

In My Own Words

An autobiography, I'm not at all sure I wish to tackle such a task. Within me, I suppose the same basic instinct exists as with all Homo sapiens upon reaching the later stages of life- to leave something behind to be remembered by.

Why then may you ask, am I unsure or hesitant about embarking upon this journey through my past? Well, the answer is two folds. First, although my life has not been exactly humdrum, it has not produced any sizeable monuments, tangible or otherwise. Secondly, and more important than the first reason, I'm not at all confident of my command of the English language.

In fact, if you insist upon reading this autobiography, if it can so be defined, you will perhaps come to know by statement and illustration that I actually have had no formal education, beyond the grade school. No doubt, at least in my mind, word selection and grammar, would in this case, be more important to the maintenance of a reader's interest than just a verbal journey through my life, however interesting it may actually have been.

See, I have a right to be apprehensive. The foregoing explanation is much too lengthy. But in any case here goes:

There are many small towns and villages in my native state of Texas. And as with many of the others, the dozen or so now dilapidated and mostly empty buildings that front the main street of Gordon, Texas gives rise, if one so bothered, to the question of why it ever existed at all.

Of course, I am inquisitive. After all, this was the town in which I first saw the light of day; and so on a recent visit with my older sister to this small town, I did ask numerous questions of her.

In the late 1800's surveyors placed Gordon in the path of construction of the Texas & Pacific Railroad, and like other small towns along its route, Gordon became a boom town. Not only was the town fortunate because of its geographic location, it had a commodity much needed by railroads of that era, it had coal, large deposits of coal. But then, as older people are more prone to comprehend, time changes everything and so it was with Gordon. The fuel used by the locomotives eventually changed from coal to oil, and the transportation mode from the horse to the auto which gave people faster access to the larger cities and their superior shopping centers, and Gordon was left behind economically.

Gordon's present population consists of perhaps two to three hundred people, mostly retiree's. Not much employment opportunity here, therefore few young people. Except for the lack of medical facilities, an ideal place to retire, because housing is much cheaper here than that found in larger cities to the east. I'm referring now to the Fort Worth- Dallas Metroplex some eighty miles to the east.

My father's family migrated to this part of Texas shortly after Texas won its independence from Mexico. For those who may not know, his name was Andrew Marvin Havins. I believe they came here from Missouri. My mother's father came from Austria to the Austin, Texas area in

the late 1800's, then after marriage moved to the vicinity of Gordon. My mother's maiden name was Pauline Anne Byers.

My grandfather, on my father's side of the family, was a veteran of the Confederate Army. He enlisted in the confederacy as a calvaryman when he was just 17 years of age and saw many battles with the North. He was wounded in one of these battles with the blue coats, although not seriously. His written accounts of his experiences leave little doubt of just how extremely rough this war was on the soldiers who fought in it. Extreme fatigue, sleeping out in the open with little or no protection from the elements, hunger, bordering on starvation. After being discharged, he studied and became a horse back Methodist Preacher, traveling from community to community by horse back and buggy. No wonder, war has made Christians of many. He was active as a preacher until his seventies, and lived to be 96 years of age.

or so to the west of Gordon. Of course, the house in which I was born no longer exists. A large oak tree marks the spot where, close-by, the little farm house once stood. It was located just a mile

We apparently moved from this place shortly after my birth so naturally I would have no recollection at all.

As we stood under the oak tree on the day of this visit, I watched tears formed in my sister's eyes as she recalled the birth of twin boys, my brother and I, On May 8th in year of 1918. My only sister Lois was approximately six years old when we were born. My only other brother Bruce is two years older than she.

My vision also clouded a little as Lois told of our birth. No modern hospitals in those days. Fortunately for my mother, a doctor from Gordon was with her during the birth. My brother and I each weighed less than three pounds at birth. How could anyone help but admire the courage and stamina of the women of that era, particularly women of the poorer rural families, who had children to raise. The house into which I was born had no central air-conditioning system or electric fans. In fact there was no electricity at all. Neither was there a bathroom, bathing was accomplished in a wash tub with water obtained from an outside well. Coal oil lamps were used for lighting at night. Coal oil (derived from coal) was replaced by kerosene with the discovery of oil. In those early days running water for indoors was a luxury reserved for only a very few. One would be correct in assuming that bathing was less frequent in those days.

The only heat was obtained from a wood burning cook stove, which I understand served as an incubator for my brother and I during the first few days of our lives, when because of our small size at birth we were given little chance of survival. According to my sister we were placed in shoe boxes, which served as our cribs, and placed in the large oven of the cook stove, the temperature of which was carefully monitored to keep us at the right temperature.

Wonder what the reaction of to-days woman would be if wood had to be carried to cook a meal, and the only means of cleaning clothes for a family of six consisted of a wash tub and a rub board.

Well, this is just a few of the inconveniences that my mother had to contend with during my early years. No question that God must have reserved a special place in heaven for women like her.

1918 was an eventful year to be born. World War 1 ended that year. Also just the year before the McClusky blew in just outside Ranger, Texas about 18 miles to the west of Gordon. The McClusky was the name of an oil well that blew in with such force that it destroyed the drilling rig and sprayed crude oil over much of the nearby terrain, until finally capped.

Of course, this was a much more significant happening to the people of the surrounding countryside than the ending of World War 1. In those days people in the rural areas hardly knew there was a war since most had no means of being informed of the progress of the war, no radios, not even a newspaper, in most instances. However news of the oil discovery at Ranger spread like a wild fire, since even the poorest and uneducated knew of the local economic impact of an oil discovery. It wasn't long thereafter that other oil strikes throughout the local country side seem to confirm speculation that that part of Texas sat atop a huge underground pool of crude oil. And so it was that in the year I was born, the whole economic structure of that particular part of Texas began to change.

My father was surely one of the first in Texas to commute to his work by rail. Like most other farm hands of that area, he was soon working for an oil company. It so happened that his first job in the oil patch was with a company that was building an oil refinery down the railroad track a few miles to the west of Gordon. So for a short period of time, he rode a train to and from his work each morning and evening. My sister recalled that she would listen for the train whistle each evening as a signal that Dad would soon be home. He had a walk of approximately two miles each morning and evening to catch the train.

Although the work was hard, farmers made good oil field hands. Attempting to grub a living from the poor farm land of that vicinity was also hard and demanding work. All hauling of materials for the well drilling and refinery construction was accomplished with teams of mules or horses, which of course, made the farmer feel right at home. Auto's and trucks were still rather uncommon in this rural part of Texas in 1918, also there were no roads in the vicinity of most well and refinery construction sites, which made such vehicles unsuitable for such work. Keep in mind that the machines used today for road construction didn't exist back then, neither did the materials used now for road pavement.

I don't recall how or the method used for selection of sites for oil well drilling back then, but once a well was drilled and produced oil, other well drilling rigs were soon drilling in the vicinity of the first. Whether this procedure was followed because drilling next to a producing well was almost a guarantee of success, I don't really know. Since there was oil under the earth almost everywhere in that area I suspect that the primary reason for this cluster type drilling activity was because of the logistics problem of getting the required materials to the drilling construction sites. In any cases, in most instances, a tent city was formed to service this drilling activity. These tent cities were called "oil field camps" and were usually given proper names.

My earliest memories were of these oil field camps as they were called. It seemed that we were never long at any one of them. Although the pay that Dad received for his work was much better than that of a farm hand, I'm not at all sure that the conditions under which we lived improved much, if at all. As stated, many of these camps were tent cities, housing several hundred people. Men who had their wives and families with them each had their own separate tent. The single men and men without their families lived in bunk house tents that housed up to thirty or forty men.

Although I was only four or five years old at the time, I remember one of these tent cities rather well. In this particular one Dad and Mother had a contract to operate the boarding house, which was meant to feed and do the laundry for several hundred oil field workers, with all of the facilities housed in tents. Much of the work consisted of supervising the work of a large group of cooks, dish washers, and cleaning people. Under the most modern circumstances, the task of feeding and doing the laundry for that many people would be horrendous. Can one even begin to imagine the difficulties that must have been faced in those early days? Remember no running water, no electricity, no washing machines, no dishwashers, no modern appliances of any kind.

It was at this particular camp that mothers' health began to fail, and although she lived until she was over 80 years old, her health was never good afterward. It all began with an operation for appendicitis. She was taken to a hospital in Ranger for the operation. Ranger was approximately 35 to 40 miles distant from the camp where we were living, which was located near Caddo, now a ghost town. That was a long distance to travel in those days, considering the mode of transportation available and the condition of the roads that had to be traversed. Dad had just bought a new Model T Ford which he used to visit mother as often as he could find the time. Back in those days an appendectomy was considered major surgery and the stay in a hospital extended to more than a month.

During one of those visits, my twin brother and I accompanied Dad. After the visit and as we were about to leave, mother reminded Dad that he should forgo any drinking until she was back home again. In those days, Dad was no different than most oil field workers, He drank boot leg whiskey and quite a lot at that. I can remember that he made mother a solemn promise that he would not drink while she was in the hospital. Now it just so happened that one of Dads' favorite bootleggers lived in Ranger, and before we left town for camp, he paid a visit to this bootlegger and purchased one full gallon of whiskey. After we arrived home, and while he was in the process of removing the jug from the car, he dropped it and the bottle broke, spilling the liquor on the ground at his feet. To this day I can still remember his reaction. No, there was no cursing or ranting or raving, he just stood silently, apparently looking at the broken bottle and its contents soaking the ground at his feet, and for the longest period of time. This incident must have had a significant mental impact upon my father, because so far as I am aware, he never had another drink of liquor during his lifetime. He was well into his eighties when he died.

My mother, in her younger days was a very beautiful lady, according to my memory and the few photos that still exist. Perhaps her most outstanding feature was her hair, which was a luxurious

wavy black, worn in those days at below shoulder length. If I remember correctly, it must have been in the latter part of 1920's perhaps around 1928, that the ladies hair style called the "Bob" came along. At that time, women began adopting a hair style that was cut to less than shoulder length. After some time of peer pressure, mother finally reluctantly succumbed to the style of the day and had her hair cut to the shorter length, and then cried each time she looked into a mirror, for a considerable length of time there after.

One of the first Christmas presents I remember my twin brother and I receiving from our parents was a set of boxing gloves. Since fighting among oil field workers was almost a daily occurrence, boxing was the most popular sport for the oil field workers. Each Saturday night, in most of the oil field camps, there would be a boxing match. Sometimes the participants of these matches were selected from local workers. Other times, one or more of the boxers would come from other camps nearby. As a preliminary to the main bout small boys such as my twin brother and I would be put in the ring to fight until it was time for the main event. As I recall this was when I was around 5 or 6 years old. I remember being placed in the ring with some other local kids many times, however I don't recall the outcome of any of the fights.

As I recall, I was approximately 7 years old when we moved to Thurber. The year was around 1925. Thurber was located only 3 miles or so to the west of Gordon and was solely owned and operated by the Texas and Pacific Coal and Oil Company. Shortly before the 1900's the coal mining activity switched from the Gordon vicinity to the Thurber area. I think this was because the coal veins were closer to the surface in the Thurber area and therefore were cheaper to mine.

In any case for the first time that I could remember, I lived in a real house in a real town. Thurber at this point in time, with a population of approximately 10,000 people, was the largest town between the cities of Fort Worth and El Paso. I am told that at one time in an earlier year the population actually reached 15,000.

It was a fact that everything in Thurber was owned by T&P Company, all real property including the commercial stores were company owned. Of course, the house we moved into on Park Row was also company owned. As I remember the house had 4 rooms and was wired for electricity, for the first time I lived in a house that had electric lights, which was very unusual for that era. Still no inside toilet or bathroom though, although the outhouse toilet was a modern two holer.

It was here at Thurber that I started to school. Herbert, my twin, and I were seated at the same desk. This arrangement didn't last for long. I was, after a month or so, promoted to the second grade. I think this came about primarily, not that I was a smart kid, but because the teacher got tired of separating us from fighting each other.

Although Herbert and I were twins, we were not identical twins. I was larger than he and our facial features were somewhat different. In our younger days, this difference in our sizes became quite a problem for me, as I will explain later.

Not only was Thurber the largest town between Ft. Worth and El Paso, It was also considered the

roughest town west of the Mississippi. This reputation came about primarily because of the ethnic make-up of its citizens. In some year prior to our moving to Thurber, the miners unionized and went on strike for higher wages. The company refused the union demands, and went to Europe to recruit new workers. As a result, workers were brought in from all over Europe. From Poland, from Italy, from Germany, from all over Europe they came. With such a mixture, the only language understood by all in Thurber, was the language of fisticuffs.

From the kids on up, we all fought. It was not at all unusual on any particular day to see two grown men fighting each other, even right in the middle of the town square. Even though we had a town constable, it was understood that no one interfered with fighters, as long as the fight was considered fair. To this day I still don't know the definition of what was considered "Fair" in a fight. In its broadest sense, I think a fight was considered fair as long as no guns or knives were brought into play.

I mentioned above that my being larger than my brother was cause for my having a problem. This stemmed from a belief my Dad had regarding fights my brother and I had with other boys. He firmly believed that should another boy be getting the better of my brother in a fight that I should step in and take over, because I was larger than he. Never mind the possibility that the boy my brother was fighting might be larger than me. Anyway, this was just another small problem I had as a boy, That is, I stood the chance of being whipped at home, should I fail to help my brother in a fight.

The school at Thurber would be considered unusual if judged by standards of to-day. When I started in the first grade there were four boys who were over 16 years of age in my class. One of these boys was the son of the superintendent of the T&P Coal and Oil Company.

I think I should make a point at this time. While it was true that there was much more fighting in those days, fights in which deadly weapons were used were rare. Among grown men of those days, resorting to the use of a knife or gun during a fight was considered cowardly, and once so branded, one would likely become a social outcast. This is not to say that if some one went looking for a gun fight that there wasn't someone about that would accommodate him.

I've spent a little more time than I intended on my experiences at Thurber. But then, maybe that is the way it should be. After all, it was there that I lived during my most formative years. We moved there when I was almost seven years old and moved away when I was about 14 or 15 years old.

As stated above, Thurber's citizens were a very rough bunch of people. Most men either worked in the coal mines or the brick factory(called the brick yard).Each of these occupations consisted of hard manual labor, much more so than can be found in the machine oriented factories and mines of to-day, because everything was done by hand.

If the fathers were rough, so were the children, especially the boys. I was puffing on cigarettes by age 7 or 8, and so were all my companions.

I guess I was pretty knowledgeable about all aspects of sex by age 10 or 11.

I had several boys who so feared me that just a threat from me would cause them to commit petty thievery to obtain cigarettes and small pocket change. In those days a nickel or dime was a lot of money.

But there was a pecking order, and though I had kids who were afraid of me, so there were at least two boys that made my life miserable from day to day. Fortunately for me, one of these boys who used to whip me at every chance, was bitten by a rattlesnake while I was with him. Because I carried him on my back quite a distance to find help, the doctor told him that I had saved his life. Never after that incident would he fight me.

Practically every boy in school, at least in the lower grades wore blue bib type overalls and blue cotton shirts to school. I seem to remember that there were a couple of boys whose mothers dressed them differently. I also remember that the other boys considered them sissies and objects of scorn.

During the winter time we boys wore "long johns" under the overalls. These under garments buttoned up the front and covered the entire body. There was also a buttoned flap at the rear that had to be manipulated before a bowel movement. During the summer, I don't recall that we wore any underwear.

Most of the boys hated to wear shoes, but were made to do so by their parents during the winter time. I can still remember the glorious feeling of shedding those shoes around the middle of May each year. As I recall, we would start pestering our parents to let us remove our shoes long before the middle of May.

May was also the month that we looked forward to for our first swim. I don't recall anyone ever giving me swimming lessons and I don't recall ever being unable to swim, although I am sure there must have been such a time.

Playing base ball, both hard and soft ball was a favorite pastime for us boys. Thurber had a baseball team that was considered one of the best in Texas. During school, we boys had organized teams that played surrounding communities. During school vacation time, we usually organized our teams on our own. Being left handed, I usually played first base.

One other form of recreation we children enjoyed in Thurber was a movie house in which silent movies were shown. Perhaps there were other types of movies shown at this theater, but the only ones that I can remember were the cowboy movies. As I remember, Ken Manyard and Hoot Gibson were two of my favorites. I believe it was around 1928, that my twin brother and I accompanied my mother and her friend on a trip to Ranger to see our first talking movie. The movie starred Al Jolson in "Mammie". A very memorial occasion for me.

Because, I suppose for reasons concerning profits, The T&P Coal and Oil Company closed down all operations at Thurber around 1933, and everyone had to move away, leaving it as another ghost town. Eventually all the frame and brick homes were torn down and nothing exists to-day except for a tall brick smoke stack where the water and electric building once stood and several old abandoned brick buildings that once housed some of the commercial stores.

Upon leaving Thurber we moved to a farm north of Quannah Texas, where Dad tried his hand at cotton farming. This venture lasted less than a year. I had no schooling during this period. When Herbert and I were not picking cotton and doing farm chores, we were running around over the Red river valley doing such things as twisting rabbits out of prairie dog holes, along with an occasional rattle snake. This was accomplished using a piece of bob wire whose ends was bent at 90 degrees, so that when twisted it would snare a rabbits' fur.

I recall that I didn't like this attempt at farming. We were several miles from the closest neighbor, the work was hard, even for children, and the weather was cold for most of the time of our stay there. Every week or so, there would be a trip to town (Quannah) by wagon to which was hitched a team of mules. This was an all day affair, since town was 10 to 15 miles away. We didn't have money to spend for anything except for items which were essential for living, but I did enjoy walking the streets and gawking at the store windows and other people.

Our next move was to the town of Weatherford, and it is in Weatherford where I am living to-day as I peck on this keyboard.

Of course that first move to Weatherford came back around 1934 or 1935. Those were the days when this country was in the midst of the worst depression ever seen to this day. I am inclined to get irked in this day and time when I hear people complain about poverty and lack of work. Compared to the poverty that existed during the period of 1930 through 1940, this period of time in which we are living to-day would be labeled as an era of plenty. Thank goodness for red beans (now known as pinto beans), corn bread, and oat meal. A lot of people in those days would go for months without seeing anything on the table except these items, along with milk and butter.

We lived in the towns of Weatherford and Mineral Wells up through the year of 1939. Dad worked for a while on a government project called WPA. Herb and I went to school for a short period of time, and then dropped out because it was absolutely necessary that we help earn a living. As I recall I believe I was in grade 7. We lived and worked on a peach farm for a period of time. We lived and worked on a dairy farm for a period of time. We did such work as shelling pecans, and plucking the feathers from turkeys. Herb and I both were big strong boys by age 16 and 17, and we did such work as baling hay for fifty cents a day plus the noon meal of beans and corn bread. When the soles on our shoes wore holes through the bottom, we made inner soles from cardboard and continued to wear them until the uppers were completely gone.

This was not a happy period of time for any of the family. We never had the luxury of knowing where the next meal was coming from. Some of the best money I made during those times was selling bootleg whiskey. It came to me in quart fruit jars and was perfectly awful booze. A lot of

the bootleg stuff in those days was actually poisonous, having a large amount of lye in it. After taking a buyers money it was customary for the vendor to uncap the jar and take a healthy swig, just to show the customer that the stuff was safe to drink.

Although I was not going to school during those years, I found that I liked to read and I read just about anything that I could get my hands on. Those old pulp magazines of western cowboys and world war 1 airplane aces were my favorites. I read all of Zane Greys'books not just once but several times. Also there were the Tarzan books and the Mark Twain books that I enjoyed reading. Much of the stuff that I was reading would certainly not qualify as good literature, but even so, I think that at my age, I had a much better command of the English language then most young people of to-day. To-day, even with poor eye sight, I read much faster than most people.

It was also during these years that I discovered women or maybe it would be more accurate to say that they discovered me. I don't think it would be considered entirely conceit to say that women looked upon me as being a very handsome lad back then. For some reason it seemed I was always involved with older women, some of whom were married at the time. Herb and I both were good dancers and the honkey tonks were very much alive in those days. It didn't require money to frequent those places and if you had a quart jug of whiskey you could be very popular.

Somehow, at least most of the time, we managed to have some old dilapidated automobile to drive and Herb and I learned to drive around 15 or 16.I remember us(the family) buying a pretty good auto for the total sum of \$ 25.00.But as I recall, us boys seldom had use of a car for dates or other type pleasure, there was just no money available for gas ,even at \$0.15 cents per gallon.

I guess I was around 17 or 18,when I joined the CCC, which stood for Civilian Conservation Corp, a government sponsored jobs program designed for young destitute boys such as I. Before this I had tried several times to join the military, but had always been rejected because of the lack of a high school diploma.

To handle this program, military type camps were set up by the government throughout the U. S. The work primarily was building parks and recreation facilities throughout the country. Of course the pay was just a few dollars per month, but for the first time, I had a sense of security. We were provided military type clothing and followed the protocol of a military outfit with respect to the command structure. As I recall I was in the CCC's for something over a year, and now I no longer remember why it ended. Also after it was over I don't remember that I developed any particular skills that would benefit me as far as earning a living. For some reason or other Herb did not join the CCC and again I don't recall why.

I believe it was around 1938, that my older brother Bruce first went to California. My mother's sister and brother and their families were residents of Los Angeles and from their previous visits we were told about the beautiful climate of California and the many job opportunities that existed there. After Bruce found work there it wasn't long before I began thinking and dreaming of also making the trip.

Note: include a para regarding Herb's fighting ability

It was probably the latter part of 1939 that I packed a small suitcase and stepped to the edge of the highway leaving Weatherford to thumb my way to California. Although hitch hiking was not new to me, I had never before attempted such a long trip. I had tried hopping a freight train before for a trip to Houston and found I didn't care for that mode of transportation. My luck was good- After several lifts that got me to El Paso, I finally caught a ride with a gentleman, who I assisted with driving and we drove non-stop into L.A. the next day.

Back in those days L.A. was a beautiful city and the climate was every bit as wonderful as I had heard. There was no great amount of smog and the city was much smaller than now. At first I lived with my mothers' sister and family. She and her husband had two boys who were younger than I, and I did enjoy living with them for a period of time. Over the next several months I had several jobs, but none paid all that well and weren't very permanent, after all, the farm work that I was most skilled in wasn't in very much demand in the city.

In the latter part of 1940, I moved to a small apartment in a second rate hotel where I lived alone. It was only a short time thereafter that I got sick with the flu and I guess I came very near dying. I am sure that had I called upon them, either my Aunt or Uncle would have gladly come to my assistance, but I didn't want to bother either of them. Whether it was because of high fever or something other, I lost conscience off and on for several days and when I was finally able to get on my feet again I was in a very weakened condition. I really thought I was about to die ,my weight had gone from 175 lbs to less than 150 and although I was eating again I was still very sick.

It was while I was in this condition that one morning I saw an ad in the paper that set me to thinking. The ad was an announcement that the Navy was seeking recruits for a radio school that was to start in the L.A. area. "Why not," I said to my self. " if your going to die then let the Navy bury you."So with that thought in mind, I immediately paid a visit to the Navy recruiting station and filled out an application.

I lied that day about a particular thing that I have since lied about several times .When asked whether I had finished high school I answered in the affirmative. My thinking on that particular occasion was that all that mattered was my getting into the Navy and let the future, if I had any, take care of its self.

Before going any further, let me make a point. I considered my father, now dead of course, to be one of the most honest men ever to live on this earth. He firmly believed that a mans' word was his bond and placed particular emphasis, in teaching us children that lying under any circumstance was wrong. In my dealing with other people, I have always strived to imitate my dad in this respect.

In the above instances, I lied about my formal schooling because I truly believed that I had acquired ,by my own studies, the equivalent of a high school education.

Now to return to the subject at hand. This initial application to the Navy, was followed by a written examination shortly thereafter. To my amazement within a few days I received notice that I had passed the test and was given a date to receive a physical examination. Now I was really concerned. My weight had crept back up to slightly over 150 pounds, but I was still very much underweight and also weak and jittery.

On the morning I was to appear for my physical, I managed to gulp down almost two quarts of milk in an attempt to boost my weight a little. Just before I entered the building where the examination was to take place, I suddenly had a hard chill and stood clinging to a street light pole for the next 10 minutes or so until I quit shaking. I was almost positive that I would fail the physical, so imagine my further amazement when within a few days I received notice to stand by for a call to active duty.

Years later I discovered the Navy was in a desperate situation in 1940. The high command knew that a war was imminent, a huge expansion in new war ships was under way and the Navy needed men to man these new ships, so desperate were they that they would even take some one who was pretty close to already being a corpse.

Note: Perhaps it is time to bring the reader up to date on my activities since starting this autobiography. It is now January 19th, 1996. I am now living in Tucson, Ariz. Three of my four children also live in Tucson or in the vicinity. I am approaching 77 years of age.

It was shortly after the 1st of the year in 1941 that my life changed dramatically, It was at this time that I received orders to report for active duty in the Navy

I didn't know it at the time, but I was about to become a participant in an experiment to be conducted by the Navy. As stated above, it was around 1939 and 1940 that the U.S. began building up Army and Navy forces in anticipation of War with Germany and Japan. New ships were being constructed for the Navy and it became clear that there would be a shortage of personnel to man these new war vessels.

So it was that the Navy took command of a facility that had been a U. S. Armory located in Chavez Ravine, almost downtown Los Angeles (now the location of Dodger Stadium) to begin an accelerated training course for Navy Radiomen. In a period of six months, some 150 new recruits would not only be given the training normally received in boot camp, but would also be given schooling in radio theory, sending and receiving of the Morse Code on Mills (also known as typewriters) and a minimum amount of training in the rudiments of re-pair and maintenance of electrical and electronic communication equipment. At the end of six months and equipped with this new knowledge, these seamen would then be disbursed through out the Navy as third class petty officers to man and operate the communication equipment aboard the ships of the U.S. Navy.

As it might be expected, my first days in the Navy were not happy ones. Keep in mind that I

was still a very sick puppy with expectations of dying in a very short period of time. Now I suddenly found myself in an environment that was completely foreign for a Texas country boy. Lucky for me that the training I received in the CCC camps somewhat prepared me for the physical aspects of military training I was about to undergo. However, there was nothing in my previous background to prepare me for the tremendous amount of knowledge, textbook and otherwise, I was expected to acquire in so short a period of time.

Another significant change that occurred to me upon entering the Navy, was a change in my name. Of the approximately 200 sailors who attended this school, I was the only one from the state of Texas, so immediately I became known simply as "Tex." From that day forward, I never again was called by my first name during my tour in the Navy.

From the very beginning I knew I was in trouble. We were in classes all day long, except for recesses during which we were given military training on the parade fields.

Almost from the very first day, we sat at desks equipped with a Mill or typewriter, radio head phones and a Morse Code key for sending and receiving Morse Code.

On my very first time to be seated at one of these desks I realized that I had a serious problem. I first looked over the entire class of some fifty students, hoping to find someone with a similar problem, but to no avail. It was then, with a great amount of embarrassment, I had to explain to the class instructor that the Morse Code Key was on the wrong side of my desk because I was left handed. It was also at this time, that the instructor explained to me and any others that might suffer from my same affliction, in not entirely an unsympathetic tone of voice, that the Navy was just not equipped to accommodate left handed radiomen. All Navy ships, he explained, were designed so that the morse code key could only be manipulated by the right hand of the radioman.

It was after less than two months of active duty, that I sat one morning in the sick bay listening to a Navy Doctor explain that apparently he could do nothing further to treat my medical problems. As such, he stated, the Navy was prepared to give me a medical discharge. I remember I was completely stunned by his announcement, although I made an effort to hide any emotion. I excused myself from his presence by asking for a period of time to consider his offer.

I had been going to the sick bay every few days since the first day of my arrival. From the beginning I had been experiencing pain in my stomach and also bouts with constipation. No question, the Navy medical team made every effort to treat my condition, even to the extent of ordering special medications. But nothing seem to help.

Of course, years later I would be able to look back to that period of time and realize that my problem was really only that of stress.

Of course, it was very stressful. Here I was, faced daily with trying to teach my right hand to do an exercise that it simply didn't want to do-sitting long hours with a headset and a typewriter listening to the Morse Code and knowing before long I would be given a test in which I would be expected to send and receive this code at the rate of forty words per minute, using my worthless

right hand and a typewriter that I hardly knew existed prior to this time. In addition, I knew this final test would also present me with math problems related to electric circuits involving alternating and direct current that would require use of equations that at this particular time I had no idea how to manipulate.

In addition to the time spent trying to learn to send and receive the morse code, I was also spending hours in class and at night with my nose in text books trying to learn and manipulate those mathematical equations dealing with electronic and electric circuits and components. Keep in mind that although I had fair understanding of the English language, I was a complete void of any understanding of math.

No wonder I had developed an ulcerated stomach and severe constipation.

In the meantime, time was running out and I knew I would have to face that Navy Doctor again. One thing was certain in my mind, the last thing I wanted was a discharge. For once in my life I knew where my next meal was coming from-I was being paid something like \$20.00 per month, and if I died the expense of my burial would fall to the Navy.

Before meeting with the doctor again, I had to find the answer to a question. Could the Navy, without my consent force me to take a medical discharge?

It so happened that a couple of men in my class had spent a previous hitch in the Navy. So I consulted with them. I found it was their opinion that it was unlikely that the Navy would give me a medical discharge without my consent. In their opinion, the most likely thing to occur in my case would be a transfer, if the doctor felt that I was unsuitable in my present environment.

The thought of being transferred gave me almost as much concern as the thought of being given a medical discharge. By this time I had formed friendships and the very thought of ending up as a deckhand, scrubbing the decks of a battleship was not at all appealing.

Only a day or so after gaining this new knowledge, I again presented myself to the Navy doctor, who had recommended a medical discharge. I told him that I was feeling much better. This was not the case at all ,actually my stomach was hurting quite badly. I requested that he let me have more time to see if my condition continued to improve, which he agreed to do. I left the sick bay that day resolved that if I entered those doors again, I would be carried in on stretcher.

I immediately, that day, threw away all the medications that I had been taking. I surmised that disposing of them was not a risk, since they were quite apparently not helping my condition. I was also quite sure that I would not be going to the sick bay to ask for any more. I also that day made a decision to let nature take its course as far as my health was concerned.

It was also about this time that I concluded that I had better increase my efforts in school or otherwise I was going to flunk out. I begin to realize that other guys were having problems too, especially when I noticed that several faces in my class had just disappeared. When I asked about them, it wasn't easy to get the story. I was first told that they had been transferred, supposedly at

their request. Actually, I later learned that they had no choice in the decision.

As I remember, it was almost two months before I finally requested Liberty-which in Navy Lingo meant getting permission to leave the base for reasons of recreation or otherwise. It was only several blocks to China Town, which was noted for its many bars and dives. I had my first drink of whiskey in quite a while, and actually my stomach quit hurting and felt real good for the first time in a very long time. Me and my two buddies decided that we would do this again, even though we all three had large heads the next day.

It is true that thereafter I begin to get out more often. As I remember it was about this time that I begin to think that I might survive after all. I begin to do somewhat better with the text books and the math problems. And also my right hand began to be more cooperative with the morse code key.

I think also that it was about this time that I first met and started paling with Pat and French. Actually this was Patrick Joseph Carty and William French. Pat hailed from the state of Oregon, while French was from the state of Nebraska. I don't remember the details of how or why these friendships got started. But we remained friends and were in the same outfits for most of the time we spent in the Navy. I do remember that Pat was much more knowledgeable about radio than I was and that I leaned on him quite heavily during the days of the radio school.

Looking back on those days ,It seemed that I always had money for drinks when we went on liberty. Of course during those school days we didn't get out more than one time during a week. But its still a mystery that I had money. I don't remember now just exactly how much we were paid as apprentice seamen, but I know it was less than \$ 20.00 dollars per month. For my entire stay in the Navy I always sent half of my pay to my mother and father to assist them with their living expenses, even so, I don't recall that I ever suffered any hardship because of the lack of money. Maybe this can all be explained quite easily-Since I had never before had money for myself-it was rather easy to get along without it.

I suppose that 3 or 4 months had passed, when one day while on the drill grounds we received a surprise. While at attention, an officer appeared and asked if any of us would like to volunteer for duty in the Navy Air Corp upon our graduation, if so, we were asked to raise our hands. Almost without hesitation I stuck my hand in the air. When Pat and French saw me with my hand in the air ,they also raised theirs. I don't remember now, but I think we the only ones in the drill group that raised their hands.

I still don't know why I raised my hand that day. I had never seen a military aircraft. I certainly had never flown in a plane. About the only conclusion I could reach was that I must have been influenced by all those pulp magazines stories about World War ! Aces that I had read as a boy. Both Pat and French were at first convinced that I had flipped my lid. How ever as time went by I think they became convinced that we had made a good decision.

It was about this time that we all received another surprise. One day the whole division was

called to-gather and told we were to become the object of a movie, to be made by the greatest movie directors in Hollywood, none other than John Ford and Cecil D. DeMille. Supposedly the film was to be used by the Navy to recruit other men into other radio schools such as ours, which were to start up in other places of the U.S. I guess this was the Navy's way of announcing that their experiment was a success.

Sure enough, shortly after this announcement, a movie crew with camera's begin to film our daily routines, from morning till night. On one occasion I was filmed as I ran out of the Armory and down the steps to grab a girl I had never seen before and kiss her. If I became a movie star I never knew about it-whether the movie was ever shown to other audiences, I never heard- war was just down the road a few months.

At the conclusion of the making of the movie, the movie directors arranged for a dance at one of Hollywood's young actress's school for all of us who had participated in the movie. There was probably 40 to 50 sailors in attendance and at least that many of the most beautiful girls I had ever seen in one large group. Needless to say, we all enjoyed this dance very much. One of the girls I met that night invited me to spend a weekend at her home there in Hollywood, where she lived with her mother, which I did of course. Her mother also seemed to like me and I was invited to their home several times after that first weekend. At the end of the school I never saw her again.

By the way, there were 200 students at that school. Only 150 graduated. We were graded on six different subjects, my grades fell below 80 on only one subject. That happened to be the sending of morse code with a key that I had to manipulate with my right hand. I may have been the only one there without a high school education.

I had never been to San Diego before, but after graduation from the radio school Pat, French and I were transferred to the Naval Air Station on North Island, just on the outskirts of San Diego. There I got my first glimpse of the military aircraft in which I was about to fly.

The Navy PBY was designated as a patrol bomber and the first ones that I encountered were strictly sea planes with no capability of landing on anything other than water. Later, approximately 1 year after the start of the war, an advanced version of the PBY was introduced that was amphibious, which meant that it had the capability of landing either on water or land.

I gazed upon my first Navy PBY Patrol Plane with great amount of awe, fear and trepidation. I think had I been given a choice at that particular time I would have elected to be a ship board sailor. During my first flight, I was one scared country boy. Of course prior to my first flight I was given enough indoctrination to know that the PBY with its twin engines was pretty noisy, but I was hardly prepared for the great amount of noise and the rough ride that occurs on take off from rough water.

In my first days as a third class petty officer, I was rather proud of my uniform and my rank. In the regular Navy, in those days, a third class petty officer rating normally came along only after several years of duty, and here I was with this rating only after six months. In joining the Navy

back then you were first rated as an apprentice seaman. Then you went from there to third class seaman, second class seaman, first class seaman, and from there to third class petty officer.

Pat , French and I were the only reservists in the squadron in the beginning, all others being regular Navy. As such we were looked upon by the others with a large degree of scorn and not treated very well. This was to change with the beginning of the war when reservists came in such numbers that the regulars became the odd lot.

It was in October 1941 that I experienced one of the worst flights of my entire navy career. One morning, while at muster, the chief radioman asked for a volunteer for a flight that the commanding officer was going to make to Seattle, Washington. Having never been to Seattle, I immediately raised my hand. For the rest of my service in the Navy I never volunteered for any thing again.

As I remember it was a beautiful warm day in San Diego. None of the flight crew, which consists of two pilots, one navigator, two radiomen, and two machinist mates wore any flight uniforms other than our every day uniforms. There was also three passengers aboard, who were not flight personnel.

Upon take off the skipper climbed the aircraft above the overcast at about two thousand feet and we headed north toward Seattle.

As the flight progressed, the cloud cover kept rising and soon we found ourselves over northern California flying at an altitude of around 16000 feet. We were all very uncomfortable. There was no oxygen in the aircraft, which we were normally expected to start using at altitudes above 12000 ft. In addition at that altitude it was very cold. I was manning the radio at this time and the skipper asked me to put him on a radio frequency for a Portland, Oregon flight controller. Upon making radio contact, the skipper asked for permission to descend to an altitude of 10,000 feet, which he apparently received. Shortly there after, while flying in very thick overcast, there happened to be a break in the overcast and a fast acting second pilot kept us from plowing into a mountain side by quickly advancing the engine throttles and putting the nose of the aircraft almost straight up. One of the crew, who was looking out the blister in the rear of the aircraft later swore that the bottom of the aircraft was clipping tree limbs as we climbed up the side of the mountain.

Having made a 180 turn, we started climbing again with the intent of climbing above the cloud cover. Soon we were flying at over 18,000 feet, the wings were beginning to ice up, all three of the passengers had passed out from lack of oxygen, and one of the engines had began to lose power.

It was then that the skipper ordered us to prepare to leave the aircraft, by first putting parachutes on ourselves and the unconscious passengers and hauling them to the exit blisters. We were then ordered to standby in preparation for pulling the rip cords on their parachutes as we shoved them over the side through the exit blisters.

I have never before or since been closer to unconsciousness as I was that day. Because of the exertion I was gasping for air and my lungs felt like they were on fire and I'm sure my face was as blue as faces of those other crewmen around me.

The order to jump never came. Very suddenly, the aircraft broke clear of the clouds, the engine began to run smoothly again and the ice began to leave the wings. Shortly we were able to begin descending to a lower altitude, the passengers became conscious and we eventually landed at the Alameda Naval Air Station near San Francisco. We were all very thankful with our feet on mother earth again. however, unfortunately my troubles were just beginning.

I had a very bad head cold when we took off that morning and I had been made aware that one should not fly with a head cold .When we made our decent at Alameda I discovered why one should not fly with a head cold. As soon as we had made the airplane secure, I made a quick trip to the sick bay. I was told that my very bad head ache had resulted from the fact my middle ear was still at 16000 ft .even though I was at sea level. The doctor told me I had a rather bad case of airtitis (probably spelled wrong) and I should not fly again until my ears had cleared and my cold had gone.

Next morning we took off again and immediately started climbing again. Some one had put a number of blankets in the plane and before long each of us had a blanket around us. There were no passengers with us now- I guess they decided that they really didn't want to go to Seattle after all.

There was no let down procedure for landing at the Seattle Naval Air Station at that time. We circled above the clouds at approximately 16,000 ft. until the skipper found a hole in the clouds and then he dove the aircraft almost straight down. During this dive I experienced traffic head pain. It felt like someone had hit me between the eyes with an axe. When the plane landed on the water I was totally deaf. In spite of the loud noise of the engines, I could hear absolutely nothing.

A couple of days later, the skipper and the rest of the crew flew back to San Diego. I remained in the hospital at the naval air station for well over a month during which time I slowly regained my hearing.

My stay there at the Seattle Naval Air Station was not a happy one. However I did have a funny experience while there that might be worth telling. After some ten days or some there in the hospital one morning I was given permission to go to the regular chow hall for breakfast. Most of the buildings at this particular air station surround a large expanse of ground with a flag pole at the center. Upon exiting the hospital, I observed a line of sailors at two different buildings. Not knowing the location of the mess hall, I assumed that the longest line represented sailors waiting to enter the chow hall. Remember, I am for all practical purposes still totally deaf ,so I could not ask questions. After waiting in line for a considerable length of time I finally entered the building to find I had been standing in line for a short arm inspection. This is an inspection given to sailors to determine if they have acquired gonorrhoea. Later I learned that this disease was wide spread among naval personnel in the Seattle area.

Upon my release from the hospital, the doctors there mailed a report to my squadron doctor recommending that I be removed from flight status for the duration of my enlistment.

Before I can continue with this story I must go back in time a little. Shortly after my arrival at the San Diego Naval Air Station from the Radio School I met an enlisted pilot and after becoming better acquainted with him, I decided that I wanted to be a pilot. At that time, an enlisted man could make application and if accepted be sent to flight school in Pensacola, Florida .This I did. In a surprisingly short period I received an answer to my request for flight school. The answer was No. It seems that about the time I submitted my application for flight school, The Navy decided that there was a serious shortage of aviation radiomen and as such there would be no further transfers to any other activities- period.

To say the least I was quite put out over this development. Somehow I learned that the Army Air Force were also looking for enlisted pilots. So I went down town one day and made application with the Army for flight school. You see I had completely made up my mind that if I was going to fly in those air machines, I wanted to be the one at the controls.

I didn't get my answer from the Army until after the war started. Again the answer was no- all transfers inter-service were suspended until further notice.

One of the reasons for accounting these stories about my effort to go to flight school was because I got pretty well acquainted with the Executive Officer of our squadron during this time. He was a very nice fellow and I met with him several times during my efforts to get approved for flight school. He seemed to be sympathetic to my cause.

Now back to my story about my stay in the hospital at Seattle. Upon release from the hospital I took a train back to San Diego. When I got back to my squadron ,sure enough, I found that I had been grounded. I immediately went to my executive officer and pleaded with him to see if he could do anything to overturn the decision that I be removed from flight status. As a result of his involvement, I was given further hearing tests by a flight doctor at the air station there and he overturned the decision that I be grounded.

One last thing about this trip to Seattle. A short time after the plane and crew returned to San Diego after the flight to Seattle the 10 parachutes that were in the plane during the flight were inspected. It was found that nine of these parachutes had the shroud lines attached with safety pins. Of course I always assumed that had I jumped my parachute would have been the good one.

We were told somewhat later that a parachute inspector was sent to prison because of his negligence.

As I remember it was a beautiful day in San Diego that fateful morning. I had gone ashore early that day because I had a date with a girl that I had met a few days earlier. We were to go to a beach just outside town. As usual, upon arriving in town I went to a locker room that I had rented

and changed into civilian clothes. Back in those days before the war ,sailors had a rather bad reputation. Although I never witnessed such myself, I was told that people had signs in their yards stating that "No dogs or sailors allowed." In any case, I usually wore civilian clothes when I was ashore.

We had a nice time on the beach that day and we arrived back in town early in the afternoon. I thought the streets looked strangely deserted, so we stopped at a cocktail lounge to have a drink. I knew the bartender there and he wasted no time in telling me that I had better report to base immediately. The day was Sunday, December 7th, 1941.

I'll never forget stepping off the ferry that day at the North Island Naval Air Station. It seemed that people were running in all directions at once. I immediately saw sailors with shovels digging fox holes here and there, and when I arrived at my squadron head quarters machine guns were being installed in all our aircraft. I was immediately told to report to a particular aircraft for flight patrol. I made my first flight that day looking for the enemy, and fired my first rounds from a fifty caliber machine gun that I had never seen before. The target was a smoke bomb on the water that we had tossed over the side for target practice. On later flights I got rather good at hitting these smoke bombs while flying at 1000 to 2000 feet above the water. Several months later I got my first chance to fire at an airborne object. It was a Japanese Zero, with a pilot who was doing his level best to send us down in flames.

Ask people today if they are aware that the Japanese captured and occupied American soil during World War II and most, by a large majority, will say they were unaware that such happened. There was practically no news media coverage of the Aleutian Campaign.

The Japanese occupied both Casket and Att in the Aleutian Island chain. After occupying Casket, they made haste to fortify the island. According to records obtained after their surrender, in terms of anti-aircraft guns, it was the most heavily fortified of all Japanese bases.

The Aleutian Campaign started with the Japanese bombing the Dutch Harbor Navy Base in June 1942.

It was supposed to be a diversionary tactic by the Japanese to divert attention from their military thrust at Midway Island. Of course, the sea battle at Midway was given world wide publicity, and rightly so ,because the Japanese defeat at Midway was the beginning of the end for them. By the way, it was a PBY patrol plane like the one in which I was flying that first located the Japanese Fleet at sea off Midway. This sighting gave our Navy Air force the advantage of striking first in the historic battle of Midway

Prior to the bombing of Dutch Harbor, we were a training squadron, located at the Naval Air Station, San Diego. We were training pilots, radiomen, and mechanics for flight in the PBY. After the start of the war, my squadron began running patrols for enemy shipping and submarines off the coast of California.

On the day after the bombing of Dutch Harbor we were on our way to the Aleutians. On the way there, we made short refueling stops at Tongue Point, Oregon and Seattle Wash. We made another stop at a small island off the coast of Canada (Sitka Island) and from there to a naval air station on Kodiak Island, off the Alaskan coast. After about three hours of sleep there, we flew on to Cold Bay and from there to Dutch Harbor. As I remember this trip took about three days.

Upon arrival at Dutch Harbor, which occurred at about dark, we immediately loaded a five hundred bomb on one wing and a torpedo on the other and took off in the dead of night to find and sink the Japanese fleet that had bombed Dutch Harbor for the second time, just two days before. Remember, this was just one plane, and we were very much aware that if we found this enemy fleet it would be our end. It was more than just a miracle that we survived that flight. We had absolutely no means of navigation except dead reckoning and we were to fly a zigzag course out over strange waters in the middle of the night for a period exceeding 12 hours and return to a pinpoint on a map representing Dutch Harbor. It was my job to find the enemy on my radar and also to hopefully find our island on our way back.

Now you would think that on such a mission all of us would be highly stressed and fully alert. But because of lack of sleep, instead we spent most of the night literally hitting and kicking each other trying to keep awake. Finally, at some point I went to sleep while gazing into the radar scope. I awoke with the pilot screaming into my ear over the inter phones. I will never forget his words "Havins", he said, still screaming, "As soon as we land I'm going to see that you are shot for neglect of duty in wartime- Now get up to the mach station and wake up _____ and tell him I'm going to personally shoot his ass off too". Turns out the whole flight crew, including both pilots, slept for a period close to 20 minutes flying on an unpredictable automatic pilot at less than a thousand feet, while searching for a Japanese fleet estimated at more than 15 to 20 warships. As strictly a matter of luck, we found our way back to Dutch Harbor from this flight.

Then after only a few hours of sleep we again loaded two five hundred pound bombs and with another PBY took off to fly down the chain of islands to Att Island, which is at the very end of the island chain.

For this flight the distance was such that we would not have enough fuel for the return flight to Dutch Harbor. We were told that upon reaching Attu, we were to land and refuel from a supply of fuel that had earlier been cached on the island for just this type of emergency. The distance from Dutch Harbor to Attu was around one thousand miles.

Of course we were told before the flight began that the Japanese may have occupied the island. So upon reaching our destination we circled the harbor several times looking for signs of the enemy. We could find no evidence that the island was occupied, so we begin our decent to land. My plane was to land first. Just as our plane touched the water, we began to receive machine gun fire from the beach. Lt. George, my pilot, shoved the throttles forward at full power and we escaped with only a few holes in the aircraft. I am sure that some Japanese commander must have given that over eager gunner pure hell. Had the Japanese waited another ten minutes both of our

planes would have been dead on the water and we would have either died or been taken prisoners for the rest of the war.

On the way back up the chain, because of lack of fuel we made a forced landing at Adak island, where we stayed for a couple of days until a navy destroyer could reach the harbor with fuel. Luck was again with us, there were no Japanese on Adak. While we were there, we were told by radio that the Japanese had occupied both Attu and Kiska islands

Mother Nature had given Kiska natural defenses against attacking aircraft. The harbor was surrounded on three sides by extinct volcano mountains.

By another freak of nature, the prevailing winds upon entering the harbor were swept up the steep sides of these mountains and in so doing would create a hole in the clouds that would usually cover the rest of the island. The small size of this hole would not permit time for the adjustment of the cross hairs on the bomb sights for a level bombing run. As a result, we had to adopt the technique of dive bombing to be effective against the many enemy ships that were usually in the harbor.

Be assured, the only reason that I am still around today is that the Japanese gunners could not believe that any aircraft could be so slow in a vertical dive. The take-off speed of the PBV was about 70 knots, it cruised at about 140 knots, and in a near vertical dive probably around 200 to 250 knots. For that reason most of their fire power was directed ahead of our planes. Usually we would approach the harbor above the mountain peaks, circle the hole in the clouds until we had picked our target. During this period we would be in very heavy anti-aircraft fire.

Once a target was decided upon the pilot would put the nose of the aircraft down until it was aimed at the target. At this time we were in an almost vertical dive.

The PBV was armed with two fifty caliber and two thirty caliber machine guns. The two fifty caliber guns were mounted in plexiglass blisters on each side of the aircraft, which were also used to enter and exit the airplane. One thirty caliber was in the nose, the other in the tail section.

In all combat engagements I manned the fifty caliber on the starboard side of the aircraft.(the right side). During these bombing runs I was given leeway to fire at any target solely at my discretion. Usually I fired at the gun placements on the ship that we had targeted to bomb, because these were always the larger warships, and because I knew their guns would be firing at us.

The bombs we carried were usually released at between three to four thousand feet and then the pilot would begin to pull the aircraft out of its dive. Our altitude would be usually less than 2000 ft at the end of the dive.

We faced the most dangerous time during pull-out from these dives. During pull-out the angle of attack of the aircraft and low altitude made us a much easier target for the Japanese gunners on the ground and aboard the ships. On one of these pull-outs I observed probably several hundred

Japanese soldiers being unloaded from a troop ship firing at us with their pistols. I could see them scrambling for cover as I directed my fire into their midst.

We also faced the possibility that the old aircraft would literally disintegrate from the high G levels of pull-out. The sound of the groaning and cracking of the aircraft fuselage being stressed to the limit and the popping of broken rivets were pretty awesome.

During this period of time in the Aleutian campaign, we were one of two squadrons of PBY's (each squadron consisting of twelve planes). We were operating off a sea plane tender(ship) anchored in Nazzon Bay, Atka Island, about 100 nautical miles from Kiska Island. (Note: this milage may be in error-my memory has dimmed.)

Although the Army Air forces were present in the Aleutians during this period of time, for various reasons they were not being utilized against the Japanese at Kiska.

Down the chain of command from an Admiral sitting on his duff a safe distance from the enemy came our orders; "Bomb the Japanese on Kiska day and night until they are destroyed, regardless of cost.

In other words we were declared as expendable. And so it was, During a period of less than three weeks we lost over half our planes and their crews.

There was speculation that some of our aircraft were lost due to the wings being pulled off during these dives. We were never sure, and we also had little accountability of the damage we did to the Japanese during these bombing runs.

Immediately after these bombing runs we had to seek the safety of a cloud bank to get away from the Japanese fighter Zeros that usually were waiting for us outside the zone of their own anti-aircraft fire.

So on pull-out from the dive and as soon we were in a cloud bank, I would leave my gun post and go forward to the radar system to direct us through the mountain peaks to relative safety. We were extremely fortunate that the Japanese did not have radar systems in their aircraft at that time. No doubt, the terrible weather that usually existed in the Aleutians accounted for many of our aircraft losses, but in times such as just described, a cloud bank was a very welcome sight.

As I recall, I only made three of these dive bombing missions. Some of the bomb runs were made on straight and level flight when the weather permitted. On all of these missions we had damage to the aircraft from anti-aircraft fire. On one of these flights, upon return to base I counted over two hundred holes in just the tail section of the plane.

For this action, I was recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross, which I never received, instead they gave me the Air Medal. For our rescue of a submarine crew at a later date, I received

recommendation for another Air Medal, but never received it. I also received personal letters of commendation from Admiral Nimitz, Chief of the Pacific Fleet, from the Secretary of the Navy (Forrestal) and from the Chief of Naval Operations (Admiral Moore).

With the retaking of Att and after approximately one year of constantly fighting the enemy and the weather, the remaining flight crews of VP-43 were returned to the states to obtain new aircraft.

While there some one decided that we should be given physical and mental examinations. As a result of these examinations the whole squadron flight crew were declared unfit both mentally and physically for further combat duty.

After approximately one year of state side duty, I was assigned to a squadron in Hawaii, where I remained until the end of the war.

Of course, during the period in which we used the PBY to dive bomb was a perilous time. But looking back, I am convinced that using the plane to accomplish missions for which it was designed was almost as bad. I am referring now to the hundreds of missions flown looking for enemy ships and submarines. Almost every mission encountered bad weather of some kind.

All of the maps and charts we used for navigation were inaccurate. Many more planes were lost to bad weather than to the Japanese. Although our planes were amphibious, I don't know of a single incident in which a crew was rescued after going down at sea. Usually the ocean was much too rough to accomplish a safe landing, and even if the crew survived the landing, one was only given a maximum of thirty minutes to live in those frigid waters.

I was extremely fortunate to return to the states unharmed. Also during that year I walked away unscathed from a landing accident that almost totally destroyed the aircraft.

In addition, I was also aboard the aircraft tender Casco, when it was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine in Nazzan Bay, Atka Island. I believe this happened on August 30, 1942. The Casco was a new type aircraft tender just out the shipyards in the states. Unfortunately for us, it was released for service prior to the installation of sonar equipment for the detection of submarines.

On the day that the ship was hit, I had been on a flight that was terminated prior to completion due to very severe weather conditions. When we returned to the harbor to land, the Casco was still out at sea. The Japanese had found our base of operations at Atka and was sending over planes to bomb us almost every day. To counter this action, as soon as our planes took off at daybreak every morning, the ship would leave the harbor and go out to sea and cruise around until dark and then return to the harbor. Upon its return, our planes would be rearmed with munitions and fuel in preparation for the flights next morning.

All this occurred during a period of time when we had been relieved of the suicidal dive bombing missions over Kiska. The Army Air corps had finally taken over the bombing missions. Our

primary mission was now to find and attempt to destroy any Japanese ships or submarines that might be attempting to resupply their troops on Casket and Att.

We had now settled into a routine of flying every other day. During those days when we were not flying, we lived aboard the Casco in quarters designated for the flight crews.

As stated , on this particular day we had returned from our mission earlier than usual and were waiting in our plane when the ship returned and dropped anchor. Some time thereafter the ship sent out a whale boat to pick up our crew. In the meantime, the storm that we had encountered had moved over the island. As a result I was the only crew member that elected to face the rough water conditions that had to be crossed to get to the ship.

When I finally got aboard, I immediately went to my quarters to change into dry clothing. I was very wet and cold from the soaking I had received in the whale boat ride. My very next thought was to get to the mess hall for a cup of hot coffee. The flight crew quarters and the mess hall were on the same deck level, one flight down from the top deck. There were four or five compartments between our quarters and the mess hall. Each of these compartments were connected by water tight hatches, which were usually left open except during general quarters(combat alert).I had just entered the first compartment when the torpedo struck and exploded in the area of the mess hall, where I was headed. I was picked up and blown completely across the compartment into a steel bulkhead.

How long I lay unconscious I don't know. When I finally regained my senses I found myself laying on the deck in complete darkness. Almost immediately I knew my predicament. All ship crews are given strict orders when struck by a torpedo to immediately close all water tight hatches leading to the top deck, regardless of whether crew members may still be below top deck.

Now I have never so stated before, but I did a lot of praying during those days of danger. I also firmly believe that God had a direct hand in seeing me through those dark days when friends around me were living their last days.

So I was doing some serious praying while I was crawling around in that total darkness trying to find a ladder leading to the top deck. Imagine my relief when I finally found that ladder and reached the top to find the hatch had not yet been locked.

When I reached top deck everything was still rather dark but I could tell that the ship was under way again and sailors were scurrying here and there all over the ship. I didn't know it at the time, but the force of the explosion had broken the anchor chain which allowed the crew to immediately put the ship in motion. Another thing that I learned very shortly was that the ship was traveling in a circle, because one of its twin screws had been disabled. As a result, the ship encountered shallow water and beached its self near the shore line, which also, by the way ,kept it from sinking completely.

When the ship hit bottom another emergency occurred. One of the signal flares that we carried

aboard our aircraft rolled off the deck into the water and ignited. The ship was losing fuel oil at a fast rate, but luckily the oil had not yet reached the area where the flare was burning. In spite of the fact that water temperatures were extremely cold one of our squadron crew members, an enlisted man, jumped over the side of the ship and held the flare under water until its flame was extinguished. He was later awarded the Navy Cross for his heroic action.

A lot of confusion followed, but eventually an order was given to abandon ship ,life boats were lowered and over a period of time we all scrambled over the side of the ship and climbed down netting into life boats and were hauled a short distance to the shoreline.

From there we all made our way to some shacks close by that had formally been the home of a group of Aleut Indians, who had previously been evacuated by the Navy to safer islands to the North.

During all this time it had been raining steadily and we were all cold and wet. Some of the planking from the shacks were used to start fires, cigarettes were lit and we all stood around trying to get warm and contemplating what to do next.

Finally an officer called a conference. It was obvious to us all that the Japanese were still out there in the darkness somewhere and if they had not already done so, they would be putting troops ashore and we were sure they would not be taking prisoners. As a result of a tally, it was found that very few of us had weapons. All flight crew members, during flight were armed with 45 caliber pistols and Thompson Sub-machine guns, but a ship order prevented us from bringing our guns aboard ship.

I finally found several crew members from my squadron. I don't remember ever seeing Pat or French during this ordeal, so I must conclude that they were not aboard the ship when it was torpedoed. It is possible that they were aboard their aircraft as were the rest of my flight crew, who I never saw again for 3 or 4 days thereafter.

In the meantime there was a call for volunteers to go back aboard the ship for guns and ammunition. As I remember there was a crew of about 7 or 8,me included, that went back to the ship that night.

To say that I was scared of going back to that ship would be putting it lightly, but the thought of being confronted by the Japs without a weapon was even more frightening. We had with us a ships crew member who knew where the guns and ammo were kept. I don't have any idea how many pistols and rifles that we brought back ashore. I know we each made several trips back and froth from the compartment where the guns were located to the rail of the ship and dumped them over the side into the life boat. We also lowered several boxes of both 30 and 45 caliber ammo into the boat.

Unfortunately, we only found one machine gun. It was an old World War 1 gun. I was the one

that found the gun and I decided it was mine. I also strapped on a loaded 45 and put another loaded one in my belt. This all made me feel a little better. On days when I was not flying, when I was in a location where I could do so, I target practiced a lot with my Army 45 automatic just to pass away the time.

When we got back to the shoreline there was quite a group waiting for us and the guns and ammo were passed out to those who professed knowledge on their use. A guard was set up all around the cluster of shacks and we spent the rest of the night wondering when the enemy attack would come.

Shortly after getting back with the guns, we learned that one of our plane crew, moored out in the bay in their aircraft had made radio contact with a Navy Task Force a couple of hundred miles out to sea and that a fast destroyer was on its way to our rescue. It was estimated that this ship would arrive shortly after daybreak.

When the torpedo struck, as I remember there was either 8 or 10 people killed outright. There were quite a few others that were badly injured. Just before daylight these injured people were taken by boats to several of our aircraft out into the bay. These aircraft were to take off at dawn and fly the injured back to Dutch Harbor.

Also just before it got light, with help from a couple of other flight crew members, we lugged the machine gun and a box of thirty caliber shells to the top of a hill just behind the shanty town and proceeded to set the gun up where we would have a commanding view overlooking the bay and the shacks below.

At daybreak the airplanes began taking off. Just after getting into the air and while still over the bay area one of the pilots looked down and there was the sub on the surface just below his plane. Thinking quickly, the pilot jerked the manual release for two depth charges on the planes bomb racks. These depth charges exploded just beneath the hull of the sub and crippled it to the extent that it could no longer submerge. Apparently the sub was making an attempt to leave the harbor when the destroyer came steaming into view. The destroyer quickly sank the sub. Quite a few Japanese were in the water attempting to swim to the shore line. I was told that the crew members of the destroyer threw lines to the swimmers and if they did not take hold of the line they were shot. Only one swimmer took hold of the line that was thrown to him and that was the commanding officer of the sub.

Not only was the commanding officer captured, but the sub's log book was also recovered. Therein lay the answer to a question that had puzzled us all. Why had the Japanese only hit us with one torpedo? The answer was in that log book.

The day before the ship was struck, I did not fly and I was aboard the ship as we cruised around out at sea waiting for dusk to return to the harbor. The Bering Sea that day was about as rough as I had ever seen it. No food was served all day long, nor was anyone allowed above deck. The Jap sub that day threw 8 torpedoes at our ship and we had no idea we were under attack. The sub

followed the ship back to the entrance to the harbor that day. The next day, after the ship left the harbor the sub entered the harbor and lay on the bottom until the ship returned that evening. It had two torpedoes remaining, one was aimed and launched at the stern of the ship. The other one was aimed at the bow of the ship. Due to the rough water in the bay, both torpedoes were deflected. The one aimed at the bow missed the ship and ran up on the shoreline without exploding. The one aimed at the stern was deflected forward and hit the ship almost midship. In the bow of the ship was located the munitions, which consisted of several hundred 500 pound bombs and depth charges. In the stern of the ship was located the tanks that carried several hundred thousand gallons of aviation gasoline for our planes, and the quarters for our flight crews.

The Jap Commander also confirmed that it was his intention to put a party ashore that morning to take us captive. Of course that was a lie. The Jap sub only carried a crew of perhaps 30 to 49 men. I don't know our exact number on that island, but I'm sure we numbered at least two hundred.

One last thing about this incident. After the all clear signal was given that day, I tried to fire that machine gun. It was defective and would not fire. No question-the Japs with their machine guns would have made short work of us.

After some three days on the island I was finally picked up and returned to my squadron.

My second radioman was a boy whose name was Herring. He was with me during most of my combat missions. Although much younger than I he was a very smart boy and I thought of him more or less as a younger brother. I nicknamed him "little chum" and taught him as best I could in the operation and maintenance of the radio and radar equipment aboard the aircraft we flew. It was shortly after the torpedo incident that I recommended that he be rated as 1st radioman in a flight crew. On his very first flight his plane was reported as missing. The crew and plane disappeared without a trace and was never heard from again.

By this time we had either lost or worn out most of our planes. So we all piled aboard the few planes left and flew to the states for new planes. I believe this occurred around the 1st of Sept 1942.

During this approximate 30 days in the states, Pat, French and I threw one hell of a big party at the Hollywood Plaza Hotel in Hollywood and then we each flew to our homes for a few days. Mom and Dad was living in Ft. Worth at that time.

Then it was back to the Aleutians with our new planes. These planes lasted until June 1943. Around April or May of 1943, the Army retook Attu Island from the Japs with a quite large number of casualties. Shortly thereafter the Army made a landing on Kiska to find that the Japanese had already abandoned the island.

We again flew into the Naval Air Station at Seattle for new aircraft. While there I think someone must have noticed that we were all acting kind of goofy. I know why I was acting strangely-I was staying tanked up on booze.

In any case some one thought it a good idea to give us all physical and physiological tests. The doctors who gave us these tests decided that not one man in the squadron was either physically or mentally in condition for further combat duty.

Looking back on the Aleutian Campaign I'm convinced a large number of American lives were lost due to the stupidity and greed of our military leaders. The Japanese only landed at Kiska and Attu because of their failure to capture Midway Island. The two islands were 1000 miles from our Navy base at Dutch Harbor. Both of the islands were just small barren volcano rocks with absolutely no strategic value to either us or the Japanese. I'm convinced that had we just ignored the Jap landing on these two remote Islands they would have rather quickly abandoned them on their own. Instead we had an Army General and a Navy Commodore who wanted to make a name for themselves and as a result a lot of Americans lost their lives.

The commodore I referred to above was Commodore Gekres who was in command of Fleet Air Wing Four, to which my squadron belonged. He sat on his butt back at Kodiak Island and gave the order for us to use the highly unsuitable PBY to bomb the Japanese out of existence, regardless of the cost of lives and planes.

When He finally thought it safe to do so, he flew down the chain of islands to pay us a visit. He was aboard the Casco when It was torpedoed. He was in such a hurry to get into a life boat that he slipped and fell into the water. He was a big man and it took several men to pull him into a life boat.

It was said and I have no doubt that it was true that he awarded himself the purple heart because he was knocked out of his chair when the explosion occurred.

For his extraordinary heroism during the Aleutian Campaign he was made an Admiral and took command of the carrier Franklin in the south pacific. This carrier was attacked by the Japanese and damaged to the extent that he should have given the order to abandon ship. Because he failed to give the order in a timely manner several hundred lives were needlessly lost.

He was also the one who recommended that I be given the Distinguished Flying Cross, which I never received.

Following is a statement entered into my Navy Service Record:

Recommended for Distinguished Flying Cross
award by Commander Patrol Wing Four for
action as radioman and gunner of PBY-5
Aircraft during action against enemy in Aleutian area
during period from 10 June to 20 June 1942

I remained in the states for almost a year. Pat, French and I were transferred back to the Naval Air Station at North Island, San Diego. Pat and I were promoted to Aviation Chief Radioman and French was promoted to First Class Aviation radioman.

In preparation for a marriage that didn't occur, Pat bought a home in Dan Diego and we all three moved into it. Because of our war records, all three of us were given light duty. In fact, we all three spent most of our time ashore, seldom showing up on base except for roll call.

But as with all good things, our tour of duty at San Diego finally anted was transferred to a new squadron being formed at an airbase near San Francisco. Pat was transferred to a squadron in Hawaii.

My new squadron also went to the Naval Air Station at Ford Island, Hawaii. I was made leading Chief Radioman and when the war ended I had approximately 150 radiomen and radar technicians under my command. While there I rejected an offer to be given an officer commission and also turned down an offer to be sent to flight school in the states. This offer came to me after the war had ended.

I returned to the states and was discharged in the latter part of 1945

Both Herbert, my twin and Bruce, my older brother went into the service during the war. Herb into the army and Bruce into the Navy. Both were given medical discharges after short tours of duty. Neither ever went over seas. In both of their cases, an ulcerated stomach were the reason for their medical discharges.

For the next 4 or 5 months I did nothing except make the night clubs around Ft. Worth and sleep most of day. I had come out of the service with approximately \$ 4,000.00, some of this was poker winnings, some was back pay from the Navy for vacation time which I hadn't received.

I don't remember the reason why I approached the Weather Bureau for employment. I seem to remember that Dad personally knew the Regional Director of the Weather Bureau at Ft. Worth. From my several years of experience with radar, I knew that eventually radar would be used as a tool in weather forecasting, so maybe that was the reason I approached them for employment.

What ever the reason, the Director and I formed an immediate friendship. As a result of his inquires, he found that a group of scientists, engineers, meteor and technicians were being assembled at the University Of Chicago to start a project to study the capability aircraft to safely fly through the thunder storm. This was to be a joint Army, Navy and Weather Bureau project, headed by Dr. Horace Byers of the University of Chicago. I seemed to have the type of experience the Weather Bureau was seeking and I was almost immediately on my way to Chicago.

After an initial indoctrination of approximately 2 months at the University, The project shifted its

base of operations to Orlando, Florida for the first phase of its investigation. Orlando was picked because Florida has thunderstorms more frequently than any other state in the union.

Initially a couple of months were spent installing a grid network of weather stations, communications systems, and radar systems. Even as a lowly technician, because of my navy experience in radar, radio and electronics and also my previous experience with directing people I was given almost total responsibility for installation of these systems. For my work during this installation phase I received a personal letter of commendation from the Chief of the Weather Bureau and the Regional Director at Ft. Worth called me to congratulate me on my achievement. I also received a small salary increase.

Our base of operations was the Army Air Base at Orlando. As a single man I was given quarters in the BOQ (bachelor officer quarters) and had most of my meals provided by the officers mess.

Most of the men assigned to the project were married and lived off base. However I had hooked up with a couple of single guys on the project and it wasn't long until we were pretty well acquainted with the night clubs around Orlando.

I'll never forget the day when one of these guys and I were sitting in the office and in through the door walked ,who I thought, was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. I'll also never forget my comment to my friend. I said to him. "Buddy, you are looking at the woman I intend to marry".Her name was Ruth Doyle House, a former Wave in the Navy, who was reporting for work on the project. She and I began dating and were married a few months later.

At the end of the thunderstorm period in Florida I was sent to Washington D.C. to headquarters of the Weather Bureau.

Ruth was transferred to the weather station at Charleston, South Carolina. Over the next few months I visited with her, both at Charleston and her home in Scotland Neck, North Carolina.

Also during this time the Weather Bureau embarked upon a plan to modify some surplus military radar systems and install them at several weather stations through out the U.S. I was put in charge of making these modifications and made the first installation of a weather radar system in the U.S. at the National Airport in Washington D.C.

On January 24, 1947, Ruth and I were married. The wedding was held in the Episcopal church at Scotland Neck , North Carolina of which the House family were members. None of my friends or family were present at the wedding. Bo, Ruth's brother acted as my best man.

To me, the wedding was quite literally a painful experience. On the morning of the day of the wedding I purchased a new pair of shoes which were too small for my feet. All through the wedding, the reception, and until we got into the car to leave Scotland Neck my feet hurt terribly. As soon as we got into our car to leave I removed those shoes and never wore them again.

We left the wedding on our way to Wichita, Kansas, where I would make the second installation

of a radar weather system in the U.S.. No sooner had we arrived in Wichita and rented a basement apartment, we both came down with severe cases of the flu. Both of us had high fever, head and chest colds and chills for an extended period of time. Not exactly an ideal honeymoon.