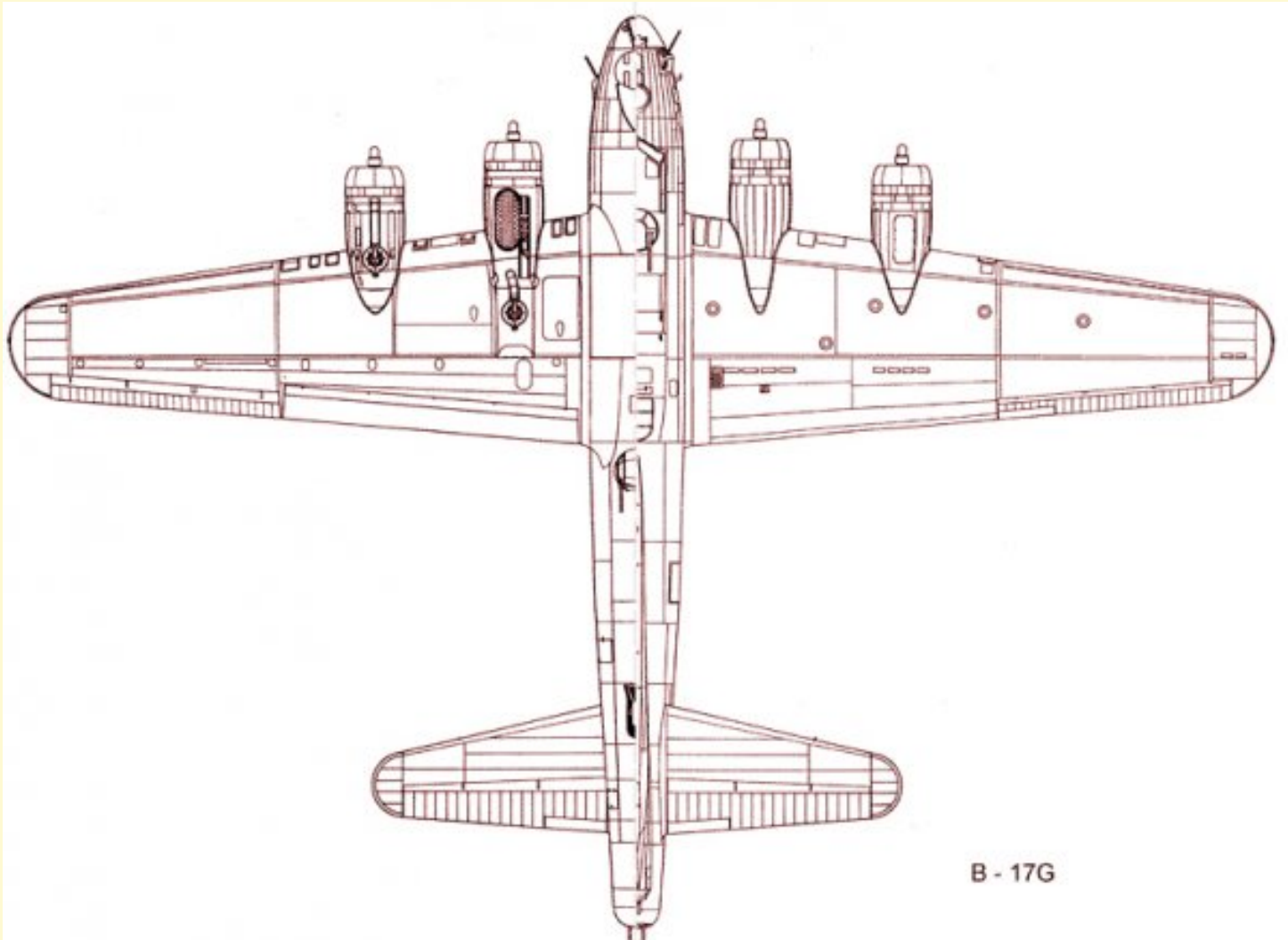


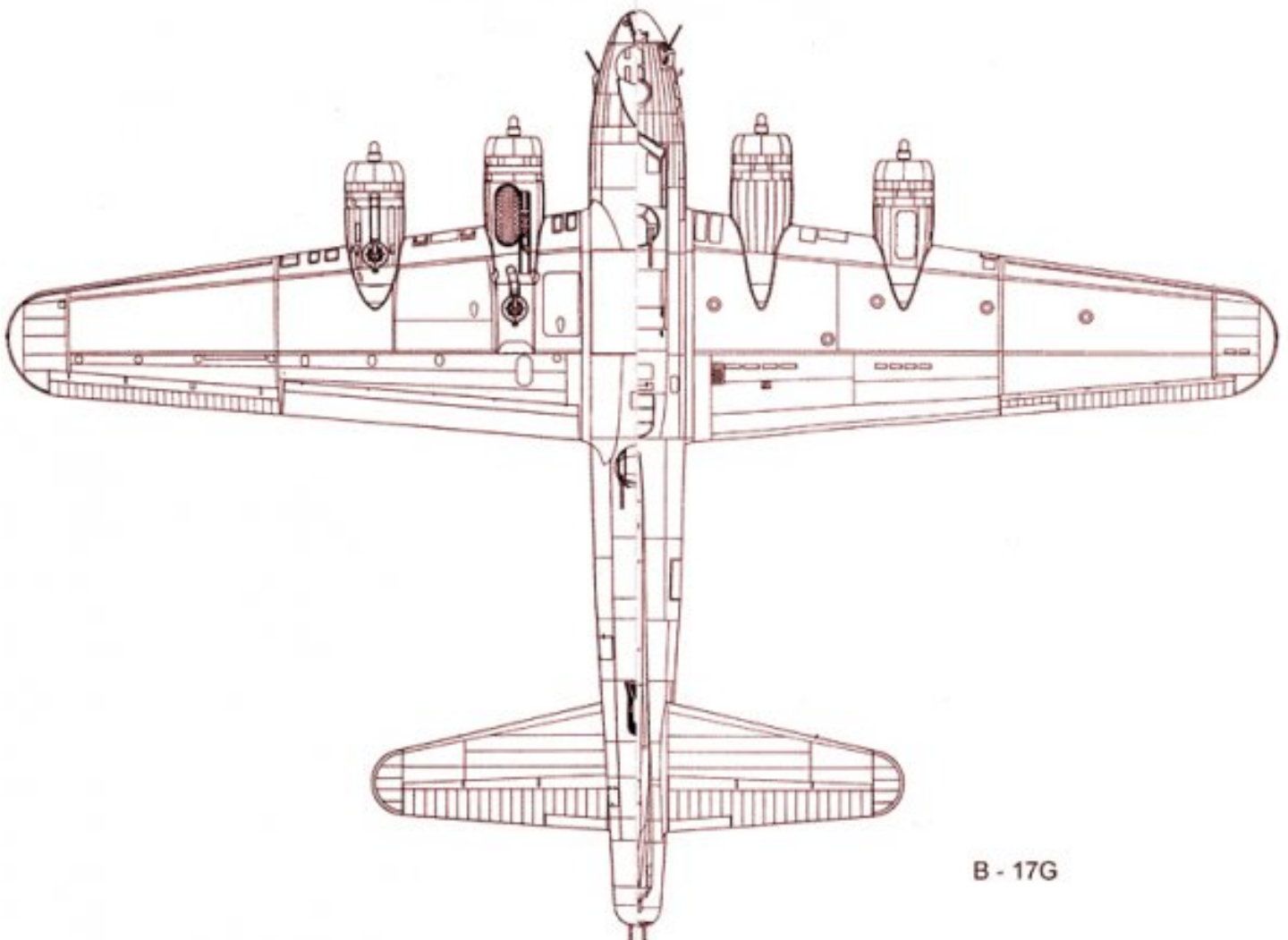


THE MILITARY HISTORY OF WILLIAM J. DALLAS 1935 - 1960





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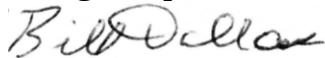
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PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE READING MY HISTORY!!!!

Dear Reader,

This history of Bill Dallas's military history was written, edited, re-edited, re-edited and printed by a novice writer with no previous experience in writing, editing, printing and a poor memory of time, names and places. There are probably many errors in spelling, grammar and editing. I have a lot more appreciation of writers of books and newspapers for their ability to control the right margin.* They are always so neat and almost in a straight line, mine are not so straight.

So again, please excuse the errors.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Dallas".

BILL DALLAS

* Bill's original manuscript was hand-typed, so he controlled the right margin manually.

PREFACE

I started writing this history on April 8, 1998 with a thought that someone may like to know just how I spent my military life. It has been a long time since I retired from the Air Force in 1960 and even longer since the beginning of my interest in the military.

Time has dimmed my memory of the dates and some of the names but there are still the sweet memories of my life. I say sweet but some memories are not as sweet as some but it has been my life, good or bad. I have not put into writing all of the sordid details. Some of them would not make very good reading and some would be very embarrassing to me and my family. You must remember that I was very young and somewhat kind of stupid but fortunately these incidents became much fewer as I grew a bit smarter.

So, dear reader, as you read this be kind to me and realize that much of this happened in a much different time and under a very different way of life.

This record is because of the urging of my wife, Allyne, and a member of our church, Clara Lobdell. Both have been urging, if not nagging, me to continue. I thank them both.

CHAPTER 1

MY FIRST INTEREST IN THE MILITARY 1928-1938

I guess I first became interested in the military when my family took me to see the Armistice Day parades when I was about five or six years old. Later when I was about ten or eleven I went by myself or with some of my friends. We usually went to the National Guard Armory near the corner of Commerce Street and Lancaster in Fort Worth, Texas after the parade was over to watch the National Guard members. In those days we were excused from school on Armistice Day, which could be any day of the week, not just on weekends as most holidays are now. I think that the thing that impressed me most was the precision in the marching and the rifle drill, changing shoulders with their rifles upon command in unison. There was usually a band playing and the heavy beat of the bass drum was a signal for their left feet to hit the ground. Their marching cadence was 120 steps per minute. Little did I know that I would be in these ranks in a few years. After I was in High School, I never got to see another Armistice Day Parade because I was always in one, until after I retired from the Air Force in 1960.

When I was in Junior High School, joined the ROTC program. I had to buy my uniform which consisted of Olive Drab (OD) trousers, OD shirt, OD tie, web belt with polished brass buckle and brown shoes. We were issued a web pistol belt, but no pistol. We had to keep the brass buckle on the belt polished and the web belt Alboed. Albo was a yellowish clay that was rubbed into the web after the brass was polished. Our teacher was a retired Army Officer and he taught us a little about the Army like how to do the facings, right, left and about face, how to salute, how to march and even a little about personal hygiene. His name was Captain Head. If we wanted to go to the rest room or get a drink of water, we had to go to Captain Head, come to attention, salute and ask his permission to go. After we had his permission we had to salute again, do an about face and step off with our left foot. You always stepped off with your left foot and even now I quite often still step off on my left foot. After Junior High School I went to Paschal High School. This was the first year it was called Paschal before it was Central High School. Here joined the ROTC program again. Our teacher was Captain Stitt. He was in the cavalry of the Texas National Guard. His duties were much the same as Captain Head.

Here we trained with a rifle. I had joined the Texas National Guard July 25, 1937. When I was in High School, I was a Corporal in the National Guard. I asked Captain Stitt why I could not be promoted because I was a Corporal in the National Guard. Big deal, I was promoted to Corporal in the ROTC.

I quit school in 1938 and went to work in the oil field near Corpus Christi, Texas.

CHAPTER 2

TEXAS NATIONAL GUARD

I joined Company B, 144th Infantry Regiment, 36th Division of the Texas National Guard on July 25, 1937. I was to receive one dollar for each drill period as a private and we drilled once a month. Our company commander was Captain William J. Sutton and our First Sergeant was Thomas E. Brown. When I signed up I said that I was 18 years old, I only lied by about three years but I was 6 feet tall and weighed about 150 pounds. I don't think they believed me but it was about time for summer maneuvers and the company was a little under strength so they took me in. I learned the manual of arms and marching maneuvers quickly and by the time I was in for a year and a half, I made Corporal. I was in charge of a squad of eight men, there were eight men in a squad and I was the squad leader. I went to camp in 1937 as a private. We went to Camp Hulen in Palacios, Texas down on the Texas Gulf Coast. It was in August and hot as Hades. We wore wool shirts and were told that we would be cooler because the perspiration on the shirt would evaporate and would cool us. I never felt cooled. We also wore wrap leggings and a campaign hat, like the drill sergeants wear now. As a private that first year I did all kinds of duties, KP, kitchen police, and guard duty plus other things that the older men didn't want to do. I was a recruit and the other recruits caught the same duties as I did.

When we returned home we had to get our uniforms cleaned and pressed at our expense. It only cost a quarter at the time but it was hard to come by in those days of the Depression.

In 1938 we went to Camp Bullis near San Antonio, Texas for our summer camp. I was a Private First Class by then and was a BAR, Browning Automatic Rifleman, in charge of the other BAR men. I was promoted to PFC/Sixth Class Specialist. As a private I made \$30 per month, as a PFC I made \$36 a month and as a PFC/SCS I made \$40 a month. It was after we returned from camp that I made Corporal and made \$48 a month.

Our First Sergeant, Tommy Brown lived near me and I got to know him pretty well. I rode to and from drills with him in his car. We found that our interests were much the same and we became very good friends.

About this time I decided that school wasn't the place for me. We, Tommy and I, had worked in the oil fields in East Texas and I made more money in some days than high school graduates made in a week so I decided to quit school and go to Corpus Christi, Texas to work. This was one of the more stupid things that I did in my early life. This was in 1939. We worked near Corpus Christi in the town of Agua Dulce. I started out as a water boy and Tommy was the Time Keeper and Office Manager. After a while I decided that I wanted to work in the ditch gang. We had a mechanical ditch digger, but the ditch gang had to clean out the ditch and smooth it for the pipe. I also worked as a welder's helper at a salary of \$1.00 an hour. Later I changed to a bulldozer's helper at the same salary but I got to drive the dozer and or minor jobs like back filling the ditch after the pipe had been placed in the ditch.

After I left the ditch gang I made more money and Tommy and I bought a small sailboat. As I became more able to sail, we made plans to buy a boat and sail the South Pacific hauling freight. We began to save our money and had about \$5000 saved by the time we returned to Fort Worth for the 1940 summer maneuvers. I had been promoted to Sergeant before we went to Corpus Christi but I was reduced to Private because I left without leave. I went to summer camp in Louisiana as a Private. After that I did not have a regular job and it seemed that we may be going to war so we gave up on that South Pacific thing.

We were called to active duty on November 25, 1940.

CHAPTER 3

ACTIVE DUTY IN THE U.S. ARMY IN COMPANY B

The Texas National Guard was called into active duty on November 25, 1940 and scheduled to be stationed at Camp Bowie near the city of Brownwood, Texas. After we were sworn into the Regular Army we stayed in Fort Worth until Camp Bowie was completed. Some of us stayed at our homes and some were provided a room in a hotel in town. We were provided meals in the area across from the armory in an area that was once the railroad station. It was a very cold winter that year and eating out of a mess kit without a table was not the best experience. In December we moved to Camp Bowie but it was not yet completed. We had wooden frames with tents over the frames but we did have heat in the tents provided by gas heaters. The areas between the rows of tents, called the company streets, were very rough and muddy when it rained. We finally had it graded and gravel spread to cover the mud. We did that part of the work.

Our usual day started with a roll call which was usually rather short but one morning our First Sergeant saw someone's overcoat blow open and saw that he did not have his uniform on so he called each name on the roster. We almost froze that morning and you can bet everyone wore a uniform at morning roll call after that. Our meals were very good and served family style with a Corporal at the head of each table. The Sergeants had a table and had special condiments on the table. The Sergeants paid for these extras. None of the other enlisted men complained of the specials that the Sergeants had, they did envy but hoped that they would be there some day. I had been promoted to Corporal after we returned from the Louisiana Maneuvers in 1940 and as an NCO, Non-commissioned Officer, I had very little to do except Guard Duty and NCOICQ, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of Quarters. In January, 1941 I was sent to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas to an NCO School that lasted about 6 weeks. The school was conducted by NCOs from the 9th Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Army Division. This outfit was one that made the landing in Normandy on D Day in 1945. Shortly after I returned to Camp Bowie I was promoted to Sergeant.

Our training at Camp Bowie consisted of maneuvers in an area about 25 miles west of the camp. Every Monday morning we marched with full pack, about 25 pounds, and rifle to the

maneuver area. I think that the maneuvers were designed to train the officers more than the enlisted men because we did little except to dig foxholes, a hole that was about 12" deep and 6 feet long. It was fine except when it rained.

After a week in the woods we returned back to camp on Friday to get ready for a Saturday morning inspection. If we passed we were given passes for the weekend. To most of us it meant going to Fort Worth. One of my friends, James E. (Buddy) Latham, bought a stretch Plymouth sedan and charged \$5.00 for the round trip to Fort Worth. His car could carry 5, and it paid for itself in a very short time. He did OK.

Tommy and I had a 1940 Plymouth coupe so I didn't have to pay to go home, just buy gas. It wasn't rationed at that time. About the middle of the summer of 1941 we started receiving conscripts. These were not draftees but men that had volunteered to get their one-year of service over. It lasted much more than one year. I was placed in charge of the group and when we received about 50, I was given an assistant, Sergeant Clifford A. Ladd. We called him Deacon because he could recite the books of the bible forward or backward 'faster than a speeding bullet'. We instructed in close order drill, military courtesy and customs of the service and other subjects that we had little or no knowledge. We did a lot of studying in the evening. I became very friendly with one man, and because he could not read or write very well, I wrote his letters home and read the answers for him. The conscripts were integrated into the company just prior to going on the Louisiana Maneuvers.

The trips to the woods continued all through the summer of that year except for the maneuvers in Louisiana. While we were in Louisiana two of my friends and I, all of us were Sergeants, were reduced to the grade of Private. It wasn't much of a pay cut though, as Sergeants we received \$60 a month and a month later Privates pay was increased from \$30 to \$50 a month. I remember that I was put on KP but I didn't have much to do. The others on KP were so used to doing as I said that the Mess Sergeant placed me in charge of the other KPs. I do not remember why my two buddies, William N. (Bill) Hard and James E. (Buddy) Latham were busted but I'll never forget why I was. Our Platoon Leader, a 2nd Lieutenant who shall remain nameless here, told me to guard the well and not to let anyone get water from the well. Later a Private, the Lieutenant's orderly, wanted to get some water for the Lieutenant. I told him that no one was to get water from the well. After the incident with his orderly, the Lieutenant came and asked

why I had not let his orderly have water from the well. I repeated his order to me; he said, "Don't do as I do, do as I say. "I lost my cool and blurted, " You little sawed off SOB kiss my ass and guard the well yourself." The next morning the Company Commander called me to his tent and asked me if I had said that to the Lieutenant and I admitted that I had. He told me to take off my stripe, I was now a Private and I deserved the punishment.

Later Bill Hard, Buddy Latham and I decided we could make some extra money doing laundry. There was a spring near our camp area so we set up shop. We rather enjoyed the work rather than just sitting around camp and we did make quite a bit. We sent our own uniforms home to our mothers and they mailed them back clean and starched. Our maneuvers started at Logansport, Louisiana and we walked from there to Lake Charles and back. We got pretty tired of the G.I. meals so we began asking the local families if they would fix us something to eat. We would give them \$1.00 for the meals and they were worth it. Usually we were fed fried chicken, mashed potatoes, some kind of beans and biscuits. They were mostly very good. When the maneuvers were over we returned to Camp Bowie but made a stop in Dallas, Texas and put on a demonstration of an attack at the Cotton Bowl. I was made a runner for the reporters in the press box and got to watch the entire thing and didn't get dirty and sweaty. The men fired blank cartridges and at night it was quite colorful. After we returned to Camp Bowie, Bill, Buddy and I were placed in a tent with a Corporal. I don't think he ever told us to do anything, he always asked. We respected his rank and always did as he asked.

One parade I will never forget was one where we marched with bayonets fixed to our rifles. We had never done this before. At one point we were given the order of Port Arms. This is to move the rifle from your shoulder and to hold it at a 45-degree angle across your body. We were given the order to Double Time, run. I think every man started to yell. It was kind of like a bayonet charge. After the parade, all of the Regiment's NCOs were called to a meeting and received a real dressing down. This was ordered by the higher brass but I don't think our company officers thought it was that bad and we were told later they didn't think we could have prevented the yelling under the circumstances that existed. Fixed Bayonets, Port Arms and Double Time, it seemed like the thing to do. All of the Regiment's NCOs were restricted to the camp that weekend as punishment, but the rest of the men were given weekend passes. I had a lot of friends in B Company but I was kind of tired of the routine and some of the officers were not to my liking. A friend of mine, Jay V. Russell, had transferred to the

1st Battalion Headquarters Detachment and our old Company Commander, Captain, now, Major Sutton was the Detachment Commander. I asked Major Sutton if I could transfer to his unit and he said yes. So I packed my duffel bag and moved.

This was a good move.

CHAPTER 4

1st BATTALION HEADQUARTERS TEXAS, WASHINGTON STATE AND CALIFORNIA

The first thing I did in my new outfit was to get a military driver's license. I drove a Jeep for several months. The time was now in the winter of 1941. On December 7, 1941 I was in the Worth Theater in Fort Worth watching the movie 'Sergeant York' when the movie was stopped and the manager said that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor and that all military personnel were to report to their organization immediately. The audience applauded after the announcement about the bombing this I could not understand. This meant WAR to me. I returned to Camp Bowie and it was not long before we received orders to ship out. All of the 36th Division was not moving, only our Regiment, the 144th, was being relocated somewhere but we were not told to where.

At the announcement in the theater most of us did not know where Pearl Harbor was. Within a few days we were on a train headed west. There were lots of rumors as to where we would be going and I think most had us going to the Pacific to fight the Japs. Our train did not have any sleeping or bathing facilities. We had to sleep sitting up and had to wash in the lavatory in the restroom. Eating was a bit of a problem too. I do not have any memory of what we were fed but I guess it was enough to sustain life. We spent about 7 days on the train and ended up in Washington at Fort Lewis. There we were issued ammunition but still no information as to our destination. After a few days we were loaded on trucks and Company B and 1st Battalion Headquarters were trucked to Camp Clatsop, Oregon. The camp was just a few miles south of the mouth of the Columbia River and the Tongue Point Naval Air Station. I had been assigned to the S-2, Intelligence Section, after my transfer into 1st Battalion. Our job was to observe the shipping from an underground post on the Pacific Ocean Coast. I don't think we ever saw very many ships and no Jap ships. While we were there someone fired some shells from the ocean to the beach. The part of the beach that was shelled was very remote with no development in the area. This caused us to think that an American ship had done the shelling to awaken the people to the fact that we were at war.

That winter was a cold one. We had a conical iron stove in our observation post and Presto Logs to burn. The logs were

compressed sawdust with oil to help it burn. One log would last for about 2 hours and would produce a lot of heat. After a few weeks we were moved to Longview, Washington to provide guards for the bridge there over the Columbia River.

The Battalion Headquarters, was assigned quarters in a building near the town of Longview. Company B was assigned quarters in some buildings that belonged to the Weyerhaeuser Lumber Company near the river. There were showers and toilet facilities but no beds, just the floor. I think we got some mattresses later. The people in Longview were terrific. It seems that Longview, Washington was founded by people from Longview, Texas and the people there couldn't do enough for us. We asked if anyone had an old washing machine that we could have and we received 6, but some did not work but we managed to get 2 to work well enough to do our laundry. We only had about 25 or 30 in our detachment. When Christmas came we were all invited to Christmas Dinner. We walked to the town square where we were picked up by some family and taken to their home for dinner. After two of us had eaten and we were returned to the square, well fed and on our way to our barracks, when another car drove up and wanted us to go with them to dinner. We said we had already eaten but he would not take no for an answer, we had another dinner. When we were taken back to town it happened again, my buddy and I had three dinners that day and had a wonderful time at each home. It was a little like being home again. Another thing the people did was in the local bar. When we would walk in the first beer was always 'on the house' then someone would always buy the next few rounds. I have wondered why we didn't return the favor of buying a round for the house. I think beer was only a dime a glass.

The state had what we thought was a funny law; a person could not walk with a beer in his hand. The waitress would always come and carry our glass to where we were going. They didn't seem to mind, but we cut out much moving around so as not to cause them more work.

It was in Longview that I met my 'first true love', Sugar. She worked in an ice cream shop and I ate a lot of ice cream just so I could talk to her. I finally asked her out and to my surprise she accepted. She had a car and most of the time we just drove someplace and did a bit of smooching, kissing, nothing else. She told me that she was kind of engaged to a man that was a flying instructor in California. I think I might have changed her mind about him but what did I have to offer. Later I found out that she had married the man and moved to California. I was heart broken,

for some time.

Our detachment was moved to Vancouver Barracks across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon. There my main duty was to guard Army prisoners. I was able to get three-day passes and hitchhike rides back to Longview to visit Sugar.

I remember one very memorable incident while we were there. One morning the 1st Sergeant told me to build a fire in the boiler. I had never done anything like this before but I thought I had better try. I was able to find some wood and some gasoline so I put in the wood, threw in some coal and then the gasoline. The fire started but didn't last very long so I repeated same try, but again the fire went out. My third try was successful I did the same things but I put in a lot more gasoline and did I have a fire. There was a pressure gauge on the furnace and as the needle was approaching the red line I decided I had better tell the 1st Sergeant and have him clear the barrack. The gauge was now past the red line, he closed the vents. This caused the fire to be choked off and the pressure dropped to a safe level. Sergeant Chick got a kick out of my being so scared but he said that I did right by calling him. It was a good thing that we were such good friends. We were only in Vancouver Barracks for about 6 months then we were transferred to San Francisco, California. Another man and I drove a Jeep from Vancouver to San Francisco, taking turns driving.

I really enjoyed the trip until we got to San Francisco. I had never seen such traffic. We finally got to our assigned location, Fort Funston. It was an old Coast Artillery Post but the guns had been long removed. It was located on a high cliff overlooking the ocean and near the San Francisco Zoo. The location was about 2 miles south of Seal Rock, still a tourist attraction. Our duties were the same here as in Oregon, observing for enemy ships. There were times that we could not even see the ocean for the fog and we were only about 50 feet above the water. Our observation post was a concrete structure built for observing the fort's gun firing years before. It was determined that the Intelligence Section needed a bomb-proof shelter so a location was selected and we started digging. The deeper we dug the wider the hole got. We were digging in sand and the sides continued to move down. The project was finally dropped after it was decided it wasn't going to work.

One of my jobs was to drive into San Francisco and pick up the mail every day. The 1st Sergeant told me that I was taking too long to go to town and return so he decided to drive with me one day.

After that trip he said that I was driving too fast. He had not realized that the traffic was so bad.

It was very cold the year around in San Francisco, once we had to drive to Palo Alto, California to get some ammunition, it was on the 4th of July. We left camp in overcoats, gloves and woolen caps over our ears. By the time we got to Burlingame we had removed our coats and by the time we got to Palo Alto it was 105 degrees. The next time we went there we were prepared for the temperature difference.

Another time we had an experience of the cost of living in California. Three of us were going to our Regimental Headquarters in Santa Rosa. We stopped in Petaluma for coffee. When we got the check we found that coffee was 10 cents a cup and between the three of us we only had 20 cents, just half enough. Since I was in charge of the detail it was up to me to clear the thing with the cafe. We were all armed with Thompson submachine guns and Colt .45s. When I approached the manager and told him of our plight, he looked me over and said something like, he couldn't argue with me considering the way I was armed. I promise to pay him the rest of the money in a day or so when we made the run again. I thought he was a little more amused than angry. I did pay him the other 20 cents about a day or two later.

I got a three-day pass to go to Longview and the 1st Sergeant let me leave on a Saturday morning with my pass beginning on Monday. By Monday I was in Portland and was picked up by the MPs. They took me to their headquarters because my pass was signed by my section officer but his title was not shown. The MP officer remembered me being at Vancouver Barracks and the officer that signed my pass so he let me go. The MP that picked me up refused to let me ride with him to the highway to Longview. I think he was a bit miffed because I was allowed to continue. Anyway I got to Longview, it was not hard to hitch a ride in those days, and I spent two days with my true love and then had to return to my post in California. It was sometime later that I heard that Sugar had married. Life was over for me I was sure.

In July or August I found that the Army was taking anyone that could pass a test would get into the Aviation Cadet Program. I still remember the address where I took the test, 444 Market Street in downtown San Francisco. The program at first required applicants to have a college degree, then later two years of college, then later some college, then later high school graduate and finally, to pass a test. I still do not know how I passed the test. I think the Good

Lord was guiding my pencil. I was told to return to my organization and wait for further orders. I really enjoyed San Francisco. It was a soldier's town except for a General there named DeWitt. He ordered that Army personnel could only order mixed drinks until 8:00PM. We got by that order by joining up with a sailor or marine and they would order and we would pay. There was one bar on Market Street that gave service men double drinks for the price of one. I can't remember the name of the bar it had an Irish name. There was a theater that had movies and name bands, like Harry James, Artie Shaw others at a cost of only a quarter.

One night Buddy Latham and I went to a neighborhood bar and there we started talking to a man and the subject got around to what we called Queers, now gays. We wanted to go to one of their bars and this man said he knew of one but he could only take one person with him. Neither of us wanted that so we decided it was time for us to leave the place. The man offered us a ride and on the way he tried to get Buddy to go with him. When we stopped at the gate we both jumped out and thanked him for the ride. This incident gave us a lot of laughs later. In California at that time was about the only place where blacks and whites went together. One day as several of us were walking along the beach, we saw a very attractive blonde sitting with a black guy. One of the men in our group, we called him 'Hairless Joe' after a comic strip character, walked up to the couple and told them to get off the beach or he was going to do something bad to the black man. We got Joe to leave and we walked on down the beach toward Seal Rock. By the time we returned to the place where the couple had been they were gone. I hate to think what Joe would have done to that guy. That was just something a boy from the piney woods of East Texas was not able to stand for.

One of my jobs at Fort Funston was all night Charge of Quarters. One night I received a call from someone that said he was our Regimental Commander. I cannot remember his name right now. His words were slurred and hard to understand but I finally understood that he was saying that the Japs had landed in Northern California and that we should come to repel them. I told the Officer of The Day when he came in about the call and he said to forget it. I made a note of the whole incident in my report and in the morning, after I was relieved and had returned to my barrack, I got a call to report to Lt. Colonel Sutton. He had read my report and wanted to know why I had not called him. I told him that the OD told me it was not necessary to call him in the middle of the night. The Colonel then asked me how long I had been in his

command then he proceeded to read me the riot act. He told me everything I had ever done wrong and his last words were that he did not want to hear the words Army Air Corps from me as long as I was under his command, and he did not. I often wondered what he said to that OD about the incident.

It was not long after that, September 1942, that I received my orders to report to Hamilton Field, California and that I had been transferred to the Army Air Corps Unassigned.

CHAPTER 5

ARMY AIR CORPS

I was ordered to remain at Hamilton Field until I was ordered to report to the Classification Center. I had no idea just what that was or where. There was another man there with the same orders and after a few days of just sitting and doing nothing I applied for a job at the Transient Officers Mess. I would receive extra pay and my meals for the job. It was easy and I enjoyed it. One day I was mashing the potatoes with a power blender, a large one, and I lifted the blades before turning off the motor. It took me several hours to clean the kitchen. I learned something. We had officers from several countries in for meals and one day one from Australia was there when we had strawberries on the menu for dessert. This officer wolfed them down like he was starved. When he told me that he had not eaten any in three or more years, I went back to the kitchen and fixed him a very large bowl with ice cream on the side. I guess he shipped out the next day as I never saw him again. I had never seen a person enjoy something as much as that man. About mid October I received orders to report to the Gulf Coast Testing Center at San Antonio, Texas. I went by train to San Antonio and it took three days to get there. I had several days before I was to report so I hitched a ride to Fort Worth to visit my family.

I reported to the San Antonio District Aviation Cadet Center, this is where the WWII comic character got his name, SAD SACK. I was tested and classified for pilot training. After a short time I was moved across the road to the Pre-Flight Training Center. I vividly remember one incident that occurred while I was waiting to go to the Pre-Flight Center. We were playing poker with a betting limit of 25 cents with a three-raise limit. I drew a pat hand of a royal flush. One other man also drew a good pat hand, a full house. A royal flush beats anything except four aces. We were not playing with a joker so I knew that I had him beat. We both made our three raises when he said that since it was just the two of us we should take off the limit. I didn't want to hurt him so I declined but my buddy kept saying to me to go ahead and take off the limit. After the man kept after me to take off the limit, I finally did. I also told him he could borrow from anyone if he wanted to bet more. He was a little shook when, after he had shown his hand, he saw that I had beat him. He didn't get any sympathy from anyone.

The Post had two parts; one was for classification where after several tests you were classified for training as a pilot, a navigator or a bombardier. I was qualified for all three but I wanted to be a pilot. I think we spent about a month in the classification center before going to the Pre-Flight Center. In the Pre-Flight Center we received instruction in math, military customs, Morse Code and lots of physical training. The math was quite hard for me but another cadet in my barrack had taught math in school so he helped me get through. Morse Code was pretty easy for me. I learned to take 13 words per minute by tone and 5 words per minute by flasher (light). I do not remember much of the codes now. As lowerclassmen we were subjected to a lot of stuff from our upperclassmen. Most of my class came right out of civilian life and most of the upper class had military background. They found out that I had been in the military and did not hassle me much. We had our hair cut in a 'butch' style. It was quite a convenience in the mornings when we didn't have to comb our hair; it saved a little time. Our status as lowerclassmen only lasted about a month then we were the ones to harass the lowerclassmen. I was in charge of our barrack and a cadet officer. No privileges just responsibilities.

Our physical training was under the direction of Lieutenant Lord, we called him 'Agony Lord' but not to his face. I heard that if your stomach muscles were strong it reduced the probability of getting airsick. Since I had had only a very brief ride in an airplane many years ago, I was a little concerned so I really worked hard in the physical training phase. About midway through Pre-flight I developed a discharge from my penis. I went on sick call and was put in the hospital in the venereal ward with men who had gonorrhea. I told the doctor that I had not been near a female in more than three months. I was tested and released two days later. They said it was just a strain, no disease. I wasn't gone long enough to put me back into another class and I graduated and was ready for flight training. Our Pre-flight had lasted about 6 weeks and I was ready to start my flight training.

CHAPTER 6

PRIMARY FLIGHT TRAINING

My Primary Flight Training was conducted at Tulsa, Oklahoma at the Spartan School of Aeronautics. My instructor was Mr. John Meeks, a civilian pilot and an excellent instructor. He was not only a very capable flight instructor but an excellent judge of us fledging pilots. He seemed to be able to understand what each of us needed in the way of motivation. When we first arrived at the school we were lined up in a hanger and a roll call was conducted. When my name was called an elderly man came up to me and asked if I had any relatives in the Army Air Corps. I said that I had a cousin but I had never met him. He said that if I was anything like him, I should not unpack my bags because I would not be there very long. What a reception, but I think it may have helped me later during my training at Spartan. I'll go into that later. This was in February 1943.

As I said, Mr. Meeks was a very good judge on how to handle us. He never chewed on me, just explained again what he expected of me and it worked. The plane we flew was a Fairchild PT-19, it had an in-line engine, two open cockpits and a single wing attached to the bottom of the fuselage. The only communication was from the instructor to the student and not from the student to the instructor. It was called a Gosport. All the student could do was to listen.

After about 6 hours of dual instruction Mr. Meeks said that I was ready to solo. I was elated but not too sure of this step in my training. We were at an auxiliary field with sod cover no paved runways. He got out of the plane and told me to take it up. My first landing was not the best and when I taxied to Mr. Meeks he gave me some instructions and sent me away for some more landings. My second landing was a lot better but still not up to his standards. As I took off for my third landing I saw the bus arriving with the other students. I knew that I had better make a very good landing or get a bunch of razzing from my fellow students. I talked to myself all the way around the traffic pattern and was really very strong on the final approach. What a landing, it was a perfect three point, that is, the main gear and the tail wheel touched down at the same time. When I taxied to the stage house I could see that Mr. Meeks had a smile a mile wide. He said that was the way the landing was supposed to be done. We had a strip of adhesive tape

on the top of our leather helmets, it was called a skunk stripe and indicated that you had not soloed yet. The guys in my group removed my tape with appropriate comments. I was the first in my group to solo. There is something about that first solo flight that is hard to explain. I felt as free as a bird up there all alone. You might say that I was the master of my future at that time. It was a real thrill, as any pilot will tell you about his first solo.

I mentioned traffic pattern, let me explain. The traffic pattern is the flight path around the landing strip. It is rectangular in shape. When you take off that is the takeoff leg. When you reach an altitude of about 1,000 feet you make a left or right turn of 90 degrees, this is the crosswind leg. The next turn of 90 degrees is to the downwind leg. The next turn of 90 degrees is called the base leg and the last turn of 90 degrees is called the final approach. During our training we did not have an airspeed indicator in the rear seat. Our instructor set up a glide angle and we listened to the wind whistling in our ears. After a number of times we were able to get just the right airspeed for a landing approach. After my solo I was allowed to fly by myself and practice some of the different maneuvers we had to learn.

The next step in my training was a fifteen-hour check. It was made with a pilot known as "The Washing Machine" because he eliminated, washed out, so many students. Mr. Meeks had me do all of the maneuvers that I would have to do on the check ride. I had several days to practice before my check ride. I practiced them all until I thought I could do them in my sleep. I passed the check ride with flying colors. The check pilot even complimented me on my techniques. I had been a bit worried about the fifteen-hour check since I had only about eleven hours of flight time, but it turned out to be OK.

The thirty-hour check ride was the next step. I had about twenty-seven hours by this time so I was not so worried about this ride. The day of the check ride was exceptionally cold and I wore heavy boots to keep my feet warm. The plane I drew had springs on the rudder and that coupled with the heavy boots was my downfall. I did terribly on the check ride by over controlling the rudder, but the check pilot said that since I had done so well on my fifteen-hour check he was going to give me another chance. The second ride was much better as I did not have on the heavy boots and the plane did not have springs on the rudder. I lived to fly another day. The only other check ride was a military check done by an Army pilot. It was a snap.

I think the most thrilling maneuver we had to do was to spin the aircraft. We did three-turn spins which may sound difficult but were really quite easy. The ground in Oklahoma was divided into lines that went north and south and east and west. We started our spin on one heading and ended on the same heading. After two and one half turns we pushed the control stick forward then pushed the opposing rudder to stop the spin. My first spin was not the easiest for me. I approached the spin several times before I went into the spin. I recovered from the spin about one thousand feet above the altitude that I started the first approach to a spin. I told Mr. Meeks about my first solo spin and he said that it was about normal for a new student on his first spin.

Tulsa was a very good liberty town. My parents told me that I had a second cousin in Tulsa by the name of Charlie Staggs, and that I should look him up. I went to his house one Saturday and had a very enjoyable time talking about relatives. He was about my father's age and I was only twenty years old at that time. He called his daughter-in-law and she came to his house. She was in her late thirties and a real party girl. She had a lot of parties in her apartment with people her own age. I was invited to several of them but usually left early. Not my age group.

There was a bar in downtown Tulsa named The Brown Derby that was a gathering place for cadets and young ladies. I met one just after I became an upperclassman. We went to some apartment several times and she tried to teach me to dance. I learned only enough to keep from stepping on my partner's feet.

The highlight of my stay in Tulsa was our graduation party at the country club. The only drink served was beer, so one of the cadets rented a car and went out of state to buy whiskey. I read the label and it said less than one month old. At the party we only drank one pint. I had ordered two pints, because it was so bad. The next day someone wanted to buy the pint I had so I sold it to him. He dropped it on the floor and before he could clean it up, it had eaten the varnish off.

One of my more frightening experiences in flying almost ended in my crashing. The day was a very bright one with light variable wind. It was varying almost 180 degrees. I flew a normal pattern but as I turned on the final approach I noticed that the windsock on the stage house had reversed and was indicating a wind from the opposite direction than it had been when I took off. I climbed out and reentered the traffic pattern for a landing in the opposite direction. Again as I turned on the final approach the windsock

had almost reversed. Once more I climbed out and reentered the traffic pattern. Again on the final approach I noticed that the wind had almost reversed again. This time I was determined to land. I made my landing approach to land as short as possible but the plane just floated and floated until I forced it down. I put on the brakes as much as I dared and as I approached the fence, I pushed hard right rudder and made a right turn. My wing was over the fence but no damage. As I taxied back to the stage house I was waved over by one of the instructors, it was "The Washing Machine". He looked at me and said, "I might have known it was you." As I mentioned earlier, my first meeting with the instructor may have saved me.

Mr. Meeks usually had us fly inverted from the auxiliary field back to Tulsa. I thought I wanted to make a parachute jump and all it would take was to loosen my seat belt and when we inverted I would fall out and make the jump. That day as we were leaving the auxiliary field Mr. Meeks told me about a cadet that did just what I intended and was washed out, I changed my mind right then. Later I asked Mr. Meeks why he had told me about the cadet that made a parachute jump and he said he did not know why he did. I told him that he had saved me as I had planned to do that the day he told me that story.

When our Primary Training was over in April or May, we were on our way to our Basic Flight Training at Strother Army Air Field near Winfield, Kansas.



Bill Dallas (second from left) in flight training 1943.

CHAPTER 7

BASIC FLIGHT TRAINING

We went by bus from Tulsa to Strother Field. On the way another cadet and I bought beer at each stop along the way. We were slightly drunk by the time we arrived at our destination but it was late at night so everyone just went to bed as soon as we picked up our bedding and were assigned a barrack. We paid for it the next day, as it was a full day of school and exercise.

We would be flying a Vultee B-13, low wing, radial engine, fixed landing gear and a two-position propeller. The plane was nicknamed the Vultee Vibrator because it did vibrate. The two-speed prop was one that it was in either low pitch or high pitch. You took off and landed in high pitch and cruised in low pitch. Our Primary aircraft had a fixed pitch prop so this took a little getting used to, but we did. We also flew from the front seat and we had a full set of instruments. They were engine and flight instruments. We were not used to any of these. I was assigned an instructor that had recently graduated from the Aviation Cadet Program, had attended an Instructor School and I was his first student. He had graduated just three classes ahead of me. I do not remember his name but he was rather short and needed three cushions behind his back in order for him to reach the rudder pedals.

The BT-13 took a while to get used to; the props were the main problem. Trying to remember if they should be in high pitch or low pitch. We did have an interphone in the BT-13 so we could communicate with each other. We also had a sliding canopy that was really nice in cool weather. This was in late March or early April when we started our training at Strother Field. The plane also had a kind of built-in ground loop because the landing gear wheels were so close together. A ground loop is when the plane makes a very sharp turn for about 180 degrees or more out of control and usually results in some damage. I never experienced one but saw several happen. Our first rides were mainly to become acquainted with the plane's characteristics like when would it stall, stop flying, and start dropping out of the sky and its spin. It was a bit harder to recover from a spin than the PT-19 but not really difficult. We had training that we didn't have in Primary, like formation flying, instrument flying and aerobatics. The first two were no problem for me but I didn't do very well in the aerobatics

phase. Slow rolls were no problem but snap rolls and chandelles were somewhat of a problem. A chandelle is like a loop except that at the top of the loop you were to roll out in the opposite direction that you entered the loop from. Neither I nor my instructor could figure out how I ended going 90 degrees to my entrance heading. My lack of proficiency in aerobatics is probably the main reason that I was sent to bombers rather than fighters.

I enjoyed the instrument flying and figured that it may save my life some day so I practiced until I was very good. One day as I was making a takeoff under a hood, I couldn't see outside, from the rear seat, I caged, locked in place, my directional gyro compass to the heading of my takeoff. I then set my flaps to 1/4 and waited for my instructor to tell me to take off. At 1,000 feet of altitude I reduced power to climb power. I thought I had done a terrific job because the directional gyro had not moved at all. That should have been a clue to what I saw next. My instructor told me to come out from under the hood and see where I was. I had started on the extreme right side of the auxiliary field and I was now over the extreme left side of the field. I had not uncaged my directional gyro. Very embarrassing to say the least. My instructor said that the area was clear so he just let me go, as there was no danger in hitting anything. The torque of the engine pulled the plane to the left. Other than that it was a good takeoff. I had learned another lesson.

I had another memorable experience when I was given a flight check. The required maneuvers were printed on the bulletin board and we were told to memorize them and we would be expected to do them in the order as they were printed. I had them memorized very well and when I was to get my check by a Major I was ready. I only remembered the first item, it was to take off and climb to 5,000 feet and level off. At about 2,000 feet we hit clouds but the instructions were to climb to 5,000 feet, so I started up through the clouds. The Major asked me over the interphone if I had an instrument clearance. I had no idea what that was so I said that I thought that he had it. I asked him if I should let down through the clouds, but about that time we were on top of the clouds. The Major pulled the throttle back and said, "Forced Landing". I asked if I should find a hole to let down through and his reply was that I had no power so I had to let down. I let down in a straight line just above stalling speed. This is where all that instrument practice paid off. We let down without a hitch. I looked for a good place to land and picked a field and started my before landing check. Just as I was about 500 feet above the ground the Major asked if the field to my right was better than the one straight ahead. I told him

that I had already committed. I guess that satisfied him because he pushed the throttle forward and told me to climb to 1,000 feet and head for home. After we landed I received a very good and detailed debriefing. I think my flying under instrument conditions saved my butt. We never did the rest of the required items on the flight checklist. I think he was just happy that no incident happened and that we landed safely. I was afraid to ask my instructor what the Major had said, as I thought it best to just let it go. It was never mentioned.

Another memorable incident was when we had a cross country scheduled. It was a triangle flight path with a control plane on the ground at each corner. After takeoff and I was at the assigned altitude I found clouds at my altitude so I started to let down but after letting down about 1,000 feet I did a 180 degree turn and went back to where the clouds started, then I climbed above the clouds on my original heading. I seem to remember that I was about 2,000 feet above my assigned altitude. I estimated how much time I had spent on my turn around and added that to my estimated arrival at the first checkpoint. When my time was up I figured that I was to the left of my course so I let down through the clouds after turning to my right. I broke out of the clouds at about 2,000 ft, as I remember, and in about 1 minute I saw the check plane on the ground. I called him on the radio and he told me that the cross country had been canceled and I should return to the base. I acknowledged his instructions and turned to the course back to the base and climbed back up through the clouds. I made it home with no problems. If I did something like that now with all of the air traffic that we have I probably would have had a collision with another plane.

Those were the dumb incidents that I had but there was one good one for me. We were going to have a kind of field day between the different flights, there were four flights in my group, and the winners would get to return to their Primary Flight Training Base. I do not remember all of the different activities but I was entered in the short field landing competition. Two posts were erected with a paper tape strung between them and the idea was to land close to the posts without hitting the tape. I do not remember how short I was but I won that part of the competition. Our flight won the event and several of us returned to Tulsa for the weekend. We flew in formation and peeled off in 5-second intervals from the formation to land. I was in the front seat and another cadet in the rear. I cut my pattern too short and as I was about to touch down I hit the prop wash from the plane in front of me. I added full power and pushed left-rudder as hard as I could to lift up the right

wing. I recovered but my speed carried me past the other plane in front of me. I landed in front of him. Our instructor did not see that maneuver and my passenger was a little shook up.

On the trip I did get to see my former instructor, Mr. Meeks, but my old girl friend was going with another cadet there. We did make The Brown Derby and downed a few cold ones but no girls. The return trip to Strother Field was uneventful and my landing there was a good one. We did night flying and that was really something. If you were not careful the ground light reflection on the canopy could cause vertigo. We were told that if we became disoriented, we should get on our instruments and believe them. I never had a problem myself but some of the other cadets did. No one crashed or had an accident though. We practiced landings at an auxiliary field. There were hundreds of jack rabbits on the field and my instructor did his best to hit one, but no such luck. About all he did was to stir up a lot of dust.

The dust reminds me of our daily barracks inspections. We had a brand new 2nd Lieutenant that did the inspection and we thought that he was a little envious of us because of the way he punished us. We did not have air conditioning and the windows were open all of the time. The area was like a dustbowl and it entered the barracks windows and lit on the nearest object which was our footlockers. The Lieutenant would write 'Dust on Footlocker' on the lockers and we received punishment if it happened too often. There were usually at least one or two cadets that remained in the barracks for some reason and he would wipe the footlockers before the inspection.

In Kansas the Arkansas River is pronounced R-KANSAS and the nearby town of Arkansas City was pronounced accordingly. The VFW Hall in Arkansas City was about the only place we went in town. No beer was available and the local girls didn't seem to care about going with us. The VFW Hall had a piano and one of our members was quite a piano player and his playing was our main entertainment. Arkansas City was nothing like Tulsa.

No one was washed out and when we completed our training we were separated into single engine advanced and multi-engine advanced training. I was sent to a multi-engine training base.

My next assignment was to Altus Army Air Field near Altus, Oklahoma. Did you notice that Altus and Tulsa have the same letters?

CHAPTER 8

ADVANCED FLIGHT TRAINING

I was sent to Altus Army Air Field near Altus, Oklahoma for two-engine training. Here we flew AT-9 aircraft. It was a low wing two-engine plane with a very high wing load. I was told that only the Martin 8-26 had a higher wing load. There were four of us assigned to an instructor and we all thought that we would be sent to B-26s.

The AT-9 had a very steep glide angle but I never tried it with power off. Once I did pull both throttles back at the same time, we were quite high at the time, and we dropped like a brick. I was in the left seat, normal for the first pilot, and my co-pilot had a map in his lap. His window was open and when we dropped his map flew out of the window. I pushed the throttles up to cruise power almost in the same instant that I had pulled them back. We didn't try that again. I turned 21 while I was at Strother but no one sang Happy Birthday. I don't remember even telling anyone. It was a milestone in my life but I didn't feel that anyone else was that interested in my birthday.

My instructor was a little older than the one I had in Basic and a lot more experienced in instructing. He was from Dallas and he kidded me a lot about me being from Fort Worth. Once on an instrument cross country to some place that I had no idea where my instructor just gave me headings to fly and I flew in that direction until he told me to change. After an hour or so he asked if I knew where we were, of course I had no idea, I only knew that we had flown in a generally southeast direction. I was too busy with the instruments to try to figure where we were. Anyway he said we had just flown over Fort Worth. He let me come out from under the hood and make a 360-degree circle and get a view of my hometown from about 5,000 feet.

As I said before I was a good instrument pilot and we got a lot of practice at Altus. My instructor did not understand the flight gyro; he said that it was just backward and that I should only use the basic instruments. This was the only flaw in his instruction. The flight gyro was a very important instrument and I learned to rely on it many times later in my flying career. The flight gyro was called an artificial horizon and it indicated your attitude, climbing or wing position with regard to the horizon.

Our night flying was a little on the wild side. There was a high hill about 10 miles north of the base and the traffic pattern could get very big at night when a lot of planes were in the air practicing landings. Normally the hill was not a factor but with a lot of traffic the base leg (I explained that in the chapter about my Primary Flight Training) got to be north of the hill. When the tower saw this they usually had some plane on the downwind leg set a new base leg. This caused those north to have to go around and re-enter the downwind leg. This was a lengthy procedure and time consuming but it was necessary.

Once we saw a movie of a prism light that could be adjusted so you would see a green light if your glide path was correct, a red light if you were below the glide path and an amber light if you were above the glide path. Right after seeing the movie we took off for landing practice. I was the co-pilot and on a final approach I looked out the side window and saw corn stalks whizzing by. I yelled for my buddy to pull up. He added power and did so and we went ahead with the landing. He asked why I told him to pull up as he was getting a green light that indicated that he was on the glide path I told him that we did not have that prism system at the base and that the green light he saw was on a fence post near the end of the runway.

There was one student that was quite a clown. He would call for landing instructions and use the call sign of "Green Hornet". It was kind of fun for the control tower at first but it began to grow on their nerves so they wanted to stop it but they could not find who it was until they conceived a plan. When they finally had it down to just a few that might be the guilty one an instructor was in every other plane except the one that they thought was the one "Green Hornet" when he called that he was on the downwind leg all of the other planes were to make 90 degree turns out of the pattern. The tower called the remaining plane to come on in "Green Hornet you have been caught". I don't know what his punishment was but he graduated with the rest of us.

We had a low altitude cross country at an altitude of not lower than 500 feet, but I don't think anyone got that high. My co-pilot and I were always right on the deck. One returning plane had corn silk in his engine nacelle. The base had another training plane an AT-17 also called a UC-78. That was a Utility Cargo type. The AT-9 was much faster than the AT-17. When we returned from the cross country my instructor asked who had flown below 500 feet, I said that I didn't think anyone got that high. He asked again,

much more emphatic this time so I just remained silent. He said another instructor saw an AT-9 right on the deck but he was in an AT-17 and could not catch up with him to get his tail number. I wondered if it might have been me but the other cadets that were in AT-9s said that they were low too, not to the instructor but among ourselves. At one point we approached a highway bridge. I suggested that we fly under it but my co-pilot talked me out of doing it. As we flew by we noticed that a high power line was on the other side and we had not seen it. I was lucky again.

Our training was about over and we just flew as much as we wanted to every day until our graduation date.

My instructor had the four of us over to his house to dinner a few nights before we graduated. After his party we went into Altus to see what was to be seen there, it wasn't much. We did find out how we could get a 'bottle'. All we had to do was get a taxi to take us to the 'house with the white picket fence,' that was the local bootlegger. From there we got a hotel room and proceeded to drink the 'bottle'. There were some prostitutes in the hotel and they attempted to tempt us but we were more afraid than wanting them so we just passed on that. It made them mad and they said that were going to call the police because we had bootlegger liquor. They didn't and we drank the 'bottle' and headed back to the base a little tight.

I received a gift from Jay V. Russell's family as a graduation present: a set of gold bars, 2nd Lieutenant, and two Army Air Corps winged props. I decided to polish the bars and they turned silver. I didn't need them for several years. Since I had at least five years prior service, I drew 1st Lieutenant's pay. It was the regulation. I graduated August 30, 1943 in Class 43-H. My Mother, Aunt Belle and her husband attended my graduation and my Mother pinned my bars on and my Aunt pinned on my wings. It was customary to give a dollar to the first enlisted man that saluted you. I waited until I saw a sergeant that I knew from the flight line and took his salute, as did others in my flight. I received orders sending me to Pyote Army Air Base, later named Rattlesnake Bomber Base. There I was to join a B-17 combat crew.



2nd Lt. William J. Dallas at graduation from Flight School.

CHAPTER 9

COMBAT CREW TRAINING, PYOTE, TEXAS

I had only three or four days from the date of my graduation until I had to report to Pyote Army Air Base so I made a quick trip to visit my parents. Several of the guys I trained with went with me but all we could do was eat and run. We took a train to Pyote and it was a hot dusty trip, no air conditioning in those days.

Our training group was called the Butters Provisional Group after our commanding officer Col. Butters a retired Army Officer. We were attached to the 19th Bomb Group for training and other support. I met my crew and was immediately drawn to our Navigator, 2nd Lt. James G. Clark, Jr. All of the four officers were 2nd Lts. Jim gave me my new nickname, Bill and it has stuck all of these years. Our Pilot, Charles W. Mars seemed like an old woman and kind of feminine to me. He didn't seem too sure of himself when he spoke. He was married and his wife was still at his home in Tennessee, she was to join him later in Dalhart, Texas. Our Bombardier was about normal but a very serious man. We never became as close as Jim Clark and I but we were friends. Jim was my kind of a guy. He enjoyed a drink and was very attracted to the opposite sex. He started me smoking. One evening at the Officers' Club Bar he offered me a cigarette, I took it and was hooked. This terrible habit lasted about forty years and resulted in my having emphysema and lung cancer. I don't blame Jim. He didn't twist my arm.

At Pyote we just flew around and became familiar with the B-17. Our Pilot, Charlie, had been to B-17 Transition School in Florida and had about 100 hours in the plane, me none. When I first sat in the cockpit and looked out the side window, it looked like there was an acre of wing. The instrument panel was something else. There was four of almost everything. I said to myself, I'll never get used to all of these gauges, but I did, it just took a little time. We went to ground school about the aircraft in the mornings and usually flew in the afternoons if a plane was available. If we didn't fly and didn't have ground school, Jim and I usually went to the skeet range. We became pretty good with a shotgun. Once a friend of Charlie's, a game warden, took us dove hunting. We got our limit then went to a restaurant where they cooked the doves for us.

Our nightlife was nil. If we didn't go to the O'Club we just sat and talked. Once we went to a nearby town of Pecos because there was not anything to do at Pyote, just a couple of buildings. We met some girls at Pecos that were telephone operators but we were not any more impressed with them then they were with us. It was our only trip off the base.

Our Flight Surgeon told us that we should get all of our shots while we were at Pyote because at Dalhart we would be flying at high altitude on oxygen and any shots may have a bad affect on us, so we had several shots at one time. They didn't bother me, but Jim had a reaction to one of them. His arm got very red and swollen for a couple of days. The day we finished finally came after about two months and we were on our way to Dalhart Army Air Field at Dalhart, Texas. I got a ten-day leave and headed home to Fort Worth.



[see crew names in following table]

THE CREW AS ASSIGNED AT PYOTE, TEXAS IN SEPTEMBER, 1943

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>CREW POSITION</u>
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(Left to right, Kneeling)

CHARLES M. MARS	2ND LT.	PILOT
WILLIAM J. DALLAS	2ND LT.	CO-PILOT
JAMES G. CLARK, JR.	2ND LT.	NAVIGATOR
CHARLES M. WEBSTER	2ND LT.	BOMBARDIER

(Left to right, Standing)

PAPAS, S.A.*	S/SGT.	ENGINEER/TOP TURRET
LUNDE, C.H.*	S/SGT.	WAIST GUNNER
McGINNIS, EDDIE	S/SGT.	RADIO OPERATOR
PETROWSKI*	S/SGT.	WAIST GUNNER
DUNLAP, CHARLES W.	S/SGT.	BALL TURRET GUNNER
SENESCHAL, ALBERT (RED)	S/SGT.	TAIL GUNNER

*THESE AIRMEN DID NOT GO OVERSEAS WITH THE REST OF THE CREW.

SEE PHOTO OF THE CREW ABOVE.

CHAPTER 10

COMBAT TRAINING AT DALHART ARMY AIR BASE

My ten-day leave was not near enough to do all that I had wanted to do. Here I was an officer and a pilot, with silver wings, and I didn't get to show it all to those that I wanted to see. After all I was a High School drop out and never had amounted to very much. Now I thought that I had accomplished a lot for my background and past history.

During my leave I ran into an old girlfriend and we went out together a few times and I began to have feelings for her. We wrote each other a few times but, as they say, out of sight, out of mind and I soon got over any feelings I had for her. I guess it was just a fling for both of us.

Not long after I got to Dalhart I received a letter from Sugar, it seems that she was having marital problems and she offered to come to Dalhart and stay with me. I wrote her back and kind of berated her a bit. I said that she was married and should try to work out her problems. We never wrote each other after that.

Our Flight Surgeon got in a bit of trouble with the crews. It seems that he had lost our shot records and we had to get all of our shots again. That was not very popular with us, but we got them all again anyway.

I had a couple of memorable incidents at Dalhart, nothing bad but I remember them. One day as I was walking through the bomb bay I caught the zipper of my flight suit and pulled it open. It was a windy day and I had to walk from the flight line to my quarters. I had to hold the opening together with both hands and I must have looked kind of funny to anyone seeing me. I got a new flight suit before the next flight. The other incident was much more of a problem for me. I had a pair of western boots made at Justin Boot Factory, cost \$65.00. I liked to wear them but a Major caught me wearing them and kind of spoke a little harsh to me. I lied and said that my shoes were in the shop and I had only one pair. He told me to get my shoes as soon as I could. About a week later he got me again and this time he was not so kind. I shipped the boots home and never wore them again until after the war.

Jim Clark bought a car while we were at Dalhart, he figured it was

cheaper than riding the bus to Amarillo every weekend and we did go there every weekend. The local girls there were much like the ones at Tulsa, they went with a group of guys until they shipped out then went with the next new bunch. There was one girl that was a real beauty and Jim went out with her one night, about a week later he came down with a discharge that was diagnosed as gonorrhea. He was grounded from flying for a week as he was undergoing treatment. Our Pilot asked me what was wrong with Jim and I told him to ask Jim. Mars said that he thought that Jim had contracted gonorrhea and I told him to either ask Jim or the Flight Surgeon. That same girl wrote me that she had been set up with a date with me on the following weekend, but I decided that I didn't want any part of that arrangement, so I didn't show up at the places we usually went. I never heard any more about her and after Jim was cured we went with a different crowd.

I found out that you cannot tell what a person may look like by the tone of their voice. One of the telephone operators at the Herring Hotel had a very sexy voice and one day, that I didn't have a date, I happened to get her on the phone that evening and made a date with her and said that I would meet her in the lobby of the hotel when she got off work. I asked how she would be dressed so I would recognize her. When I saw her come into the lobby, I left for the elevator and went to my room. Boy, was she homely. I had learned my lesson; never make a date with someone you have not seen.

During this time gas was rationed but you could buy ration coupons on the black market. The gas stations were not supposed to take them if they were not attached to a book but most did, as they were not selling much gas anyway. One night on our way back to Dalhart when we were about out of gas and no coupons we tried something that worked. We had a bottle of high-test rum so we poured it into the gas tank and made it the rest of the way to Dalhart, only a few miles down the road.

We had been at Dalhart about two months when we departed on the first leg of our trip overseas in December 1943.

CHAPTER 11

EN ROUTE TO THE EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (KNOWN AS THE ETO)

We left Dalhart by train en route to Kearney, Nebraska. It was during this trip that I heard that Fats Waller had passed away. I was a very big fan of his music, and still am. When I was a teenager and worked at a drug store in Fort Worth, I would ride my bike home so I could listen to his records on the radio, a thirty-minute program. This was a big loss to music lovers the world around.

During the trip I got into a crap game and I was down to my last few bucks when Lady Luck smiled on me. All of sudden I could make any point and did a lot of passing, winning. I broke most of the other guys and the train porters too. I even loaned one guy \$300 and won it back. Jim came in where the game was and asked how I was doing, I told him to bet on me and he wouldn't lose. I guess the others thought that any minute I would lose my lucky streak, but I didn't until all of the others called it quits. I won over \$1,000 in that game, the best I had ever done before or since. After we got to our station in England and got our first payday, the man that I had loaned the \$300, repaid me in English pounds. The rate then was \$4.02 for one English pound. I had forgotten how much I had loaned him but he was true to his word. He started counting out pound notes and I was wondering when he would quit. He gave me seventy-five pounds. Just imagine how large a stack of seventy-five one-dollar bills would be. That night on the train I bought liquor for the group. The train porters had some Southern Comfort, and only that, but I can't remember how much it cost. The only containers we had to drink from were paper folding-cups that folded if you were not careful. After a few drinks we were not very careful and our shirtfronts suffered. We got into Kearney the next day and I smelled terrible. As soon as we were assigned quarters, I headed for the showers. I had a problem; the Southern Comfort had glued my undershirt to my body. A hot shower solved that little problem. I have never tasted that foul drink since.

While we were in Kearney we were issued Colt .45s and shoulder holsters. One afternoon Jim, Charlie and I went to the PX garden and as we walked in, one of our enlisted crewmembers jumped up from his table and said "Grab Leather". This was witnessed by a

senior officer of the base. Charlie was told to take up the weapons of the enlisted men and keep them until we got to the ETO. I think he gave them back as soon as we left Kearney.

We were assigned to two B-17s. Charlie, I, Webster and three of the enlisted were to be in one plane and Jim and the other enlisted crew members in the other plane. We had Air Transport Command, ATC, pilots in charge of the planes. We left Kearney and flew to Presque Isle, Maine, spent one night, then flew to Gander Lake, Newfoundland. While in Gander Lake, Jim Ferguson and I proceeded to get a little under the weather from beer one night. We decided that Newfoundland girls needed our company so we headed for their quarters. We got in and two young ladies took us into their room. I guess someone decided that our presence was not desired so she called the guard. I don't know how we got past him in the first place but we did. The girls pushed us into a closet and closed the door. The guard opened the door and found us behind the clothing and told us to come out. After we came out and were outside the building, Jim told me to hit him as soon as he grabbed him.

The guard must have heard Jim because he told us to get out of there right then. We went back to the PX, had a few more beers and decided that we could talk the guard into letting us in the ladies quarters. The guard saw us but we couldn't get within 20 feet of him, so we called it a night and went to bed. The next day in the PX all of the ladies were pointing at us and giggling.

One day our ATC pilot, Jim Clark and I checked out some skis and headed for the ski trail. I had never seen a pair of skis much less been on them, but I thought I would give it a try. Both Jim and the ATC pilot had some experience on skis. I did pretty well on the trail but we got off of it somehow and were lost. We came to a road and figured that it would lead us to the base, as we knew about the general direction we had to go. There was a pretty steep slope in the road and the ATC man went first, he fell and I laughed. I started down the hill and as I got even with him he stuck out his ski pole and I bit the dust. He had lost one ski but when I fell I didn't lose mine so I skied the rest of the way down. The road turned away from the way we thought we should go so we decided to walk around the lake. That turned into a very rough trip, but we made it back to our quarters. I put my skis and poles in the landing of the steps and as far as I know they are still there. When I was clearing the base, the special services NCO asked about my skis. I told him where they were and that I did not want to touch them. I was told that I couldn't leave the base until I turned them

in. With me on the way to combat I didn't think they would hold me up and they didn't.

We took off that night on our way to Valley, Wales. I rode in the tail gunner's position. It was an uneventful trip, except that I went to sleep and when I awoke I couldn't see anything. I held my flashlight toward my face and turned it on but I didn't see the light. I found that my oxygen hose was kinked and no oxygen was getting to my lungs. As soon as I cleared the hose I was able to see again. I was lucky that I woke when I did. We had spent Christmas in Gander and departed on December 30, 1943.

We arrived in Valley, Wales on New Year's Eve.

CREW LIST OF MY FIRST CREW

CHARLES W. MARS**	2ND LT.	804700	PILOT***
WILLIAM J. DALLAS	2ND LT.	691042	CO-PILOT***
JAMES G. CLARK, JR**	2ND LT.	811561	NAVIGATOR
GEORGE L. ARVANITES	2ND LT.	804499	NAVIGATOR***
CHARLES M. WEBSTER	2ND LT.	688729	BOMBARDIER
CONRAD J. KERSCH**	T/SGT.	6558428	TOGILIER***
A. PAPPAS*	S/SGT.		ENGINEER
EDDIE McGINNIS**	S/SGT.	35648423	RADIO OP***
C.H. LUNDE*	S/SGT.		WAIST GNR
PETROSKI*	S/SGT.		WAIST GNR
CHARLES W. DUNLAP	S/SGT.	13125695	BALL TURRET GNR***
ALBERT J. SENECHAL**	S/SGT.	31242805	WAIST GNR***
VINCENT A. ANGIONE**	S/SGT.	12128830	TAIL GNR***
RAYMOND L. FOSTER**	S/SGT.	32460947	ENGINEER***
DELBERT S. NIVENS**	S/SGT.	37396868	WAIST GNR***

* NOT ON THE FINAL CREW. THEY DROPPED OFF BEFORE WE WENT OVERSEAS

** DECEASED

*** CREW THAT WAS TOGETHER WHEN WE WERE SHOT DOWN

CHAPTER 12

ARRIVAL IN THE ETO (EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS)

Our arrival in Valley, Wales was nothing to be heralded by the Welsh people, but it was something for me since I had never been so far from home. At least we spoke the same language, kind of anyway, but we had no problem communicating with the Welsh people or the British personnel at Valley. The accommodations were not what we were accustomed to but we only spent one night there. The dining room now, was something else. The Americans stationed there called it the 'gag and vomit' and oh so aptly named.

The next day, January 1, 1944, was spent on the train to Bovingdon, England. There we were briefed on English customs and some of the operations of the Eighth Air Force. We, officers, also read outgoing mail to see that nothing was being written that would violate existing regulations and maybe get to the enemy. Some of the letters were very personal and I did not like the task of reading other peoples' mail. We inked out the parts that were considered unacceptable. Some letters had very few words left after the censoring. Once I stayed too late for the last train to Bovingdon, had to spend the night at the Red Cross Shelter and return to the base the next morning. I had been scheduled for censorship duty and I had to report to the Commanding Officer. He heard my story and gave me three or five, can't remember how many, days of additional censor duty. We spent about two weeks there then were assigned to our duty stations. I was assigned to the 303rd Bombardment Group, 427th Bomb. Squadron at Molesworth, England. When I write I, it means the entire crew was assigned.

CHAPTER 13

OPERATIONAL UNIT 303rd BOMB GROUP (H)

It was while I was at Bovington that I met a very attractive and nice young lady by the name of Joyce Richardson. We went on several dates together and I met her family. Her mother was a stay-at-home Mom, her father was the leader of the Royal Band, her brother was a middle school student and her grandfather was retired and a very interesting gentleman. He was a friend of John Phillip Sousa and could tell a lot of tales about his musical friends. The family had been bombed out of their homes twice before moving to the town of Watford. It wasn't very far from London, less than an hour by train. When I visited her I usually brought gifts to the family. Cigars to Joyce's father, perfume to her mother, coins to her brother and usually flowers to her. The coins I brought were U.S. coins and some bills too. Once Joyce's grandfather and I were going to town, Watford, and were waiting for a bus. After several minutes he suggested that we walk to the next bus stop, only a few blocks. When we got to the next bus stop, no bus in sight, so he suggested we walk to the next bus stop. We did this several times and finally we were almost to town so we walked the rest of the way. Good exercise for both of us.

By now it was the last part of January and we spent the month of February flying in the area and learning the problems of weather. The weather was terrible. The base was usually fogged in in the morning but we had to take off and fly no matter what it was. One day as we were near the industrial town of Birmingham our pilot, Charles Mars, asked me if I had tuned the radio to the barrage balloon frequency, I said I had but as I checked the radio controls I found that I had not. As I finished the procedure the radio came to life with a very ominous and very loud whistle. We were in the middle of the barrage balloons over Birmingham. We climbed as fast as we could and did a 180-degree turn to get away from there. I think we were above the balloons. The balloons were to keep the German aircraft from dive-bombing the town. They had long stringers hanging from the balloons that contained explosives that would blow the wings off of an aircraft if they were hit. My pilot flew his first mission before I did. I think he had three missions before I flew my first on February 28, 1944 to Bois Coquerel, France. We were to bomb a missile site but the weather prevented us from seeing the target. We went over the target area nine times and ended up returning home with our bomb load intact. We had

been briefed that we should not bomb occupied territories indiscriminately. That was my second most memorable mission. I'll cover my most memorable missions later. I digress for a bit. My first realization that one could get killed flying the missions came when a classmate of mine, Mike Goldman, was killed on his second mission. Mike was the first of our stateside training group to fly out of Molesworth. After his first mission several of us asked Mike how the flying over enemy territory was. He said that it was no problem, or words to that effect. When Allyne and I were in England in 2000 for my Group's reunion, we attended the Cambridge American Cemetery in Cambridge, England. I found Mike's name on the interment list. I found that his remains had been returned to the USA by his family. He was not married. I had been in training with Mike during Basic and Advanced Flight training and we were in the same training group at Dalhart and Pyote before going overseas.

My next four missions were not as memorable as the fifth. (See Mission list for a list of all the missions I flew.) The fifth was the really big one, Berlin. We expected it to be heavily defended with Flak guns and aircraft, and it was. When you were getting shelled by Flak the fighters did not bother you, they didn't want to get hit either. We did not get any damage by the Flak but on the bomb run when we were more or less sitting ducks, we had a FW 109 come straight head on at us. The only evasive action we could take was to move up and down a little but it must have been enough because he did not fire at us. Our tail gunner got credit for shooting him down. He had flown straight away from our tail.

We almost went to Berlin on March 3, 1944 but the weather was so bad, we had to climb so high that the temperature was so cold that all of our guns were frozen and could not be fired. We were about 30,000 feet high which is about as high as a loaded B-17 can fly. We, the pilot and I, wore heated suits with the body, feet and gloves being heated. Our breathing caused the windshield to frost over. When the window in front of the one flying frosted over the other pilot took over the controls. The one that was not at the controls held the back of his glove against the windshield to thaw a place open so he could see the lead aircraft. We could only fly for about ten minutes before the frost took over the windshield. Our ball turret gunner got so cold that he had to come out of the ball. He had a heated suit but the ball was out in the wind and made the suit ineffective. His guns would not fire. Later in Alaska I carried a .22 semi-automatic on my flights. One very cold day we decided to take some target practice and I found that my pistol would not operate and I had to pull the slide back each time I shot.

Several of us boiled our guns to get rid of all of the oil in the pores of the metal. It worked and we were able to shoot them in semi-automatic operation. Back to our guns in the ETO, we didn't have the capability to boil the guns but we never were in the same very cold conditions after that March 3, 1944. The date for our first all out raid on Berlin was March 6, 1944. I don't think I mentioned that above.

The mission that we were shot down on was my eleventh and it was the same kind of a target we had on my first mission. This mission was to bomb a V-1 launching site near Wizernes, France. This was my pilot's thirteenth mission, it was on March 26, we were over enemy territory for twenty-six minutes (half of which is thirteen) and my squadron, 427th (numbers added together equals thirteen.) So thirteen figured in every thing that day. I was doomed from the start, too many thirteens. A Flak shell exploded very near the front of our aircraft and the fragments wounded five people: the pilot, me, our navigator, our top turret gunner, and our radio operator. The top turret gunner and the radio operator had broken legs, one in the left leg the other one in the right leg. My pilot lost his right hand little finger, our navigator was hit on the left side of his nose and this caused a problem with his breathing and killed his two front teeth, my wounds were on the left side of my body; left upper leg, left hand (the steel is still in the bone of my left hand), upper left arm and the left side of my neck. My flight suit had a lot of blood on the front and I was sure that my throat had been cut badly, but I could not find any large wound. I guess the altitude caused even the minor wounds to bleed a lot. Later on a train on the way to our prison camp my leg was swollen around the wound. When I pressed on both sides of the wound the puss shot almost across the railroad car. Then I could see a kind of shiny object just below the skin. No one had a knife but one fellow had a finger nail file. We burned the end with a lighter to sanitize it then I was able to pick out the piece of steel. I kept it for a while but lost it somewhere. My wound healed very quickly after removing the piece of steel.

I was captured near the town of St. Omer, France as soon as I hit the ground. I don't think I was seen until my chute opened about three or four hundred feet above the ground because I had made a long delayed jump before I opened my parachute. About a week or so before we were shot down, we had a paratrooper talk to us about parachute jumping. He said if you jumped at a very high altitude, above 15,000 feet, you did not feel like you were falling but at about 10,000 ft, the ground would appear to be coming toward you. I jumped from about 20,000 feet and controlled my

body position by moving only my little fingers. I tried moving my entire hand but I moved around too much. I fell slightly head first on my stomach until the ground appeared to come toward me. I waited a short time then pulled the ripcord to open my parachute. I swung back and forth two or three times then I hit the ground. I didn't fall but stayed on my feet. I heard something that sounded like fireworks in the distant. When I saw the ground kicking up around me I realized that I was being shot at by the people I saw about 100 to 200 yards away then I hit the ground on my belly and the shots stopped. A few minutes later a group of very young German soldiers got to me. The German in charge was older than the others. I had landed in a plowed field and the nearest woods were several hundred yards away. No chance to escape. My leg didn't bother me but I limped a lot just in case I had a chance to escape, I was taken into a house that appeared to be a local army headquarters. When I answered a question with the word "right", the German told me to speak English not American.

I was on three missions to Frankfurt, Germany. After we were shot down we were transported by train to the interrogation center near Frankfurt, Germany. En route to Frankfurt we went to Brussels, Belgium where we spent the night. We were put in what was about like our regular sized pickups but there was no room for the guards, they had to walk. Our driver was a Belgian man and as we drove he got faster and faster until the guards were running. They must have said something to the German Officer riding by the driver. The German said something very harsh to the driver who just shrugged. Every once in a while the driver would give the "V" for victory sign with his two fingers and again would drive fast enough to make the guards run. He did this several times before we got to our jail. We spent the night in Brussels then back on a train headed for the interrogation center. As we got off the train at a little old lady was waving her walking stick and saying "G--damn son-of-a-bitch." As I looked around and saw all of the damage that was done by our bombs, I thought that we might be deserving of what she said.

We were interrogated by English-speaking German Officers and I was surprised at the amount of information they knew about me. They knew my organization in England, where and when I graduated from flight training, where we trained in the States before coming overseas, some things about our base that I didn't know and much more. I did not verbally say that all of what they said was true or not but maybe my expression of surprise confirmed it. A man from the International Red Cross, he said that was where he was from, interviewed all of us about our treatment

by the Germans and offered me a card that I could write my family and tell them that I was all right. I did just that but later I wondered if the man was what he said he was and the card was just a ruse to get my home address. I'll never know. My Mother received an unofficial card from a man in New England saying that he had heard my name on the shortwave radio that said that I was a Prisoner of War in Germany. It also gave my home address. Later, about two months or so, my Mother received an official telegram from the U.S. War Department saying that I was indeed a POW in Germany. I think that this was about three or four months after I was shot down. After three or four days of interrogation we were put on a train, destination unknown. The days were quite boring and we were afraid to talk much to the rest of the members in our compartment. There were about eight or nine people in each compartment. I knew only one, my pilot. Each night was spent in a railroad yard in some kind of a building. It was unheated and the weather was kind of cool. I think the Germans thought that if the rail yards were bombed we would get killed and they wouldn't have to take care of us. Fortunately we were never bombed. Our route took us into France and I was hoping that a situation would happen that would allow me to escape. It appeared, no guards were in our car and I didn't see any in the next one. I went back to my compartment to ask if anyone wanted to jump off the train because there were no guards in sight. As we got to the door the guards came back. Later that day we got into Germany and I felt that I could not get away so I gave up trying to escape.

LIST OF MISSIONS FLOWN DURING WWII BY WILLIAM J. DALLAS

28 FEBRUARY 1944

GROUP MISSION # 114--BOIS COQUERAL, FRANCE

2 MARCH 1944

GROUP MISSION # 115--FRANKFURT, GERMANY

3 MARCH 1944

GROUP MISSION # 116--ERKNER, GERMANY

4 MARCH 1944

GROUP MISSION # 117--BONN & COLOGNE, GERMANY

6 MARCH 1944

GROUP MISSION # 118--BERLIN, GERMANY

16 MARCH 1944

GROUP MISSION # 121--AUGSBURG, GERMANY

20 MARCH 1944

GROUP MISSION # 124--FRANKFURT, GERMANY

22 MARCH 1944

GROUP MISSION # 125--BERLIN, GERMANY

23 MARCH 1944

GROUP MISSION # 126--HAMM, GERMANY

24 MARCH 1944

GROUP MISSION # 127--FRANKFURT, GERMANY

26 MARCH 1944

GROUP MISSION # 128--WIZERNES, FRANCE

WE WERE SHOT DOWN BY FLAK ON THIS MISSION. CREW BAILED OUT AND ALL EXCEPT THE BOMBARDIER WERE CAPTURED AND SPENT THE REST OF THE WAR AS POWS. THE BOMBARDIER EVADED AND RETURNED TO ENGLAND.

CHAPTER 14

PRISONER OF WAR CAMP STALAG LUFT 1, BARTH GERMANY

After several days on the train we arrived at our destination, Stalag Luft 1, Barth, Germany. We were taken to the camp commander's office, Hauptman Von Muller, one at a time for a brief orientation speech. It boiled down to, "it is your duty to escape and my duty to keep you here and I will win". He did on the most part. A few did escape from the camp but were later caught and returned. The usual punishment was thirty days in the guardhouse.

I was assigned to Block 7, Room 4 along with the navigator, George Arvanites. Charles Mars, Pilot, was assigned to another Block. A Block is what we called a barracks. The enlisted men were sent to another camp because our camp was for officers only. There were sixteen men in the room I was assigned (see list of names). At first they didn't talk much to George and me, but later some of the prisoners that I knew from flight training came by and identified me and others identified George. Then we began to talk about each other, what outfit, hometown and state and other personal stuff. There were three others from Texas and the other thirteen were from all over the U.S. (including George and I).

The first several weeks I was hungry all of the time. We had two meals a day, breakfast and dinner and that wasn't much. Breakfast usually consisted of barley that was prepared like oatmeal and usually contained weevils. If we complained to the Mess Officer his comment was, jokingly, "to turn them in, meat was not on the menu". After a while I just closed my eyes if they were in my spoon and gulped them down. Our evening meal was a bit better, usually, Spam was often served with boiled dehydrated vegetables or rutabaga turnips. I traded my Spam for potatoes or anything else; I couldn't stand the stuff. Later on I manage to gulp it down, as I was so hungry. We each received 1/7 of a loaf of bread each day. The bread was the color of wheat bread, but it was not wheat that gave it the color, it was saw dust and it was not fully cooked. Eating it as it came would cause stomach gas so it had to be toasted to prevent this from happening. We had contests to see who could let out gas the longest. After a month or so I was more or less used to the short rations and was not so hungry all of the time. Our German rations were augmented by Red Cross Parcels. We had a combined dining room where all of our

compound ate the two meals.

At this point I should point out that when I arrived at the camp there were two compounds, North and South, I was in the North one. Later more prisoners arrived and two more compounds were opened, North 2 and North 3, we became North 1. There were seven Blocks in our compound and about twelve rooms in each Block. Most of the rooms held sixteen men but two had only two because of the size of the rooms. Our Block Leader was in one of the small rooms and the Compound Mail Clerk was in the other.

After a while everybody knew all about ever other person in our room. I forgot to tell about the Red Cross Parcels. When they arrived the Mess Personnel removed some of the items to be used in the meals. We usually got cigarettes, cheese, powdered milk and other items that I can't remember. This arrangement was quite satisfactory, as we did not have very good stoves for cooking in our rooms. They were not very good for heating either. Later we got a visit by the former heavyweight-boxing champion, Max Schmelling. The next day our dining hall burned down and we had to learn to cook for ourselves. George and I formed a two-man combine to cook and eat. Others in the room did the same. We still got potatoes from the Germans but I can't remember getting anything else except bread.

We passed time by playing bridge, poker for cigarettes, chess and other card games. Our cards got so worn that we had to remark the faces and numbers. My navigator, George Arvanites, taught me to play bridge and he and I became partners and were quite good compared to the others. We devised our own system of bidding that was very effective. Others did the same so it made the games quite enjoyable. Sometimes we played from morning to night, with time off for meals.

The Germans made surprise inspections all of the time, even at night. Once we set up bridge hands, played a couple of tricks then placed our hands on the table. The cards were arranged so that we could take the left card of each hand to make a proper play. One night we got to use this ploy, the Germans came for a surprise inspection. As soon as we heard them coming, we jumped out of bed and played a hand or two. When the guards came into our room, one asked how we could play in the dark. We said that we Americans could see as well in the dark as in the light. The smarter guards just scoffed at us but the dumber ones were a bit miffed. We enjoyed the joke anyway.

Each morning, rain or shine, and each evening we had roll call. One guard would walk down the front row, there were five rows, and count then he would report to the Commandant. If the total was not correct they would count again. I can't remember them counting more than two times. They assumed that someone had escaped or was hiding. The Blocks were searched and they usually came up with the correct count. There were times when there were some that had escaped, but not for long. Once when we knew several had escaped, we were told not to fall in for roll call when the guards told us to. We had to wait until our senior officer told us to fall in. Finally the guards brought out dogs and we were told to fall in for roll call or the dogs would be turned loose and the guards would start shooting, all lined up for roll call. Some things you just don't push too far.

During the summer we usually sat outside to try for a suntan but in the winter we sat with our heaviest clothing on around our stove. The Germans gave us some coal, but not enough to really warm our rooms. Once the guards asked for volunteers to do some work and in payment they could have all of the coal they could carry. Yankee intelligence prevailed and we tied our overcoats arms together and buttoned them up to make a bag. We filled the 'bags' with the coal briquettes The Germans had ground the coal and added something, we thought sawdust, the formed the mixture into briquettes about two inches wide, five inches long and one an a half inch thick. They burned very well.

We took on a project that proved that we were ignorant of the way to build a fireplace. To begin with we found what we thought would be our building block for the fireplace, there were concrete slabs measuring about ten inches high, about two inches thick and about two feet long outlining a walk way beside our Block. We dug them up with no interference from the guards. We constructed our fireplace with these concrete slabs then sat back and admired our work. We had a stove made of tiles that was about eighteen inches square and four feet tall. We built fires in the stove for warmth and cooking but we thought that the fireplace would be better. We got a rude awakening. The coal that we got for working had been placed in Red Cross cartons about twelve inches wide, ten inches deep and thirty inches long. We had four or five of these cartons full of the coal briquettes. The fireplace worked good for cooking but when it got cold we got very little heat from it and we used up about half of our coal supply. We had no choice but to tear down the fireplace and replace it with our original stove. Some things are best left as they were.

Our winter was not as bad as we expected. It was cold, below freezing, but not much below. We did not have a thermometer or we might have been colder than we were. The worst part was when we had roll call, especially the afternoon call when it was almost dark. It was cold and at times windy. Our camp was just south of the Baltic Ocean and maybe that is why it did not get so cold. In spite of the cold we all walked around the compound several times a day for health reasons.

The only water supply we had was cold water. We would heat a can of water to boiling and pour it into a bucket then add cold water to make it ok for washing. Once a month we were taken to a shower building for hot showers. We got one minute to get wet, two minutes to soap then one minute to rinse. We went to Auschwitz Concentration Camp on a tour long after the war was over and the building that the Jews were suffocated in was just like our shower room. You can imagine how I felt then.

I think that there was probably someone in our compound that could make anything out of the materials at hand. Someone had built a crystal set radio out of the copper wire from an electric heated suit and some materials that he got by trading with a guard. The radio was used to listen to the BBC out of England every day. They used the steel beams of our dining building as an antenna. The information was then written on the paper labels of the powdered milk cans then passed from Block to Block. A guard, POW, was positioned near the doors of the Block that the paper was in. In the event that a German guard was near, he would call "Goon Up", and the paper was hidden until the all clear was given. There was a huge map of Europe on the inside wall of our mess hall that the Allied and Russian lines were marked by a string. The lines were those that we got from the German newspaper, but you could tell where the actual lines were by the smudges of POW fingers touching the map. The Germans knew that we had a radio but they never found it because it was taken apart after each use and the parts were given to several POWs. Another person built a clock out of wood and he adjusted the gears until it kept the correct time. Still another one made a violin and it sounded pretty good. He took one-inch boards and scraped the wood until it was thin enough to get a good sound. Like I said, I think someone could make almost anything out of the materials at hand.

When an air raid was sounded we all watched the U.S. aircraft fly over our camp and cheered as loud as we could. Finally the Germans required us to go into our Block when the air raid sirens sounded. One day a training plane flew over our compound

several times, getting lower each time, finally he was so low that the POWs threw rocks at it. Someone must have hit the plane because the next day an order was issued by the Germans that the POWs should not throw rocks at German aircraft. We won that battle.

We got our powdered milk, named KLIM, in a one-pound can. We made a lot of things out of the cans. When I say we, I am not always meaning that I was doing the making. We cut the bottom out of one KLIM can and put the two together to make a can about ten inches high. This was the can that we heated water for washing. Another tool that was made was a blower out of the cans. We would put a can of water in the tall cans and build a fire of coal in a can with holes in the bottom on top of the blower. The blower would reduce the time to get water up to a boil. We could heat several cans of water very quickly this way. We also toasted bread and cooked over the same type of fire. After our dining building burned down we each got a whole Red Cross box for a while.

About two months before the Germans were defeated the Red Cross boxes stopped for some unknown reason and all we got to eat was some dried vegetables and a few small potatoes. We all started losing weight and a few did not have much to lose. George and I got down to about 110 pounds before we started getting the Red Cross boxes again. I started taking up the waist of my trousers until the hip pockets started to overlap. When the Germans started giving us the boxes again, we all got very loose bowels. The only paper we had was the empty cigarette packages. We ruffled them some to make them a little easier on our skin. The lines to the toilet were long and painful and you had to get in line as soon as you were finished to use the facilities again. It was a very painful week.

It was not long after we got over our illness that we could hear heavy guns at night, then we knew that the war would soon be over. In about a week or so we woke up one morning and saw that all of the guards were gone. That same day we got word over our loudspeaker system that they had a personal message from General Eisenhower and for us to stand by. One of my roommates was ready to head out for the American troops but I talked him into waiting for the message. The message came about an hour later and it said "Stand By". I told my roommate, Bill Reichel, to grab his stuff and let us get out of here. So off we went and just headed west.

LIST OF PERSONNEL IN ROOM 4, BLOCK 7 AT STALAG LUFT 1

ALFRED BERNARD

GEORGE ARVANITES

GEORGE KING

EDWARD EDWARDS

STANLEY PERLMAN

RICHARD McDONALD

WILLIAM BALL

WILLIAM HARRY

HARRY McEVER

ERNEST HERZING

WILLIAM REICHEL

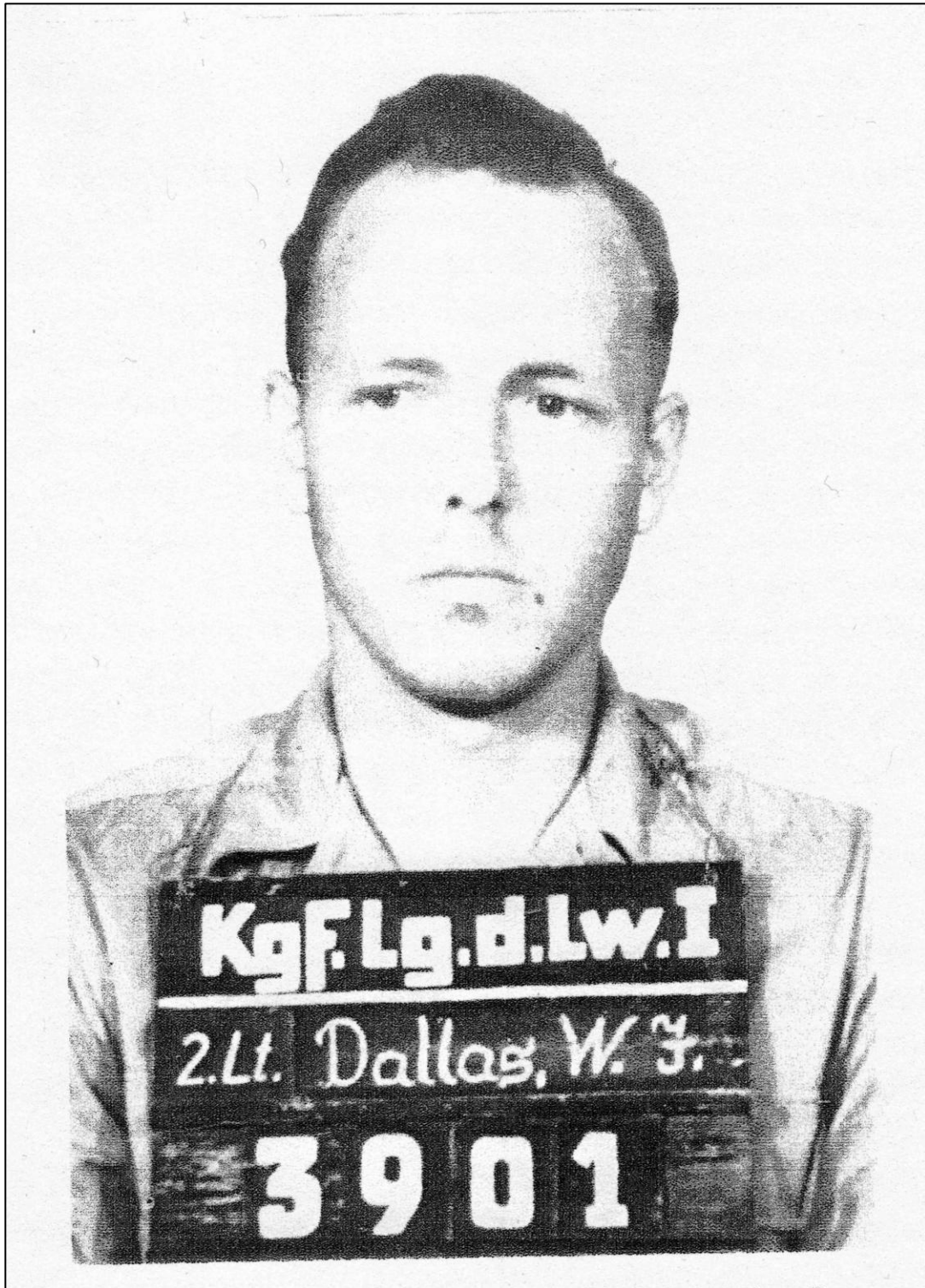
FRED BUTLER

JACK WINN

NORMAN STOCKWELL

ALLEN TEAGUE

WILLIAM DALLAS



This is a copy of a photograph of William J. Dallas by the Germans at Stalag Luft 1 about the first of April 1944.

CHAPTER 15

WALKING OUT OF GERMANY

There was no problem leaving the camp, the guards were gone and there was no one to stop us. After we had walked a mile or so from the camp we came to a body of water and there didn't seem to be any way across except for a small boat that could carry five people at the most. We waited for our turn then four of our group got in the boat. There were two oars so Bill and I used the oars but it seemed as though some of the other three had never been in such a small boat and when it tilted enough for a little water to come over the side they moved too quickly to the other side then water came in over that side. Finally Bill and I got them settled and we rowed to the other side. We cut cards to see who took the boat back for the others. One person rowed back to the other side; that is why only four others could ride in the boat. We then started walking in what we thought was the westerly direction as the sun was sinking in the west. We walked for some distance and came to a farmhouse. When we knocked on the door an elderly lady answered and we asked if we could sleep there for the night. She motioned for us to come in and then took us up stairs to a bedroom and indicated that we could sleep there. We didn't give it a second thought but went to bed. It was a very comfortable bed with a feather cover which we didn't need or use. The night was warm enough with just a sheet as a cover. Later Bill and I thought about the night and were kind of uncomfortable about the thought that they could have killed us during the night. Maybe they were not angry with the Americans as their area was not bombed or hurt by the advancing troops. We were not sure if this was the American, British or Russian Zone. The next morning the people fed us breakfast but I can't remember what it was. We thanked them and started walking in a westerly direction.

Before we left camp a man of Polish descent wrote what he said was "American" in Russian and we drew the American flag under that. As we were walking the second day we saw a soldier walking behind us. As we increased our pace, he also increased his. He finally caught up with us and said in very good English "Hello, how are you?" We asked if he knew that we were Americans by the words on our jackets. He said he had no idea what it said but that he recognized 'Old Glory'. We told him that we were ex-POWs and were on our way to the American Zone. We also said that we had heard that the Russians were taking us POWs back through

Russia. He said he had not heard that. We talked a while when we saw a tractor coming down the road. The Russian stopped the tractor and told us to get on the back. We rode for some distance when the driver indicated that he was turning off the road so we jumped off and started walking. After some distance we came on what we thought was a roadblock as there were several Russian soldiers with automatic weapons standing there. We conveyed to them that we were ex-POWs trying to get home and were very hungry by pointing to our mouths and rubbing our stomachs. We were able to get to them and one took us to an apartment building and knocked on a door. When someone answered the soldier said something in Russian and the people inside indicated that they had nothing. The soldier took his weapon off his shoulder and we thought he was going to shoot them. We got him to calm down and he then took us to the next building where we were given some soup and bread. It was very tasty and when we finished we left a package of cigarettes.

Back on the road we indicated that we were going in the direction that we pointed and after a while a truck came down the road in the direction we wanted to go and the soldier held up his hand for the driver to stop. When it was evident that he wasn't, the soldier took his weapon off his shoulder and pointed it at the driver who then stopped. As the soldier talked to the driver he was motioning us to get in the back of the truck. After we had ridden for quite a while the truck slowed down and started to turn. We jumped off and started walking again. There was Rostock ahead so we headed in a direction that would take us south around the town. After a short while we saw some Russians driving a herd of horses in the direction we wanted to go so we got on two of them and away we went. After a while I told Bill that I couldn't get my horse to do what I wanted. He said that I just didn't know how to ride so we changed mounts. We came to a small forest and after I got on the other side, I kept looking back for Bill. Finally he came walking out of the woods and no horse. He said that the horse was blind and in the woods he became disoriented and would not go the way Bill wanted him to go.

After walking for several miles we came to a Russian checkpoint. There we were interviewed for a few minutes then after a while they let us go into the British Zone. They took us to a building that appeared to have been an army barracks. Shortly we were assigned a room and Bill and I went into town to see what it was like. There was no battle damage but we came across some other ex-POWs and they had found a winery with several large vats of wine. We went into the building and found the vats in the

basement. The vats were about six feet tall and four or five feet wide with two by two inch wooden bungs. The vats were labeled French Red and Moselle 2. We kicked out the bungs and started handing buckets of wine up to the ground floor. It was not long before we were a bit drunk from the fumes. The guys on the ground floor had started just pouring the wine over the bottles in the cases. We were about three or four inches deep in wine in the basement and we had all of the wine we wanted so we left the winery and sat on the curb drinking the wine. Some British MPs came along and wanted to know who and what we were doing. We told our story and gave them several bottles of wine. We were told that we had better get off the street as there were some Germans that were still angry about the war. About that time one of our group came by with a horse and buggy. We all got in singing and headed back to our quarters. Just after we arrived we heard a lot of automatic weapons being fired so we all fell to the floor. After a while the firing stopped. We later found out that some of the guys had found some automatic weapons and ammunition and shot it all up.

The next morning we were to leave in a bus for the American Zone. I could not find Bill Reichel but someone told me that Bill had gone to some woman's house in the town. I found the house and knocked on the door several times before some woman came to the door and I called to Bill and told him that bus was about to leave for the American Zone but he said that was going to stay for a while. I didn't want to leave him but he would not leave. Some of the guys shot up all of their ammunition at a water stop for the bus. It was running hot. I guess they thought that they might have a problem when we got to the American Zone. I doubted that anything would happen.

When we arrived at the American Zone we were assigned tents for an over night stay. A fellow ex-POW that was in the room next to mine and I went visiting and met a U.S. officer in the Engineers. After a while he brought out a bottle of Bourbon and we all had a drink. My fellow POW had only one or two drinks but the Engineer and I killed the bottle of Bourbon, then we POWs went to our tent and retired for the night. The next morning an aircraft arrived to take us to Le Havre, France where Camp Lucky Strike was located. This was where ex-POWs were processed before going to the States. The fellow that I had been with the night before and a Major, a fighter pilot, started going around together. The food was good and there was plenty of it. German POWs served the food and I guess they found out that we were ex-POWs and they put too much food in our mess kits. After we ate we washed our mess kits

in boiling water and left them to dry near the mess tent.

We found that they were processing about three thousand people a day and that there were about thirty thousand ex-POWs in the camp so that meant that we would be there doing nothing for about ten days except to sit around and eat. We decided that we would ask for a three-day pass to Paris. We went to the camp headquarters and asked for a pass but we were denied. As we left we asked ourselves why did we stay when there were no guards and no barb wire, so we gathered our stuff, cigarettes and candy bars, and headed for Paris. When we got on the road we hitched a ride in a weapons carrier, like a pickup, that was going our way. There was a Major chaplain in the truck that was pulling a trailer and after a bit we asked what was in the trailer and he said bodies. We did not ask any more but he said they were black soldiers that were found in the water in Le Havre. He was taking them to some place to be buried. After several miles they were going a different way so we got out and thanked them for the ride. The driver said that it was four kilometers to Paris. No sweat we could walk that far.

After while we saw a small boy playing in his front yard and we asked him for water but he brought us three bottles of wine. We asked him if it was four kilometers to Paris by drawing the figure four in the dirt, but he wrote the number one hundred. It was not as close as we thought. We started walking and after a while three American trucks came along and they picked us up. I got in the first truck and told the driver our story. I asked if he had anything to eat and he said that all he had was some C-Rations and that I was welcome to them. I thought that they tasted pretty good but I was very hungry and they were still a lot better than what we got in prison camp. The driver said that he would take us to the center of the action in Paris even though it was a bit out of the way to where he was going. He dropped us off at Place Pigalle, called Pig Alley by the U.S. troops. We looked around but since we had no French money we could not buy anything. After a while and after talking to some army troops, we found that cigarettes were good way to get some money. We sold a few packs for two hundred francs each, about two U.S. dollars, so we had a couple of drinks then got a hotel room. The major and I bunked together as the other guy was not too interested in making the bars. He wanted to see Paris from the ground for a change. I can't remember the major's name but we had a ball for about seven or eight days. We went to a processing office and got a partial pay of one hundred and fifty dollars. That was enough for our stay. We met up with our other guy and we were put on a train for Camp Lucky Strike.

When we arrived back at our tent we were told that a roll call was just made and we were counted as absent. We went to the office and lied through our teeth that we had been to the exchange and just returned. The officer checked off our names and as we left the office he asked how Paris was. We were processed the next day and I asked for a seven-day leave in England. I picked my orders the next day and got a ride on a B-17 to England. I had talked to the pilot and he said that he would take me to Molesworth. What a nice guy.

CHAPTER 16

MY STAY IN ENGLAND

I got transportation to the Officers' Club and there I met two officers who I knew by name, Major Sheets and I can't remember the other one's name but neither knew me either. Major Sheets was a 1st Lt. when I was shot down. They invited me to lunch and there they told me that the Group had been transferred to North Africa and that only a few remained and they were about to leave. I was told that the Officers' Club was giving a party and the drinks were free. They had tried to sell their whiskey to the English but they would not pay what the club wanted. They were giving it away at the party but they were selling it for 1 English Pound a bottle. I got really smashed that night. I found a mug my navigator had given me. I was surprised that it was still there. I filled it with Scotch whiskey a few times. The next morning a major asked me why we threw a woman in the fire pool. The fire pool was a concrete pond of water to be used in case of a fire. I told him he must be mistaken but he said I asked him to help me throw that Bi--h in the pool so he did. He was a bit under the weather like I was. I bought four bottles of Scotch then took a train to Watford, the home of my lady friend.

As I got out of the taxi, the entire family, Mother, Father, brother and Joyce Richardson ran out to meet me. It was a joyful reunion. Joyce was not a prude but she allowed me to go so far then it was STOP. We had warm kisses, nothing further. I was invited to stay at their house and I accepted. Every morning Mrs. Richardson woke me with a large cup of tea, then in about fifteen or twenty minutes she knocked on the door and said that my shaving water was in the bathroom. What a hostess. After a couple of days I found that I could buy food from the commissary for people I was staying with. I spent about fifty dollars for food and got a few things for the family, also for Joyce. Mrs. Richardson was so surprised at what I brought. Some of the stuff she hadn't seen since before the war back in 1939. Joyce and I went out every night and in the daytime we took walks in a nearby park. She often got nearly asking about us getting married but never quite went that far. Joyce told me that an officer that had been going with her when I met her had asked her to marry him. I said that if it didn't work out would she consider me but she said that she would not do such a thing. I asked her to marry me and she didn't hesitate a second before she said yes. I was elated to say the least.

When we got to her house I asked for a family meeting and then asked her father if I could marry her. He thought for a second and said yes. Then I asked her mother and brother and they also said yes, especially her brother. Her mother said that she wondered when I was going to pop the question because she knew her daughter's view on the subject. We did a lot of planning about just what to do before the day. I knew that I could not get the approval for the marriage in the short time I was going to be in England. I planned to go home, visit my family and friends then return to England during my leave of 90 days. That was all right with Joyce, as she wanted to get married in England. Before I left Watford I gave her some money for stamps to write me and we said our good byes for the time being. I had stayed in Watford for about 12 days on my 7-day leave.

When I reported to the Headquarters in London a Sergeant said that I had overstayed my leave. I said that I did not get out of France until 7 days after I received my leave orders. I was sent to South Hampton to await a ship to the U.S. I stayed there for about five or six days before shipping out on the Queen Mary. I met some sailors in a bar one night and during our conversation I said that I hadn't had a fresh egg for over a year. They told me to meet them at the Navy's entrance the next day about 5:00 PM. I was surprised when they gave me a sack with about a dozen eggs in it. They had told their Mess Officer about my sad tale and he sent the eggs to me. That evening as we were talking about our plans after we got home one of them asked if I wanted an egg in my beer. Not meaning it actually but kind of saying that I wanted too much. I decided that I did want an egg in my beer so I broke one in my beer and drank it down. Some of the locals frowned on what I did as eggs were still kind of scarce in England. When I got back to my quarters I tried to find a place to cook my eggs but the kitchen was closed and no fire was available so I just threw them away. A day or two later we boarded the Queen Mary bound for the good old U.S.A. and not a day too soon. I wrote Joyce a couple of times while I was in South Hampton and I received one letter saying that she was thinking of making a trip to see me but I told her I was leaving very soon and I may not be able to see her. I left before I received a reply.

CHAPTER 17

GOING HOME BY BOAT

After several days at South Hampton we boarded the Queen Mary bound for the good old U.S.A., and not a minute too soon. The passenger list was all military, ex-POWs and some nurses. Our cabin had bunks on both sides of the room. They were in tiers of four or five with only about two feet of space between bunks, but it didn't bother anyone. We were going home.

The dining room was terrific. We could order anything we wanted from a very large menu. The waiters were English and they seemed to enjoy serving us. They knew that we were ex-POWs. I stuffed myself at each meal with some food that I had never heard of, at least by the name on the menu. It was all delicious and plentiful. I know that I gained weight because my trousers were beginning to get a bit tight. I could use the additional weight as I was way below my normal weight of 165 pounds. I didn't outgrow my clothes.

The main lounge was huge. It was like the lobby of a large luxury hotel. There were marble columns about two feet in diameter. I met another ex-POW from Temple, TX named 'Doc' Withers. He wasn't a doctor but his father was a pharmacist in Temple. When I was working for the Federal Highway Administration, one of the areas I worked in included Temple. I tried to locate Doc but there were no Withers listed in the telephone directory. I guess he might have moved by the time I started looking for him.

Doc and I met two nurses, sisters, from Parrot, Kentucky, and played Old Maid all the way across the Atlantic Ocean. The nurses were in another part of the ship and the access was guarded by MPs twenty-four hours, so we didn't get to visit them on the ship, ever. When we got to the New York harbor the standing joke was "we didn't think the Statue of Liberty would still be standing, we thought that she might be sitting." We went to an Army base in New Jersey for two days then loaded on a train destined for San Antonio, Texas. That was the last we saw of the two nurses. Doc Withers mailed them the Queen of Spades as a joke. He included his home address but I don't know if he got a reply from them.

CHAPTER 18

THE TRAIN RIDE TO TEXAS

The train we were on had kerosene lamps and a potbelly stove. The stove was unnecessary as this was in late June and most of us took off our shirts to try to keep cool. We stopped in a town in Pennsylvania named Leighton and were there for about a half hour. Doc Withers asked me if I wanted to get off the train and I told him that my bag had been checked. He had not checked his bag and he said that he had plenty of clean clothes and that we were about the same size so I said OK. We got off and hid behind the train station until the train pulled out. A railroad detective offered to take us to town to a hotel where we could wash as we were covered with soot. We had kept the windows open and the soot was all over everybody. We went to the hotel, showered and put on clean clothes. The detective took us to the VFW Hall and told everyone that we were ex-POWs and on our way home and that we had missed our train. What a welcome we received at the VFW. We could not spend any money as someone was always buying our drinks. I tried to play the jukebox and a man told me that my money was no good there and he put money in the jukebox and told me to select what I wanted to hear. What a place, I have always wanted to return, for a visit for a visit but I never have. Maybe some day I'll be able to visit Leighton again.

We bought tickets on the next train to Texas, me to Fort Worth and Doc to Temple. We asked the Pullman Conductor if a bedroom or compartment was available as we were very tired and wanted to get some sleep. He gave us a compartment at no charge after we told him we were ex-POWs on the way home. We did give him a few packs of cigarettes. We sat in the coach after a short nap as we were bored and wanted to see people. In the coach there was a young lady across the aisle from us with a very active three- or four-year-old boy. She looked really beat so we offered her our compartment to rest and clean up, as there was a shower there. We told her to lock the door and not to answer if someone knocked. We said that we would take care of her boy until she returned. She was gone for about two hours or so and when she returned she looked like a different person, rested and hair fixed. She must have thanked us a dozen times for what we had done. She was on her way to California to meet her husband who was coming home from the Pacific Theater.

I got off in Fort Worth and that was the last I ever saw or heard from Doc Withers. I got a taxi to my home and the driver and I talked and we discovered that we had been in the same Texas National Guard company in Fort Worth back in 1937-38. When I got home my Mother and sister met me at the front door with hugs and kisses. It was quite a moment for all of us. My sister looked a little more plump than I remembered and when I said so she told me that she was expecting her first child. She had married an Aviation Cadet while I was a POW.

I wrote to Joyce several times but I never received a letter from her. Maybe she met someone else or had second thoughts about me. I really cared for her and it may have developed into something if we had more time together. I often think of her but I never got back to Watford. We had gone to England, Allyne my wife and I, for my bomb group's reunion several years ago, but did not have the time to visit anywhere else.

I only stayed in Fort Worth overnight then took a train to San Antonio. The first train I was on had arrived two days before. I explained that I was told that the train would be in the Leighton station for an hour or so and I had decided that I had time to call home and tell them that I was on the way to San Antonio. They bought my lie, so it appeared, and I received orders giving me a ninety-day leave. Then I was to report to Miami, Florida for orientation. I got on a train that afternoon for Fort Worth. The next ninety days was a ball for me. I had a year's back pay and I spent it on wine, women and song, so to speak. I bought a Packard convertible and got a bunch of gasoline stamps at Carswell AAF Base there in Fort Worth. They were a lot more than I needed. About a week or so before I was to report to Miami, I received orders to report to San Antonio to what is now Lackland Air Force Base for processing and reassignment.

While I was in Fort Worth the Japanese gave up and the war was all over. I was driving west on 6th Street in town when the end of the war was announced. I stopped at a red light at 6th and Main Street when all of a sudden my car was filled with a bunch of screaming women. I tried to explain that I was on my way to pick up my date for the evening but it was ignored. Traffic was backed up on both 6th Street and Main Street for about an hour. I was late on picking up my date but she was a very understanding young lady. When my leave was up I reported to the Personnel Distribution Center at San Antonio. This would be the second time I had been to this base with the first time being when I was at the Classification Center and Preflight Training Center. There I met a

Captain that had been in the Pacific as an Intelligence Officer. We buddied around for several weeks and met two nice young ladies at a Pig Stand Drive Inn on West Commerce Street. We visited there many times and one day I asked one to go out with me after she got off work. Her name was Mavis Humfleet.

After she got off I took her by where she lived and she changed clothes. We went to a couple places that were about to close then I found a good place to park. We kissed a few times then I took her home. Later we went out again and as we talked about our plans for the future, she asked if I wanted to marry her and I said "why not" but where could we get married at this time of the night, at 2:00 AM"? She said she had heard that the Justice of The Peace in Seguin, Texas would marry anyone, any time of the day or night. We went there and the courthouse guard called the JP and by 3:00 AM we were husband and wife. I paid the JP \$25.00. After we were married we rented a furnished room with kitchen privileges, but we only stayed there about two weeks because the landlady and her family were eating most of our food that was in the refrigerator. We moved to another place but for only a couple of weeks before I was transferred to Albany AAF, Georgia. This was one of two moves before we went to Biloxi, Mississippi.

CHAPTER 19

OUR MOVES BEFORE KEESLER FIELD

When we got to Columbus, Mississippi we could not find a place to live but we heard from other military families that there were apartments in West Point just about twenty-five or thirty miles west of Columbus. When we got to West Point we found that the apartments were concrete block buildings with about five or six so called apartments in each building. There was a kitchen, living/bed room and a bath. The only beds we could get were metal cots with cotton filled mattresses. It was all that was available, but we found that many Air Force Officers were living there. Let me describe the apartments. The apartments in each building were all on the same concrete slab and the walls did not provide much privacy. The kitchen stove was either coal or wood burning and in the firebox was a copper coil to heat water. The housing office furnished a small amount of coal, but it had to be hauled from the drop off point to the apartments by us. The site had been a living place for the workers at the now closed ammunition depot. There were a lot of wooden boxes at the old site so we got our wood from there. At night you could hear the occupants cutting the boxes up for kindling wood. After we ran out of coal we used the wood all of the time, so we made many trips to the site for more boxes. We were at West Point for about a month and met many other military families two of which we were together for the next four years.

I checked out in the AT-6 airplane, a single engine, low-wing plane and did a lot of flying there with other pilots not checked out in the AT-6. One day I had another pilot in the rear seat and we flew around for about four hours and I practiced some aerobatics, which I did rather poorly. After we landed I told the other guy that it was my first solo flight, I thought he was going into shock. It wasn't true but I did it for fun. He said that he thought that I was an old fighter pilot. Later we were both at Keesler Field, but he didn't hold a grudge. We had to drive from West Point and back every day so we carpooled, four of us so each only drove about once a week. We drove into the sun in the morning and in the evening, no fun for the driver.

After several weeks we were all assigned to another base. I was sent to Albany, Georgia a place that I had never heard of before. We rented a room from a widow lady but after a week we decided

we wanted a larger room with more privacy so we moved. The new place was with a family with one child and we got along fine with them. When the guy came home from work he always wanted a 'shooter', which meant a drink or two, and I did so with him. At Albany we flew B-25s but the main objective of the base was to provide some French pilots with flying time. They were pilots but no two-engine time. Once I was sitting in the engineer's seat and this Frenchman was making touch and go landings and takeoffs. That is, we did not stop but after we touched down the pilot was to takeoff again. Once the pilot was talking to the instructor and I could see the trees at the end of the runway were coming up very fast. The student finally gave the plane power and we cleared the trees.

We met a bar owner there and every time we passed the bar he would come out and say "Ah ha, San Antone". We went to his farm one day as they were harvesting sugar cane with a mule drawn press. We dipped some cane into the froth that formed on the juice coming from the press, very sweet.

One night two couples went to a nightclub to party. I was scheduled to fly early the next morning so I was not drinking anything but coke. About 10:00 PM we left with a couple for home. The road was a two-lane road and a car in front of me was driving about fifteen miles an hour so I went around him. All of a sudden red and green lights started flashing and I was pulled over by the sheriff. He ordered me out of my car and said that I was driving on the wrong side when I passed him. I said that it was a two-lane road and I had to drive there to pass him as he was driving so slow. Then he threatened to black jack me then someone in the car said something and he went to the car and told them to shut up. The deputy told me to be quiet because the sheriff did not like military personnel and that he might hurt me, so I shut up. My wife then began to call the sheriff names and he told me I was going to jail and to get in his car. I asked why was I going to jail because I had not said anything. He threatened me again so I got in his car. The next morning a black guy came by and wanted to know if I wanted some coffee. When I said that I did, he wanted money of which I had none, so no coffee. Later one of the officers that was in the car with me came and got me out of jail. I thought it was all over until I was processing to leave the base for Keesler Field Mississippi. At the MP office I was told that I had to go to the County Judge's office because of an unpaid fine. When I got to see the judge he fined me \$65.00. That was a bunch of money in those days, but I paid the fine and hoped that I never saw Albany, Georgia again. I haven't.

One of the officers that I met at Albany was going to Keesler too and he had bought a trailer and had some room if I had anything to move. I think all that we had then was a footlocker that I had moved in the back seat of my car. We loaded that and a couple of bags into the trailer and off we went to Keesler Field. The other couple was Stuart and Rhoda Stuart. I can't remember his first name because we all, including his wife, called him by his last name.

CHAPTER 20

KEESLER ARMY AIR FIELD, BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI

When we arrived at Biloxi we could not find a place to rent so we went to Gulfport a few miles west of Biloxi and found a pretty nice apartment in an apartment house. There were four apartments plus the owner. We met the couple that lived on the same floor next to our place. I immediately liked the man and Mavis liked his wife. They were Hatch and Coleen Hatcher but I never knew his first name. The night we met them we bought a case of cold beer and spent most of the night on the breakwater talking and drinking beer. It was a real joy to meet such nice and likeable people. Later we met the lady that was also on our floor, then the couple in the apartment just below ours. We liked them all. We had a lot of cockroaches so we bought some poison and we killed about fifty or more. Our landlady asked if we were fighting the roaches and we said yes. She asked us not too because they were coming down to her apartment. We told her to fight them too. No one else complained. Hatch was in the Air Force but he was about to be released from active duty as an officer. He decided to enlist because he could be enlisted as a Master Sergeant. This required him to go to some school for a few months. We tried to make up for his absence and I guess we did help a little having Coleen go with us to the Officers' Club and inviting her for lunch or dinner. When Hatch got home Coleen was a different person, she actually glowed. She also got pregnant about the time her husband returned. After a few months they moved out when Hatch was transferred and we moved a bit later.

We found an apartment a bit closer to Biloxi and right near the now-closed Gulfport Army Air Field. When we inspected the apartment we noticed a lot of roaches so we got some more poison and fed it to them. We swept up about a hundred roaches and never saw another one because we continued with the poison. We stayed in this place until we got into a duplex just off the base in Biloxi. Our neighbors were Eddie and Ginny Perkins. He was a Master Sergeant and she was a secretary on the base. We became very close and years later met up with them at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. In 1946 I was sent to Barksdale AFB in Shreveport, Louisiana to a flight instrument school. We rented a place in town from a widow who lived just across the street. There were two young ladies also in the house with us, but we

hardly saw them. Our landlady liked to talk about her dead husband. She said she could feel his presence in the house we lived in. We had the kitchen all to our selves. One evening I got behind a curtain just outside the kitchen and when Mavis came down I pushed out the curtain and said WHOO. She almost had a heart attack right there. I don't think I was ever forgiven for that. While we were at Barksdale we decided we wanted to start a family but it was not easy. After several months Mavis had an examination and that something was giving of an acid that was killing my sperm. After a minor surgical procedure it was gone and she got pregnant. After the nine months the baby girl was born but she only lived a few hours. We buried her in a cemetery in Biloxi. We still wanted a child so she got pregnant again and on November 20, 1949 Suzanne was born in the hospital in Biloxi. In December, 1949 the Air Force decided to reduce the Air Force and I was released from active duty. We went to Fort Worth and I enlisted as a sergeant at Carswell AFB.

CHAPTER 21

LIFE OUT THEN IN THE AIR FORCE IN FORT WORTH

When we got to Fort Worth, Texas we found a house that we could afford. It was a two bedroom one bath with an attached garage with a dirt floor in the garage. I later put in a concrete four-foot-square slab for a washing machine. Mavis finally decided she needed an automatic washing machine. Suzanne was only about two months old and was growing like a weed. We spent over \$50.00 a month on just baby food.

We decided that my best bet was to enlist in the Air Force; it was the only life I really knew. The Army had said years before that if you had been a sergeant or higher in the Army former officers could enlist as a Master Sergeant. I had been only a Corporal just before becoming an officer so all I could get was a sergeant. I stayed at Carswell where I enlisted and was assigned to a B-36 unit. I was assigned to work on a B-36 but it was on the job training until I could go to the Aircraft and Engine course at Sheppard AFB in Wichita Falls, Texas. After I completed the course I asked for the B-36 specialized course. When I was about to graduate I asked to be assigned back to Carswell as my family was there in a house that we had bought. All of the class was sent to Carswell. I worked on engines until they found that I had been a pilot so they had me chasing parts. That meant that when someone wanted a part I had to look for the part number then go to the parts hanger and get it. I did this until March of 1951 when I was called back to active duty as a Captain but not flying.

About this time Suzanne was walking everywhere. I think she started walking when she was about eleven months old. She was a real joy watching her run and laughing all the time. We had bought a second hand TV and she enjoyed the shows. It was the only TV in the neighborhood at the time and we had a lot of company. It didn't come on until 6:00 PM. One neighbor was very heavy and when we were watching wrestling matches she got so excited that she broke the springs in our couch. I was enjoying my job at this time and thought I would stay in the Air Force as an enlisted man until I retired. I found out later that Mavis had called the editor of the Star-Telegram newspaper and told him about me and asked him to see if I could be recalled to active as an officer. His son was in the Air Force and was also a POW. He called a

congressman and he must have called the Air Force. I was sworn in on March 9, 1951 and assigned to Lackland Air Force Base. Mavis went to Kentucky to show off Suzanne to her parents and I went to Lackland AFB in San Antonio, Texas for my third assignment to that base, but with three different names.

My first job was the Orientation Officer for the Air Force recruits and with my commanding officer's help I did a pretty good job. Every morning I would deliver short speech and then introduce other people that would be available to the recruits, the Red Cross, Chaplain and a Medical Officer. In the afternoon I gave a similar talk to the female recruits. I was amazed in the change of the appearance of the young ladies. About the time they were to graduate I talked to them again, their makeup, hair and clothing were all a great change. I think some of them had never been near a hairdresser nor received any professional advice on their makeup. The female officers were more aware of the change than I was. I was a Captain at this time and happy. I also had an additional duty of reading parents mail regarding their sons. Most thought that we were starving them. I looked at their service record and usually they had gained weight but because of the exercise they did and the regular meals they thought they were hungry or maybe they wanted Mama to baby them. I usually called the individual to my office and had a little talk with him, I asked him to write home and tell them how much he weighed and what he was doing. I never received a second letter from the same parents except that a few wrote that they had heard from their son and were satisfied that he was alright and eating well.

We moved from our first apartment as soon as base housing was available on the base at Lackland. We had a very nice two bedroom, one bath and a covered parking place. A neighbor had two children that Suzanne played with. Once she was missing and Mavis was scared to death. They searched the area with no results. I had gone to a baseball game and was not aware of the problem. When Mavis was about to call the MPs, two Air Force officers drove up with Suzanne and her tricycle. When they asked her where she lived she said she did not know the address but she could point. That's the way she got home. She told her Mother that she was going to the 'Club' for a drink. That's what parents teach their children. Once in the Officers' Club her Mother and I were talking to someone and I was watching the bartender and Suzanne. He was mixing what I thought was an Old fashion but he put it in front of Suzanne and she started to drink it. I stopped her and that is when I first heard of a Shirley Temple and that may have been why she was going to the 'Club' for a drink. She wanted

one every time we took her there. In late 1952 I applied to return to flying status. My commanding officer tried to get me not to apply as he had recommended me for promotion to major but the flight pay increase would be more than the increase in pay as a major and I wanted to fly again. I was reinstated as a pilot and transferred to Ellington Air Force Base. The couple that lived next door to us in Keesler AFB was also at Lackland AFB and they wanted to move to the apartments where we were. I talked to the housing officer and asked if they could have our apartment when we moved out, he said OK. At Ellington I had to ride as copilot for a while to get my feel for flying back and because I had been off flying status for more than three years, but it didn't take long for me to get that feel again, and I loved it.

About this time Korea was getting to be a real problem and pilots were needed there. Our squadron officers decided who would go. One pilot was on the list to go, but he was in WWII and he didn't want to go to another war. He went to the Adjutant General on the base and he agreed that someone who had not been in combat should go first. The basis for our Squadron Commander to determine who should go was when they were last at an overseas assignment. He was very upset and some of us WWII people were sure to feel his anger, so I applied for assignment to Alaska and got it. There was an officer in my squadron at Lackland that had been to Alaska several years before and he said that they had to wait about three months in one place for the lake to freeze hard enough to drive across. There was not a bridge there at that time, but was when we drove up the Alaskan Highway. I asked for authorization to drive as I was going to buy a mobile home and pull it up the Alcan Highway. That was our intention but we could not find a mobile home that was insulated for the sub-freezing temperatures so we junked that idea but we still drove there.

CHAPTER 22

ALASKA BOUND

We had a Buick Roadmaster sedan and we put a footlocker behind the front seats and made a large flat space for Suzanne. She once asked "how much further was it" and I said that we were going to drive forever, she never asked again. I had to go to West Palm Beach AFB for training in the SA-16 Albatross before going to Alaska. It was a two-engine, high wing airplane capable of landing on land, sheltered water, open sea and snow or ice. At West Palm Beach and Alaska it landed on all of them: snow and ice, sheltered water and land in Alaska and land sheltered water and open sea in West Palm Beach. I had to attend survival training in Idaho before going to Alaska also. It consisted of three weeks in the wilderness and walking with a pack that weighed about 60 or more pounds. We had only three three-ounce cans of food a day and were expected to get more from the wild. I think the largest animal we got was a porcupine. It tasted a bit like turpentine but it was otherwise all right. I was designated as a crew commander and had seven enlisted men and one officer in my crew. One day one of the enlisted men asked me if I wanted some snake to eat and when I said yes he showed me a can with what I thought were earthworms, I changed my mind about the snakes.

At the end of the exercise I had lost about three or four inches in my waist but I had gained a pound. I also did not shave until I got back to civilization but I kept my mustache. When I arrived in Cincinnati, Ohio to meet Mavis and Suzanne. Suzanne ran up to hug me then backed off and said, "shave it off" and I did. We were ready to go to Alaska. I had received orders to report to the 74th Air Sea Rescue Squadron at Ladd AFB in Fairbanks, Alaska. We knew someone at Elmendorf AFB at Anchorage, Alaska and I thought that I might get them to change my orders to the Squadron at Elmendorf but the Group commander said that they needed me at Ladd. I left Suzanne and her mother with the couple we knew had flown to Ladd in an Air Force plane. I found an apartment in Fairbanks then flew back to Anchorage and we drove to Fairbanks. It had taken us about a week to drive from the lower U.S. to Anchorage. One night in Canada at a motel I had to go to the rest room and I looked outside and it was daylight at 3:00 AM. I asked a man if it ever got dark here, it was in August, and he said not at this time of the year.

CHAPTER 23

LADD AIR FORCE BASE, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

Our apartment was very near to Ladd AFB and was on the second floor. We became friends with the family on our floor and an Air Force officer on the ground floor. Our neighbors on our floor were from Canada and had a very attractive young daughter that later became Miss Alaska. After about six months quarters on the base became available and we moved into one. They were garden type, that is, the kitchen, dining area and living room were on the ground floor and the bathroom and bedrooms were on the second floor. We also had a basement where we put the washing machine. It was quite comfortable and after a while we learned to put things on the stairs that we later carried upstairs, it saved a lot of going up and down the stairs.

My squadron consisted of four SA-16 aircraft and six flight crews. I was required to fly with some of the older pilots before I got my own crew. We did a lot of local flying to become familiar with the area and the aircraft. There was a high hill just west of the base that had been flown into by a civilian aircraft several years before. The idea was to show me that wrecked aircraft do not look like the same as before the wreck. There was also a C-47 that the crew had bailed out of several years ago and had landed on its own after it was out of fuel. The crew did not survive as it was in the winter and they were not dressed for the extreme cold weather. When I saw the crew list I saw the name of a pilot I knew at Keesler AFB back in the late 40s. The accident results caused the requirement of heavy clothing in the winter. When the cold weather began in late September we were required to wear rubberized boots with woolen socks, woolen pants and a heavy jacket called a parka. As the winter progressed we had to wear woolen underwear, long johns, the woolen pants, windbreaker pants, woolen jacket, the parka and white felt boots. The rubberized boots were required because of the snow melting and water was on the ground after the very cold weather, ten degrees below zero we wore the felt boots, we called them bunny boots. I wore my regular socks, then a felt footlet that came to my ankles then two or more pairs of woolen socks. This kept my feet warm. Every morning I had to check my crew to see that they had dressed properly, mainly the long johns. One day my squadron commander told me that my navigator did not have his long johns on. I told him that I had checked my crew

and everyone had them on. He said that all my navigator had on were the tags of the underwear. I checked and the CO was right. I sent my navigator home to get full-length underwear. I told my crew that from then on everyone would have to drop his pants so I could check their clothing. My crew consisted of me, pilot, co-pilot, navigator and an engineer. All were officers except the engineer. I never did have them drop their pants and from then on there was no problem. I explained that the requirement may save their lives if we had to crash land or bail out in the extreme cold.

Our squadron had the responsibility of all of Alaska North of the Alaska Mountain Range which included Mt. McKinley. After about six months I was designated as the squadron standardization pilot. My duties were, among others, to fly into all of the stations with runways over 2,000 feet in length in our area of responsibility. At this time the DEW Line, a number of radar sites across Northern Alaska and Canada, was under construction and was being supplied by U.S. Air Force C-124s and we might be required to be of service if one went down or required help. I took each crew on the route to the DEW Line and the first place was Norman Wells. The weather was quite bad on my first trip and I had to make an instrument approach, that is, I flew designated headings and altitudes to get under the overcast to land. I started my approach when I noted that the headings were in GRID. I called my navigator and asked what was the difference between GRID and MAGNETIC, he told me about 180 degrees. I put on climb power and climbed above the overcast. By flying magnetic headings I was heading into the mountains. I reset my gyro compass and made the approach and landing without any problem. This point about the difference between the two headings was very important for the other pilots in my squadron. We then flew to Yellow Knife and refueled and spent the night. The DEW Line was being constructed by civilian contractors and the one at Yellow Knife was the Northern Construction Company. The local manager met us at the airport with three cars and three bottles of whiskey. My copilot, navigator and I were about under the weather by the time we got to the hotel. We all went to bed as soon as we checked in, much to the disappointment of the people that met us. The next morning they said that they had partied all night, with a long flight home, I'm glad we went to bed. We flew from Yellow Knife to Copper Mine, which was about eight hundred miles from the magnetic North Pole. We didn't land but flew back to Fairbanks. I took all of the other pilots on the same trip so I was well known by the people at Yellow Knife. The locals called the contractors the Northern Destruction Company because of the way they acted.

One radar station that we flew into had a landing strip that had been a ridge that was bulldozed to a width just wide enough for us to land. It was a rather steep incline that required us to land uphill and takeoff downhill. I got to know the Air Force officer in charge and he asked me to bring him whiskey from the Officers' Club at Ladd. He had a small club for the enlisted men at the site. He was the only officer there. I knew that it was against regulations but he had no other way of getting the booze. He gave me a code name to use when I was bringing a load to him; it was Bald Eagle, taken from my head no doubt.

When we got to Alaska Suzanne was almost four years old and the next year, 1954, she started to kindergarten and really enjoyed being with other children. Back at Lackland Suzanne came to our bed and said that she was cold. We cuddled her but found that she was very hot with fever. Then she started shaking and her mother said that she was having a fit. I told her to grab her tongue to keep her from swallowing it, but then Suzanne clamped down on her mother's finger and we could not open her jaws. I got a wet cloth and started wiping her forehead and in a minute or so she opened her jaws and began to get a little color in her face. We took her to the base hospital where she was given a shot of penicillin and in about five minutes she was as well as ever. The doctor said that her tonsils were the cause of the fever. In Alaska it seemed that every month or so she would get a fever and we got her shots of penicillin. The doctor at Ladd Hospital said that we should have her tonsils removed even though she was a lot younger than they usually were removed. We told her that we would get her a Cinderella watch if she would let the doctors work on her and that she could have all the ice cream she wanted. As she came out of the recovery room I showed her the watch and she grabbed it without saying a word. In fact she didn't talk for a few days, just pointed or nodded yes or no. She has never had a sick day in her life since then. I don't think she asked for ice cream either after the operation.

There were several flights that have remained in my memory because of what had happened. One was my first trip to Barrow and in the dead of winter. We spent the night so we could search for an Eskimo that was missing while he was on a fishing trip in the ocean. The temperature was at least 40 below zero and the wind was blowing about twenty to thirty miles per hour. We could not face the wind in fear that we would get frost bitten. Any bare skin exposed to the wind for more than a few seconds could be frost bitten. It was not snowing, too cold, but the existing snow was blowing so bad that you could not see more than a few yards

in front of you. We had to walk at an angle to reach a building in the direction the wind was blowing from. We did not get to see the monument for Will Rogers and Wiley Post. They were killed at Point Barrow a few miles from the town. We did fly over it and could see it plainly the next day. It was clear and no wind. We searched for several hours and all we could see was an Eskimo in a boat paddling toward Barrow. Later we found out that he was the person we had been looking for. It was normal for them to hole up in a storm or high wind until it was over then do what they had been doing.

Another trip that is in my memory was a trip to Elmendorf AFB in Anchorage. Our assistant operation officer wanted my crew to fly a box to Elmendorf for some reason. I told him that there was a C-124 that was going to Elmendorf and that he could put it on that plane. He said that there would be too much paper work involved. We took the package and had no problem on the trip to Elmendorf but on the way back it was after dark, no problem with that but we started getting ice on the wings, our floats and drop tanks. We had all of the power we could get but we were still losing altitude. I told the copilot that we would bail out at 9,000 feet. At about 9,500 feet we broke out of the overcast and by putting the nose down we got enough airspeed to use the wing deicers. We had a notice that our SA-16 had used the wing deicers and the ice clogged the wing slots and caused the plane to stall from lack of airspeed enough to fly, they crashed. We still had lot of ice on the floats and drop tanks but we could maintain flying speed with normal cruising power. I called Flight Service and requested an altitude of 9,000 feet northbound. He said that 11,000 feet was the minimum altitude northbound. I asked if he had any other traffic and he replied that there was none. I said that I would be flying at 9,000 feet northbound Visual Flight Rules. We made it back to Ladd AFB and I told the guy that sent us that his not wanting to fill out the paper work to get the package on the C-124 almost cost us our lives and an airplane. He was a captain too so I didn't mind jumping on him. I should explain that Visual Flight Rules meant that the ground was visible and that the horizontal visibility was good, and it was in this case.

Another flight in my memory was once when we were to supply a ground party going up a glacier toward Mt. McKinley to rescue a man that had fallen and could not get down under his own power. Our squadron Pararescue group was climbing up the glacier but did not take any supplies with them. They wanted to travel fast in order to save the man's life. We were to fly up the glacier and drop the supplies to the rescue group. We did that and about that time

we encountered a subsiding air. That is the air mass we were in was like a downdraft but not severe but we were losing altitude. I moved as far as I could toward the mountain on my left then made a very tight turn to my right; too tight to maintain my altitude. We got around but the clouds were now covering the mountaintops in front of us.

My navigator got on our radar and guided me, when he said that we were clear of the mountaintops, I climbed another 1,000 feet. We flew back to Ladd, but in a few days the man had been saved and a helicopter airlifted him to a hospital, my crew was told to fly to Lake Minchumina to return the supplies to Ladd. The lake was near Mt. McKinley and the supplies had been flown by helicopter to an airstrip at the lake. We started loading the stuff and I watched the nose wheel hydraulic strut, when it got too close to the bottom I told them to load more to the rear of the plane. We finally got it loaded and were ready to take off. I told my copilot to raise the landing gear as soon as we were airborne. In the event of a problem, we could land on the lake but there was no problem and we made it back to Ladd. There were a lot of false alerts, but you could not second guess them and presume that a pilot was not in trouble. Once my copilot made a comment that the pilot of a plane that was overdue at his destination was just visiting a lady friend for the night and forgot to call the radio station. I told him that he may be right but we had to try to find him. It was in the winter and after dark when we started looking for him. We went to the last place we knew that he had been, but he had taken off from there. We flew the route he said that he would take and about half way to the second place he was intending to go, we saw a light being waved. We headed toward the light and saw a plane on the frozen river. On our next pass I let down as low as I thought was safe and had my copilot look out the side window. As we passed over the plane he could see someone waving a gas can and from that we decided that he needed gas. We made another pass and I blinked our landing lights to acknowledge his message. We reported our findings to the airport at Fairbanks and they sent a plane with gas the next morning. Our navigator gave them the exact location.

A year or so later I was in Nome and saw some people unloading polar bear hides. While I was talking to the people, one of them asked if I was Captain Dallas. When I said yes he told me that he was a passenger on the plane that we located on a river and that they received gas the next morning. I was happy that all turned out OK. He had been hunting polar bears and had shot three. As we were talking I said that I had wanted a bear skin about six feet

long to take back to the Lower Forty-Eight. He asked if I wanted the smaller one that he had shot. I was afraid that he might say it was mine for some amount of money and I didn't want to say no after he quoted a price so I declined his offer. I later found out that preparing them for the send-a-skin home was quite expensive, so I do not have a polar bear skin rug. In May or June I was told that I could return to the Lower Forty-Eight and would be stationed at West Palm Beach AFB, Florida. Quite a change in climate. We went home on a ship and had quite a storm en route to Washington State. We were just getting ready for bed when it got really rough outside. I said we might not get sea sick if we were in bed so we got there as quick as we could. Once I could feel the bow of the ship rising and it stayed that way so long, I wondered if we were going to take off, but we came down with a very hard impact. We heard the dishes crashing in the dining room that was very near our cabin. The next morning at breakfast there were two couples of us at our table each of us with one child. At the next table there was a family with several children and the one at one end said that she was getting sick and she did right down the middle of the table. They all got up and left. I tried to ignore it, as I was afraid I might get sick.

The weather calmed down and we docked at Seattle, Washington. We checked in at a hotel and went shopping. I had my sea legs and had to hold on to the tables to keep standing. The next evening we got an over night flight to Detroit, Michigan. We checked into a hotel but the room we were assigned was taken, so the bellhop called the desk and got the number of another room, but it was taken also. By this time I was so sick that I knew that I was going to throw up. I found a door that opened into a janitorial room and there was a large mop basin in one corner. I headed for it but everything came up before I got there, but I hit the basin. We finally got a room and we all went to bed, but alas we were not destined to get any rest because a plumber came to fix something in our bathroom. We did finally get a short nap then I called my sister in Flint, Michigan and told them where we were. They said that they could be there in about an hour. They were there in exactly one hour.

My brother-in-law, Smitty, drove so much faster than we were used to. In Fairbanks about the fastest we ever drove was about twenty-five miles per hour. I think I made a dent in the floorboard of the passenger side of the front seat. We visited the family for a couple of days then Smitty and I went to Detroit to buy a car. The one I wanted would not be available until the next day so they gave me a black and white one to drive. When I got back to my sister's

house, Mavis had a fit about the color of the car. I finally got her calmed down enough so I could tell her that the black and white was just a loaner and that I had bought a two toned blue one that we could pick up the next day on our way to Florida. Everything was OK then. She liked the car that I had picked out and we were on our way to Florida.

On the way there was a stretch of highway that had a double yellow stripe down the middle, no passing. There was a mule drawn wagon on my side of the road, what was I to do, there was no traffic and was only going about two miles per hour. I finally decided to pass him since nothing was coming toward us. Just as soon as I passed the wagon I saw red and blue lights flashing behind me. The officer asked me if I knew what the law was about the double yellow striped road. I told him I knew about the law but the wagon was moving so slow and there was no traffic coming toward me so I slowly passed the wagon. He talked to me until the wagon passed us and then he left, no ticket. I waited until the wagon got into the town before I moved. I passed the wagon in the town where there was no double yellow stripes. The rest of the trip was uneventful and we got to West Palm Beach, Florida safely.

CHAPTER 24

WEST PALM BEACH AIR FORCE BASE WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

We arrived in West Palm Beach in June 1955 and stayed at the same motel we had stayed in back in 1953 when I was there for training in the SA-16. The motel was owned by the same people and they were happy to rent us a room. As in most of the area they were usually closed during the summer as the tourist trade was very slim and it was expensive to keep all of the units air-conditioned.

My first duty was to be retrained as an instructor, which meant that I would be flying in the right seat. The training consisted of land operation, that is, landing on land, of short field landings and takeoffs, and regular landings. It was no problem as I had flown a lot in Alaska in the right seat just to let my co-pilot get some time in the left seat. The pilot's seat was the left seat as in most aircraft. We also made sheltered water landings at Lake Okeechobee. These included the normal landings and takeoffs into the wind and landings and takeoffs down wind. The down wind operations required a little different control procedures. Another takeoff was going in a circle. This was for takeoffs from small bodies of water. I had no problem with any of these. The open sea landings and takeoffs were very different operations that I had very little experience in making. I had some landings in the open sea during my training back in 1953 but none since. After a couple of days practicing my instructor thought I was OK. I didn't really agree but I felt that I could get more practice before I took a student there. One day the landing gear came down during a landing. My instructor said that I must have put the gear down but that was impossible, I told him, because I had my left hand on the overhead throttles and my right hand was on the controls. He then said that it must have been a malfunction. I thought he must have hit the gear control by accident but I said nothing. Our students were already pilots but they had no experience in landing on water. Usually there was never much of a problem teaching them to land on water except when I read the check list and said 'landing gear' some of them, being used to landing on land, said 'gear down'. I always asked if they really meant that. It usually never happened more than once. I enjoyed this very much. Our flight schedule had me flying one morning at 6:00 AM and at 12:00 noon the next day, alternating every other day. I liked this as it

gave me time to study as I was attending on-base courses from Florida Southern University. I earned a BA in Business while I was at West Palm Beach AFB.

Right after we found a house to rent, it had to be near a school as Suzanne was ready to start the first grade and we wanted to take her to school ourselves. She really enjoyed school and she got involved in everything available. She was the director of the class singing. We were there through the fourth grade and she started taking piano lessons right after we arrived in West Palm Beach. We also bought a boat with an outboard motor and water skis. It was kind of painful for me in learning to get up on the skis. I would fall and when I let go of the rope handle it went between my legs causing bruises on both of my upper legs. I finally learned and had many happy weekends skiing. Suzanne and my wife had no trouble learning to ski. The first time I pulled Suzanne she got up, but I didn't tell her how to turn and as we got to the other side of the lake she held up her hand and let go of the ski rope handle. It scared me to death and I turned around as quickly as possible but there was no problem she was swimming toward the boat. She had learned to swim and was not afraid of the water. After that she learned to ski on one ski and she and another girl about her age began opening all of the West Palm Beach Ski Club shows. They started out on two skis, then dropped one and while holding poles with the sign saying "Welcome To The West Palm Beach Ski Club Show". They made two or three circles around the small lake. It was quite a sight.

Every year a show was put on for the general public. There were aircraft on display and fly-bys of the different aircraft on the base. One activity I was involved with was a short field takeoff with a jet-assisted takeoff. I ignited the four jet bottles just after I was rolling on the takeoff and as soon as I had 65 miles per hour airspeed I pulled the nose of the aircraft up and climbed at that same airspeed, 65 MPH, to 300 feet of altitude then leveled the plane. It was kind of spectacular my wife told me. I did this for three years at the air shows.

I instructed for three years then the flow of students was reduced and I was assigned to the base flight operations. There I checked flight plans of pilots that were flying to some other destination. For some pilots I had to sign their flight plan but some had their own clearance authority, these I did not sign. After about three months I was transferred to the base squadron from the training squadron. My new duty was Assistant Disaster Control Officer. I worked for a major who was my boss when I worked at Base Operations. We

were concerned with disasters and aircraft dispersions for defense purposes. Each squadron had a dispersal plan to put into effect in the case of a possible engagement with some other country. During the Cold War with Russia we had to send aircraft to Germany to transport personnel or equipment. Even though we were a training base some of our aircraft arrived in Germany before operational units' aircraft. We had many practice alerts called by the Strategic Air Command (SAC). All of the practices paid off. Later I was assigned an additional duty of Protocol Officer. I had to meet all aircraft with an officer with the rank of Colonel or higher. If it was a General I had to notify our Base Commander. I would arrange transportation or anything else they might desire. During the winter I think my main duty was to arrange foursomes and tee times for visiting General officers from the Washington, D.C. area. I was quite popular with the golfers on our base; they wanted to play as much as possible.

While I was at Base Headquarters I had a phone call from a friend of mine in the training squadron telling me that my name had been submitted for a transfer to Air Rescue Headquarters at Orlando, Florida (ARS HQ). At this time I had put in for the job of MATS Liaison Officer in Taipei, Taiwan. I tried to find out from our personnel office about me being about to be sent to ARS but they said it was classified. I told them that I had clearance up to Top Secret but they said that it was a different type of classification. I decided to go to the top, our Base Commander. He called the personnel officer in and said that I was probably going to Taiwan and to take my name off the assignment to Orlando. About a month later I received my BA in Business from Florida Southern University, and less than a month later my assignment to Taiwan. We began packing and my wife went shopping for hats, purses, shoes and dresses for our new assignment. She had heard from other wives that there were a lot of social events that she would be invited to since I would be on the protocol list. We also bought a shipping trunk to hold all of the stuff.

I had an air conditioner, hang on type, installed on my car for our trip to California. On the way we stopped in Arizona to visit an old friend from Keesler AFB. He advised that we should leave very early in the morning because the desert was so hot at that time of the year. I thought that the AC would be enough but he thought differently. As it was we did not suffer in the least as the AC did its job quite well. In California we traded our Buick in for a Chevrolet and had it shipped to Taiwan.

We flew out of Travis AFB near San Francisco, California. Our first

stop was Hickam AFB, Hawaii. We were there the day Hawaii became the 50th state in the U.S.A., to Wake Island then Tachikawa AFB, Japan where my headquarters for my job in Taiwan was located. We had friends there from West Palm Beach, Florida and they entertained my wife and Suzanne while I was receiving the instructions about my new job. I was told that I would have a house and furniture provided in Taipei. The next day we left for Taiwan with a stop at Okinawa AFB. When we arrived at Taiwan Airport the officer that I was relieving met the airplane and escorted us to the Friends Of China Club Hotel where we were to stay for over a month before the paperwork was completed on the lease by the Government.

CHAPTER 25

TAIPEI, TAIWAN

This is the first time I have been in a country where the language was so different. We were in Japan but for such a short time I didn't notice the difference. On the military base everyone spoke English, even the waiters and bartenders. Now it was the way of life for us. We had to adjust, not them.

The officer I was replacing took me around to the different offices I would be doing business with and a few of the people he knew. One that I met was an American that was a vice president of Civil Air Transport (CAT). We were invited to his house many times. His wife worked for the U.S. Navy in Taipei so he was entitled to shop in the Post Exchange (PX) and the commissary.

My office consisted of an assistant, (2nd. Lieutenant), a Master Sergeant, 1 staff sergeant, 4 corporals, a secretary (Mrs. Liu), a civilian (Dickie) and a Chinese Army Driver (Soong). I learned right away to depend a lot on Dickie as he spoke good English and he knew his way around the Airport and Taipei. Soong spoke some English but his accent was difficult for me to understand at first but by the time I had been there a few months I had no problem understanding him. Mrs. Liu spoke good English but she was so quiet and was not one to speak casually. She was a very good secretary.

My office was responsible for the offloading of Military Aircraft, usually C-124s, cargo that was destined for the U.S. military in Taiwan and the Taiwanese military. I never knew what was in the boxes that came into the airport. The enlisted men set up a schedule as to who would be on duty when a plane was due. We did have some previous notice and Soong knew who he was to pick up then they would call either me or my assistant. None of the enlisted men had a telephone but Soong knew where they lived, I never did. The Master Sergeant was an African-American and he did not seem to have any assigned duties. I asked him what his responsibilities were and he said that he had never been given any. I checked service record and found that he had been rated as excellent at cargo school. I told him and the other enlisted that he was in charge if neither I nor my assistant were present. He liked that, now he could do what he was trained for. I met him again in Washington, DC where he was working at the Officers' Club at one

of the Air Force bases in the area.

We met an elderly couple at the Friends of China Club (FOCC) Hotel where we stayed for over a month. He was the president of a company building an oil refining plant near Taipei. One day an employee of the plant pushed a button that fouled up something and the man we met had to return to the U.S. to get the part necessary to repair the damage. The government gave him 48 hours to leave the country after he repaired the damage. I never found out if his company received any money for the work done. We hated to see them go as they were so much fun to be around.

We finally got into our house that was about 10 miles out of town. There were 5 other houses in the same area occupied by U.S. military personnel. Our first problem was that we did not have water and even after calling the U.S. officials we had no water. Someone told us to have a party and invite the local police commander and give him a present of Scotch whiskey then ask for a favor. We did and asked the chief if he could do anything to help us get water supplied to our house. We had water the next day, you couldn't drink it but we could wash and flush our toilet.

The sewage drainage was something else. They had what was called 'benjo' ditches where the sewage flowed. Our water drained out the back of the house to a ditch then ran to a larger ditch. I do not know where it went from there but I think it went to water the local crops. When I was driving home if I saw a truck spraying water I held my breath until I was well past that area. The stench was awful. The local men had a habit of relieving themselves beside the road. They did face away from traffic. I never saw a woman doing such.

Our car finally arrived at Keelung, Taiwan. Dickie went with me to pick it up. He arranged for a Taiwanese man to walk me through the process of getting our car. It was worth what he charged and if he had not helped me I might still be trying to understand what I was supposed to do. I had to see about eight or ten different men and each one had to put his 'chop' on my papers. A 'chop' is a symbol kind of like a signature. Finally we got through the process and I drove back to the airport in Taipei. It was a Sunday and our gas station was not open. I asked Dickie if he could get me some gas as the tank was near empty. He said it would not be any problem. He filled the tank and when I asked him about the gas he said it was 100 octane. I was afraid that it might blow off the engine head if I accelerated very much. I went to the gas station almost every day to put in some regular gas to dilute the 100

octane. I didn't have any problem with the gas but I had to get a filter put in the gas line because the gas had so much dirt I had to clean the filter about two times a week to get the dirt out.

Once a woman drowned in the river and someone had pulled her to the shore and tied her body so it wouldn't go down stream. There was always a crowd at the bridge where she was tied but no one pulled her body up on the bank. She finally disappeared and I guess the city finally did something with her body. Death or injury was nothing to the people there unless it was a family member, it seemed to me anyway.

I made a lot of trips to Hong Kong as a co-pilot. The reason for the flights was to deliver packages to the embassy there. It was very interesting there in Hong Kong. You could get a suit made to order for \$26.00 or a sports jacket for \$ 15.00. The first day they took your measurements, that evening you went for your first fitting then the next morning they delivered your suit to your hotel. They worked on it day and night in shifts, I guess. The resulting product was very good. I was introduced to a tailor there and went back many times. Once Suzanne played bingo at the Officers' Club and won two round trip tickets to Hong Kong. I was allowed one trip there with my family on a military aircraft so I took the tickets to the man I knew a CAT and got the money, but it was Taiwanese money. We sold the money at the going rate to other people and got about \$300 U.S. for Suzanne to spend in Hong Kong. I think she spent about \$500 out of that \$300, but she had fun. I took her and her mother to my tailor to have some clothes made. The first visit there, Suzanne had a long hairpiece woven into her hair. When we went back for a fitting she did not have the hairpiece on. The tailor was very upset; he thought she had cut off her hair. He calmed down after we explained about the hairpiece. Later, many years later, my wife, Allyne, and I went on a tour to China and Hong Kong. We visited the tailor I had known before and he remembered, he even told of my visit to his home and the incident about Suzanne. The price of suits has gone up, to about \$300. I didn't buy one, but a member of our tour did and he was very satisfied with the quality.

While in Hong Kong we bought a beautiful baby grand piano for \$300 U.S. The seller said that he would pack and send it to the U.S.A. I gave him a post dated check and dated it for two months ahead. I was surprised that he accepted it that way. We received the piano in Fort Worth in October 1960 in excellent condition. Suzanne played on it until we traded it in on an upright in Bryan, Texas in 1963. I think she still has it.

There were two Officers' Clubs in Taipei. The main one was where the bingo games were played and where I usually had lunch. The other club was much smaller and for Happy Hour the drinks were \$0.05. Yes, a nickel. We usually had a group there and rolled dice to see who bought the next round. The most it would cost was about thirty or forty cents a round. Usually the drinks were ten cents. We bought liquor at very reduced prices. Beefeaters Gin was \$0.90 a bottle, Johnny Walker Scotch (Black Label) was three dollars and the most expensive was Crown Royal, which was five dollars.

We had a live-in maid named Yeng and paid her about \$15.00 a month. She cleaned our house, prepared our meals and any other chores necessary. It was in our best interest to have someone in the house at all times to prevent thefts. Once I came home from work and was reading the Air Force Times and Yeng asked if I wanted a drink, I said yes bring me a Scotch and water. The drink she brought looked like water so I thought OK, I'll just have water. I took one swallow and I was shocked. It was not Scotch and water and I called out "Yeng what did you fix for me?" She brought out a bottle of gin; it was a square bottle just like the scotch. I showed her the difference so I wouldn't get gin and water again. One night my wife and I went to bed and were surprised when the middle of the bed was much lower than each end. We made it through the night and asked Yeng the next morning about the bed. She said that maybe 'Suzy' jumped up and down on the bed. No big problem it only cost \$1 U.S. to get it fixed. We told Suzanne no more jumping on the bed. The second year we increased Yeng's pay to \$20.00 a month. She had it a lot better than the other 'ammas' in the neighborhood as she had a bed with a mattress, we had an electric water heater, a gas stove and an electric washing machine. The other ammas in the area had to build a fire in the water heater, sleep on a straw mat and wash clothes by hand. They would visit Yeng and marvel at the way she lived. Once Yeng was ill and she sent her daughter to work for us for about a week. She was just as efficient as Yeng. I had bought a Teak wood statue of the Chinese Goddess of Mercy and had it displayed in our living room. One morning I saw Yeng praying to it. I asked if she was a Buddhist and she said yes but that her daughter prayed to that American Man. I didn't understand so she explained that he was Jesus. He was that American Man because the Americans were the ones where she learned about Jesus. Yeng was worth everything we paid her. I don't think she ever threw out leftovers. I know that when we had peas one evening the leftovers were in fried rice the next day. Once she offered me some coins and when

I asked her where they came from she said she had sold empty bottles and cans for the money. I told her to keep any money she got from such things.

CHAPTER 26

FLYING HOME TO TEXAS

I was ready to retire in 1960 so we prepared to leave Taiwan in October. We had everything packed when I received word from my headquarters asking if I would consider remaining on the job until my replacement arrived. They had no idea about how long that it would be so I declined.

All of my crew was there at the Airport to see us off including Soong who was in the Chinese guardhouse but they let him out to say goodbye to us. We flew to Manila, Philippines where we were met by a Chinese officer that I had done a favor for in Taipei. He introduced us to a family that owned a cigarette factory and were quite well to do. Their house had a tall wall around the property with a metal gate. They took us around Manila and would not let us spend any of our money except for personal things. They were the greatest of hosts.

On our way home we stayed in Honolulu with my wife's brother for a few days. They took us around Honolulu and one day we went to a beach that was black sand. At first I thought it might rub off but it was ground lava and very fine. We went to a Luau and the drinks seemed so mild, but they had quite a delayed kick to them. I got smashed and it was not my intention to get that way. The next day I got a shave and a haircut from a lady barber who was Japanese. I did not know that she was that nationality or I might not have let her shave me.

We left Hawaii after a few days and flew to the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. We took a cab to Fort Worth and when we got there the cab driver would not take a check. I tried to cash a check at the Texas Hotel but no luck; I was not staying at the hotel. I told the cab driver it was a check or nothing, he took the check. It was on a bank in San Antonio, Texas. I cannot remember where we stayed in Fort Worth but we later rented an apartment in west Fort Worth. Later we bought a used car, an Oldsmobile. First we had bought a Ford but my wife did not like it so we exchanged it. We met a couple that lived in the building next to ours and he convinced me to go to college. He was an electric engineer for an aircraft company in Fort Worth. He got a promotion and moved. We rented a house and had our furniture delivered. Suzanne was given a little dog in Taipei. We bought a cage and had it shipped to

Fort Worth. Brian and Dawn Chick picked up the dog and kept it until we got there. We had to take the dog to the pound, as it did not understand English. It was very confused; first it wanted outside then a few minutes later it wanted back in. He repeated this many times a day.

I was assigned to Base Operations until my retirement orders came. I retired October 31, 1960 and I thought it was over but I was surprised. In late November I received a call from Washington, DC from a Colonel saying that I had some minority service that could not be used for retirement. I told him that I had already been retired and that there were only a few days left in November. He said that it would be a paper thing only and I should not worry. A short while later I received orders canceling the first retirement orders. Now I was out of the military.

EPILOGUE

These have been rather glossed over tales of my military service, leaving out a lot of things that I cannot, or do not, want to remember. I hope that I have remembered the important parts of my military service. I have had a long and mostly enjoyable trip over the twenty years I spent in the Army and Air Force.

I began my active duty as a corporal in Company B, 144th Infantry Regiment, 36th Division of the Texas National Guard November 25, 1940 and retired as a Major in the Air Force November 30, 1960.



THE MILITARY HISTORY OF WILLIAM J. DALLAS 1935-1960

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