customary for many of the wives and families to come together on the Mole to fellowship while waiting and then welcome home the crew of the returning ships. Although all official communications was carried on by radio and between the ship's officers and the officials in the Port's Control Tower, communication between crewmembers and families were accomplished by other means. Each family knew exactly where on the decks their crewman would be stationed. Every wife and most children waved flags made of colors and designed such that they were recognizable by their own husband or father aboard Brinkley Bass. One of the old salts, a First Class Petty Officer Signalman, had taught his wife and children Semaphore and Morse Code.

It was customary for him to send light signals to his family and was customary for his wife to answer by use of a spotlight mounted on his car door. Needless to say, at about one mile out, the old salt began his normal signaling to his wife on the Mole. This time his message

was stern and deliberate. Knowing the message could be seen by all within 10 miles and that it would be understood by anyone who knew the code, the Signalman sent a message which relayed the despair and frustration of the crew and was meant to be seen by the wives and children as well as the Admiral in the Port Control Tower. The message went something like this. SOS – Our Captain has just announced that Brinkley Bass will not make pier today. He has commanded that Brinkley Bass will drop anchor somewhere in the harbor and will stand out for three days. Be advised that the crew of Brinkley Bass will not be given liberty for at least 72 hours. As we passed about ¼ mile from the Mole and just as we were starting to recognize or loved ones, the Signalman's wife frantically messaged back from her spotlight. Her message was simple and to the point. She asked. What can we do? The Signalman responded as follows. Get as many wives and children as possible. Muster them at the door of the Bases Commanding Admiral. Ask for audience with him. Explain our circumstance. Wait for his response. She came back with a short message. We will do it! Just as the Mole came alive with wives and children heading for cars, the radio in the Pilot House screeched with this command. Will the officer of the deck on Brinkley Bass please tell your captain to use a secured line and call the Bases Commanding Admiral Immediately. The Signalman quickly got off a message to his wife. Honey – Hold for about 5 minutes. She responded. OK! About three minutes later, the signal light from the Tower began to flash. The message from the Tower went something like this. Will the Signalman on Brinkley Bass please advise your wife that there will be no need to meet with the Admiral. Brinkley Bass will most assuredly make pier within the hour. Direct all wives and children to the pier. Brinkley Bass will be at liberty ASAP. Before the Signalman had time to respond, his wife messaged as follows. Got the message. See you on the pier. About five minutes later the 1PA system announced. The Captain has given the order to ready the ship for mooring. Take your stations. The Captain has ordered the ship to go to 3 Section Duty and as soon as all stations are secure Sections 1 and 2 will be at liberty. Be safe in securing the Brinkley Bass. In about 30 minutes the Bass was at the pier and about 30 minutes later, the Boatswain's Mate Piped Liberty. The Officer of the Deck announced liberty for sections 1 and 2. About 1 minute later I had found my wife on the pier and we were off and running. Because I had secured, by lottery, the right to take a 2 week leave, my wife and I were on an extended holiday at the expense of the United States Navy. After a few weeks off, I returned to ship to take up duties as the Lead Fire Control Technician and Lead Petty Officer in the Weapons Gang. A few months passed while we repaired and maintained the ship. I was a short timer in that I had about two months left on my enlistment. All electronic spares were moved to a warehouse at the Naval Station. The spares were to be inventoried, replenished as necessary, returned to the ship and stored for ready access during the next deployment. Because I was short and not expected to be on board for the next deployment, I was allowed to work at the spares warehouse until my discharge date. I was due out of the Navy in March 1968.

Late, on the evening of January 23, 1968, as my wife and I were watching television, regular programming was interrupted by a news flash. The news person said in a very loud, stern voice; "The USS Pueblo, a United States Spy Ship, has been taken captive by the North Korean Navy". I just sat there in amazement. My wife and I sat and just looked at each other for about five minutes. We began to speak quietly, almost softly to each other about the newscast. We had both, almost simultaneously, realized the possible results and

ramifications of this terrible act of treachery. What does this mean to us, she asked? I'm not sure, but I do know that it is not good, I replied. I assured her that there was no way to know until morning, when I get back on board the ship. We did not have a telephone and therefore could not be quickly notified. If they decided that it was important enough, they would send the Shore Patrol out to round up the ship's crew. I decided that because we were bound to port for at least two more weeks, they would probably not respond with that much speed. As bedtime approached, I reassured and calmed my wife while trying to calm my own spirit, we settled in for sleep. I could not sleep, so with anxious anticipation, I tossed and turned until the alarm shocked us into the new day. My wife drove me to the Naval Station as she often did when the ship was in port. We had one old Ford Falcon which she used to shop and run errands while I was at the Naval Station or on board ship. I reported for daily duty at 7 AM at the warehouse where we were working with the ships spare parts inventory. The Chief who was overseeing the inventory and spares checkout, came to our work area immediately, as was his normal approach to the day's work. This morning he was very quick with his orders for the morning. He first asked, have you seaman heard the news of last evening? Everyone remained quiet as if to say that they had not heard the news. With a loud but shaky voice, he blurted out the news of last evening. The USS Pueblo has been taken captive by the North Korean Navy, the old Chief barked. One of the Petty Officers on our detail quickly came back with a question. Who in hell is the Pueblo, he asked? The Pueblo is a spy ship, the Chief responded. The ship was in international waters and the damned Korean swift boats came out and seized it, he quipped. So what's next, I asked. I have been given orders to direct you back to the Bass where you can be given direction, he said and with that bit of news we all started for the door to find transportation to Pier 15 where the Bass was ported. We all together walked toward the main street on the Naval Station where we could catch a shuttle bus out to the Piers. As we walked along, they began to swear and complain. Each seaman in that party knew that they would pay some kind of a price for this 'act of war' and they were quick to let all within hearing distance know that they were not pleased.

As we came aboard, the Officer of the Deck complained that we were late for muster. As the ranking Petty Officer in the party, I stepped aside to explain our special circumstance. I'm sure that the Officer knew exactly what we were about. He just wanted to show his authority and disgust because he would now have to reiterate the whole directive to us. The OD asked us to step back about 15 feet so that he could give us orders as he ushered crewmembers on and off the Bass Quarterdeck. He said that the Captain had called earlier and had given directions to the crew. He said that the Captain would be on board later in the day with direction from higher authorities. The OD then took a base phone number by which we could be notified and told us to go about the business of the day. He also said that if the Captain wanted immediate response, he would call us, otherwise that we should report directly to the ship for 7 o'clock muster on the morrow. We left the ship, wandered down the pier, caught the next bus back to the station, and returned to the warehouse where we were conducting the ship's inventory of spares. We got very little work accomplished during the remainder of the day because we were all very upset with this turn of events.

The morning muster is the only time in any given day and time when virtually all 300 Bass crewmen are on board ship at one time. Only those on leave miss the morning muster and they would be called in if the ship were to get underway before scheduled departure. I got up early, woke my wife, and we got ready to go to the Naval Station. She dropped me at the Pier at 0645 AM. I went aboard and checked out my space and at exactly 0700 AM the Captain barked out his command over the IPA System. This is the Captain. All hands heave out. Muster with your duty section on the Pier. Three hundred sailors, in single file, left the Quarterdeck and within ten minutes were mustered and lined, at ease and in formation on Pier 15. The IC Electrician had rigged a mike on a long cord from the Quarterdeck and two large speakers on the main deck of the Bass. The Executive Officer called the crew to attention and after about one minute placed the crew at parade rest. The Captain came from the Quarterdeck to a position in front of the crew where the XO handed him the microphone.

The full contingent of the Armed Forces of the United States is on the Highest Alert, the Captain barked. The USS Pueblo has been seized, one US Sailor has been killed and the remaining 82 crewmen are alive but in captivity. The President, his Cabinet, and the US Senate and Congress are in meetings and sessions on Capitol Hill and at the Whitehouse. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are in meetings at the Pentagon, and the Military Leaders of the Pacific Theater are meeting, as we speak, in Hawaii. Brinkley Bass has been directed to expedite its readiness and to be seaworthy as soon as possible. At least one Flotilla, including a Carrier, Cruiser, Support Ships, and a number of Destroyers have been redirected from Hawaii and the South China Sea. This Flotilla will merge off the coast of North Korea and be given over to the Commander of Naval Operations in the Pacific. They will be directed as the President and our Commander in Chief gives command. All special projects which are presently in progress in preparing the Bass for sea duty will be expedited with all due diligence. Destroyers across the Seventh Fleet will be called upon to make haste in readiness. The Bass will most assuredly be called upon to make sacrifices in the defense of the United States of America. Our status is classified. Those of you who go home at night, tell your families to get ready for assignment at sea. I will be visiting all special projects in the next 72 hours to be advised as to dates for possible seaworthiness. Be safe as you work, but be expedient. Get the Bass ready to do what the Bass does best. Get her ready to go to sea. We were called to attention by the EXO and then dismissed by the Captain.

I made some quick calculations as to how I should spend the next two weeks. I was scheduled for discharge on March 15th. The ship could not possibly get underway until about February 15th. This was January 25th. If the ship gets underway while I am still in the Navy, I would have to go with the crew. Once at sea, I would be extended until the ship gets into port. This Captain is an old salt who loves to take the ship to sea. He volunteers the Bass for any and all sea duty. Unless and until I get out of the Navy, I will be stuck at sea for another two to three months, minimum.

I spent the remainder of that day in concentrated meditation. I had to come up with some method for getting out of this inevitable sea duty. I dreaded going home that night, knowing that I would have to explain this terrible situation to my wife. My wife picked me

up as she often did and we proceeded toward home. We were short on money in those days so we usually ate dinner at home when I was in port. That night I asked my wife to eat out which was always a welcomed event. After a hamburger at a fast food place we went home for the night. I immediately broke the news to her and she began to cry as she always did when I told her that I would have to go to sea. As we pondered the dilemma, I began to see clearly what had to be done. When I told my wife that I had a plan, she asked me to explain it to her. I told her that I had to go it alone and that we should know within a few days whether or not I could make it work.

The inventory and restocking project was winding down. Most of the work was on course to be finished in about two weeks. It was the longest of all outstanding projects which must be completed before the Bass could go to sea. My duties were that of supervision and because then crew needed very little supervision, I could disappear for long periods without disrupting the work flow. The only person that I had to worry about was the shore duty Supply Chief who was overseeing the project for the Station Supply Division. He also knew that the project was on automatic so he too spent long periods away. The only problem was that because he had been pumped up by the Bass's Captain to finish quickly, he would be coming around a little more often.

I planned to do all of the administrative tasks required in order to process myself out of the Navy. In order to get this done, I had to enlist the aid of as many helpful sailors as possible. The next lower Petty Officer in the restocking project was a young AT3. He quickly agreed to cover for me in any way that he could. We decided that when the Chief asks for me that he would tell him that I had to go to the ship or to the doctor or to the dentist. Actually all of these destinations were true because in order to process out, I had to visit all of them at least once.

On this, the first day of my out processing, I reported early to the warehouse, enlisted the help of the AT 3, and proceeded very quickly to the Bass. My wife usually kept the car but for these days I required it in order to get around the Station quickly. I drove as fast as possible to Pier 15, parked the old Ford Falcon Wagon in a time restricted zone, saluted the Officer of the Deck and came aboard the Bass. I quickly checked my area to see if there were any items which may have to be turned in at the Station's Base Supply. I could see nothing which may require that attention. I climbed the ladder to the main deck, proceeded down the interior corridor to mid ships, and entered the ships office. The Yeoman Third Class turned in his roller chair and asked, what can I do for you. I knew this seaman as well as anyone on board and I hoped that he would work my plan with me. The Navy was usually an easy place to get things done and most sailors would cooperate with you as long as they felt that they would not be embarrassed or get in some kind of trouble. Actually the Yeoman's involvement was minimal. Once explained to him, he quickly worked with me to solve my problem. He gave me a form/checklist by which I could proceed to process out of the Navy. He provided me with a pad of 25 blank Chits. The Chit was a six inch by six inch form much like a doctors prescription form. You peeled the Chits off the pad just like a Post-It and filled each one out as required. The system operated much like the old hall passes of the high school days. All any sailor had to do was to fill out a destination and get an officers signature and he could proceed to the

doctor, dentist, optometrist, or any of a thousand destinations. The out-processing required visits to about 15 different stations which were located all over the Naval Station. I had in my possession a number of forms which had previously been signed by the Weapons Division Officer. I quickly left the Bass, returning to the warehouse operation where I could continue my out-processing project.

The AT3 advised me that he had covered for me by telling the Chief that I had to go to the ship for some form of processing. He accepted the cover so when I returned, I stopped by his desk to check in. I had not missed anything so I was on track to proceed with my out-processing. I studied the Weapons Officers signature for a few minutes and then signed all twenty five of the Chits. I had a phone at my desk in the open bay work area which I expected to use as often as required. I had a station phone book at my desk. I leafed through the directory quickly to train myself on how it was laid out and then began to write a list of numbers which I would need to expedite my out processing. Using the check off sheet provided by the ship's Yeoman, I quickly searched the station directory and wrote the numbers together with the contact at each station. After listing all required contacts, I began calling to set all required appointments. It only took about 2 hours and I had tightly scheduled appointments to fill the next 2 days.

The next morning, as always, I reported to the warehouse as 7 o'clock sharp. The restocking crew met with the Chief for or morning briefing and pep talk. We finished quickly as always and I quietly left the warehouse at 7:45 in route to my first appointment of the day. I hurriedly finished filling out the chit which would authorize my doctor's visit. I entered the waiting area, signed in and presented the chit to the corpsman at the window. He checked the chit and called me to the window for clarification. He asked for my ID Card and Liberty Card. He said that he had to verify my USN Service Number and duty station. He hurriedly handed the cards back to me and handed me a medical form to be filled out. It was one of those 100 questions forms which I filled out in about 2 minutes and handed back to the corpsman. He informed me that the office was short one doctor but that a nurse could do most of the requirements and one of the duty docs could finish. The nurse took my blood pressure and temperature, asked me to pee in a cup, and called the doctor to finish. The young First Lieutenant was very proficient in his duties. He checked my breathing, did the cough routine, looked at my ears, throat, and eyes, checked my reflexes, had me read an eye chart and filled out the a form. That all took about 10 minutes. The doctor had looked at my shot record and had decided that I need 3 shots so that I could return to civilian life in a totally immune state. He checked the time lines for shots and told me to come back the next afternoon for the shots. He advised that I had to visit the dentist and optometrist for fillings and glasses. He told me to come back in 3 days for the reading from the urinalysis. He also told me that if the urinalysis was good that he would OK me for discharge, if the dentist and optometrist agreed. By this time it was 9 o'clock so I hurried back to the warehouse to be seen by the Chief. I made sure he saw me as I passed by the coffee mess, checked with crew and quickly exited to make it to my 10 o'clock dentist appointment. I completed another chit, entered, signed in, presented the chit and went through the same routine with ID and form completion. I was taken directly to a dental chair and within 30 minutes had been poked and probed including a full set of x-rays. As I departed the dentist office, I was handed an appointment card for cleaning and x-ray reading. The appointment was for the afternoon, two days down the road. By 11 o'clock I was back at the warehouse to be seen by the Chief before he headed to the Chief's Club for his liquid lunch. I made the eye doctor appointment at 1 o'clock where I went through the card and forms routine. I was tested and provided with prescription and appointment for glasses dispensing and fitting. The

appointment was set for three days in the future which I would have to squeeze in between other appointments. By the time I returned to the warehouse it was 2:30 and after about an hour of working with the crew it was time to wrap for the day and head for home. I spent the remainder of that week making appointments and re-appointments. Sometime during those few days I returned for the three shots. The restocking crew got every weekend off so as usual we quickly left the base about 3 o'clock Friday afternoon before we could be locked in for the weekend. Monday came too quickly as always. I started the week at 7 o'clock Monday morning. Over the weekend I had laid plans for my week and if allowed to stay on schedule, I really believed that I could be processed out by Friday. By late Monday afternoon I had finished with doctors and physicals. The urinalysis was clean. By Tuesday afternoon I had glasses which fit good and actually provided me with 20/20 vision. By Wednesday afternoon I was finished with the dentist including cleaning and three fillings. I was running on a tight schedule but I thought I could make it by Friday. I left for home on Wednesday with a plan to finish by late Thursday with all requirements completed to facilitate my discharge. Thursday morning began at 7 o'clock with the Chiefs meeting. I immediately left the warehouse and headed for the Bass out at Pier 15. The Chief stopped me on the way out where I convinced him that I had urgent business on the ship. He let me go with a command to return quickly to my appointed duties with the restocking crew. I saluted the Officer of the Deck and stopped to examine the duty roster for the day. I asked the OOD as to the Captains itinerary. He questioned my need to know and when I told him that I would like to visit the Captain to discuss shipping over he was quick to give me the Captain's itinerary. He advised that the Captain would be on board for a few hours that afternoon and then again from approximately 9 to 11 o'clock the next day, Friday, February 12, 1968. I saw that a junior Officer, the Weapons Officer, my Division Officer would be OOD from 4 to 8 o'clock this very evening. I decided that I would have to slip some paperwork past this young Ensign after everyone else were gone this very evening. I went straight to the Yeoman to get the final papers required for discharge. The Yeoman backed out on his promise to help but he did tell me to use his typewriter for anything I needed. He pointed to the cubbies that held all the forms. He laid a completed DD214 form and completed discharge by the typewriter which I could use as examples and closed the door between the typewriter station and the main office. I am a pretty good typist so it took about 10 minutes to type the two forms. I placed the forms in the official envelope, placed that envelope in a larger brown envelope shook hands with the Yeoman and left the ship's office. I had taken all of my personal and military clothing and equipment home over the previous three weeks. I stopped by my rack and locker, removed the lock from the locker, removed a couple of pictures which were on the ledge next to my bunk and exited toward the quarterdeck. I spent the rest of that day, Thursday, in checking out with Unit Supply, Base Supply, Shore Patrol, and other Administrators. By 4 o'clock, I was checked out and ready to finalize my covert departure. I went back to the warehouse where everyone but the Chief were gone for the day. I told the Chief that I had an hours worth of work to do. He said goodnight and left the warehouse. At 5 o'clock I proceeded back to the Bass to finish my days work. The OOD was at the quarterdeck. I saluted him and came on board. I asked If everyone was gone. He told me that the Captain and XO were gone for the day and that he was functioning as CO in their absence. I told him that I had a paper which had to be signed so that I could finish the job early the next morning. Without question and without even looking at the DD214 Form, he signed the form, I saluted, he bid me good night, and I departed the Bass. I could not sleep at all that night knowing that I was only one signature from freedom. I arose at 5 o'clock as always, showered and shaved, and headed for the station. I checked in at the warehouse and met with the Chief and the crew for our usual morning meeting. The Chief asked for a report on the status of the restocking program. We advised him that we were basically ready to restock the ship. He said that he would check with the Bass Supply Officer and if he was ready we could start restocking Monday morning. I had heard on the Bass that as soon as stores were back on board we would be ready to

sail. I was cutting it close but if all went well I would be a civilian by this afternoon. I quietly said goodbye to the restocking crew and left the warehouse. I drove to Pier 15 and parked in an area reserved for 30 minute parking. It was a place where I could watch the movement of people around the Bass. At exactly 9 o'clock the Captain was piped aboard the Bass. I exited my car and moved quickly to the Bass quarterdeck. I saluted the OOD, he returned the salute, and I moved quickly to Captain's in port cabin. I knocked on his door and the Captain responded, enter. I saluted briskly and he offered me a seat. I quickly rejected the seat and went into my heavily rehearsed dialogue. I told the Captain that I had come to get a seal and signature on my discharge. He asked to look at my DD214 and Discharge Forms. As he looked at the forms, he continued talking to me. He seemed to be pleased by the forms. He expressed his displeasure that I was not shipping over but that he was really pleased with my service record. I told him that I would probably ship over within 90 days which was customary in the Navy. That threw him off guard and he never look back at the forms. He signed the Discharge and affixed his Ship's Seal, we shook hands, saluted, exchanged good days, and I left his in post cabin. I moved quickly to the ship's office where I gave the Yeoman the duplicates of the DD214 and thanked him and gave goodbyes. I advised the Yeoman that if questioned he could simply say that because I was on shore duty that I had a Yeoman/Typist on the station type the papers. We shook hand and I proceeded with great haste to the quarterdeck, saluted the OOD and saluted the flag on the fantail and departed the Bass for good. I headed for the main gate where I slowed to accept the wave off by the gate guard and proceeded to the stop sign at Ocean Boulevard. I made the right turn on to Ocean Boulevard and at that moment I knew that I was free from the United States Navy and completely free from the military which had kept me captive for the past eight years.

I drove quickly to our apartment to break the news to my wife. My wife is Christian and very moral. When I told her of what had just happened, she was angry and actually flabbergasted. She immediately began to feel as though I was in trouble and that somehow we would pay a terrible price for my early out processing. For the first time I actually thought about what had transpired and began to wander and worry about what may happen next. We decided to move over the weekend and leave no forwarding address. It was early in the afternoon, Friday, February 12, 1968. I was free from the military, married, unemployed, and afraid that I may be in trouble. I broke out the greater Los Angeles phone book and made a few calls. First, I located an apartment in Gardena which was a small city very close to Los Angeles proper. I had interviewed with a number of Computer Manufacturers in the past two months in search of employment for Post Navy life. A number of companies had told me to call as soon as I was discharged. Computers were just starting to find their way into mainstream business. They were being used heavily in the banking and financial arenas and LA was the financial capital of the West Coast. I called IBM, Burroughs Corp, and NCR, three of the companies which had offered me employment and after a few minutes with each, I had been tentatively offered employment by all three companies. I set up appointments for Monday with IBM for 9 o'clock, Burroughs at 1 o'clock and NCR for 3 o'clock. I needed a job so I decided to keep trying until I had something solid. We drove a few blocks over from our apartment to Long Beach Boulevard. Markets, Retail Stores and Liquor Stores lined the Boulevard. We filled the old Ford Falcon Station Wagon with empty boxes, returned to the apartment and began to pack in readiness to move to a new residence. We spent Saturday and Sunday moving our meager belongings to a one bedroom apartment on Rosecrans Boulevard, in the city of Gardena. As we finished our last trip of that Saturday, we swung by the Sears

Store on Long Beach Boulevard where I purchased two 3 piece, sharkskin suits, three white shirts, and a pair of shiny black shoes. We had decided that I should dress well for my upcoming interviews with the Computer Manufacturing Companies. I stopped off at a Barber Shop on Ocean Boulevard for a ten minute hair cut. I felt that I was ready for the interviews which would set my fate in the civilian world. By Sunday evening, we had settled into our first civilian home. Even though we were very tired, it felt so good to be separated from the oppression which we had felt for so many years. It was finally time for us to take our rightful place in the civilized world that we had actually forgotten existed. It was time to be retrained, to become civilians.

Monday morning my wife and I got up early and readied ourselves for a long day. She had decided to ride shotgun to help me in navigating the sprawling streets of Los Angeles. We left the apartment at 7 o'clock, stopped for breakfast at a diner on Rosecrans, and drove to the downtown center of Los Angeles. We arrived at the IBM Building at 8:30 so we sat in the car for about 15 minutes. I didn't want to arrive too early but I certainly didn't want to be late. My wife waited in the car while I went into the lobby. I introduced myself to the receptionist. She was polite as she checked her appointment calendar. She told me that I would meet with the Unit Manager at 9 o'clock and that there may be other meetings or schedules to keep depending upon the first interview. I met with the Unit manager for about 15 minutes at which time he took me next door to meet with his boss, the District Manager. After another 15 minutes with the two Managers, the Unit Manager took me back to the lobby where I was offered coffee and asked to wait for a few minutes. He left the area and then returned in about 10 minutes. We sat on a sofa and talked for another 10 minutes. He stood, as did I, and he told me that he and the District manager would like to hire me but that I was to be tested before a final decision could be made. A Secretary/Test Scheduler came in and announced that I could be scheduled for testing the following week. I accepted her proposal and was scheduled for testing the following Monday at eight o'clock in the morning. The Unit Manager and I shook hands and I departed the IBM Building.

My wife and I drove around for a while and then stopped for lunch at a Jack In The Box. We ate a quick burger and then drove to the Burroughs Building. We sat in the car until about 12:45. My wife waited for me in the car. I reported to the Secretary/Receptionist that I had a 1 o'clock appointment. She asked if my wife was in the car waiting as she could see the car from her desk. I told her that she was in the car. She called the Unit Manager who came out quickly to greet me. As the Unit Manager approached, I saw the Secretary go toward the car and as the Unit Manager began to talk to me, I watched the Secretary escort my wife toward the break room. This very big awkward looking man was to become my 'Boss' for the next 3 and 1/2 years. Lyle Starkweather was his name. Lyle took me into the offices where he introduced me to Stan Baumgartner, another Unit Manager and Paul Ryan, the District Manager. We were led to a conference room where we all took seats around a very large walnut table. The Area Manager (Can't remember his name) joined us at the conference table. I felt uneasy as I was asked a thousand questions by all four managers. Although we were there for only about an hour, it seemed like an eternity. After an hour of interrogation, Lyle invited me to follow him to the break room. We found my wife in the break room. Lyle asked that I take a break with my wife

while management discussed their opinions of me. In about 30 minutes or so, Lyle returned to the break room. He told my wife and I that management liked me and that my interview went well. He asked if I could return for the next two days to complete a battery of tests. I told him that I could be there at 8 o'clock in the morning of the next two days. He escorted us to the lobby where he bid us good day. As we were leaving the building I heard Lyle advise the Secretary/Receptionist that I would be returning for testing at 8 o'clock the next morning. I looked at my watch and quickly saw that we would be late for my 3 o'clock appointment with NCR. The NCR building was about 20 miles across Los Angeles. Considering a 30 to 40 minute drive, I would definitely be late. I went back to the Secretary's desk where I asked permission to make a local call. She handed me the handset and asked for a number to dial. As I read the number from an NCR business card, she dialed the number. An NCR Secretary answered after the first ring. I advised her that I was stuck in traffic and would be about a half hour late. She made me feel at ease as she told me that the Unit Manager would wait for me and that he really did not have another appointment and that my delay would in no way affect my interview. She said that traffic delays were so bad in Los Angeles that it was almost impossible to keep all appointments on a timely basis.

My wife and I drove quickly across Los Angeles, arriving 30 minutes late for my appointment at NCR.
