

Smokey's Books

Introduction

January 2010

It is now January, 2010. As they say, time flies when you're having fun. I started this book project a little over five years ago. As the first book writing progressed, my focus was shifted to creating Web Sites through which I could find those who would collaborate in the writing. As conduits for information exchange, these Web Sites have provided a treasure chest of 'content'. My 'Memory Jar' has been filled in such a way that I cannot describe. I have provided a way to share such that the 'Memory Jars' of thousands of others have also been filled to overflowing. If I don't live long enough to finish this book project, I can rest in knowing that the overall story has been recovered, recollected, remembered, and recalled by these thousands of individuals who have touched my life and have shared space and time with me for almost 70 years. As I write these books, I am forced to remember the bad first and then the good. I have to stand back occasionally and rest from the writing because of the swing of emotions. As we begin the 'New Year' of 2010, I plan to finish at least one and possibly two of my books. I will spend a lot less time on Web Site publishing and a lot more time on writing. The working title(s) are as follows:

From Poverty to Peace
Part 1 - Early Years
Poor & Proud in Earlimart
Part 2 - Trabzon Turkey
TAS - 457 Amazing Days
Part 3 - Twice Viet Nam
By Boat & Back - The Bass
Part 4 - Later Years
Blessed by God - Peace @ Last

At first I expected to write one long book with four parts. That format gave way to a series of four shorter books. The book(s) will tell the story of my life. The first 'book' actually starts a number of years before my birth when my grand parents left the 'Dustbowl' of Oklahoma in search of work in California. It ends when I ran away from home in search of a better life away from the Central Valley of California. The second 'story' is about my life in the USAF and more specifically the 15 months I spent on a 'Spy Base' in North Eastern Turkey about 100 miles from the old Soviet Union, now Georgia and Armenia. The third 'book' is about the years I spent in the United States Navy, aboard the USS Brinkley Bass DD-887, a Destroyer and Fighting Ship of the USN 7th Fleet, and more specifically the 13 months in the South China Sea and the Viet Nam War. The fourth 'book', if I ever get to the fourth book, will cover the years from 1968 to the present. The first three of the four shorter books will each be divided into two parts. The first part of each book will be fiction and the second part of each book will be a true recollection of my life as it was lived at various times. The fourth book will be a chronology of the 40 years of my life leading up to the writing of this book. As I began to pen the many stories that together tell the story of my life, I slowly began to realize the gaps in memory. I quickly realized that I would, of necessity, have to find those who might collaborate with me in the re-filling of the 'memory jar'.

In the summer some four years ago I launched the first two of a number of information sharing Web Sites. The first Site : <http://www.smokeystover.com> , was launched as a Book Information Site. Its purpose was to introduce me as the author of a series of books, introduce the books, and to describe the content of the books. The second Site : <http://www.smokeystover.net>, was launched to facilitate the 'Posting' of 'Photos' and 'Stories' I received that would eventually add to the 'Content' of the books. Both Sites served well in their intended functions. In June of 2006 I decided that the two sites should be consolidated. I merged the Sites into the .com Site leaving the .net Site available to be re-used in one of my many business ventures. While <http://www.smokeystover.com> remained as the Book Information Web Site until 2007, it lost most of its usefulness and because of a financial drain of too many Web Sites, I shut the site down. Smokey Stover's Place (a company info site) is now housed at <http://www.smokey-stovers-place.com> . As the Sites brought in information, I began making contact with many individuals from my past. I soon discovered a requirement for launching other Sites to serve very specific functions. I saw a need first to launch a Web Site that should be dedicated to Trabzon Veterans and for the specific purpose of them sharing their 'Story' and 'Experience' with each other and with their children, grand children, family, friends, and the rest of the world. In March of 2006, I launched the third of my information sharing Web Sites : <http://www.trabzonairstation.com> was launched and dedicated to those GIs who served on the 'Mountain' called 'Boztepe in Trabzon Turkey from June 1953 to April 1970. What a story !!!!! This is a 'High Maintenance Site' in that I receive something to 'Post' almost every day from one or a number of the Trabzon Veterans with whom I am communicating. The 'Trabzon Story' is being told by those GIs who were there and it is being 'Posted' on this Site daily. As the 'Story' is being recalled and recollected by the 63 Trabzon Veterans who have been placed on

the 'Duty Roster', I am beginning to pen my 'Story'. By 2007 I had rebuilt this site and published it as <http://www.trabzonairstation.net> and by mid 2009 I merged these two sites into the original site which now provides photos, stories and slideshows for viewing by Trabzon Veterans and their families and friends.

In June of 2006, I decided that information sharing was very slow for the third book. Because other individuals were hoarding the information about the USS Brinkley Bass DD-887, I launched a fourth Web Site that is dedicated to the 'Story' of the thousands of sailors who were stationed aboard the USS Brinkley Bass during her 29 years of service in the US Naval Fleet and to those Brazilian sailors who served aboard B. Bass during the remaining 27 years of service to Brazil. The Site is <http://www.ussbrinkleybassdd887.com>. Within 6 months, this site was beginning to bear fruit in the 'Photos' and 'Stories' which were coming in daily emails. This site was rebuilt and given over to the USS Brinkley Bass DD-887 Association and now serves as their 'Official Web Site'. I have taken on the job of Bass Association 'Historian' and Web Manager'.

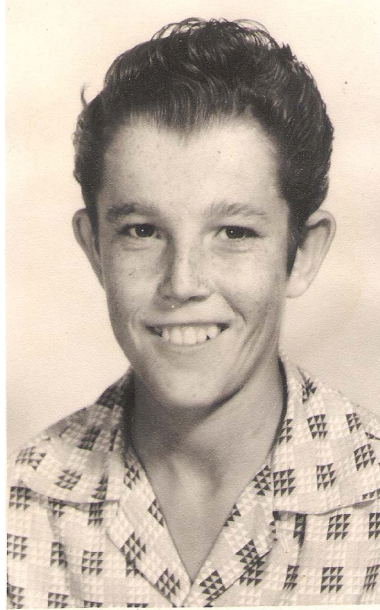
The biggest 'Story' that may very well be part of the fourth 'Story' is the 'Story' of the collaboration of many by way of Internet Communications in the bringing together of so many individuals with common pasts to tell these 'Stories' to the world. I have come to the realization that my 'Story' is just a minuscule part of the overall story. I have come to an understanding that if I can tell the overall story, my story will be woven into the fabric of the bigger 'Story'.

Since I have launched the last two information sharing Sites, the original Sites : <http://www.smokeystover.com> and <http://www.smokeystover.net> have been allowed to fade away. The Domain Names will remain registered such that I can use them at a later date. As mentioned in the first paragraph of this preface, the first three books will have two parts comprised of 1 part being fiction and a 2nd part being the truth of my life. I will in a brief statement, attempt to explain the reasoning behind this format. The first part of each book will be produced as fiction because of the following reasons:

1. This story begins almost 68 years ago. Many of the 'facts' are not and cannot be substantiated and therefore cannot be sold as biographical and or complete truth.
2. Memory is a funny thing. Most of what we remember is true. Some of what we remember is only wishful thinking.
3. Many of the 'Stories' are rumors, innuendoes, urban myths, and twice told tales.
4. Many collaborators wish to remain anonymous and therefore their names will not be given. Even though their stories are true they will be produced as fiction because their names will be fictitious.
5. Many characters in the 'Storyline' cannot be named for a myriad of reasons. Some may sue for libel. Some have requested to 'not be named'. Many will not be named to protect them from the wrath of others, while some will not be named just because I don't wish to expose them for their past to others. Although all names in the first part of each book will be fictitious, many will be able to identify themselves

and others. Almost anyone who has a desire for whatever reason to read these 'Stories', will find himself or herself in the 'Storyline'.

The second part of each book will be true or I should say as true as my own memory will allow, because the second part will be my own 'Story'. I will use the true identities of the primary characters in the non-fiction part of each book. At the present time, I'm not at all sure which part of each book will take the most paper. I do know that the true story will be the hardest to tell. Please read the front pieces and introductions to each book. They will contain all the information one will need to lead into the 'Storyline'. The end of each story is the beginning of the next and the completed 'Story' will contain the 'Story' of my Life.



First Draft Copy

Book Not Yet Titled

By : Bill 'Smokey' Stover

Introduction

My name is Bill 'Smokey' Stover. I am a new author. This book (not yet titled) Parts 1 through 4 is my first attempt at writing. The continuing story is divided into 4 parts and will be published and sold as 4 individual books. The books are a series of stories based on situations that really happened. I am uniquely qualified to write these 4 books because I have lived through each of the life situations that have been chronicled in these stories. Although all names and characters are fictional, each character is a composite of a type of person who lived in each of the times that are written about in these 4 books. The target market for each book is very different from each of the others. Those who may be interested in any one of the stories may not be interested in any of the others. Any individual who reads any of these stories, may find what they believe to be their own character embedded in the storyline. Many will be angry because a likeness of their character may be exposed to the world for the first time. Others may be elated to see that truths are finally revealed. These stories were written using information from many sources. They were also written from my very unique perspective. My advice to anyone who reads any of these books is to read it with an open mind and with a desire to learn more about the time and place that is the focal point of the story.

About the Author

I grew up in Earlimart, a town of 3000 in the very center of the Central Valley in California. Some people I know say that they were raised in the town where they lived during their childhood. To say that you were raised implies that someone taught, trained, nourished, loved, and fed and clothed you. Very little of these types of attention were ever applied in my family, in my town or in my environment. I grew up, or I should say, I was allowed to grow up in Earlimart, California. It is only by the grace of God that I lived to see adulthood, and then it may only be because I ran away from Earlimart in the summer of 1959 after my junior year of high school. I ran away and never looked back. Life was very hard and very dangerous in the Valley in the 1950's.

My Roots!!!!

The Dust Bowl Days

Also Known As

The Dirty Thirties

In the 1930's the dust storms blew across the southern plains destroying crops, killing cattle, and changing the lives of all who lived in the path of the drifting sands. The Dust Bowl was created in the area of southern Colorado, southern Kansas, and the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas. The dust storm also affected Arkansas, Missouri, South Dakota and New Mexico. The wind blew and the topsoil was blown away. The decade was called the Dustbowl Days and the Dirty Thirties.

Landowners lost their farms to foreclosure and sharecroppers were left with no means of support for their families. At the same time the country was suffering economically in a period known as the great depression. Some workers headed south while a few headed north and east. Most, however, headed west toward California in search of jobs and food. The migration of perhaps 2,000,000 people took place along Route 66. Most of the migrants found their way to the San Joaquin Valley of Central California.

What Brought Us To Earlimart?

My wife and I are grandchildren of the Dust Bowl Days. Although we lived our childhoods just a few miles apart, we did not meet until we were adults. Our grandparents were from Oklahoma and Arkansas. They grew up in different towns and states and never new each other in the old country. These families crossed paths in California in the 1930's and 40's. Our parents ended up in the San Joaquin Valley because they were the children of the Dust Bowl.

In 1923, some 8 years before the Dust Bowl Days began, my wife's father, Jack Hawkins, at the age of 25, left his parents home in Maysville, Arkansas in search of income and employment. Jack had heard of an old friend in California who had jobs working the grapes in Delano, California. He thumbed a ride on a Ford Model T drawn trailer ending up in Delano about a month later. Jack was a confirmed bachelor. He remained single until he met Winnie Myers and married in 1944.

My maternal grandfather Andrew and grandmother Mary Snider were the parents of sixteen children. They were sharecroppers in McAlester, Oklahoma. The owner of their farm lost his property to foreclosure. In the fall of 1934, Andrew and Mary took their 16 kids, headed south to a farming area just south of Fort Worth, Texas and settled in to work 160 acres of farmland. Within 10 years, Andrew and Mary owned that farm. Through the years the farm was subdivided and at one time or another all of their 16 children lived in separate homes on the farm. Andrew and Mary lived on their farm until they died. Andrew died at 93 years old and 10 years later Mary died at 92 years old. My mother Mintie was one of the middle daughters of Andrew and Mary.

At about the same time, my other grandfather John and grandmother Jessie Stover were forced to leave Clinton, Oklahoma in search of income. John and Jessie's three older children were gone from the home. They opted to stay in Oklahoma. My father Carl was the youngest (16 years old) child. Dad had heard of work in Texas, so at 16 he took out on his own in search of income. He bummed around until he ended up on the farm of Andrew and Mary Snider just south of Fort Worth, Texas. John and Jessie found their way to Earlimart, California. John worked the crops for 40 years. He picked cotton, picked up potatoes, picked melons, cut grapes, and even worked some in the wineries of the San Joaquin Valley. Jessie was Cherokee Indian. She had some college and was a School Teacher in Oklahoma. She hated California so she never assimilated. Jessie returned to Oklahoma in 1952 to live with her oldest son until she died in 1965. John died in Earlimart, California in 1976.

Houston and Nora Myers left Oklahoma in 1935 with three daughters. They headed for California. Nora was legally blind. My wife's mother Winnie and her sister Florene were also legally blind with the same rare form of birth cataracts. Their younger sister Marie who had normal vision, accompanied. Houston found work in Alamogordo, New Mexico. He also found a state operated school for the blind in Alamogordo. He kept his family in New Mexico long enough for his blind daughters to progress through the 8th grade in the school for the blind. They learned brail and touch typing while at the school. My wife's mother, Winnie survives her sisters and at 83 years old still communicates by telephone and by typewritten letters. After their daughter's completion of the 8th grade, Houston and Nora moved the family to Delano, California where Houston worked the crops until he died. Houston and Nora both died in Bakersfield, California in 1975.

Jack Hawkins was a bachelor. He had not given much thought to marriage. He and Winnie Myers met in Delano, CA in 1943 and were married in 1944. Jack was 45 and Winnie was 22 years old when they married. Their son Von Ray, was born the following year. Paulette (my wife) was born the next year. Leotta was born the next year and their

youngest daughter, Eva, was born a year later. Jack worked in the Grape Fields until he was forced by health to quit working in 1956. He died in Bakersfield, California in 1976. He was 78 years old when he died. Winnie at age 83, resides with her daughter in Bakersfield, CA.

My father, Carl Stover and mother Mintie Snider met and married while he worked on the Snider farm in central Texas. They were very young. My father was 18 and my mother was 15 when they married. After they gave birth to their first child (my older sister), they left the farm to find work in the oilfields of west Texas. My father worked as a roughneck for two years. Shortly after my birth, the family moved on to Casa Grande, Arizona where my father worked with my uncle in the cotton gins about 50 miles from Phoenix. A few years later, my younger brother was born. Shortly after his birth, the family headed for California to join up with my grandparents in Earlimart, California. We arrived in Earlimart in 1946 and in 1948 my younger sister was born in Tulare County Hospital, California. The four of us were literally born as we were moving west from central Texas to California's San Joaquin Valley. My father worked as a tractor driver, mechanic, and night watchman on ranches and farms around Earlimart until he gave up on them. My parents relocated back to Phoenix, Arizona where my father worked as a mechanic until he died there in 1979. After my Father's death, my mother moved back to the farm in central Texas where she lived for a number of years. She relocated to live with my sister Marie, her oldest daughter, for the last years of her life. She died in 1989 and was buried in central Texas. Although my mother was forced into the gypsy lifestyle adopted by the children of the Dust Bowl, she never mentally left here home in Texas. Because my mother always missed home, we made a yearly pilgrimage to Texas for as many years as I can remember. She lived and died as the daughter of a Texas farmer. My grandmother outlived most of her 16 children. She died on the farm at 92 years of age.

All of our family members, those original migrant workers who fled the Dust Bowl are now dead. My wife's mother Winnie at 83 years old is the only remaining child of the Dust Bowl. My wife and I are only two of hundreds of family members who remain as grandchildren of the Dust Bowl and we have spent a lifetime working our way from poverty to peace.

Poor and Proud in Earlimart California

Chapter One

Born in the oil fields of West Texas

My parents called me Bud until I started to high school. As a young boy growing up in Earlimart, my close friends called me Billy. I had long, curly hair that was out of control, especially when I ran a lot or while playing basketball on the playground at school. Some

of those who played together every day called me 'Wild Hair'. As I approached my teen years, some of my closest friends called me 'Stovepipe', because I was undernourished and very skinny just like a stovepipe. Because my name was William, I asked my friends to call me Bill. 'Bill' never stuck. I was called 'Stovepipe' until I ran away from home in the summer of 1959. When I was young, I had heard my Grand Father's friends call him Smokey, and later when I was a teenager I had heard my Father's friends call him Smokey. I decided that when I had the opportunity, I would have my friends call me Smokey. While in Air Force Boot Camp, I finally got my way. I told my buddies that my nickname was Smokey. Every person who ever serves in the military comes home with a nickname. My buddies were happy to call me Smokey then and the name stuck. I have been called Smokey since Air Force Boot Camp in 1960. I have told many people that my nickname was Smokey a long time before the 'Cops' took the name from Burt Reynolds in 'Smokey and the Bandit'.

I remember most of the terrible things that have happened to me from about 4 years old until now. Things that happened from my birth until just before our arrival in Earlimart, California are mostly vague as far as memory is concerned. When I was a teenager, my Father and Mother told me about Buford, Texas and the circumstances of my birth as well as some of the things that happened between birth and 4 years old. The very early years were recalled from my Mother's memory.

I was born in Buford, Texas, April 10, 1942. Buford is so small that my parents always told people that I was born in Colorado City, Texas. Both towns are so small that most people have no idea where to look for either one. Back in the early 40's, when I was born there weren't any good roads which went straight to Buford from any city of any size. Today Interstate 20 goes right by Buford in Mitchell County. If you head west out of Fort Worth on I20 and proceed through Abilene you will find signs which will lead you off the main highway to Colorado City and Buford. It is about half way between Abilene and Midland, Texas, about 250 miles west of Fort Worth.

My Father, Mother, and older Sister, came from Waxahachie, Texas, a small town just south of Dallas. They had only been in Buford for about a month when I was born. My Father had come to work in the oil fields which are the only place to find work in West Texas. I was born in a two room shack that has no doubt been blown away by the desert winds by now. The closest doctor was in Midland to the West and the only hospital was in Abilene to the East of Buford both being a minimum of 30 miles away. In those days there was no such thing as neo-natal care. Poor women would get pregnant and give birth 9 months later or miscarry sooner. Babies were born either in good health or sickly and most were born without the luxury or convenience of hospital or doctor. My birth was no exception to the rule. No matter where poor people were living at any given time there usually lived at least one or two women who could be considered mid-wives.

The two room shack had no indoor plumbing. The toilet facility was an outhouse which was placed above a hole in the ground about 100 yards behind the house. The outhouse was a two-holer. I think they made two-holers so you could have company on those cold and windy West Texas nights. The shack was on the back of another property. The front

house was much larger and nicer than the house we were forced to rent. The property was supplied water from a well and pump house which was close to the front house. Our house had one hydrant that was about 3 feet off the ground atop a half inch iron water pipe. It was at the side of the house just under the window which one might call the kitchen window. Although the cabin really didn't have a kitchen, there was a 100 year old wood stove located next to the window that was called the kitchen window. A small table made with 2 by 4s and plywood had been hand sawed and nailed together and placed inside the house just under the window. Someone had attached an old holey hose about 10 feet long to the hydrant and placed a sawed stump outside the house just beneath the window. Anytime anyone needed water they would place a large bowl or bucket on the table inside, go outside, and from the stump they would point the hose through the window and into the container, turn the water hydrant on, and when the proper amount of water was in the container, turn the hydrant off. This was the running water system that was in place at the time of my birth.

I was born at about 6 o'clock in the morning. When my Mother went into labor (about midnight), my Father sprang into action. The only source of heat was the wood stove in the kitchen. The stove always had hot coals because even in April in the deserts of West Texas, it was cold in the early morning hours. He stoked the fire and then proceeded to the storage area just outside at the back door, where he found 4 buckets. He brought the buckets to the kitchen area where he placed them on the table under the kitchen window. He ran outside, turned on the hydrant and filled the buckets with water. He came back inside and placed the buckets on the four hot plates on the wood kitchen stove. As he quickly passed the bed in the front of the house, where Mom spent most of her days and nights, Dad told my Mom to hang on for a few minutes while he went to find the midwife who would help in my delivery. He ran from the front door, jumped in and started the car and in about 2 minutes he was out again and knocking on the front door of the midwife's house. The woman answered the door, was dressed in another 3 minutes and 2 minutes later they were back in our house and getting prepared to birth me. A total of about ½ hour and Dad was ready. The midwife and my Father collected enough clean rags together and laid them on the table under the kitchen window. Dad spent the remainder of the night stoking the fire and keeping the water hot while the midwife attempted to keep my Mother comfortable. I was born at about 6 o'clock in the morning. The midwife cleaned me up, cleaned up my mother, gave my Father some instructions and left. She was finished at about 7 o'clock. My Dad took her back home and returned in a few minutes. He complained that he had no breakfast and left for work in the oil fields of West Texas. The woman who lived in the house on the front of the property stopped by at about 5 o'clock and left off a casserole for my Dad's dinner. She repeated that for the next three days. My Dad had to find breakfast and lunch for three days and he ate the free meal each evening. On the fourth day, my Mother was up and about. She cooked breakfast, prepared a sandwich for Dad's lunch and had dinner ready when Dad came home from work. The midwife stopped by each day, about mid day to check on Mom. She usually brought soup or sandwich for my mother. She also brought fruit, water and cool milk. After the fourth day she stopped coming by because Mom was again capable of accomplishing the daily chores. We had no refrigerator or any way of storing perishables so my Father stopped by the local market every evening to buy necessary items to feed and hydrate Mom and me.

There was no baby formula or disposable diapers in 1942. My Father also purchased a few of the necessities for maintaining a new baby. The baby formula was mixed from milk and other commodities. The contents of the diapers were dumped nightly in the out house and then the cloth diapers were washed nightly in a wash tub on a washboard. The gray water was then thrown out in the backyard and the washtub was rinsed near the hydrant at the side of the house. The rinse water was again thrown out in the back yard.

My Father worked as a Well Pullers Helper in the oilfields of West Texas for almost two years. He made just enough pay each month to pay the rent and the grocery bill at the local market. Dad worked hard his whole life but he didn't like hard work. He wrote letters to all of his relatives and all of Mom's relatives in search of an easier job. He finally received a letter from my Uncle which told Dad of a job in Casa Grande, Arizona.. This Uncle was Mom's oldest Sister's husband. They lived in Casa Grande, a small town about 50 miles from Phoenix, Arizona. He was a shade tree mechanic just like my Dad. He had lived in the deserts of Arizona for about 15 years and Mom said that He was a desert rat that would never live in a normal place.

Chapter Two

Moving West – Texas To Arizona

Dad finished out the week, collected his check, paid the rent, paid the grocery bill and packed the car. At two o'clock the next morning, Dad and Mom finished loading the 1932 Ford Sedan and together with my Sister, we headed for Casa Grande, Arizona. Mom said that Dad always started trips, especially desert trips at 2 o'clock in the morning so that we could get as many miles behind us as possible before the afternoon sun was too high and before it was too hot to travel.

It is almost 800 miles from West Texas to Casa Grande. We spent almost 3 days on the dusty desert roads before we finally pulled into Casa Grande. My Uncle had set up the job and a place to live just outside of Casa Grande. My Dad would work for the next two years as a mechanic in the cotton gin where most of the cotton in the region was processed, bailed and shipped to textile mills all over the world. My Uncle was a foreman on the work crew that moved trucks and cotton trailers around all day as they emptied trailers of cotton and loaded processed and bailed cotton onto trucks for shipment. Dad worked in the hot gin 12 hours each day to keep the plant running while they were ginning and bailing. He worked 10 hours a day on the maintenance crew to repair all of the mechanical equipment and to ready the plant for use for the next production cycle. My Uncle worked as a mechanic during the down cycles to ready all outside equipment for the next production cycle. Most of the workers at the gin lived in company housing that was paid for as rent on a monthly basis. We were no different than everyone else. We lived in a 30 year old, 20 foot long, 8 foot wide trailer house. The trailer houses were placed in circles of 8 trailers per circle.

There were 3 or 4 circles of trailers. In the center of each circle was an out building that was used by all of the people from the circle. The out buildings were all built from the same prints. Each building had facilities for washing clothes. The laundry facility consisted of two ringer washing machines and two rinse tubs and sinks. Each out building had toilet facilities for men on one side and for women on the other side. The men's side had four open commodes, four sinks, and four showers without curtains or doors. The women's side was the same except the commodes and showers were in stalls with curtains for privacy. Boys and men of all ages used the men's side and girls and women of all ages used the women's side. All residents were told to use their own facilities unless you had to go when your facility was full. Mom said that on numerous occasions either Her or Dad had to use one of the other facilities because the number of people using ours was far too many for the number of units available at certain times of the day especially morning and evening.

We lived in Casa Grande for about two years before Dad had had enough of the very hot and heavy duty labor which he had to do each day. Within a year, Mom was pregnant again. She gave birth to my younger brother, just about six months before we left the cotton gin and trailer house. There were a number of midwives in the trailer park so it really wasn't hard to find a woman to assist Mom in childbirth. The owner of the gin and company housing was somewhat benevolent in that he paid a doctor to visit the camp about once a month. The doctor staged his patient visits in an office building located near the road in front of the gin. He would see as many children as he could on one day and then see all of the expectant mothers and other women the next day. If any men required the doctor's services, he would return on Sunday afternoon so that they would not have to miss work for a visit. This was the only care my mother had ever received during any of her pregnancies. The doctor would try to get back to his infirmary for deliveries of babies but usually he did not make it so most babies were delivered by midwives. My brother was born in the early morning, delivered by midwife with my Dad's help. A few months after my brothers arrival Dad started writing letters to his Father and Mother who lived in Earlimart, California. Earlimart was situated in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley. The Central Valley, as it was called by those who lived and worked there, produced much of the truck crops, fruits, and nuts for the world.

Dad had saved as much money as he could during the two plus years in Casa Grande. He had enough money to pay the company store bill including enough food staples to get us to California. He had an extra \$100 so he traded up from the 1932 Ford Sedan to a 1937 Ford Sedan.

Chapter Three

Moving On – Toward the Great Valley

We pulled out of Casa Grande, Arizona at about 2 in the morning on a hot, windy, and dusty day in August of 1946. We always left on any trip at 2 in the morning. My Dad was punctual. He wanted to get some distance down the road before the desert sun was too

high. When the sun was high, it would be 100 degrees or even hotter in the deserts of Arizona and California. We had no Air Conditioning and there was very little shade in the desert. The old cars always overheated in the hot afternoons in the desert. Most afternoons were spent sitting under any shade that could be found and waiting for the sun to go down so we could get a little further down the road before resting for a few hours. This day was no different than expected.



We left Casa Grande in a 1937 Ford Sedan. The old Ford was a four door with what they called suicide doors. The front doors opened to the front while the rear doors opened to the rear. The doors were called suicide doors because if you opened a rear door while in motion, the door would be blown open very violently. Many of these doors had been blown off the cars when children in back seats opened the door while in motion. My Dad was very proud of the family sedan. The car had a Flat Head V-8 Engine, with 16 inch wheels. Dad was a mechanic of the back yard/shade tree variety. He had been trained at the school of hard knocks. He carried a toolbox with the eight to ten tools needed to maintain the car. He also carried the five parts that may be required to fix the car when it would break. The parts inventory required for any trip of 50 miles or greater was a fuel pump, carburetor, spark plugs, breaker points, and fan belt. Dad also carried a big jug of water, brake fluid, and a 5 gallon jerry can of gas for the car. Dad spent about a week getting the old Ford ready for the trip to California. He rebuilt the carburetor, rebuilt the brakes, and purchased and installed four retread tires. The Ford was a Square Back with a big trunk. My Mom and Dad fit in the front seat while the three kids were jammed into the narrow back seat. The top was equipped with a makeshift carriage rack that my Dad made with his own hands. We carried some items on the rack that were for ready access such as clothes and shoes and cooking utensils and a few bags of food items such as ears of corn, potatoes, fruit and vegetables, sugar, salt, flour, and coffee. There was no fast food or money to buy it with in those days. When we stopped to eat we built a fire and cooked something to eat. The back bumper was outfitted with a trailer hitch that Dad had built with his own hands. We pulled a small trailer. The trailer was the bed from a 1932 Plymouth pickup. It was fitted with board sides about 4 feet tall. The trailer carried all of

the worldly possessions of our Family. My Dad built the trailer with his own hands. We left Casa Grande with four one gallon milk jugs of ice water and two jugs which contained regular tap water. My parents asked us to drink the regular water until it was gone then we would drink the ice water. Cold water was hard to find in the deserts of Arizona and California. The old Ford had two bumper guards on each bumper. Dad purchased four water bags before we left on our trip. The water bags were made of thick, tightly woven canvas. Each bag was left to soak in fresh water overnight. Just before departure, the bags were filled with water and hung by rope straps over each bumper guard. They were made in the wineskins model. As the Ford rumbled down the road, the wind blew past the water bags and the water inside was cooled a few degrees. We traveled with all of the latest technology.

By sunup, we had traveled about 150 miles. We three kids always got car sick as we made the curves and went over the bumpy roads. We also had to go to the bathroom quite frequently. We had made a number of pit stops before the morning sun. We had also stopped to allow my younger brother to throw up at least once because of carsickness. We had devoured a box of saltine crackers by morning but we were very hungry and we wasted no time in complaining about our hunger. We found a rest stop just outside of Vicksburg. My Dad built a fire (it was already 90 degrees in the desert) and my Mom cooked up some food for the hungry brood. We had fried potatoes with pancakes. Mom cooked some sugar water for syrup for the pancakes. She mixed a little orange Koolade with some of the cold water and our meal was complete. From parking to cleanup, we were stopped to eat for about two hours and then back on the road again.

The old Ford got about 15 miles to the gallon of gas. The tank held 10 gallons and gas was 10 cents per gallon. Our range was about 150 miles at a cost of about \$1.00 each pit stop. We gassed up in Vicksburg and filled as many water bottles as were empty. We found a place with ice and bought enough ice to make the water cold for 25 cents. We left Vicksburg with hopes of reaching the California border without any major problems. At about 10 o'clock with the temperature at 100 degrees, the Ford began to overheat. Dad drove until he spotted a big mesquite tree just off the road. He parked the car on the shady side of the tree and began to wait for the radiator to cool down. It takes about two hours for the radiator to cool from the overheated condition. As soon as possible, Dad removed the radiator cap and refilled the radiator with the water that he brought just for this occasion. Dad pulled back out onto the road, knowing that if the car overheated before the next town, he would have to use the reserve water in the water bags. He slowed to about 40 mph in hopes that the old Ford would not overheat. We were about 40 miles out of Kingman when the car began to overheat again. After another two hour wait, Dad used the water bags to fill the radiator and we were on the road again. As we crested a long hill we could see the first signs of the radiator giving off steam one more time. It was late afternoon now and it was at least 120 degrees in the desert of Arizona. As we started down from the top of the hill, we saw Kingman about two miles ahead at the end of a long decline. The hill was steep enough for a quick decent into Kingman. Dad knew the road and he knew the car. He knew the capabilities and the limitations. He pulled the floor shift gearbox into neutral and let out on the clutch. He left the engine running in case he needed to reengage the transmission to act as a brake. He told us to hold on because we were

beginning a fast trip to Kingman. The old Ford growled along as we came down the mountain, reaching a speed of about 60 mph tops. The tarp on the trailer was just about blown away as we finished the trip down the mountain. The road leveled out and the coasting Ford slowed to a crawl as Dad steered it into the first gas station we passed in Kingman, Arizona.

Dad filled the radiator, water containers, water bags and the drinking water jugs. He purchased enough ice to make the drinking water cold. He gassed the car, asked the attendant for directions to a rest stop, and steered the old Ford back out onto the roadway. It was about 3 miles toward California when we exited the road at one of the few rest stops in the Arizona desert. The kids were hungry and road wary from the long hot ride in the summer heat. Mom decided that it was time to eat and Dad just wanted to close his eyes and rest for a while. Dad gathered some mesquite limbs from the desert just outside of the rest area and found a few pieces of wood from what appeared to be a broken palette. He placed the wood in a pit that had been used many times for fires and started the fire. In about 5 minutes Mom was prepared to cook the meal. She quickly peeled some potatoes. She pulled two large canning jars from the carriage area. The jars contained lard and bacon grease. The materials were normally solidified but because of the heat they were almost completely liquefied. Mom poured about 1 cup of lard with a few tablespoons of bacon grease into an iron skillet. She threw in about 8 hands full of chopped potatoes, about 1 hand full of chopped green onions, stirred in salt and pepper, and began to stir the potatoes over the fire. As she prepared the potatoes, she mixed some flour and corn meal with salt, pepper and sugar in a tin bowl. She mixed in some water and a small portion of canned milk. After removing the potatoes from the skillet, Mom poured another cup of lard into the skillet. As the lard began to bubble, she dropped a number of half cups full of the flour mix into the hot lard. Mom used a large spoon to remove the fried bread from the boiling skillet. As the bread was placed on a cloth, she sprinkled sugar on the bread pieces. We all ate this dinner as if it was a seven course meal. As Mom began to clean up after the meal, Dad took out a blanket, placed it on the picnic table, climbed up onto the table, laid down, and fell asleep. The patio cover provided enough shade so that Dad was out of the direct sunlight. The kids gathered under another patio top in order to sit on the benches and out of the sun. Mom finished cleanup, placed all utensils back under the roof carriage covering, and joined the kids at the patio table. As always, she tried to control the chaos of the activities of the three screaming, hitting, running, and jumping children. Dad was tired and even with the noise from us kids, he slept for a couple of hours.

As the sun was going down, Dad awoke with a start, pulled on his boots, and announced that it was time to get started toward California. Mom had anticipated his mood and had readied the car for travel. Everything had already been returned to their right places. She yelled loudly at all of us advising that we use the restroom facilities. Mom would always say that it was our last chance and that if we did not go now, we would have to pee our pants if we had to go in the next three hours. We all used the facilities and reported to Mom that we were ready to travel. It was dark by the time we loaded into the old Ford. Dad counted heads, slammed his door, and we were underway again. He up shifted to high gear and in a few minutes we were traveling at 60 mph. The kids played around for a while in the back seat and then fell asleep. We pit stopped in Mojave, CA where Mom woke the

kids and told them to use the bathroom and get a drink of water. Dad went through his ritual of gasing and watering the car and within 30 minutes we were back on the road again. We were traveling at night and the car was running cool so we were making good time. Some hours later, I remember my Grand Father waking the kids and telling them to come into the house and find a place to sleep. We were in Earlimart, CA which would be my home for the next 13 years.

Chapter Four

Life begins in Earlimart – 4 Years Old – 1946/1947

I don't remember much about religion before the age of eleven or twelve. I do remember life and how hard life was while growing up in Earlimart, California. Earlimart was a dirty little town in the Central San Joaquin Valley of California. Agriculture was and still is the main industry in the Valley. Regardless of their ethnic or racial backgrounds, most of the people in Earlimart worked the crops or worked on farms in some capacity.

Have you ever watched the movie 'Grapes of Wrath'? That movie is a very good rendition and portrayal of the life of those who fled the dust bowl of Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas and ended their trip in the Valley in search of some of the gold of the Golden State. My grand father came from a farm in Oklahoma to Earlimart with those early arrivals in search of his part of the American Dream. Some years later, my father brought his young wife and family from the oilfields of west Texas to settle in the 'Big Valley'. The year was 1946 when we first came to Earlimart. The region was very poor. The school had no kindergarten and no one started to 1st grade until after their 6th birthday. I couldn't start to school until September, 1948 which was well after my 6th birthday.

I remember that something was very odd about the relationship between my Grand Parents. My Grand Mother lived in a very nice house made with blocks on the far north end of town. My Grand Father lived in a very small wood frame house on the far south end of town. Grandma did not have a car nor did she drive while Granddad owned and drove a well maintained Plymouth Sedan. Anything Grandma wanted she got. Granddad stopped by her house almost every night on his way from work. If Grandma had requests, Granddad would stop by the market or 5 and dime and the Post Office and then stop by her house to deliver the goods. Grandma was a big eater and a busy writer so food, stationary, and stamps were always in demand at Grandma's house. Some years later, my Grand Father explained the relationship in this manner. 'Your Grand Mother and I cannot live together. She nags me to no end. I have never done anything right since we were married. I built the blockhouse that she lives in when we first came to California. After a number of years together, I decided that I had better move out before one or both of us got hurt. That's when I bought the lot and built the little frame house that I call home. We are both Christian. Neither of us believed in divorce so, I made a deal with your Grand Mother. The big blockhouse was hers for as long as she wanted to stay there but only if she would stay on her end of town and leave me alone. I agreed to take care of her needs including pickup and delivery of necessities and driving her to the doctor on the rare

occasions when she had to visit his office. We both grow a large garden at each of our homes. She grows certain vegetables and I grow the others and then we share when the crops come in. When we have visitors from Oklahoma or Texas, we see them at her house. Anytime we need to feed a number of people, we eat at her house. My house is much too small for visitors and because her house is much bigger, we meet relatives and friends at her house’.

My Grand Mother’s house sat on about 2 acres of Valley Sandy Loam. She always produced a big garden on about one acre. When we came to Earlimart, there were three tent houses semi-permanently situated on her side yard. As friends and relatives moved to Earlimart from Oklahoma, my Grand Father would assist the male members in putting up a tent house. The three tent houses had been erected sometime during the previous three years. I remember that my Grand Mother did not enjoy children in her home. She was sharp tongued with us and on many occasions ejected us from her home with a great verbal assault. She reluctantly allowed us to stay in her house until my Father and Grand Father could build the ‘new’ tent house. In about 2 weeks, we moved into the tent house which became the fourth in the tent city which was on my Grand Mother’s property. The tent houses had become popular in the late 30s and early 40s as people came from the ‘Dust Bowl’ in search of income and living quarters. These houses were very unique in architectural design and efficiency. Long poles were laid out on the ground. Big boards were nailed around the perimeter and flooring planks were nailed to the poles. Eight foot poles were placed at about 6 foot spacing around the perimeter. A twelve foot pole was placed in the center of the north and south perimeter walls. A four foot wall on all four sides was constructed of crude cut and unfinished 1 by 12 boards. A four foot wide doorway was finished into the center of the west wall. Another twelve foot pole was affixed to the very center of the house. A beam was hoisted up and fixed to the north, center and south 12 foot poles. All 8 foot perimeter poles were tied together with beams around the outside walls. Beams were affixed at 6 foot placement between the 8 foot tall beams and the twelve foot tall beams. These last beams provided a truss system which would give support and form to the tent material. The tent materials were spread over the frame and quickly took on the shape of an A-Frame dwelling. The tent material was draped over the frame almost to the ground on all four sides except in the door area. A flap was fixed in the door area and a hinged door was built to the four foot level of the wall. Air Conditioning was simple. When we needed air, we would roll up the side or sides to get flow through ventilation. A kerosene heater was placed near the center pole for heat. We slept on cots or single beds and in the winter when it was cold, we just pulled the beds close to the center of the room so each one could feel the heat. Mom cooked meals on a wood stove cook top that was placed on a wood floor just out of the door area. Dad built a poled area with a roof to cover the stove. The men got together and built a shower room out back. They rigged a big galvanized bathing tub on a platform about 18 inches off the ground. A garden hose was connected to a hydrant just at the back of my Grand Mother’s house. The men rigged four poles around the tub that supported a tarp that acted as a shower curtain for privacy. They left a flap for entry and exit to the rear of the shower room. A pipe and faucet was attached to one of the poles and the garden hose was attached to the bottom of the pipe. To take a shower you had to go to Grandma’s, turn on the hydrant and then get in the tub and turn on the faucet. When finished you reversed the process. They drilled a

hole at one end of the tub and affixed a length of hose that served as a drainpipe. The drain water gravity flowed out the hose into the back yard where it stagnated and eventually perked into the sandy loam. We lived in the tent house for about one year. We saw a number of improvements that year. The men from the tent houses got together and built two larger outhouses. They dug the holes deeper and wider and then built two two-holer outhouses. They labeled one HERS and the other HIS. Although we had outhouses for many years after this, these were the first and last gender based outhouses I remember. About six months into our stay in the tent house, Dad came home one night with a dilapidated old trailer house. He pulled it in close to the north wall of our tent house where it became a private bedroom for him and a cooking facility for Mom. Dad and Granddad built a covered wooden deck in front of the old trailer house and a large wooden picnic table. This became the dining room and dining room table.

The women in my family were very mean to the children. My Grand Mother did not want kids running in and out of her house so she made them afraid by hurling verbal abuse at them until they stayed clear of her house. Mom started whipping us early and by 1947 whipping had evolved into a form of recreation and entertainment for her and the other tent house women. When any kid from the tent houses was being punished all of the women including my Grand Mother would run out to watch the show. We learned at a very young age that we should be out of sight and thereby be out of the minds of those women. My Father was busy trying to earn money for food. He was either working at a pickup job or he was out looking for long term employment. Dad got up and left early every day and usually returned in time for dinner at night. Sometimes he stayed gone until late in the evening. On those occasions, when Dad came home late, he would be chastised to no end by my mother. I watched my parents through the years and later in life began to understand why my father stayed gone as often as possible. My older sister was in school so she was gone most days until late in the afternoon.

Together my younger brother and I survived the rest of 1946 and 1947. We decided early on that life was much more peaceful when we were away from home. We also learned that the major requirement of us was that we had to be home before dark. We tested our abilities in timing and we began to explore and go further and further away until we often got too far from home and did not make it home before dark. On those late returns, we would take a good whipping before dinner and then sent to bed early. As we successfully found our distance limits in all directions, we could get as far as 3 or 4 miles from home and then get home before dark. We were basically free to explore anything we felt like getting into and on many occasions we escaped situations just short of being killed by someone else or just short of killing ourselves.

Chapter Five

Rough Beginnings – 5 Years Old – 1947/1948

The year 1947 ended very badly for me. I spent most of 1948 in the hospital in Tulare, California. Tulare was about 25 miles to the north of Earlimart. The county seat was in

Tulare as well as the only poor people's hospital. We never visited a doctor unless we were deathly ill and at least three times in 1948 I was deathly ill. While on the road, I had survived the Whooping Cough, Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox, Jaundice, Scarlet Fever, and Food Poisoning on a number of occasions. Who knows what other deadly things had contacted me but didn't stick?

Late in 1947 I began to experience many physical ailments. The first time I became deathly ill in Earlimart was sometime around Christmas of 1947 or New Years of 1948. I began to have breathing problems like no one in my family had ever seen. The women of the tent house city took turns at looking at me. After my Grand Mother examined me, she, my Mother and the rest of the women decided that I had Walking Pneumonia. It seems as though my Father and other men that they knew had spent time with Walking Pneumonia in the past. After about a month of coughing almost to the point of coughing up blood, my Mother decided it was time to go to the doctor. Early the next morning my Granddad drove up into the side yard, stopping in front of our tent house. He got out of his Plymouth Sedan and walked up to the door. He yelled at my Mother asking, 'Where is old Bud'? I heard him from out behind the out houses where my brother and I were playing in the mud that had formed in the shower drain water. I came running toward the house coughing very loudly as I slowed to a walk. The lack of oxygen made it difficult to run especially in the dust from the sandy loam. Granddad stooped down to talk to me. He asked, 'How do you feel today, Bud'? I told him that I really didn't feel very well. He went into our tent house to talk to my Mother and after just a few minutes, returned to talk to me. He had retrieved a bar of soap, a wash cloth, and a towel from my Mother. He took me to the shower, picked me up, and placed me in the tub. He went over to Grandma's house, turned on the hydrant, came back and after turning on the faucet on the shower pipe, he gave me a bath with soap. It was really cold water and I hadn't had a real bath with soap for months. He toweled me off, picked me up and walked quickly to the tent house. 'Get old Bud dressed, He needs to go to the doctor and he needs to go today', He told my Mother. Mom dressed me in a clean plaid shirt and overalls.

Granddad and I drove to Tulare to the poor people's hospital. On the way to the hospital I asked Granddad why He was taking me and not my Mom and Dad. He said that Dad had to work and that Mom had to stay at home to watch the other kids. It took about an hour to get to the hospital. Granddad and I sat and waited for about two hours before we could see a doctor. There were about 100 people in this big waiting room and every one of them was coughing and sneezing and blowing their noses and rubbing their eyes. Eventually, a doctor came to this big waiting area to examine a number of the children who were waiting. He was apparently a children's doctor because he only examined children. He began to isolate and separate groups of children. He divided the boys from the girls and then separated each into groups according to their symptoms. It only took a few minutes and I was separated out with a group of about 10 young boys aged from about 4 to about 10 years old. After a few minutes, the doctor stood in front of our group and announced that whoever brought us should meet with him for a brief consult. Granddad came with the other parents to talk to the doctor. The doctor was very quick and straight to the point. He said that there was a serious problem in the valley with kids and a number of sicknesses. He told this group of adults that this group of kids had Pneumonia. He said

that the hospital had a ward that was full of boys with pneumonia and that I would have to stay there until I could shake it. With this bit of information, I began to live through the very rough year of 1947. We waited for another hour before a nurse came in to collect the group of boys with pneumonia. We followed the nurse to a room down a very long hallway. There we were each given a light blue gown to wear. It was one of those hospital gowns with a single tie in the waist area of the back. We piled our clothes just in front of our feet as commanded by the nurse and pulled on the gowns provided. We were each given in which we packed our clothes. We lined up and walked in line to the other end of the hallway where we gave our bags to those who brought us to the hospital.

We said good-bye to our friends and relatives and returned to the room where we were being dressed. Granddad waved to me as I disappeared into the dressing room. The next time I saw my Grand Father, he told me that he had taken my clothes back home and that my Mother has washed them so they would be ready to wear upon my return trip home. We were paired off each with another boy of similar age or height and told to tie the other boy's tie string with a bow tie knot. We were told that in the future we were to tie and untie the unreachable tie string for our newfound friend. I hadn't had very much experience tying because I had never had a pair of shoes that fit well enough to tie or to untie so I faked it and tied a hard knot. I remember paying a dear price for the indiscretion of tying a hard knot. I can't remember the exact schedule for changing gowns but I do remember the first time we changed gowns, I could not untie the knot in my tying buddy's tie string. Each of our gang attempted to untie the knot to no avail. I finally summoned the nurse to untie the knot. She unleashed a verbal assault on me that none of us would soon forget.

I spent most of the next 6 months in the poor people's hospital in Tulare, California. I learned quickly to tie the right knot in just a few days and from then on the tying exercises went just fine. Children could not come inside the hospital, so on the rare occasions when my brother and sister would visit, they would communicate with signs from the lawn outside. My ward was on the third floor of the hospital so I would go to the window to read the signs below. I remember Merry Christmas, Happy Easter and Happy Birthday signs.

Mom soon fell into a routine for visiting me in the hospital. She had to use all of her powers of persuasion in order to make the visits. She rode the late afternoon Greyhound Bus from Earlimart to Tulare every Wednesday and then returned to Earlimart on the last bus from Tulare. On one of her first visits, I heard Mom have a very heated discussion with the head nurse and a doctor. When my Mother decided that she needed something from anyone, she would get just as loud and noisy as she needed to make the requirements known. On this occasion, she got very loud and when everything settled, she came over and told me what deal was struck. She had advised the hospital staff that she would be coming in on the late afternoon bus and then leaving on the last bus every Wednesday night and that she would require transportation to and from the hospital. I asked Mom what she promised them and she simply said that she promised them that she would be quiet from now on. It was apparently a good deal for the staff because they agreed to her deal and from that day on, she was afforded transportation to the hospital and back to the bus station on Wednesday nights. I remember a few nights when Mom's connections didn't

work completely right and she spent the night on a chair in the pneumonia ward. Almost every Sunday afternoon Mom would visit me in the hospital.

Dad came just a few times. He was usually working or out looking for work. My Grand Father usually came to visit because when my Father couldn't or wouldn't bring Mom, Granddad brought her. Granddad was always more of a buddy than was my Father. Sometimes the adults would bring the kids and friends to visit and that is when they would stand on the grass with signs for me to read. I didn't know at the time but my mother had to negotiate a number of deals in order to make the visits work. I questioned how Mom could afford the bus ticket for Wednesday night visits. I also wondered how she got to and from the bus station in Earlimart, especially the late night trip. My Granddad explained it to me sometime after I got out of the hospital. Even though my Grand Father was always nice to my mother, she always seemed to hate him. She was only nice to him when she wanted or needed something. Granddad told me that Mom asked him to drive her as required on Wednesday nights. He said that he was willing to do 'most anything' in order to keep my mother calm and quiet. He also told me on another occasion that the Greyhound Bus was free. He said that Mom had told the bus driver about her situation and that the driver told her that she could not ride without the fare. Granddad said that she got on the bus so that the driver could not open the doors and then she laid into him with a verbal barrage that would humble anyone. Out of self defense, the driver told Mom to take a seat and be quiet so that they could get on the road. He said that she almost had to repeat the process again but the bus driver was quick the second time to offer her a seat. From then on, the deal with bus driver was understood. He would let her ride, and she would be quiet. My Grand Father knew how the deal was struck because he was the one who took Mom to the bus station on Wednesday nights. He had witnessed my mother in action as he had so many times before. I asked Granddad how the deal worked on the return trip to Earlimart each Wednesday night. He said that the bus driver was the same man on the return trip. It seems as though he started his day in Bakersfield, drove with local stops to Fresno, and then finished his day/night in Bakersfield. Mom would make the trip with a stopover in Tulare for a two hour visit, return to the bus station and ride back to Earlimart with the same driver. Can you imagine what that poor driver went through every Wednesday? It probably got much easier as the months went on and on. I'm sure that Mom expected to ride the bus and the driver expected her to be quiet for the trip to Tulare.

The hospital was a pretty quiet, controlled and dull place most of the time. A few things happened along the way to break the monotony. Early on, my mother started to bring bubble gum on her visits. She first brought a few pieces for me but one day she brought enough for all the boys on the pneumonia ward. She passed the bubble gum out just before she left for the night. Mom had not been gone for five minutes when the bubble gum became a major problem. Some of the boys started blowing big bubbles and gum ended up in their hair and in the bed sheets. Those who could not blow bubbles began twirling and snapping the gum. As the gum became stringy it would fly uncontrollably away. Within about ½ hour, bubble gum was all over the ward. Needless to say, bubble gum was banned from the pneumonia ward. The next time Mom came for a visit she was greeted with a 'NO BUBBLE GUM' sign and she had to check her bubble gum at the nurse's station. My

mother became very angry but as the nurse explained to her what had happened, she calmed down a bit. She transferred her anger to me as if I could have controlled those 15 young boys with bubble gum and ignorance enough to lose control.

Penicillin was the new wonder drug of those years. They were starting to use it to fight every disease known to man. What better place to test the potency and dosage than on a pneumonia ward full of poor, helpless, and sick boys? Within a week, the entire ward was regimented to the schedule and ritual of penicillin shots. It took only a couple of rounds to find those who were allergic. Two boys had violent reactions to the shot. One of them almost died. They were removed to another place where they could be dealt with differently. The remainder of us were put on schedules for medication. The boys were divided by bed rows. Every hour, twenty-four by seven, one of the four rows would receive a shot of penicillin. This schedule was repeated endlessly. The first shot came to the left shoulder. The second to the right shoulder. The third to the right buttocks and the fourth to the left buttocks. I peeked at my chart and saw the lines of script which noted meds. The first line read; Mar 15, 1948 – 1. 0000xxccls, 0400xxccrs, 0800xxccrb, 1200xxcclb, 1600xxccls, and 2000xxccrs. Each line was for 24 hours and contained the date and 6 meds received in that 24 hour period. After just a few days it was uncomfortable and within a few weeks was almost unbearable. Most of the boys were brave in front of their peers but at night you could often hear the younger boys crying with pain. I remember quietly crying myself to sleep many nights for many months. We had no choice and we were told daily that the shots would cure us and that we would probably die if we did not take the shots. Some days I thought that dying would be preferable to another round of penicillin shots. Our shoulders, and buttocks' became bruised and callused and over time our senses became numb to the pain.

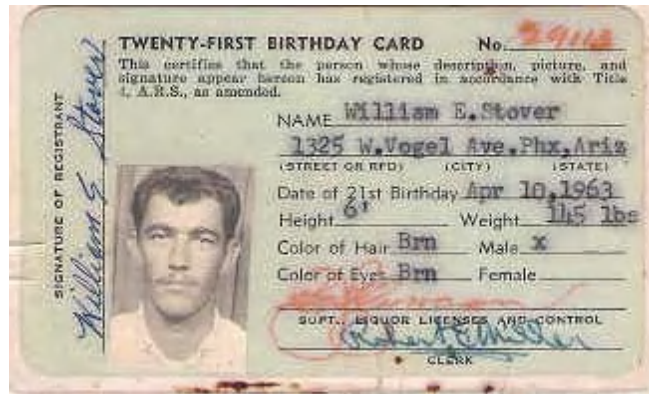
The boredom was broken a few times by sporting events. I had been in the hospital for about three months when a couple of older boys were temporarily assigned to the 'young boy's pneumonia ward'. The boys were about 13 or 14 years old. They were much more adventuresome than us younger boys and they immediately began to search for 'things to do'. One day they went on a scavenger hunt for neat things. They returned after a few minutes with two wheel chairs. One of the younger boys asked what they were going to do with the wheel chairs. One of the 'older boys' told him to shut up and watch. They hid the wheelchairs in small storage area at the end of the ward and waited for night to come. The night nurse almost always dosed between 10 and midnight. I was sound asleep at 10 o'clock when I heard a terrible commotion out in the hallway. It seems as though the 'older boys' decided to race in the dimly lit hallway. They had crashed together into a gurney and had left one of them almost crippled. The night nurse had called for backup and a couple of very big orderlies were dragging the boys back toward their beds. The nurse also called for a doctor. By the time the doctor arrived in about ½ hour, I was beginning to dose back into a sound sleep. Needless to say, the next morning brought an hour of scolding and punishments. The two 'older' boys were immediately removed from our ward to more acceptable quarters. The rest of us were told to stay in our beds and ask for permission to get a drink or go to the restroom. This went on until the nurses were driven crazy with requests. Everything returned to normal in just a few days.

Sometimes a number of younger women from a nearby church, I think they were Baptists, came to read for us. They would have some of the school aged boys read for them and then they would read to the boys. The young women who visited with me would read stories for me. I'm so glad that they never asked me to read because no one had taken the time to teach me at all. I enjoyed the reading very much and I learned early that when you get involved in a story, you can travel the world over without leaving the hospital. My mother had just a third grade education. She never read to us kids. Maybe it was because she felt uncomfortable reading out loud or maybe she just did not want to waste the time. I do know that many years later my mother read 'Romance Novels' all day, every day. I think she could transport herself into a better life through reading.

Time dragged by between Mom's visits. She would bring bubble gum for me and I promised that no one else would get any and that the nurses would never know. I managed to hide the used bubble gum and Mom would remove it on her next visit. Winter turned to spring, and spring turned to summer. They would not release me on the weekend so Mom and Dad made a special trip to Tulare on the last Monday in May to take me home. I was weak from a lack of exercise but I wasted no time in getting back into my routine of ranging out as far as possible each day. I kicked the last feelings of weakness as the hot days of June came and went.

My Father had secured a new full-time job while I was in the hospital. He was working at the Texaco Station. The Texaco Station was on the north end of town just a few blocks from our Tent House and my Grand Mother's house. My Mother was completely fed up with my controlling Grand Mother. My Father was tired of dealing with water and dust in the Tent House so they were looking for 'better' quarters. My Father always worked nights and the Texaco Station Owner worked days. Some days my brother and I would hang around the station until the owner would get fed up with us. He would tell us to 'get the hell home' and we would take off running toward the tent house. He eventually told my father and we paid the price for messin with the boss. One day my Father came home for breakfast and immediately drove back to the station. My brother and I sneaked down to the station to see why Dad had gone back. In a vacant lot across from the station, they had dragged up about 30 railroad ties. There was a stack of rough cut lumber and a load of other construction materials. Off to one side of the lot was a truckload of old grape box sides. A crude foundation was already laid in place. My Father, Grand Father and Texaco Station Owner began to manipulate the building. We could see that they had come to build a house. The owner spent the morning helping with the building. He would run to the station when anyone would pull up in a service isle. He would gas their vehicle, check their oil, clean their windshield, receive their money and then return to building. As the day moved along and the business got busier, the owner stayed at the station to serve the customers. This building ritual lasted for about two weeks, until the house was built. I remember the house well. The railroad ties became the wall supports. The big grape box sides became the exterior wall siding. The inside walls were ¼ in plywood from packing crates. The walls were insulated with old newspapers. The grape box sides were bowed and cracked and in some places you could read the newspapers through the cracks and gaps. There were also places inside where you could read the newsprint because in some places the packing crates did not completely fill the gaps. The electric company would not

okay the house for electricity so the men of the construction crew affixed a pole to the roof of the house and another to the roof of the station. They ran regular electric wire up the pole on the station, across the street, and down the pole on the house. They brought the wires down inside the wall and at the base of the wall they ties a bunch of wires together and stapled them along the base of the walls to other areas including the kitchen. We moved a few items into the house and set up house keeping while my Dad and Granddad finished the roofing. They finished moving over the next few weeks. Dad pulled the old trailer from the tent house so that we would have cooking facilities and we were resident in our new home.



Trabzon Turkey - TUSLOG Det 3-1

July 1962 - October 1963

We were young patriots whose lives merged at a very special time in the history of the United States of America. We were asked to serve during the 'Cold War' which was not really a cold war at all. After being trained in all of the necessary disciplines, we were transferred from all over the USA and the World to Trabzon, Turkey. The new station was given the name TUSLOG Det 3-1 which is an acronym for Turkish United States Logistics Detachment 3-1. We came by ones and twos to this remote and isolated Air Station which was situated atop 'Boztepe' Mountain. Many of us knew absolutely no one else when we arrived. Some were fortunate enough to know others who came from the same training class or school back in the States. Although it was a 15 month tour of duty (457 days) which was designated 'Remote' Duty, we were truly isolated, in that we were completely separated from our country, our families, our value system, in most cases our religion, our way of live and from the protection of our government and our justice system. We were given very little training as to how to deal with or to react to the environment and society of Trabzon, Turkey.

Each of us lived two lives while at 'Trab'. We did our 'Top Secret' jobs day by day and night by night as USAFSS Airmen. When not on duty, we tried to be normal young men by passing time at the club, in the barracks day rooms, or in Trabzon and the surrounding countryside and towns of northeastern Turkey. TUSLOG Det 3-1 was located on 'Boztepe' Mountain between the Black Sea and the Mountains, about 100 miles or so from the Soviet, Georgian, and Armenian borders. We were 'Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea'. The people there were fundamental Muslim and mostly uneducated. Because their religion restricted relations with foreigners, we interrelated only sporadically with the local people. We were very vulnerable to abuse by locals, therefore we usually traveled together and in numbers of 3, 4, or more when moving about in the towns and countryside. Only the very adventuresome, very ignorant, and very brave airmen traveled the back streets alone. Because we relied heavily upon each other, most of us

aligned with one or a number of 'buddies', in order to survive the 'Trabzon' experience. We counted the days until we could be called short timers. We celebrated each milestone as we passed the time (457 days).

The 60's were the most dangerous of times in the history of the World Community. The two superpowers had amassed great numbers of nuclear weapons. USAF Strategic Air Command B-52's were flying high flight missions all over the world. They were in the air 24 hours a day. Each one carried 2 nuclear bombs. USN War Ships were cruising every ocean and at ready to launch Aircraft in retaliation for potential Soviet attack. The US had Missiles in the US, Turkey and other countries with nuclear warheads pointed at the USSR while the USSR had missiles with nuclear warheads pointed at Turkey and Europe. The US had been flying recon flights over the USSR for many years. A number of these aircraft were shot down over the USSR and at least one pilot had been captured. The Soviets were busy installing Missiles of all capabilities in Soviet controlled Cuba. As this buildup escalated, our intelligence community advised President John Kennedy that Cuba was installing Soviet built offensive and nuclear capable missiles. The 'Cold War' became very 'Hot' in October 1962 when JFK commanded the Naval Blockade of Cuba. The two Superpowers came face to face with potential nuclear war when the US Navy started to turn back the Soviet Ships which were delivering the missiles to Cuba. The Soviet President 'Blinked' when he commanded ships to return home. He then commanded the de-installation of missile launch sites in Cuba. Most people who remember those days, simply refer to the period as the 'Cuban Missile Crisis'. We remember those days as 13 days of destiny, because we were in the crosshairs of Soviet nuclear missiles, migs, warships, submarines and other weaponry. On November 22, 1963, those who were on the 'Mountain', gathered at the radio to hear that President Kennedy had been assassinated by an ex-Russian citizen.

The 60's were the most dangerous of times in the history of the World Community, and we were pulled together at Trabzon in order to provide eyes and ears to the Free World. We are proud to have served as we provided early warning for defense as well as intel for potential offense. We quietly arrived by ones and twos. We silently lived under the threat of attack with no visible means of protection and we did it because we were patriots. We celebrated for days as we readied to leave. We quietly left the 'Mountain' just as we had arrived 457 days earlier. Most of us returned to the United States to continue our lives as civilians, while many reenlisted to go on to other assignments in the silent world of the USAFSS. Because of the 'Top Secret' and 'Delicate' nature of the information we shared, we very seldom talk to 'outsiders' about what we saw, heard and felt, while on 'Boztepe' at Trabzon, Turkey, in TUSLOG Det 3-1.

My name is Bill 'Smokey' Stover. I arrived in Trabzon Turkey in July 1962 via THY and departed on THY October 27, 1963. I was Honorably Discharged at McGuire AFB, New Jersey November 15, 1963. I arrived home in Phoenix, Arizona late on the evening of November 21, 1963. My mother woke me late that next morning to tell me that JFK had just been assassinated in Dallas. I was awoken my first day home from Trabzon, Turkey, November 22, 1963 to the news that JFK was dead.

I had lived for 15 months in the shadow of the Soviet nuclear threat. I was very aware of the world situation. I was especially aware of the struggle against Communism and the absolute threat of Soviet World Domination. I had made the transition from an 18 year old vagrant to a 22 year old Patriot. During the period from November 22, 1963 to February 24, 1964, I made the transition from Patriot to an 8 hour a day job, part time college student, and basic goof off and I did not like what I was becoming. I decided that I was yet a Patriot and three months after returning home from Trabzon, Turkey, I reenlisted in the US Military.

After completing a battery of Tests and a Physical Examination, I was offered good electronic and computer training by Recruiters of the US Navy, the US Army, the US Marines and the US Coast Guard. The US Air Force was angry with me for not re-enlisting in the Air Force and they did not offer any incentives to re-enlist. Because I evaluated the Naval Training to be the best offering, I enlisted in the United States Navy. After a year of training in electronics, radar, computer, radio, gyro, and crypto, I found myself on the USS Brinkley Bass DD 887, a Destroyer and Fighting Ship in the Pacific Seventh Fleet of the United States Navy. After more training in San Diego, CA, the Bass set sail and in a short time was stationed in the Viet Nam War Zone. After two cruises, many battles, and wartime incidents, I was Honorably Discharged from the United States Navy in February 1968.

I retired from California Civil Service in the year 2001. I started a small company in 2002. I shut the company down at the end of 2005. My wife and friends have been telling me for many years that I should write a book about my life. I am finally semi-retired and have committed the time and energy to producing my life's story. I started writing a book which will probably end up being as many as four short stories or one very long book. The second and third parts to my book, or the second and third books will cover life in the USAF and USN from 1960 to 1968. More specifically, life at Trabzon and aboard Brinkley Bass will take most of the paper of the book. Although the 'Cold War' and the Viet Nam War will be the stories behind 'the story', they will not be the focus of my book. Any information about the 'Cold War' will be general knowledge or de-classified. Individual jobs will not be described unless specifically named persons request coverage. Names will be used only when permission has been granted. Information about the Viet Nam War will be general knowledge which was never classified and most will come from my own Viet Nam experience. Stories from any and all who were 'there' will be used. The stories will be as deep and wide or as shallow and narrow as collaborators request. If you want to be recognized, give your name. If you want to protect your past, be anonymous in your gift of information. Because we were 'there' together, we were 'buddies' together, we were 'afraid, brave, proud and sometimes 'crazy' together, we respect each other and will protect each other in this life against those who may not know about our status as 'Patriots', 'Warriors', 'Heros', Airmen and Sailors. I will use any and all information which anyone may share with me, be it newspaper news, magazine stories, letters, pictures, personal stories, documents, fragments, dated material, and anything which may establish connections and timelines.

I started research for this series of stories in October 2005. I launched two web sites to facilitate information and data collection and gathering. I have communicated with hundreds of people from my past. Many people have collaborated in this book project. By way of the internet, I have gleaned the Public Domain for storylines, datelines and timelines. I will use any and all resources to fill in the gaps of time. Every item and incident that finds its way into the storyline is a true event that really happened. The timeline and names is sometimes vague because most of the events took place 40 plus years ago. I am very happy that I have the opportunity to put these rich years to paper. I will not apologize for content or possible errors in dates or anything else in the timeline or story line. Anyone with contrary information can and should make that known to me by way of email addresses provided and if there are subsequent printings, errors will be corrected.



Collision at Midnight

From the Viet Nam Era

A Story About The Crew of USS Brinkley Bass DD-887

February 2,3,4,5,6,7, 1966

Just a few pages from my Book. Six amazing days in February 1966.

From:

William E. Stover – USS Brinkley Bass DD 887 – 12/1964 to 2/1968 – FTG2

To:

Anyone who may remember the darkest days in February 1966.

My name is Bill Stover. I served the USA for 8 years during the 'Cold War' in the USAF and during the Viet Nam War aboard the Destroyer, USS Brinkley Bass DD 887. I served the last 15 months of my AF duty on a 'Spy' base at Trabzon in eastern Turkey near the Soviet Georgian border. I spent the last 3 years of my USN duty aboard Brinkley Bass of which 13 months were spent in the War Zone in the South China Sea, near the coasts of South and North Viet Nam and the Southern border of Red China.

The 15 months in Turkey was Isolated and Remote and the entire tour of duty was served during the most dangerous of times in the history of the world community. I was 'there' during the 'Cuban Missile Crisis'. I could talk about the Nuclear Threat and the real dangers we faced but that's another story.

Service on any 'Fighting Ship' of the U.S. Naval Fleet is given while living aboard the worlds best 'Prisons'. We stood watch at 'Port and Starboard (6 hours on watch and six hours on other duties)(24 x7) while at sea and at 'GQ', at 'Battle Stations'. All personnel in the Weapons Division were involved in handling explosives and firing big guns during all kinds of confrontations and Incidents of War. We can only speculate as to how many other human beings we killed with the 'Big Guns' of Brinkley Bass. Most of our first West Pac Cruise, my duty station was Trainer and 'Trigger Man'. For 12 hours a day, months at a time, I pulled the Trigger which fired salvos of our four, 5inch/38caliber guns. Again, there is no way to calculate the thousands of rounds of explosives which were delivered to the enemy from the squeeze of my finger on the 'Trigger'.

I remember many of the young heroes who were stationed on the Brinkley Bass during the hottest days of the Viet Nam War. Jerry Kiser is just one of the many Weapons Division Petty Officers I remember. Most of the sailors I remember were Fire Control Technicians, Gunner's Mates and Boatswain's Mates who were a team within the Weapons Division. I will write about a number of 'Team Mates' as I put to pen the Brinkley Bass 'Story'. Although I haven't heard from or about him for 38 years, I remember Jerry. He was about my age, mid 20s, during the Viet Nam experience. Jerry was BM2 and Lead Petty Officer in the Weapons Gang and Deck Crew while I was FTG2 and Lead Petty Officer in the Fire Control Gang. Because of War, many young men were promoted quickly. Those with intelligence and ability were quickly elevated to Lead Responsibilities. It was unheard of for a Boatswains Mate to make BM2 in just one enlistment. Jerry was young and cocky, sharp and responsible and he was promoted quickly to BM2 (Petty Officer 2nd Class). If I remember correctly, Jerry spent many hours as Weapons Lead in a Gun Mount Gunnery/Loader Crew. As Deck Crew Lead, He also spent many hours in Refueling and Replenishment Operations where he was responsible for dangerous and tricky operations, all of which were carried out under 'Red Light' usually between midnight and 2 o'clock in the morning. All 'At Sea Operations' in the War Zone were conducted under 'Red Light' and darkness in order to cut down on the vulnerability of attack during daylight hours.

Toward the end the first cruise the Bass was assigned 'SAR' Duties off the coast of North Viet Nam. SAR is an acronym for 'Search and Rescue'. Congress had just enacted the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in response to North Viet Nam Swift Boat attacks on the USS Maddox and USS Turner Joy of the US Fleet in the South China Sea. President Johnson

had escalated the War to a 'Fever Pitch'. We were engaged in heavy bombing of Hanoi and Hiphong Harbor. Pilots from the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps were flying hundreds of sorties each day. They were flying low altitude bombing runs from Carriers on 'Yankee Station', and Bases in Thailand and South Viet Nam. They flew A1s, A6s, and F4s and other 'Fighter/Bombers'. B52s were flying 'High Flight', Saturation bombing runs from Guam. Many years later it was the B52 crews who paid the price for coming up against the improving Soviet SAM Missiles. These young Pilots and Navigators of the Fighter/Bombers of the mid 1960s who were bombing Hanoi and Hiphong were in harms way each time they were catapulted from the Carrier's Flight Decks and every time they were wheels up from air fields in Thailand and South Viet Nam. Too many of these aircraft were shot down by SAM Missiles and Anti-Aircraft Guns. Too many of these aircraft fell from the skies because of mechanical fatigue. Some were lost to human error and personnel fatigue. Others were lost to malfunctions on Carriers and miscalculations by support personnel on the bases throughout the region. The Brinkley Bass together with USS Waddell DDG 24 spent the last few months of their first Wes Pac Cruise of 1965 and early 1966 in 'SAR', Search and Rescue of these 'Downed' Pilots and Flight Crews.

I am writing these pages on the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the worst 6 days of my 8 year military career. February 2nd is my mothers birthday. It is also Ground Hog's Day. It is hard to forget these days. I remember these incidents as if they happened yesterday because I have, as many others who were 'there' have, replayed and revisited this experience many times over the last 40 years. The chronology of the six days is entirely from my memory. Although others may have seen it from other vantage points or from other perspectives, all who were there will never forget those few days in February 1966.

The USS Brinkley Bass DD 887 was ordered from R&R in the Port of Hong Kong back to 'SAR' duties, arriving on station February 2, 1966, and on February 3, 1966, together with USS Waddell DDG 24 was on duty off the coast of North Viet Nam. As on previous SAR duty we operated with a number of Helicopters from carriers and land bases. The choppers on this day were from the carrier Ranger. We had been warned previously that big shore batteries in North Viet Nam were very active, that we should be ready to engage if ever called upon to get close to the shoreline. At about mid-day the two destroyers received the call that a pilot was down very close to the borders of China and North Viet Nam. We were south of this area when the call came in. Choppers were called and we proceeded at 'Full Speed' toward the downed pilot. We pulled in close to the harbor. This harbor was very close to Red China. I was Trainer in the Gun Fire Control Director. I had a small radar monitor to my right. The Train Control Wheels were between my knees. My fingers were tightly fixed to the left and right triggers and my eyes were glued to the eye pieces which provided the best view of any target from the range finder's powerful binoculars of the director system. We had pointed and trained the director system toward the harbor and the downed pilot. Pilots normally approached the Northern Targets at a high altitude from the south. They descended quickly from the east, dropped their armament, quickly ascended toward the South China Sea and evasively maneuvered to avoid SAM Missiles and Anti-Aircraft. They were trained to ascend ASAP so that in the event they were hit, they could eject over water. Most pilots who made it out over water were successfully rescued by "SAR" destroyers or Helicopters assigned to 'SAR' duties.

This downed pilot had apparently been hit at a low altitude because he had, of necessity, bailed early and had come down in the very center of the harbor. I could see that the pilot was alive and staying afloat. He was only about 800 yards from the shore, and he was in very dangerous waters. The assigned helicopter was delayed some minutes in arriving. The Bass was pointing in from the north and the Waddell was pointing in from the south. The very big guns from gun emplacements above and behind the harbor and inland on the mountain side, began to fire at Bass and Waddell. Two large Chinese Junks began to approach the pilot, one from the north and one from the south. Bass and Waddell began to return fire and fire upon the junks which were moving slowly toward the downed pilot. The chopper arrived and we thought we would recover the pilot, but as the cable was lowered toward the pilot, the chopper took a direct hit in the middle of the fuselage. The pilot of the chopper reported that his technician was hit and that he must retreat because his ride was falling apart. He quickly pulled back and headed to sea. We heard that the chopper fell about 5 miles to the west and eventually heard that the pilot and co-pilot were rescued by our second 'SAR' chopper. We cut our gun mounts loose to take different targets. The forward gun mount was firing at gun emplacements while the rear gun mount was firing at the junk which was approaching from the north. The Waddell was firing at the second junk which was approaching from the south. The 'Big Eyes' of the Gun Fire Director were trained on the downed pilot. I watched the entire operation, up close and personal. I watched as a huge hole and ball of flames appeared in the fuselage of the chopper. Our rear gun mount placed some very impressive rounds upon the junk. That junk flamed out and a few minutes later it sank. The second chopper became involved in the rescue of the crew of the downed chopper and they could not respond immediately to our operation. As both ships were dealing with shore batteries and self defense from those big guns, we witnessed the junk coming from the south pull the downed pilot aboard. He was captured, alive. After about 15 minutes of trading fire with shore batteries, commanders decided it was time to retreat to safer waters. As we fell into column with the Waddell, and commenced zig-zag maneuvers, we could see that the big guns were becoming more accurate as we came into their best range. They were most effective as we reached 11 miles at sea, and then we began to move out of their effective range. We called for air support and before we lost sight of the harbor, I counted 80 aircraft dropping bombs on the gun emplacements and on the back side of the harbor.

We spent February 4th at sea on 'SAR' duty. It was a tense and nervous time because commanders were trying to decide whether or not we would return to that harbor and go in close for a recon run. We operated with choppers in a number of 'SAR' missions during the day of February 4, 1966.

We started a normal refueling and replenishment operation about 10 o'clock on the evening of February 4th. These operations had become tricky in the recent past. Many operations were being disrupted by Russian Trawlers (Spy Ships) who were operating in the South China Sea. On more than one occasion we had called for Sea Going Tugs to engage these Trawlers and physically bump them out of the way of our sea operations. Our Fleet had kept an eye on two of these Russian vessels for many days. We knew that they were too far away to interfere so we started our 'Normal' Operation. We had accomplished these operations about every 3 days for the passed number of months. We

expected problems because each refueling and replenishment operation presented it's own unique problems. All operations at sea are dangerous, especially in a War Zone. That is the nature of Naval Service. This particular operation was rather uneventful. As in all operations, the two destroyers pulled alongside the replenishment ship. They each refueled and took on stores. The Bass finished first and as usual, remained alongside until the Waddell finished operations. The Flotilla Commodore was resident on Waddell and therefore the Bass always traveled in column behind Waddell. As in all previous operations, the Bass and Waddell pulled away from the replenishment ship at full speed in anticipation of a command to column up before heading for assigned duty station. It was midnight and all of the Brinkley Bass Crew was in motion, moving about the ship in relieving watch and assuming the mid-watch. We don't really know why disaster struck at this moment. We do know that lives were lost because of a series of events which were far from normal.

I was on watch in the gun fire director, just to be relieved for the mid-watch by another Fire Control Technician. I had on a headset which allowed communications with the bridge. I heard the commands to cut speed to 2/3rd and to bring the ship to the left to start a column maneuver. Apparently the Officer of the Deck thought he had heard the column command. We were far too close to Waddell and these commands put the Bass on a Collision Course with the Waddell. The captain was apparently in his sea cabin just behind the bridge. A lookout (Seaman) yelled that we were on a collision course. Others were screaming. The Captain heard the noise and came running onto the bridge. He ran to the wing hatch and immediately began to take action. He screamed very loudly a series of commands. He yelled, 'This is the Captain, I have the Con, Right Full Rudder, All Emergency Back, sound the Collision Alarm, and brace for shock. At this same time, my watch relief had just climbed upon the top of the director. The hatches on the top of the director were open. He put his head inside and calmly told us that we were going to collide with the Waddell. I stood and looked out of my hatch and then braced for shock. I watched in amazement as the Bass collided with Waddell. We hit at mid-ships. The Bass rode up and down as the collision was in progress. A rooster tail of sparks 100 feet high emanated from between the Bass and Waddell. As the Bass pulled away from Waddell, I could see light coming from the holes just ripped into the hull of Waddell. The Bass drifted to a stop and then began to sink in the bow area.

The ship's crew was quick to respond. Within a few minutes we heard that there was no loss of life. Everyone brought mattresses, wood and tools including pumps. Within a few minutes the decision was made to ask for assistance because we were losing the battle with inflow of water. We had completely destroyed 40 feet of the bow. The gash was about 20 feet high. Although most of the damage which provided holes and allowed inflow of water was above the water line, water was coming in from the ship's bobbing in a heavy sea state. The USS Navasota responded to our call. They put a big boat in the water with timbers, pumps, tools, other materials and a Damage Control Team of 16 Seamen. The helpers were Ship Fitters(Welders and Pipe Fitters) and Damage Controlmen who were Builders and Welders. Together with our crew this Damage Control Team fought water inflow through the night. By morning they had saved the ship. The Bass was afloat.

It was February 5, 1966. The sea state was a 5 (very high waves) by morning. It was decided that the Damage Control Team should be returned to Navasota by chopper. The chopper arrived about 9 o'clock or so. The Ship Fitters gathered on the deck of the fantail because ammo and stores were removed from the lower decks and all decks except the fantail were burdened with materials from below. I believe that Jerry, the BM2 was the Lead Petty Officer in the Deck Handling part of that airlift operation.

All of those being taken aboard the chopper were outfitted with kapok life jackets and were lifted by cable to the chopper. I was positioned on the ECM Deck which was physically located above the location of the chopper. I was not involved in this operation, so I had gone up to the ECM Deck to get a good view of the transfers. The last of the personnel to be lifted onto the apron of the chopper was the SFC, Chief Petty Officer. It is military protocol for the Ranking Person to Lead into any Operation and to follow on the way out to be sure that the path is good going in and that all personnel exit OK.

Disaster struck again, just when the Chief was being brought on board the chopper. The chopper lost stability, turned at least 180 degrees and flipped upside down. In the process, I stood in amazement as I helplessly watched while the Chief fell from the chopper as it flipped. The chopper hit the water, exactly on the Chief, about 10 feet from the fantail of the Bass. I slide down the ladder to the deck below and again fixed my sight on the chopper. Personnel on the fantail and the main deck and our own dash flight deck were throwing life jackets and life rings into the water. I found life rings where I was, and heaved them into the water. The sea state was high and the Bass was basically dead in the water. As the chopper crew and those of the Damage Control Team began to surface, they looked like corks or fishing bobs, popping up from the water. The Bass and these men began to drift apart. They were grabbing life jackets and life rings which would support them if they remained in the water for a prolonged period.

Three Seamen were lost at sea that day. The Chief and an SF1 and an SF2 were lost. They went down with the chopper. Another chopper came to rescue the survivors. Other tragedies which occurred that day will be told about on another day.

The Bass pulled into Da Nang, South Viet Nam the next day. Navy UDT guys went down and checked out damage below the water line. They welded chain in strategic places and advised the Captain to proceed to the Philippine Islands at 5 knots. We proceeded to Subic Bay, Philippine Islands arriving sometime on February 7, 1966.

What a STORY – You think !!!! It happened pretty much that way – February 2,3,4,5,6,7, 1966.

I tracked those lost during those days. I watched every POW return from captivity in 1973. They came off the planes in Manila and again in Hawaii. They were repatriated in order of capture. Those captured first were repatriated first. I remember at least 1 returning POW who had been captured on that day. When the Internet matured, I found the names and home towns of those 3 Ship Fitters who went down with the chopper. Their names are registered in two different logs of the USS Navasota.

Although some of the second cruise was spent on ‘SAR’ duties most of the Bass’s involvement was in Night Shore Bombardment which was usually Harassment of the Viet Cong, we did get out a few times for ‘Plane Guard’ with various Carriers on ‘Yankee Station’, just off the coast of Viet Nam. During this cruise we encountered ‘North Vietnamese Swift Boats’ and “North Vietnamese Piloted Migs’. We responded with deadly force in every situation. We were at War and as a Patriotic Crew, we took care of duty as ‘Duty Called’. I will record some of the incidents encountered by the Bass on the second cruise at another time and in another venue.

This is the story from my point of view and from my unique perspective,

William E. Stover – USS Brinkley Bass DD 887 – 12/1964 to 2/1968 – FTG2



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.

From Poverty to Peace – Part 4

By : Bill 'Smokey' Stover

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.
