

I WAS LUCKY

by

Charles S. Oldfield.

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## FOREWORD

After my father finished *This Is My Story*, he wrote its Foreword. Just one year, six months and 27 days later, he died in Turkey on May 22, 1953 at the age of 62. That may be the reason I have delayed writing my story for over 40 years.

While I have never been afraid of dying, I do hate death because of the unhappiness it imposes upon the surviving loved ones. This is something I have experienced four times, starting when my mother died at the age of 28, just three months before my fifth birthday, and most recently when my wife, Bonnie Adele Spangenberg, passed away after we had been happily married for nearly 50 years.

After that, I wrote:

Should I hate death, that eternal sleep  
Which locks forever sorrow from the soul  
This final tryst which ancient poets keep  
And term the very summit of their goal  
Yes, like a child who is forced to bed  
When play, it seems has only just begun  
So when death again raised its ugly head  
I was sad, for life with Bonnie was so much fun.

Now that I am 75, I have started to write my story *I Was Lucky*. I am no longer the embittered, frightened old man I was after Bonnie died. Instead, I am a lucky person who has experienced three wonderful years with Gloria Elizabeth Otten, my new companion in life.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>No. of Pages</u>
I	SNAP-SHOTS	4
II	BOYHOOD	20
III	TWENTY-ONE	5
IV	LET US GO BACK IN AND FIGHT THE WAR	20
IV	A REMEMBERED TAKE-OFF	3
VI	THE THING	7
VII	DE SOTO PATROL WATCH OFFICER	4
VIII	DESCRIPTION OF MILITARY EXPERIENCE	7
IX	EXPERIENCE IN CIVILIAN JOBS	13
X	WRAP-UP	2

## Chapter I

### SNAP-SHOTS

The Kodak Brownie box camera and its associated roll film were created by George Eastman. His inventions were first publicized on October 25, 1888. The tiny, black-and-white pictures produced by Eastman's inventions were called snap-shots. Whenever I look at one of those old, faded pictures, I realize that it is comparable to my only memories of my mother, who died in March, 1925, three months prior to my fifth birthday. Thus, this introduction to my story is nothing more than my remaining mental snap-shots of my mother, Catherine Rantz Oldfield.

My mother was a member of a large Catholic, German and Irish family. Her father, my Grandpa Rantz, was born in Germany but immigrated to this country, where he first lived in Pennsylvania. Later he settled in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he met and married my grandmother, who had recently arrived from Ireland. Together, they had five daughters and three sons. Grandpa Rantz was 5'8" tall, with a full head of white, curly hair. Grandma Rantz was five feet tall, with beautiful, dark brown hair and eyes. It was obvious that my mother was one of their daughters, because she was 5'5" tall and had the hair and eyes of her mother. Grandpa had a family business which consisted of produce wagons, and teams of horses which he and each of his sons drove. Very early each morning they would drive to the produce warehouses, purchase fresh produce, and then deliver or sell it to various neighborhood grocery stores in St. Paul. This was a six-day work week for each of them and included taking proper care of the horses and equipment. The last thing they did each work day morning was to have breakfast together and divide up their share of the profits in Grandpa's kitchen.

Every Sunday after church, the Rantz clan would gather at my grandparents' home. After all, the family was a significant factor in the lives of people during those long-ago years. One thing I remember about such visits is that Grandpa Rantz would always be sound asleep on the couch in his front room while Grandma Rantz would be the hostess in her kitchen. One time when I was the youngest grandchild present, Grandma pulled me up on to her lap, which because of her fat tummy consisted of only her knees, and then whispered sweet words to me with a thick Irish accent. The finale of that experience was when she gave me a sip of her coffee. Then she started teasing her sons about using skunk grease (used for chest colds) rather than bacon grease for frying their eggs.

My first trip outside of the United States was when my mother took her two toddlers (Kathleen and me) to visit a girl friend who had married a wheat farmer in Canada. Their home in the small town was very close to the railroad station. One



day, we ankle-biters went to the railroad station to place pennies on one of the tracks so they could get flattened by the trains. After that, Kathleen started walking under some empty freight cars parked on a side track. This scared me! Since I knew only a few words, e.g., ma-ma, da-da, etc., I started screaming and crying at the top of my lungs. With that, the station master came out to see what the ruckus was all about. He came up to me and I pointed at Kathleen under a freight car. Immediately, he ordered her out and told both of us to stay away from his railroad tracks. That evening, the wheat farmer came outside carrying some roman candle fireworks. He fired one up and then showed me how to hold it—away from my body and aimed down the street. He handed it to me and I tried to follow his instructions. A fire ball came out of the end aimed down the street. Instead of flying down the street, it fell down onto my left tennis shoe. Incidentally, I still carry a scar on my left foot as a reminder of my first trip outside of the United States.

Although we had lived in two other places after I was born, the only home which I can remember living with my mother, father, and sister was at 1228 Dayton Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota. My parents had paid for it in full with the money they had saved during their marriage. I can remember it so well, despite the fact I have never been in it again during the last 69 years. In front of our home we had gas street lights which were lit and turned off by a man riding a bike. On the street behind us was a street car line where Kathleen's first pet, a tiny white poodle, was killed. Across Dayton Avenue lived my very first friend, Freddy Detloff, whose father was a pharmacist. One block behind Freddy's home was a park around a small lake. When the lake froze over during the winter, it became a skating rink where my mother taught me how to skate on my four-bladed skates strapped to my shoes. At the far end of the park was the rear door of the home of mother's oldest and favorite sister, my Aunt Maggie.

A short time after Kathleen's dog left this world, a box from my Uncle Percy Forbes (actually a second cousin) arrived at our home. At one of the holes drilled into the side of the box was a wet, black nose. When the top of the box was removed we saw the cutest, fat pup. His brown and tan fuzz was like a Collie's, but his nose was the same as a German Shepard pup. His mother and father were working farm dogs. When he grew up, he was the size of a male German Shepard with the long fur of a Collie. The entire family loved Shep and he loved us. One early evening, when Shep was half grown, he started barking like crazy in our front yard. My mother, sister and I rushed outside and we saw the gas light man trying to burn Shep with his lighting torch. My mother didn't hit the guy, but she really told him off. As a result, he never tried to burn Shep again and Shep, who was a smart animal, never again got close to the man. My last memory of my mother which involved Shep occurred just prior to Christmas of 1924. Every Christmas our mother used her friends "the elves" to keep us kids in line. My mother convinced me about the existence of elves because she always seemed to be informed about my

behavior. One evening before Christmas, my mother was upstairs and my father, Shep, Kathleen and I were in the kitchen. My father and Shep went to the front of the house. All of a sudden our father called us kids and told us that the elves were throwing candy down the front stairs (which lead to our bedrooms). When Kathleen and I arrived at the stairs, we looked up and couldn't see anything. Then, the candy started bouncing down the stairs. When it reached the bottom, Shep grabbed each piece and ate it. Then our mother, who was upstairs, started laughing and so did my father. At that point in time, we kids finally realized the truth about the elves.

I can remember one day when my mother took me to visit her sister, my Aunt Maggie. They were not only sisters, but friends. Later, I learned that my Aunt Maggie was being black-listed by her other sisters because she lived with a man she wasn't married to. He owned and operated a string of successful bakery shops in St. Paul. When he died several years later, he left his entire estate to Aunt Maggie. But the time I remember visiting Aunt Maggie, the man came home carrying a large box of cream-puffs. After my mother and aunt left the kitchen, the baker opened the box and handed me two cream-puffs and said, "Let's have a cream-puff fight." Then, he threw a cream-puff at me. When my mother and aunt returned to the kitchen, it's walls and floor were covered with smashed cream-puffs. Initially, there was a period of silence, then the three adults started laughing. I didn't, because I wished I could have eaten a single cream-puff.

Freddy Detloff and I always played together. One day we were in his basement which contained a furnace, a coal storage bin, wash tubs, and a gas stove to heat the wash water. Next to the stove was a box of matches. Since my mother had told me not to play with matches, I didn't touch one, but Freddy grabbed a couple of them. Then we went outside to a box which was leaning against the house. It was full of kindling wood and newspapers for starting fires in the furnace. Freddy opened up the top of the box, scratched the match, then threw the lighted match into the papers. When the papers started burning, we ran over to my house, climbed the staircase to my bedroom, and hid under my bed. Shortly thereafter, my mother pulled me out from under my bed, took my pants off and gave me a spanking. Then she repeated it with Freddy. Someone had seen us start the fire and then run over to my house. Before reporting us to my mother, they had put out the fire with a pail of water. Thus, I learned the hard way that it was really dangerous to play with matches.

The day my mother died in the hospital, at the age of 28, Kathleen and I were staying with one of our mother's sisters, our Aunt Florence. That evening, after it was dark, she asked us to come in and sit with her on a couch in her front room. Behind the couch was a large picture window with the drapery open so you could see the twinkling stars in the sky. Then, she let us know in a very kind way

that our mother had passed away. First she opened her Bible to a picture of two angels. On one of them she had attached a picture of our mother's face. Before we could react, Aunt Florence told us that whenever a person went to Heaven, a new star was born. Then she pointed at the brightest star in the sky, and told us it was our mother's star. You can be sure that my Aunt Florence's story about my mother's star kept me on the right path during the balance of my boyhood. This did not mean I was easy to handle—as my Uncle Dan used to say, "Charles is a good boy, especially when he is asleep."

## Chapter II

### BOYHOOD

After my mother passed away in March 1925, we continued living at 1228 Dayton Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota. However, by the time I entered high school in January of 1936, I had lived in eleven different towns and attended eleven schools at eight of those locations. Further, during the same time frame, I was supervised and treated with love and kindness by Mrs. Sletner, Auntie Eggleston, Arlene Oldfield, Aunt Bessie, and Lucille Oldfield. Thanks to those ladies, I became a happy-go-lucky person rather than a "sad sack." Why? They provided to me what I needed. This included discipline to control the wild hair in my make-up as a human being.

During the summer of 1925, our dog, Shep, became very protective of Kathleen and me. Since he came from a long line of farm dogs, he more or less herded us wherever we went. When we came to a street, Shep would grab with his mouth the hand closest to him. While holding the hand he would look left and then right. If there were no vehicles on the street he would walk us across the street. Shep would never let us on the street if a vehicle was approaching us from either direction. Whenever Kathleen or I cried, Shep would let us hold him and he would attempt to soothe us by whining along with our sobs.

As that first summer progressed, things more or less got back to normal when the two arsonists of Dayton Avenue decided to strike again. This time, the two five year olds decided to start a fire in a man's kindling box next to his garage. Before we could get the fire started, the man caught us in the act. We didn't get spanked; instead our fathers told both of us that we would have to do chores for the man whenever he asked us. The next day the man told us that he wanted us to move some bricks from his backyard to the front of his house where he was making a flower garden. On our last trip, I accidentally dropped a brick which bounced through a basement window. To make a long story short, my father had to pay for the window and the man never asked Freddy or me to do a chore for him again. Later in life, I learned that young arsonists got a sexual kick from starting fires. In our cases, Freddy and I would not have known what a sexual kick was even if we had one. My experience with the wrongs in which I was involved as a young person happened only when I had nothing more constructive to do.

My first day in school turned out to be a surprise to me. We had to get in a line which led to the school nurse who was giving vaccinations and shots to the students. By the time I reached the nurse, I was scared! Before she could touch me I started crying. When my teacher tried to hold me, I started screaming and kicking my teacher in the shins. The next day my father took me to school. On the walk

to the school, my father told me that the vaccinations and shots would not hurt any more than a small pinch. Then, he gave me a small pinch which didn't hurt. Next, he told me he wanted me to be brave like a man. In those days that was a common saying to little boys. After all, a man was supposed to be brave and never cry. Anyway, my father was right; the vaccination was like a tickle, the shots were like tiny pinches (until the next day), and I was brave.

The only other things I can remember about kindergarten were making paste out of flour and water and talking when I was supposed to be napping during the daily rest periods. The teacher solved my talking problem by taping my mouth shut. It didn't hurt me and taught me not to talk when I was not supposed to. The practice of dealing with children in those days was relatively simple, but effective. The teachers focused primarily on teaching their students the art of self-discipline. This helped the children who had to face the problems of the Great Depression which started a couple of years later.

Christmas of 1925 was the most fantastic Christmas I had as a child. Our father, Kathleen and I were going to have Christmas in Beloit, Wisconsin, with our Aunt Bessie (my father's sister) and her husband (my Uncle Dan). We were going to travel from St. Paul to Beloit on Christmas Eve. While we were waiting to go to the railroad station, it was snowing very hard outside. All of a sudden, a neighbor knocked on our door. When we opened it, he told us that Santa had left some presents for us kids at his home. So Kathleen and I ran up to his home. Sure enough, there were presents for us. About that time our father came and told us that Santa had just arrived at our home, so the three of us ran home. Before going in, he pointed to the sleigh tracks that Santa's sleigh had made. When we went in our home, we found a pile of presents. About this time the taxi cab came to take us to the railroad station. The next morning, Aunt Bessie and Uncle Dan met our train in Beloit. As we drove to their home, they pretended surprise about Santa's two visits in St. Paul. When we went into their home, Kathleen and I were surprised to find that Santa had left a pile of presents for us there as well. That is what I call a fantastic Christmas! I guess our mother's star was watching over Kathleen and me.

My father had a real problem, he had to work to make a living, but he had no one to take care of Kathleen and me when we were not in school. He solved this problem by rooming and boarding us with Mrs. Sletner and her family. We slept in the same bedroom as her children and Mrs. Sletner treated Kathleen and me the same as her own children. It was fun living with them. They were Swedish, so we learned some of their songs, one of them sounded like this, "Yah yah skovyha luta fisk and brandy."

I don't remember how long we lived with the Sletners, but during this period my father started going with Arlene Stauffacher who worked in his office. Arlene thought I would be better off if I was boarded and roomed with a Mrs. Eggleston who owned a duplex. Mrs. Eggleston lived in the upstairs flat and her daughter, husband and their baby son lived in the downstairs flat. Mrs. Eggleston asked me to call her Auntie Eggleston and I did when I started living with her. Her daughter was married to Fred Stone who became a famous newspaper man. Their baby was named Fred Stone, Jr., but was called Mike. I fell in love with Mike, the first baby I really got to know. Years later, when I started going with Bonnie, I told her about Mike. When Bonnie's and my son was born on October 26, 1946, she named him Michael Charles Oldfield. Whenever Auntie Eggleston had to go out, I would eat my meals with the Stones. Fred Stone, Sr. thought I needed to be taught proper table manners. He was right! He always had a yard long ruler next to him when we ate together. Whenever I put one of my elbows on the table, Mr. Stone would tap it with his ruler. Now that I am 75 years old, I realize that I have now forgotten Mr. Stone's "no elbows rule" when sitting at a table. Anyway, Auntie Eggleston and the Stones were very nice to me when I was living with them.

Arlene Stauffacher and my father were married in the spring of 1927 and their son, my half brother, Edward Anthony Oldfield, was born in December 1927. In our father's book, "This Is My Story" he indicates why his second marriage was a failure. Despite the problems, Arlene was very good to Kathleen and me. In fact, we still stay in touch with one another. She is now 95 years old. I have only seen Edward twice in my life. The first time was when he was a premature baby in an incubator. The second time was when he and his wife, Evelyn, attended our father's funeral at Arlington National Cemetery in June 1953. He looks more like our father than I do. I can remember two things which happened when Kathleen and I lived with Arlene. One was when Kathleen was hit by a car and her left hip and right wrist were bruised. Two years later, Kathleen spent six years bedridden in a hospital as a result of that accident. Second was when Arlene wanted me to learn how to play the piano. That was a lost cause because I was more of a outdoor kid than an indoor one.

When my father realized his marriage to Arlene might be (for the final 25 years of his life he repeatedly tried to remarry Arlene) over, he quit his job with the Great Northern Railroad and took Kathleen, Shep and me to live with Aunt Bessie and Uncle Dan in Beloit, Wisconsin. From then on for the next five years we only saw our father once or twice a year because he was busy working to support us during the Great Depression. I can remember one time when Kathleen and I were both in two different hospitals, our father worked eight hours a day with the Interstate Commerce Commission and eight hours each night loading mail cars. He always lived up to his responsibilities as a parent. In today's world, there are a tremendous number of American men who make absolutely no effort to live up to

their responsibilities of being a father. They are the real bums of their respective generations.

Our lives with Aunt Bessie and Uncle Dan was a different but good experience for me and Kathleen. When I lived with them for five years I didn't realize that fact, but later I woke up to the facts of life. When Aunt Bessie was eleven years old, both of her parents died. When she was 16 years old, she supported herself by being a teacher in a one room school house. When she was relatively old to get married, she met C.D. Parishkovoplos who was an immigrant from Greece. Aunt Bessie taught him how to speak, read and write English. During the process they fell in love and were married. Their marriage was a good one until Uncle Dan died in the fall of 1964. One thing good about the immigrants of Uncle Dan's time is that they realized the importance of learning the English language in becoming effective American citizens. After they learned English, they taught their children how to speak it. Thus, the stupid/expensive system which exists in today's schools was not required.

In the previous paragraph, I mentioned that living with Mr. and Mrs. C.D. Parish was a different but good experience for me and Kathleen. Each day we were assigned chores which had to be completed before we were permitted to play. This rule was also applied to homework. In addition to assigned homework, Aunt Bessie required we read a certain number of pages from a popular novel. That is why I started reading Mark Twain's books when I was seven years old. One thing I learned in a hurry was not to tell a lie to Aunt Bessie or Uncle Dan. I guess that is how I became a fast and tricky runner. Whenever I told a lie I would be prepared to move in a hurry so I couldn't be spanked. Later when I grew a little and was faster, I was seldom caught. However, by that time I had learned it was not wise to lie.

Aunt Bessie's and Uncle Dan's home was south of Beloit on a bluff overlooking the Rock River. Aunt Bessie was a cat lover. She became incensed because Shep kept her cat up a tree. So she called her brother and insisted he give Shep to someone else. He did, so Shep was sent to Bun Eggleston (Auntie Eggleston's son) in St. Paul. This made Kathleen and me angry, so we plotted our revenge against Aunt Bessie. I decided I was going to scare Aunt Bessie by pretending to run away. Then, Kathleen was going to insist that she be sent to live with our Aunt Florence in St. Paul. The next morning we initiated our plan of attack. I hid under a wooden box in the neighbor's back yard. The only supply I carried with me was my father's WWI canteen full of water. Aunt Bessie came outside and asked Kathleen, "Where is Charles?" Kathleen replied, "Oh, he has run away." Aunt Bessie started screaming and searching for me. I could hear Aunt Bessie calling, but I didn't come out. When Aunt Bessie could not find me she called Uncle Dan and asked him to come home. When he came home, they

searched their property. When they couldn't find me, they called the Beloit fire department because they thought I may have drowned in the Rock River. When the fire department arrived, they started firing a small cannon over the top of Rock River, hoping that my body would surface. When it became dark, the fire truck returned to Beloit. Pretty soon, Kathleen brought a slice of bread to me. Before I could eat it, Uncle Dan pulled me out from under the box and handed me to Aunt Bessie. She didn't waste any time; she pulled down my pants and undershorts, and then spanked my bare bottom. Then it was Uncle Dan's turn; he copycatted Aunt Bessie's action. I wasn't hurt and didn't cry because I was too busy keeping from laughing. Kathleen came up and told them, "If you are going to treat my brother that way, I want to go live with my Aunt Florence." The next day she did! That night Aunt Bessie called the fire department and told them I had become scared of the dark and returned home. This was done to keep from paying for the shells they had fired across the Rock River. As I told you in the last sentence in the first paragraph of this chapter, "I always had a wild hair in my make-up as a human being."

I lived with Aunt Bessie and Uncle Dan from the spring of 1928 until the fall of 1932. Looking back, it was a learning experience for me. Aunt Bessie insisted that I be a good student and always be helpful to my teachers. Thus, she taught me the basic principles of getting along with my superiors. Uncle Dan taught me the importance of knowing and respecting the cultures of the various groups of people I would have daily contact with during my lifetime. He was a Greek who loved his homeland, the "Old Country." He took me to Greek picnics (barbecued lamb and men dancing in a circle), arrangements to bring a bride-to-be from the "Old Country," weddings and funerals. In other words, know their culture and you may understand them. I was lucky, because I never heard any adult I lived with during my boyhood make a negative racial, or religious, comment about any other people! This business of calling blacks - Afro Americans, yellows - Asian Americans, tans - Hispanic Americans, etc. is nothing more than - please know the basic culture of other people. Following the O.J. Simpson case, the news media, not the trial, created a major racial problem in two days, i.e., the whites against the blacks, or was it the whites against the blacks, yellows, and tans?

During those years with Aunt Bessie and Uncle Dan, I learned a new love - sports. We played sandlot baseball, football, and basketball. We didn't have coaches or uniforms. Of course, the younger or smaller a kid was - the later he was chosen to play. But everyone played. I had one advantage - I was an extremely fast runner. In the winter, we switched to skiing, skating, sledding, etc. My friends in those days included Floyd Levine and Wilford Zabelle. Both of them were good guys from blue collar, middle class families. The only swearing we did was comparable to the complaint, "Gosh all fish hooks!" The subject of sex didn't arise until we entered our adolescent period of life. In those early years of life, the



neighborhood girls were not only better students than the boys, but evidently entered their adolescent period before we did. Why? I never asked a girl what she had, but on occasion I was asked to show them what I had. C'est la vie!

When I was ten years old, someone decided I should have my tonsils out before I entered the 5th grade. So I was taken to a hospital a few blocks north of where I lived at 1501 Liberty Avenue, Beloit, Wisconsin. When I woke up, I had a very sore throat until a nurse brought me a dish of ice cream which eased the pain. Pretty soon Uncle Dan came in and told me that it was time to go home. Boy, was I glad to see him. When we were walking to his car, I showed my happiness by running. That night, the wounds in my throat ruptured and I started bleeding. The doctor came and cauterized my throat. The next day my throat became infected. This developed into double bronchial pneumonia. I was lying in a pool of sweat and heard the doctor say to Aunt Bessie, "You had better call his father and have him come, because Charles is dying." When I heard that, I made up my mind not to die, because I wanted to see my Dad. My Dad did come and I lived, but had difficulty recovering. So I spent the next ten months in the Pinehurst Sanitarium, Janesville, Wisconsin. During those ten months I went from 60 pounds to 110 pounds, grew a couple of inches, read O'Farrell's trilogy of Studs Lonigan and the entire Tom Swift series and everything else which was available to read. In the fall of 1931, I was only permitted to attend school a half of each school day, but somehow I was skipped one half of the school year I had missed. Poor Kathleen was not as fortunate as I was. By the time I left Pinehurst, she had been in the University of Wisconsin Hospital, Madison, Wisconsin for three years suffering from osteomyelitis in the left hip and right wrist. After several radical surgeries which left her a permanent cripple, she was finally released after spending six years of being bedridden. Since they didn't try to educate children in hospitals in those days, poor Kathleen had to face life with a fourth grade education.

One day when I came home, Aunt Bessie asked me to go downtown with her. She took me to a candy/ice cream store. She said, "Let us celebrate. You can have anything you want." So we both had a hot fudge and nut sundae. Then we talked. She told me that the next day I was going to Omaha, Nebraska, to live with my father. We talked about that and we decided he must have gotten married again. Well, he had! When I left Beloit, I realized how good and kind Aunt Bessie and Uncle Dan had been to me and Kathleen.

When I arrived in Omaha, I was met by my Dad and his new wife, Lucille. We went to their three bedroom apartment which was next door to a beautiful pink marble museum, the Joselyn Memorial, and across the street from Central High School. Part of my last semester in grammar school was in a school at the bottom of the hill. When we arrived at the apartment, we were greeted by Nellie, Lucille's mother. During my Dad's marriage to Lucille, Nellie spent 13 years visiting her.

Except for two occasions, I always was polite and considerate of Lucille and Nellie. Why? I wanted my Dad's marriage to Lucille to last. Lucille always treated me with love and kindness. Because of that, Nellie hated my guts. As time went on, I felt the same about Nellie! Rather than go into details of the two occasions I mentioned above, let me just say that I reversed the Golden Rule on them because of the unhappiness they caused my sister.

During my last semester in grammar school, my father was ordered to start working out of Topeka, Kansas. So my Dad, Lucille and I moved to Topeka. Nellie went to Hollywood where she met a large Indian who claimed to have played football with Jim Thorpe. I thought Leo was a big B.S. operator, but he wasn't. During World War II he played for the Treasure Island Navy team, which was coached by Joe Verducci, my last High School football coach. At that time he was well over 40 years of age, so this fact was highly publicized by the San Francisco Chronicle. Anyway, I started an experience where I learned that what was taught in one school was different from what was taught in schools of other states. In the case of Kansas versus Nebraska, Kansas schools were more advanced than those of Nebraska. Thus, I had to struggle to complete the sixth grade and I did!

When I was in the 7th grade, I had a track coach who believed in a training agenda. I followed it. Since Ted Scott was faster than I, he ran the 100 yard dash and I ran the low hurdles. I didn't particularly enjoy the hurdles because I had to spend considerable time learning how to take seven steps between each low hurdle. Further, to help my track career, Lucille put me on a special diet that was considerably different than what they eat today. Further, I learned that running fast was not the complete answer, running properly gave you more of a chance to win.

After Topeka, we moved to Denver, Colorado, where my Dad was furloughed without pay. So we drove to Hollywood, California, where we lived with Nellie for a couple of weeks. My Dad was hired by Los Angeles County as an accountant and Lucille was hired as a typist by an automobile agency. Then we moved to Glendale, California. During the early 1930's, there was no smog in Los Angeles County. Why not? Because of the Great Depression, not too many people could afford to drive a car. However, while going to school in Glendale, I quickly learned why the area is called "La-La Land." It seemed that all the kids I got to know had one goal; they wanted to become a movie star, or at least have the lifestyle of a movie star. I was glad when my Dad was rehired by the federal government. We moved to Oakland, California, and then to Washington D.C.

In Washington D.C., we lived in the Petworth Addition which is next to Rock Creek Park. I went to Woodrow Wilson Junior High School. I was 14 years old, 5' 8" tall, and weighed 135 pounds. I continued being a good student and was a member of the soccer and track teams. Our neighborhood was full of guys who

loved playing sandlot baseball and football. The name of our team was the Petworth Eagles. To me, the Petworth Addition should have been named the Paradise Addition.

When I left Beloit in 1932, Floyd Levine gave me a condom. He told me that I might need it in the big city (Omaha). I carried it in my billfold. The night before every school day Lucille would iron my pants. One evening, when she asked me for my pants, I accidentally left my billfold in one of the rear pockets. She didn't say anything to me, but Dad called me and took me into the bathroom where we had a talk about sex. This happened four times while I was still living at home. Generally, the theme of my Dad's pitch was, "If you are fooling around with some girl, make sure you love her. Because if you get her pregnant, I will make sure that you marry her." I don't know why Lucille and my Dad were sweating me out. Of course, they did not know that I was so shy around girls that I had difficulty even talking with them!

Although my career in track lasted for six years, it peaked during the spring of 1935. I had been a naturally fast runner since I was seven years old. To make a long story short, I ran the 100 yard dash in the Junior High School city track meet in 10.2 seconds. This broke the old record time. Then on the same day, I anchored Woodrow Wilson's relay team to a new record for the 440 yards. As a result, an article about me was printed in all of the Washington D.C. newspapers. All of a sudden, I established my first goal in life; I wanted to be a sprinter on the U.S. Olympic team. I failed to meet that goal, because I never learned how to run a sprint properly.

Earlier I mentioned the difficulties I had in going to school in Omaha, Nebraska, and Topeka, Kansas. Why? The schooling system in Topeka was in advance of Omaha's. In 1935, the education system in Washington D.C. was so far in advance of the one in Berkeley, California, it was unbelievable. Therefore, I only had to take two courses a day to graduate from Junior High School in Berkeley, California.

In December 1935, we moved from Berkeley to San Francisco, California. We lived in the Sunset District at 1282 Second Avenue, right around the corner from Polytechnic High which was across the street from Kezar Stadium in Golden Gate Park. At that time, Kezar was the major football stadium in San Francisco. It had 55,000 seats which were occupied on Thanksgiving Day when Polytechnic played Lowell High School, the Little Big Game (between St. Mary's College and Santa Clara University), and the Shriner's East West Game (now played in Stanford Stadium, Palo Alto, California). The reason I mention this is because my primary source of income came from renting out parking spaces for cars of the people who attended those games. I had negotiated a deal with the homeowners on a single

block to split the parking space profits. For the sold-out games, each homeowner made \$1.50 and I made \$15.00. However, I made sure that the 30 parking slots were clean prior to and after each game. Naturally, for the non sold-out games, our profits were less, because the parking fee per car was fifty cents rather than one dollar. Since our nation was struggling to get out of the tentacles of the Great Depression during my years in high school, a dollar was a lot of money.

During the 1930's, San Francisco was a great place to live in. It was a true melting pot of people, i.e., Italians, Irish, Chinese, Russians, Japanese, blacks, tans, etc. To the best of my knowledge, everyone got along with one another. One thing for sure, it wasn't "La-La Land." The young people I became friends with during my first year are still friends of mine. They did not live in a dream world; in fact, they were very practical. If a guy was big enough, he wanted to become a cop or a fireman. If he was too small, he wanted to get married and go to work for the WPA. After all, the WPA paid such people \$56 a month. The only chances to go to college were if your parents could afford to send you, or if you were a good enough athlete to win an athletic scholarship. Going downtown was always a pleasure because it was full of the best dressed, most beautiful women in the world.

The Castro District existed then, but since the majority of homosexuals were in the closet, they were scattered throughout the general population of the City. During the 1930's and 1940's, this was true in all of the major cities of our country. During WWII, the Castro District started to become what it is today because the San Francisco Bay Area was where a lot of military personnel departed the United States. Thus, the military got rid of the people they didn't want, prior to departure. In the 1950's, the homosexuals started flaunting their preferred lifestyle to the public in the Castro District. In the 1970's, a Canadian male who was an airline steward visited the Castro District. Since he had traveled to the Ivory Coast of Africa, he was a carrier of the AIDS virus. Thanks to him, the males who live in the Castro District now have the highest percentage of AIDS patients in the United States.

Those of us who lived in the Sunset District said it was named that because the sun never set there. The invigorating temperature of the fog was somewhat like the trade winds of Honolulu; it controlled the temperature and our energy. I think Mark Twain wrote when he was a reporter in Sacramento, California, that San Francisco was the only city in the United States which was cold in the summertime. Once you became used to the coolness, you loved it, or at least I did.

In January, 1936, it looked like I was going to improve my ability to run faster. Coach Perry B. Kittredge had me run anchor on Poly's relay team in the Civic Auditorium. One of the stars who participated in that indoor meet was Glen Cunningham, the best miler in the United States. Poly's relay team won and set a new record for San Francisco's high schools. So Kittredge took me down to

Stanford University where he introduced me to Dink Templeton, one of the top track coaches in the world. Coach Templeton told me how to train to run the 100 yard dash properly. He stressed: the start, a minimum of four short quick steps off the starting block; then, gradually lengthen your stride and run relaxed for fifty yards; next, gather your speed by shortening your stride; and finally, the finish, by diving at the tape. I don't know if it was the lack of self-confidence, but I never was able to effectively lengthen my stride and run relaxed for fifty yards. I did make the finals in the city meet. Afterwards, Coach Paul Hungerford, our football coach, came up to me and said, "Oldfield, if you ever learn to run straight, you will win by ten yards." I remained a member of the track team for the two following seasons, but only as an anchor man for our relay teams. Why? I never lost my speed when I could run naturally. However, my training in starts and gathering my speed helped me become an effective running back in football, which was always my favorite sport, from when I was seven years old until now. To be honest, I loved football because it is a physical game. It taught you physical courage and confidence in your ability to face up to guys who were six inches taller than you and outweighed you by more than 50 pounds. This paid off when I was a fighter pilot because I knew how to face up to fear. Plus, I knew the tricks of the trade, which is essential to playing football or surviving combat in fighter aircraft. Thus, I always had the zest and can do attitude for football and flying fighter aircraft in combat. As a result, I was lucky, because I loved both experiences in my life and the excitement required by the wild hair in my make-up as a human being.

During the spring of 1936, I got to know Jim Allison, Clyde Widnes, Bob Shoemaker, Alyn Beals and Tom Kilday. The latter three I played football with. Alyn Beals is now dead, but was the greatest football player I have ever known. He made all City twice, All American for three years at Santa Clara University, and was an all-star for the original San Francisco 49ers. He was only 5'10" tall, but was a fantastic end who never was over impressed with himself. He was first class person.

During the summer of 1936, I started going to China Beach which is located just east of the Golden Gate Bridge. Because of its location, there was no rip tide and was less foggy than the ocean beach. However, the water was just as cold as the ocean beach. That wasn't any problem because soon after you entered the water you were so numb its temperature was not a factor. I would look at the girls, and sometimes get enough courage to ask a pretty one, "Would you please tell me what time is it?" When they told me the time, I couldn't think of anything else to say other than, "Thank-you." I met Al Ward and Jack Moore who were football players at Poly Hi. Both of them were big handsome guys who became friends of mine. As a result, I wanted to play football with them. My father refused to give me permission to play because he said I was too young and small. He was right!

During the spring of 1937, Coach Paul Hungerford asked me to come out for the football team. I told my Dad, and he gave me permission. To get me in shape, my Dad got me a summer job digging holes for telegraph poles of the Western Union in the desert east of Corona, California, which had a race car track where Barney Oldfield drove a car 106 miles per hour. Since this was a major accomplishment, the track was named after Barney. No, we were not related, because Barney Oldfield's family was from Ireland and mine was from England. The job paid \$60/month, room/board, and railroad passes to and from San Francisco. The work weeks lasted 10 hours a day, six days a week. The other workers were men who never did anything except stare off in space before and after work. After we arrived at the work site, Supervisor Schmidt and his closest buddy would disappear for the day. Where did they go? They spent their days at a nudist colony which was close by. After four days, I had dug four 7 ½ foot holes which were 1 ½ feet in diameter. This was done by hand with a 10 foot crowbar and 10 foot shovel called a spoon. This was amazing, because digging into the desert was like digging a hole into a rock. Everything was done by hand, including setting the telegraph poles. Naturally, I was one of the two balancers. On my fifth day, I pulled a muscle in my stomach trying to move a roll of telegraph wire. This made me sick, so I asked Schmidt for my Western Union travel pass. He gave it to me and I went home. When I arrived at home, my Dad was mad at me for quitting (after all, it was during the Great Depression) and because I hadn't returned my railroad pass to the Western Union downtown. The next day, my Dad returned my pass. He told me that Schmidt had called and asked them to send me back after my stomach healed. Why? Because of my high productivity in digging holes. My Dad asked me if I wanted to go back and I said, "No." You have to realize, I loved and respected my father. I never argued with him, or made excuses for the mistakes I had made.

During the fall of 1937, I was a happy guy playing football and making money by renting out parking spaces. Coach Paul Hungerford was an old-fashioned hands-on coach. If he caught someone goofing off during practice, he didn't hesitate to correct them. If they continued, he would kick them in the rear end. In those days, we played a single wing offense, and every player had to play offense and defense. Thus, we had to learn the basic requirements of each system, running plays, practicing blocking and tackling, pass defense, returning passes, punts and kickoffs, etc. I have to say that no one was better than Mark Rivero and I were during blocking and tackling drills. Our motto was, "The bigger they are, the harder they fall." I can assure you that it was important to learn how to deal with fear. Whenever you faced a guy bigger than you, it was important to teach him to join the church, i.e., knock him down before he broke you in half. A small guy has only one advantage over a much larger fellow; he is quicker. It was an entirely different game than it is today. This is the result of the T-formation versus the single or double wing formations. The quarterbacks were blockers not passers. The

left halfbacks usually were the runners, passers and kickers. The right halfback was a blocker and runner on reverses. Only the fullbacks are used the same today, as blockers or plungers on the goal line. In 1937, our team won the championship, and Al Derien, our left halfback, Bill O'Malley, our right guard, Al Ward, our right tackle, and Alyn Beals, our right end made the All City first team. Despite a serious hamstring pull in my right leg, Hungerford made me first string alternate to Al Derien, which permitted me to play just enough to earn my first block P letter in football. Actually, what I really did was to learn how to play organized football under an outstanding coach.

During the spring of 1938, Jim Allison, Clyde Widnes and I started planning what we were going to do during the summer months. After we had made some decisions, Jim and I bought a 1926 Model T coupe which had been converted into a pickup. Since we paid a total of \$15.00 for it, he and I started arguing about who would drive it and then complained about the other guy's driving. Then, we started tearing the car apart. Since it was a complete overhaul, we decided to install new brakes. After we completed that task, we went out on a check ride. I was driving when we came to a stop sign. I tried stopping the car, but the car wouldn't stop completely until I accidentally slid into the bumper of a car driven by an elderly couple. Naturally, Jim claimed I was at fault. So I got out, and sat next to the passenger door and Jim got into the driver's seat. Then he drove up the streetcar track. When we were next to the car I had tapped, I told the elderly couple that no damage had been done to their car and then apologized. Naturally, the co-owner of our car had to apologize too. While he was explaining, he drove into the heavy tailgate of a streetcar. When he did, our car bent in the middle and I shot out of my side of the car. I wasn't hurt, but I was worried because I had convinced my Dad to insure the car. The conductor of the streetcar got out and started chewing on Jim! The master driver, mechanic, etc. deserved it. Fortunately, the damage done was to our car, not to the streetcar, but the wishbone in our car was bent. So we drove a shortened car back to Jim's home. Never buy a car with a friend, because it might shorten the friendship.

Next, Jim and Clyde came up with an idea where they and I could make some money, so they convinced me to join the 250th Coast Artillery of the San Francisco National Guard. By recruiting me, each of them earned some extra money and I was paid a dollar for each weekly drill I attended. Also, we all made \$15.00 for attending two weeks of summer camp. At summer camp, Jim, who was a corporal, was in charge of garbage pick-up. It was an easy fun job which took only about three hours. After that, we could do whatever we wanted to, e.g., go to the beach in Santa Cruz, etc. The last day was the highlight of our summer encampment. We had a drunken sergeant who used to come down to the ravine, where we dumped the garbage, and harass us. On the last day, he came down and started to open his mouth. We pushed him down down into the garbage, and



starting covering him and the garbage with coal oil. Last, we pretended to start to burn the garbage. The sergeant couldn't do a thing to us because he was drunk and all we could do was laugh.

We knew what we were going to do the rest of the summer. We had already decided to go up to Lake County, north of Napa Valley, so we go to work at one of the mines. We bought a two week supply of canned goods and started out, after telling our families we would return prior to the start of school. After we arrived at Clear Lake, we were surrounded by several police cars. We stopped, then at least 20 policemen approached us from every angle. All of them had their weapons in the ready position. Then, we put up our hands and surrendered to them. They thought we were murderers who were running wild in northern California. After we identified ourselves, they asked us what we were doing up there. We said that we were going to work in the mines. With that, they all started laughing and told us that the mines were closed down! So we found a campsite, ate some cold beans, cleared rocks from where we planned to sleep, and then placed a rope around our dirt bed. We had heard that a rattlesnake would not cross a rope. Evidently, this was not true, because I woke up one morning and found a fat rattlesnake curled up next to me on top of my blanket. I know I broke a world record sliding out from under the far side of my blanket!

We ate a breakfast of Jim's world famous, raisin filled pancakes. At least, that is what Jim said they were. Jim would pour the batter on our griddle, the hungry horse flies would dive in. Clyde and I would complain, and Jim would say, "Don't worry about them, they are just like eating raisins."

We went to groups of cottages next to a swimming beach on the shore of Clear Lake. There we met a man who sold fishing bait. He asked us if we would like to seine minnows for him and would pay us one penny per minnow. Naturally, we said yes. We didn't have a boat so we had to net the minnows in the shallow water. The only time you find minnows in the shallow water is prior to sunrise and after sunset when the temperature was just right for them. Seining minnows at those times was against the law in California. That didn't stop the three of us. After we did that job for three days, we had delivered thousands of minnows to the baitman. When we quit our jobs, the guy said that only 100 minnows had lived, so he paid us a total of one dollar for our efforts. Remember the saying, "Crime doesn't pay." Well, it was true in our case.

After trying to get girls to eat Jim's pancakes so their parents would invite us to dinner failed, we decided to go home. On the first day, we had seven flat tires. As a result, we didn't travel too far. Fixing flat tires on a 1926 Model T Ford was not an easy task. First you had to jack the wheel (wooden spoked) up, remove the tire from the iron rim, remove the inner tube from the tire, find the hole in the



inner tube and patch it, then reverse the procedure, with exception to pumping up the tire and hope that it held after lowering the jack.

The second and our last day on the trip home, we found another flat tire when we awakened. Since it was my turn, I started fixing it. Jim started complaining about my technique. I knew that Jim would fight if challenged. I also knew that he was a wrestler on the San Francisco Olympic Club team and had tremendous endurance. Therefore, I couldn't let him get his hands on me. While I was thinking this, I started my Gentleman Jim Corbitt act dancing around Jim. Finally, Clyde said, "Stop fooling around." We did! No punches were landed!

When we started down the long hill on Route 101, between San Quentin Prison and San Rafael, California, we had another flat tire; the flat tire came off and passed us, the iron rim came off and passed us; and then our left rear wheel wooden spokes gave us a bumping ride to the bottom of the hill. Believe it or not, Clyde and Olga Widnes now live in San Rafael in the near vicinity of our spectacular ride down Route 101. Some kind person gave us a wheel to replace our broken one. However, our brakes didn't fit it, so we had difficulties traveling to Jim's home. I can still remember not being able to stop on Van Ness Avenue or Fell Street. When we arrived at Jim's home, it really hit the fan. His parents and two sisters were in the final stages of leaving for a trip to Canada. We had arrived a month too early. About that time, Clyde and I walked in, both of us were sunburned, dirty, with wild uncombed hair, and tired. When Mr. and Mrs. Allison and his sisters saw us, they started laughing. As a result, they decided to go to Canada without Jim. This was a mistake, because Jim had a series of parties with girls we had met at China Beach. Since I had started training for my final semester at Poly, I only went to one party where I got to kiss a girl for the first time in 18 years. At a later party, which I didn't attend, someone burned down one of Mrs. Allison's curtains. Since Clyde and I didn't go to that specific party, Mr. and Mrs. Allison continued to think we were the only good guys their son knew.

In 1938, high school teams were not permitted to practice until their schools were in session. Since it was absolutely essential that a player be in shape prior to starting the three hour practice sessions, I worked out three hours per day, running, dodging, exercising, etc. We were not supposed to work out with weights, because we were told they caused you to become muscle-bound. In today's world, all athletes lift weights. Because I had experienced a severe hamstring pull in my right leg the previous year, I would run up the First Avenue hill, which had a 50 degree slope, three times each morning. Such exercise reduces the probability of a hamstring injury and also teaches you to run hard in a low profile. One day when I was running, Paul Hungerford came by. He told me that he had been promoted to Dean of Boys and Joe Verducci was coming to Poly from George Washington High School to become our football coach.

Unlike our team in 1937, we only had two players who had first string experience, our quarterback, Joe Johnson, and our All City right end, Alyn Beals. Although I didn't start in our first game, I started in the eight games which followed. During the course of the nine game season, I played three games each in the following positions: right half; left half; and fullback. Since Alyn Beals was our punter, I played his end position when he kicked. After the season was over, only three of us earned full football scholarships: Alyn Beals to Santa Clara University, where he was a first string All American end for three years; Vic Ramos to the University of San Francisco; and myself to the University of San Francisco. Although we didn't win the City Championship, we lost by a single point to Galileo who won it, and beat our historic rival Lowell on Thanksgiving Day in front of 35,000 fans in Kezar Stadium.

Because I was having so much fun in my last semester at Polytechnic High School, I let my grades slip, I received two A's and three D's. I had wanted to go to the University of California in Berkeley, California, but they didn't accept D's for A's and B's. Although the University of San Francisco accepted me, they placed me on probation. My Dad told me if I didn't study he was going to pull me out of school. He did not want me to become a football bum. I got his message, but not the complete message, i.e., in overdoing the fun I lost my perspective of the importance of schooling to my future. However, all of the troubles I have had in life were because I overdid, overkilled what I was involved with and lost my perspective about the other important factors, i.e., "I could not see the forest, for the trees." From 1961 to 1964 when I was trying to be promoted from Lt. Col. to Colonel, I finally started doing something to correct this major weakness; I started to evaluate my daily performance in writing. This effort was difficult but rewarding because I was promoted Colonel in a minimum of three years.

From January 1936 until December 1938, I was a student in high school. These were formative years of my life. Thus, they were among the best years! One thing different then was that a girl's reputation was important to them and also to the guys. Therefore, in those days we had very few girls getting pregnant. I always looked forward to when we returned to school in the fall, because many of the girls blossomed out during the summer months and when the fall semester started, they returned to school as beautiful young women. As a result, when I returned to school in the fall of 1938, I lost the majority of my shyness around girls. Although Polytechnic High School no longer exists today, it probably has the best football record of any high school in California. Thus, I am pleased to be a member of the Poly High Grid Club's Hall of Fame.

In the spring of 1939, I had a football scholarship to the University of San Francisco. Initially, I didn't do anything except get in shape for football. However, my Dad thought I would be better off if I would go to work. So he got me a job as

office boy with the Pacific Motor Transport Company, a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific Company. We were located in the first floor of the Southern Pacific Building on Market Street. Since I didn't want to be a failure as I had been with the Western Union in 1937, I worked my tail off. I was always the first one in the office and the last one to leave the office. Every evening after work I would go to work out at the YMCA prior to going home. Of the \$85/month, I paid Lucille \$15/month for food. The only other money I spent was 10 cents/day for streetcar fare, going to and from work. So I saved money for going to school and buying a 1932 Model B Ford Sports Roadster. It was blue, with a push button radio, two spare tires were mounted on the front fenders, and it had a rumble seat. I wish I still had it.

The summer of 1939 was planned. I was going to quit my job just prior to the National Guard's summer encampment, attend it and gain some weight, and then go to Clear Lake to get in shape for football practice which started in August. Bob Shoemaker, who was going to the University of California, went with me to Clear Lake. His intentions were the same as mine. We met a guy up there by the name of Bob Preston, who looked like a combination of Charles Atlas and Tom Mix. Preston was older than Bob Shoemaker or me. He was up there to get over a love affair. Anyway, he worked out each day with Bob Shoemaker and me. I don't know if we had any influence over Preston, but he ended up marrying the girl who had been the reason he came to Clear Lake in the first place. While there, I had my first opportunity to break training. When Bob learned about my opportunity, he argued we should stick to training, not to playing around. He convinced me!

We had a unique dinner one evening with a Jewish family which had recently arrived from Poland. This dinner was in late July of 1939. They told us that the Germans were going to invade Poland on September 1, 1939. I cannot remember what they told us to back up their prediction, but they were right! Thus, on September 1, 1939, the world started to learn what World War II was going to be like. At that time, the only positive thing that happened was that it took the United States out of the Great Depression.

At that time, many of our senators and congressmen were isolationists. Their position was supported by the American Firsters led by Charles Lindberg, a hero of mine since he made the first solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. In his case, he became a hero again because of his combat record during WWII and remained so until his death in the Hawaiian Islands where he is now buried. However, a great debate started in 1939 and lasted until President Roosevelt declared a national emergency on September 16, 1940.

As a result of the above, I started practicing football at the University of San Francisco in August 1939. In those days, freshmen were not permitted to play on

the varsity; although we had five games with the freshmen of Santa Clara, St. Mary's, etc., our primary role was being the Scout Team for the varsity, i.e., our job was to prepare the varsity for their future games. On the first day of practice, we were in all-white uniforms. At that time, I was 5'9" tall, weighed 172 pounds, and had a 28" waist. In other words, I was a hunk. The varsity was at one end of the practice field and our squad was on the opposite end. Two of the stars on the varsity were the Fisk brothers, who were from Willows, California, where their mother owned and operated a restaurant. Dan was the varsity center. He was 6'3" and weighed 245 pounds. Cliff was an All Pacific Coast fullback. He was 6'2" tall and weighed 235 pounds. I mentioned their sizes because both of them were considered huge in 1939. In addition to being big, Cliff's face looked like he had run into a truck. I heard someone call, "Charlie - Charlie Oldfield!" It was George Malley, the head coach. He told me to put on a green practice jersey and become a defensive halfback. I was in the process of putting on the jersey when Dan came out of the line of scrimmage to become a downfield blocker. At that time, I had the jersey half on and was trying to pull it down over my body, when Cliff broke out around left end. Dan tried to block me and missed. I still did not have the jersey completely on, in fact, both of my arms were above my helmet and my hands were fists. I had no alternative but to lower my target and drive my fists and helmet into Cliff's family jewels. When I got up, I staggered around, and could hear a lot of laughter. I looked down and there was big Cliff Fisk lying in the fetal position with both of his hands protecting the area between his legs. He had fumbled and passed out! That was my introduction to college football.

In those years, a full time athletic scholarship did not guarantee a free ride for four or five years. In fact, such scholarships only lasted as long as an individual remained an effective contributor to the team. A friend of mine, Al Ward, was a strong candidate to become an All American when he suffered a compound fracture of his right leg. This ended his career in football and his scholarship was dropped. Since football teams produce a revenue needed by the schools, the problems associated with football today existed when I played. True, there is one exception, i.e., a drug problem didn't exist in the late 1930's and early 1940's. Despite the above, I loved the sport of football and the camaraderie between football players. Playing the game taught me: the importance of teamwork; how to face up to fear; and, to gain confidence in myself. Each of them were essential to becoming an effective fighter pilot.

During my two semesters at the University of San Francisco, I earned 18 ½ hours of business administration each semester with above average grades. In other words, I had no desire to become a football bum. In addition, I earned my freshman numeral (43) sweater. Boy, I was proud of that beautiful, green wool sweater. One thing it meant, I was still on football scholarship.

In October 1939, the most wonderful experience of my first 19 years of living happened to me. At that time I lived at 39 Hillway Drive, a very steep hill above Polytechnic High School. At that time, I walked to and from the university. It was fun in the morning because I always could see the girl students of Poly. At that time USF was an all male school. That fall was unusually hot in San Francisco, so hot all public schools closed for a week because they didn't have air conditioners. Naturally, all the kids went to the beaches to cool down. When the heat wave ceased, they all came back to school sunburned or tan. That particular morning when I came down Hillway Drive, I saw for the first time the prettiest girl I had ever seen. She had dark brown hair, blue eyes and a beautiful tan. She was 16 years old, 5'5" tall, and in her junior year at Poly. Her name was Bonnie Adele Spangenberg. When I was introduced to her by a girlfriend of hers, the other girl said, "You must remember Charlie, he was one of our football players last fall." Bonnie gave me a long look and said, "Oh, him?" It turned out she preferred the intellectuals and the guys who were in the Drama Club. However, to make a short story shorter, I made a date with her on October 29, 1939. I got my 1932 B Ford sports roadster clean and ready to run. That afternoon I played football and ended up with a black eye and broken nose. When I arrived at her residence on 19th Avenue, I went to where Bonnie lived, I went to her home and picked her up. I opened the car door for her. Then I tried to start my dream vehicle, nothing happened. I let the brake off and we started down 19th Avenue. I finally pulled off in a side street. I got out of my car, opened up the hood, and tried to locate the problem. Bonnie spoke up and asked, "Why don't you turn the key on?" I did, and the car started. Looking back, it was obvious I was as nervous as a cat on a hot tin roof. We drove downtown and went to see Clark Gable in the movie "Manhattan Melodrama." After the movie, we went to Dan's, which was the most famous milkshake place in San Francisco at that time. Then we drove to Ocean Beach where I asked her to go steady with me. She said, "Yes." It was the start of my everlasting life with her. The date was October 29, 1939.

Bonnie was always very independent. Her mother and father deserted her, sister and brother and they were all brought up in foster homes. When she was 17 years old and was a senior at Poly High, she supported herself by taking care of a mentally troubled child. The day after she graduated from school she went to work with the telephone company, where at the age of 18 she became the youngest supervisor on the west coast. She was always a success as a person, mother and wife.

During the fall of 1939 and the spring of 1940, I continued playing football and keeping my grades up at USF. During the summer of 1940, President Roosevelt informed the American people that he was going to declare a National Emergency on September 16, 1940. This meant that all National Guard Units were going on active duty in the Army of the U.S. (AUS). My two recruiters, Jim Allison and Clyde Widnes, had completed their National Guard enlistments, but I still had 9

months and 20 days to go on mine. Thus, I went to Camp McQuaide which was located close to Watsonville, California, on a high plateau above Monterey Bay. In November 1940, they brought in the first draftees and we all had to go through basic training together. This training was provided by Regular Army personnel. Their job included getting rid of National Guard personnel who did not meet their standards. It was then I learned the importance of having a college degree. That piece of paper gave you the opportunity of becoming an officer. At that time, I was a buck private making \$21 a month. Many of the draftees were doing everything and anything to get thrown out of the AUS. We had one of those guys living in the pyramid tent I was in. Every morning he would announce that he was going fishing. He refused to leave the tent. Instead, he would sit on the edge of his bed, bend over an empty pail, drop his line (string) in the pail and pretend to fish. Every once in a while he would pull his line by his fishing rod (pencil) and check his bait. He did not last too long because he refused to eat. The medics finally took him away and we never saw him again. I don't know if he was mentally ill, or smarter than anyone else. It was obvious he liked fishing more than being in the Army.

During our basic training, we had to see V.D. movies. These very vivid movies were usually shown just prior to lunch. Up to that point in time, I thought you were supposed to wear a condom to keep from getting a girl pregnant, but then I learned a condom was equally important to keep from catching syphilis, gonorrhea, and other venereal diseases. These movies were so realistic you became sick to your stomach watching one of them. Evidently, that is why they were shown just before lunch, so they would have maximum impact of the viewing audience. About this time the military decided to let red light districts in Watsonville, Santa Cruz, and other small towns keep operating as long as no one caught V.D. in one of them.

About this time I became a regimental chauffeur. I spent my days driving the intelligence officer, and my nights driving the military police officer. As a result, I spent a considerable amount of time in the whore houses of Monterey Bay. Why? Because the military police officer had to constantly check each red light district, which usually were ten cottages on a single block in each small town. Each night he would take me into three different cottages and introduce me to the madam. Then he would leave. The madam would take me to the ladies' waiting room. In the next room was the kitchen, where their husbands waited for their wives to complete their night's work. As time went on, I got to meet a lot of prostitutes who would offer me cookies to eat, and some freebies. In each case, my answer was, "No!" After seeing several V.D. movies, I was leery about even being in a house of prostitution.

In regard to my driving our intelligence officer, each day we would go to a valley in the foothills south of Santa Cruz. We would park the car and then hide in

some bushes where we had a view of a large mansion on the opposite side of the valley. The place was surrounded by many antennas and was owned by the German American Bund Association which supported Hitler. We would scan the area with field glasses and take pictures. We never stayed in the same position, instead we were always in a different clump of bushes. One day, we were hiding in the wrong clump, because it was poison oak or poison ivy. The next day we were both covered with a rash which persisted for several days. As a result, I was unable to take Bonnie to her senior prom, or see her on my twenty-first birthday.

## Chapter III

### TWENTY-ONE

On June 7, 1941, I became 21 years of age. I could vote, and I have in every national election since then. I could get married, and I planned to as soon as I could support Bonnie. Under the existing laws, I was a man. However, in real time I was still pretty wet behind my ears. At that time I thought there were good people and bad people, but was not mature enough to realize that the majority of people were in the grey area between those extremes.

On that birthday I was looking forward to July 5, 1941, when I would receive an honorable discharge from the Army of the United States. The University of San Francisco had already informed me that I would be on a football scholarship again when I returned to school in the fall. When I was discharged I had to register with my local draft board because I was 21 years of age. I was surprised when I was told that I would be drafted when my number came up, because I only had nine months and twenty days of active duty whereas the draft law required a minimum of one year. Naturally, I told my Dad. Because of friends he had, I was hired by United Engineers in Alameda, California. My job was in the Mold Loft where I made templates (wooden patterns) for steel plate that would be used in the construction of fleet tugs for the U.S. Navy. As a result, the draft board gave me a six-month deferment. In the process of doing that job, I learned how to read blue prints. So I was sent out in the yard as a trainee shipfitter where I learned how to work with steel. I was in charge of a seven-man team, i.e., burners, chippers, welders, and helpers. Our job was like putting a jig-saw puzzle together and making sure each piece fit. As a result, the draft board gave me an unlimited draft deferment. Thus, I could have spent the war as a shipfitter, but I didn't!

I didn't want that role, I wanted to be a fighter pilot during WW-2. At night, I attended Drews Academy, a West Point prep school in San Francisco. A couple of my classmates were Joe Johnson and Slat Slattery, football friends of mine. All of us wanted to be fighter pilots. Since I had never been in an aircraft, I bought a book about flying. Then I cut a broom stick so I could use it as a Joyce stick which controlled the elevators (up and down) in the tail and ailerons (turns) in the wings. The movement of the Joyce stick had to be coordinated with the movement of the rudder (in the tail). The rudder was controlled by the foot pedals. I would practice making coordinated maneuvers while sitting on the john in the bathroom. After my first flight Mr. Hayworth (my instructor) said, "I thought you told me you didn't have any flying experience." I replied, "I told you, I had never been in an aircraft before." Then I told him how I had learned to fly while sitting on a john.



Why did I and many of my friends want to become fighter pilots? Because many books about the fighter pilot aces (minimum of five air victories) of WW-1 were published during the 1920's and 1930's. These books covered the exploits of German, French, British, Canadian, and American pilots. They were not described as killers, but as officers and gentlemen, i.e., the knights of WW-1! During the same time-frame we read in the news media about the national and international speed races in which American pilots, such as Al Williams, Roscoe Turner, and Jimmy Doolittle flew aircraft comparable to fighter aircraft. We all realized that flying such aircraft was a dangerous but exciting profession. On the other side of the ledger, the role of a combat infantry soldier was more dangerous and not as exciting.

On December 7, 1941, I drove out to the telephone company's office on 19th Avenue where Bonnie worked four hours in the morning and four hours in the evening. We planned on taking an afternoon drive. She didn't come out on time. I had no idea what was holding her up. When she did appear, she was crying. Then she told me about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and other military installations in the Hawaiian Islands. Both of us were in a state of shock. So we spent the afternoon talking. We knew our lives would change, and they did.

On December 26, 1941, I called my boss at work and told him that I had some personal business to take care of. I had read in the newspaper that the Army Air Corps was going to open an office on Market Street. Its purpose was to recruit men (17-27 years of age) for Aviation Cadet Training. So I went downtown and signed up for pilot training. At that time, they were only accepting single men for such training. When I told Bonnie about that requirement, she said, "If you think I am going to wait until the end of the war to get married, you are crazy!" My answer was, "We will get secretly married." We went to a doctor for blood tests and then to City Hall for our marriage license. That night when I arrived home my Dad was up and waiting for me. If one has a home address in San Francisco and has a San Francisco marriage license there is no way he can get secretly married in San Francisco. Because I was a happy-go-lucky person, my Dad had serious doubts about me assuming the responsibilities of being married. In January 1942, my Dad was transferred to Honolulu, and the Army Air Corps decided married men could become Aviation Cadets. The last time I saw my father alive was in the spring of 1952 just before he was assigned to work in Turkey. Bonnie and I had been married for over ten years, our son Michael was five years old and our daughter Catherine was one year old. My Dad's last spoken words to me were, "Charles, the smartest thing you have ever done was to marry Bonnie." He was right!

In late February of 1942, Bonnie and I were planning to get married. As a result Jim Allison and Clyde Widnes decided to have a bachelor party for me. Although none of us were drinkers or smokers, they took me bar hopping on Powell Street. In addition to drinking, the three of us were smoking cigars. About

that time the "lights went out." When I woke up, I was cold. When I looked out of Clyde's car windows, all I could see was snow. Where were we? We were on Donner Summit, over looking Donner Lake! So I yelled, "Let us go somewhere it is warm!" Clyde drove us to Reno, Nevada. When we arrived we gave Jim the money we had. It wasn't a lot, but enough because Jim hit a Jack Pot on a slot machine. We then had sufficient funds to eat, have hoty baths, send telegrams to our bosses, and drive back to San Francisco. What were the results of the bachelor party? Hangovers, Jim and I were fired from our jobs, Clyde was promoted because his boss thought he had gotten married in Reno, and my marriage was delayed.

The delay only lasted a day. I went to the Boiler Makers Union in San Francisco and they sent me to Western Pipe and Steel Company in South San Francisco where I worked as a shipfitter on baby flat top carriers which escorted convoys of ships during WW-2. These small carriers had the same hulls as the Liberty Ship freighters which were produced by the thousands during the war. My job was not in the yard as it had been with United Engineers, but down in the double bottom of the carriers. My work week was seven days, 10 hours per day, and I was paid 97 cents per hour. All the guys I worked with thought I was crazy for waiting to be called up to active duty as an Aviation Cadet, when I had an unlimited deferment from the draft. I recognized their position, but looked forward to the excitement of flying. Doing a simple, repetitive job, down in a cramped, cold double bottom was not my idea of excitement. In addition, I was embarrassed of not being in uniform. That is why I always rode on the back platform of a street car.

On the evening of March 19, 1942, Bonnie and I were married in an Episcopal Church. Kathleen, my sister, stood up with Bonnie, and Clyde Widnes was my best man. After the ceremony, I took them out to dinner where we shared a bottle of champagne. Why the Episcopal Church? Because our mother was a Catholic, Kathleen and I had been brought up in the Catholic faith. However, when I was in high school I joined the Episcopal Church and Kathleen remained a Catholic until the day she died. I never forgot our wedding anniversary, because March 19 is the day the swallows return to Capistrano. In fact, there is a song "When the Swallows Return to Capistrano." I know of only one time they didn't, that was on March 19, 1992, which would have been Bonnie's and my 50th wedding anniversary.

On December 25, 1941, I proposed to Bonnie and gave her the engagement and wedding rings which I had bought from Mr. Cresalia, who was a wholesale jeweler in San Francisco. To surprise her, I hid the rings in a hope chest I had made for that purpose. Since I liked making furniture, I spent months making a large hope chest. I bought several boards of mahogany, glued them together, sanded them

down, and then put on 13 coats of finish. There was only one problem, it didn't look like a hope chest, but like a large, shiny casket.

By the time we were married, Bonnie was a supervisor at the telephone company and I was working 70 hours a week. Thus, money was never a problem. Once a week we would go to one of the finest restaurants in San Francisco. Then and today, San Francisco was famous for its restaurants. We lived in a small apartment, at 170 Parnassus Avenue, close to the University of California's Medical School and Hospital. This was convenient to where Bonnie worked. I was still working for Western Pipe and Steel but not in South San Francisco, but at the finishing docks in San Francisco. After a ship was launched, it was moved to those docks so the work on them could be completed. Since the double bottoms were now under water, it was very cold to work in them. Therefore, I always ate my lunches on the flight deck of the baby carrier. Bonnie's sandwiches were exotic but delicious. Each day they were different. One I can remember was whole wheat bread, with bean sprouts and sliced avocado filling. Some days I would find a love note in a sandwich. Since Bonnie was still working the split shift, I usually went to the YMCA for a workout after work. Then, I would go home and prepare a meal which we would eat after 10 P.M. each night.

In addition to working out five nights each week, once a month I went to see Dr. Anderson, an optometrist, who was the father of Bill Anderson, a friend of Jim Allison. Why? You had to have nearly perfect vision to become a pilot. My far vision was outstanding, 20-10 in each eye. I had a minor muscular problem which Dr. Anderson corrected by an exercise I practiced each day. Dr. Anderson never charged me a single cent for the examinations and help he gave me. My supervisor never docked me for the time I missed at work, because he knew I was getting ready to become an Aviation Cadet. One day after seeing Dr. Anderson, I ran into a friend of mine from the Poly High track team. He was a Japanese American citizen. Although he was a third-generation American, he told me that he and his family were being sent to an interment camp. I couldn't believe what I was hearing; after all he was good an American as I was. This was one of the most stupid mistakes made by the military and politicians in the history of the United States. It was imposed only on the Japanese Americans who lived on the west coast! It was the result of the panic which U.S. citizens experienced after Pearl Harbor. After December 7, 1941, we had many false alarms in San Francisco. Sirens would blow and everyone was supposed to turn out their lights. If it had been a real attack, it would have been too late to turn off lights. Anyway, people went crazy! I actually saw people break down locked doors to turn off a single light in an empty home. I never could understand people who panicked during periods of high stress. It is better to do nothing than to react in a panic mode.

Earlier I mentioned why we were married in an Episcopal Church. However, Bonnie's mother was Lutheran. Besides that, Bonnie believed her father was Jewish. If she had requested that we be married in a Lutheran Church or a Jewish Synagogue, I would have become a member of that faith and married her. After all, I loved her and respected her because she was morally above reproach. She was always the best good person in my life. When I switched from being a Catholic to an Episcopalian, I felt I could always contact God no matter where I was. I thought that heaven and hell were in real life, not in the afterlife. Last but not least, I have always believed that when your number comes up—you die. Therefore, you should always do the best you can while you are living and not worry about the future. If there is a heaven and hell in the future, I am not going to worry about that, because I am going to meet some old friends in either place. Bonnie always claimed to be an agnostic. If she was, she was a liberal agnostic because she believed that God was an important factor in everyone's life and Jesus Christ was an actual man who was a Prophet of God. When she was dying, she was not worried about her future, but about what was going to happen to me and to our dog, Danny Boy. Bonnie, God Bless and thank you! Please do not consider that I do not respect the religions of other people. I do! On the other hand, I have no respect for the hypocrites of their respective religions.

From March 19, 1942, until September 16, 1942, we didn't go on a honeymoon trip, but Bonnie and I were on the sweetest honeymoon of our lives. Because I had been working seven days a week and Bonnie didn't drive, we sold our 1939 Ford coupe. No problem, because we could travel any place we wanted to for five cents each on a street car. One time we went to a T-dance at the Fairmont Hotel on Knob Hill and won a bottle of champagne at a waltz contest. We were lucky because Bonnie was a good dancer and I could follow her. Then I was notified by Western Pipe and Steel that I was eligible for a week's paid vacation. While I was enjoying myself, the Army Air Corps notified me that I was supposed to leave San Francisco on September 16, 1942, and travel to Nashville, Tennessee, to start Aviation Cadet training. This was a surprise, because I had been waiting a long time to hear from them. Besides that, I was hoping to start my training at Santa Ana, California. This was typical; Len Otten, who was a Captain in the Signal Corps in Maryland, was ordered to start his training at Santa Ana, California. On September 16, 1942, Jim Allison took Bonnie, Kathleen, and me to the Embarcadero so I could catch the train ferry to Oakland. It was a sad occasion, lots of tears, because I did not know if I would ever see them again. Since I was lucky, I did!

## LET US GO BACK IN AND FIGHT THE WAR

When I was assigned to the 84th Fighter Squadron, 78th Fighter Group at Duxford, England, we flew P-47 Thunderbolts and our combat missions in them averaged about four hours. After we were equipped with P-51 Mustangs, our combat missions in them averaged about six hours. Why? The P-51 was not only faster, but burned considerably less fuel than a P-47. On my last combat mission I was airborne for six hours and fifty minutes. However, that combat mission did not end then, but continued on for forty-nine days while I evaded capture by the Germans in northern Holland.

On February 24, 1945, I arrived back at Duxford after spending my first forty-eight-hour pass in London. I was glad to be back because I had hoped to receive some mail from my wife, Bonnie, and I wanted to hear about the air battle our squadron had been in during my absence. No mail--this was not unusual because the mail from home usually came in bunches. Listening to the guys who had shot down German aircraft was exciting. The results of the fight were exceptional--twelve ME-109's were shot down and our squadron lost only one P-51. Next I checked to see if I was scheduled to fly on the following day's mission. I wasn't! About that time, Capt. Calloway came in and told me he wouldn't be able to fly on that mission because of a sinus infection. Although I was an element leader and Calloway was a flight leader, I went to see Maj. R. E. Smith, our squadron operations officer, and volunteered to take Calloway's slot. Much to my surprise, the Major told me that he and Lt. Col. R. C. Marshall, our squadron commander, had already decided to give me an opportunity to become a flight leader. So I was scheduled to lead Calloway's flight.

On Sunday, February 25, 1945, I was awakened by the intelligence officer walking down the hallway. Whenever he stopped walking and knocked on the door of some pilot, the individual knew he was going to fly on a combat mission. That early morning he knocked on my door. I got up, showered, shaved, etc. Then I put on my long johns, socks, wool shirt, flight boots, flight suit and jacket. The rest of my gear was down on the flight line. Next, I walked over to the mess hall, not to eat, because I believed a hungry animal reacted quicker than a full one. I picked up a Baby Ruth, orange, and egg. Then I slowly walked to the briefing room. Before you got into your plane, your nervous energy was quite high, but increased to a maximum during takeoff, so it was important to relax whenever the opportunity presented itself.

The briefing room was located in a large aircraft hangar next to the control tower. The three squadrons each were represented by 16 of their pilots. The

briefers consisted of intelligence officers, a meteorologist, and our new group commander, Col. John D. Landers of Joshua, Texas. He was an ace with 30 victories in Pacific Theatre. The name on the left side of his plane was "Big Beautiful Doll." Since he was a big, conceited man, it was rumored he didn't have a girlfriend or wife, so he named his aircraft after himself. On February 25, 1945, I was a 24-year-old first lieutenant and Landers was a 23-year-old full colonel. Sounds like I was jealous of him. Not really! I was no different than the rest of the guys, we all wanted to check out his credentials in the air. We were told our target was Halle Airdrome which was located south of Nuremberg, Germany. The reason for hitting Halle Airdrome was because it was the focal point of the German jet fighters being produced in the general area of Nuremberg. We were supposed to escort B-17 bombers to the airdrome so they could bomb it. After they completed their mission we were supposed to strafe Halle Airdrome. When the briefer said that, a loud moan came from the fighter pilots. Why? You never strafed a German Airdrome when you could not surprise them. If the defenders knew you were coming in, it was like buying the farm--without making a down payment. The meteorologist told us that the U.K. and west coast of Europe would be covered with clouds, but the target area would be as clear as a bell. He finished his portion of the briefing by saying the winds aloft would be extremely strong from the north. A couple of months later, we learned that the briefed winds were wrong because the majority of the 78th Fighter Group landed in Scotland some 300 miles north of Duxford. The briefing was completed when Col. Landers stood up and said he would lead the group by flying lead in the 84th Fighter Squadron.

After the briefing, I went to our ready room where I deposited my billfold, egg and orange. After putting my candy bar in one of my pockets, I picked up my gun, hunting knife, and survival kits. We carried our hunting knife so we could puncture our dinghy in the event it accidentally inflated within the cockpit. We were then driven out to the parachute shack where I put on my G-suit, Mae West, parachute, helmet and oxygen mask. The G-suit was comfortable to fly in and kept you from blacking out in a tight turn, but walking in them or using the relief tube was difficult. The relief tube was on the right side of the cockpit. The G-suit had a slit between its legs and it was about 3/4-inch long. So before you could use your relief tube you had to fish around for your penis and then pull it out through the small slit. On a previous mission, one of our pilots tried to get a handle on the problem by using his knife to enlarge the slit. He succeeded, but in the process cut the skin of his penis. When he saw some blood he yelled on his radio that he had been wounded. After landing, he filed for a claim for a Purple Heart--and got it.

When I arrived at my plane (Bonnie), my three-man ground crew was waiting for me and had Bonnie ready to go. They helped me into the cockpit and connected me to my dinghy, G-suit, radio, oxygen system, shoulder harness, and seat belt. All I had to do was start my engine after seeing a green light from the control

tower. After seeing the light I started my engine and taxied out for take-off. Since Duxford was a grass strip and there was no snow on it, we took off, 16 planes lined up abreast. It was easy because all you had to do was to remain in formation with the plane that was left of your plane.

Shortly after take-off Col. Landers started a slow turn to our climbing heading. During the turn, our squadron became flights of four for the first time. The overcast was dense and thick, but we knew when we were crossing the English Channel because our turbo started cutting in. When that happened, the associated noise and vibration caused an increase in our "pucker factors."

I cannot recall the exact altitude we were when we broke out of the clouds, but the weather was as forecasted, absolutely beautiful. To the right you could see Switzerland and below us the bomber stream of B-17s. We started S'ing above the stream until the B-17s reached their Initial Point. There were no enemy aircraft in sight, so we moved off to the side and watched the B-17s do their job. As usual, they had to fly through black clouds of high altitude flak. When they started dropping their bombs on Halle Airdrome, we flew down to the deck, hoping to surprise the defenders by coming into attack from an unexpected direction. About that time, Col. Landers called and said that he and his flight were going down to the airdrome to check out the heat. Shortly thereafter, he said that it was too hot and that none of the rest of the group should attempt to strafe Halle Airdrome. A couple of months later we learned what had happened. When he dropped his external tanks, he forgot to switch to his internal fuel system. Thus, when he was on his strafing run his engine started stopping and he thought he was hit. This was not uncommon! One must realize that his primary concern was the overall safety of the 78th Fighter Group.

Before we started to let down, two planes of my flight aborted. So my wingman and I joined Lt. Mark Twain Wilson's flight because he had experienced a similar problem. Since aborting a mission was most common prior to becoming engaged in combat, this was taken seriously by the powers-that-be. When it became apparent that an individual had lost himself to the fear of combat, he was usually sent to the Army Infantry. When Col. Landers told us not to strafe the airdrome and that he was returning home, my wingman and Lt. Wilson's wingman decided also to go home. My brief experience of being a flight leader was like catching a ride on a gravy train and slipping off of it when it made its first turn. It seemed as if I went from flight leader, element leader, to wingman in a matter of minutes. C'est la vie!

After our wingman left, Mark T. said, "Come on Charlie, let us go back in and fight the war." So we did for over an hour after the group departed for home. After the Malmedy Massacre of American POWs by German troops during the

Ardennes Bulge, we received orders that anything that moved in Germany was an authorized target of opportunity. After expending our ammunition on such targets, we climbed to 7000 feet because we knew it to be a safe altitude. It was considered safe because German anti-aircraft guns were not effective at that altitude. We pinpointed ourselves and turned to our going home heading. Since it was an opportunity to relax, I removed my oxygen mask and ate my Baby Ruth. I started thinking about reading Bonnie's mail which I knew for sure would be waiting for me at Duxford. Off to my left, I could see Mark T. smoking a cigarette, the last one he would have for about a week.

Getting home was primarily dependent upon flying the correct course and accurately calculating your time and distance to your home base. Although our aircraft were equipped with radios (used only in an emergency) and IFFs, they did not contain any radars. If you ended up in East Anglia it was no problem because when you crossed one of the many airfields there, you could read its letter designation by the control tower and from that you could determine your heading home. If you were close to France, you could call "Hot Dog," our emergency strip, and get a heading to the strip.

When we approached the cloud bank we had flown through that morning, we entered it at 7000' because it was not only a safe altitude but we could get maximum range from the fuel we had remaining. When the time came to start our approach, we descended to 200 ft, our instrument altitude to stay below the bomber traffic patterns in East Anglia. Since we couldn't see anything, we continued to let down until we saw grey waves with white caps. There was no visible coast line in front of us. We made a 180-degree turn back to land. Because we had been briefed on strong winds from the north, we thought we might luck out and land in France. Then we started calling "Hot Dog" but received no response. About that time, we started crossing a series of sand bars which we later learned were the northern part of the Friesian Islands. These islands run north of Den Helder, Holland to just short of the harbor entry of Wilhelmshaven, Germany, which was the hardened home base of German submarines. Although it had been bombed many times, it was still functioning as a haven for German submarines. About the time we started flying over buildings south of the large harbor, people waved at us but no one fired at us. It was raining and sleeting but we could see an airfield in the distance. Since we still thought we might be in France, we lowered our landing gear to let them know we were friendly. They didn't buy it! Instead, everyone who could fire a weapon or throw a rock opened up. To get closer to the ground, we pulled up our gear and turned left to go west over the harbor. Because of the 20-mm and 40-mm shells exploding around Mark T., I could hardly see him. He seemed to be surrounded by cotton balls. Both of us were zigging and zagging. Naturally, my plane was surrounded by exploding debris (cotton balls and red tracers). Both of us were hit by fragments of flak, Mark T. in the right knee and myself above my upper



lip and on the inside of my left leg. At the time it happened, neither of us were aware that we had been injured. I called Mark T. "Don't go out to sea again, instead turn south." He did! Because we had confidence in one another and knew our ability to survive was greatest together, we decided that when one of us had to go in, the other would follow. During the next 49 days both of us followed that basic philosophy.

It was raining and the ceiling was less than 100 feet above the ground. Both of us were low on fuel when we flew over a wooded area. West of the woods was a town which we later learned was Bakkeveen, Holland. North of the woods were two, small, flat fields, separated by a single line of trees. Mark T. called and said he had to belly in. With that, he turned back towards the fields, blew off his canopy, slowed up his aircraft by dropping his flaps, and prepared to land going west on the western field. He cleared the single line of trees but had to slip his plane into the ground, because he didn't have the fuel to go around. This was dangerous, because his gun sight was only inches from his nose.

Based on what I learned from watching Mark T., I planned to land on Mark's landing field because the eastern field was a postage stamp in comparison to his. My downwind leg was to the east at less than 50 feet above the ground. While on it, I lowered my seat to tighten up my shoulder harness and then blew off my canopy. My base leg was to the north at the approximate altitude of some high tension lines which ran north and south over a canal. When I turned on my final approach to the west, I saw the high tension lines for the first time. To avoid them I pushed down the nose of my aircraft and then pulled back on my stick to keep from hitting the ground. The next barrier was the single line of trees. I thought I had sufficient speed and altitude to clear them, so I shut down my engine. My judgement was wrong because I didn't fly over them, instead my plane slid on the ground and came to a stop with its nose between two trees. Immediately I cut off all my switches and blew up my IFF. I tried to get out of the cockpit but couldn't because I was still locked in. The second time I tried, I lost my helmet and oxygen mask. I started to run towards Mark T. when I remembered my map. I grabbed it out of the cockpit and rubbed out the crayon marks on its plastic cover. Then I threw it in a ditch full of water. I took one last look at Bonnie. Other than a bent propeller, a missing canopy, and a few flak holes, she had come through the ordeal in great shape.

Since Mark T. was still in his plane, I thought his face was wrapped around his gun sight. However, he had been going through the same procedures I had been doing. When we met in the middle of the field, a group of civilians started running towards us, so we took off. We ran to a canal which ran west to east next to the woods. While we were deciding how to get across the canal, a teenaged boy came up to us. We asked him, "Where are we?" He replied in perfect English, "You are

in Bakkeveen, Friesland, Holland. Run into the woods because the Germans are coming."

With that information we inflated our Mae Wests and jumped into the cold, dirty canal. After we got out of the water, we started walking to the southwest. The reason we took that angle is because we both remembered that when Daniel Boone avoided capture by the Indians in the woods, he knew that they searched in a line abreast, so Daniel always put himself in a position where he could back track against them. After all, Mark T. and I were from a generation which did a lot of reading.

When we came to a clump of bushes, we went into them and laid down. Then we listened but could not hear anything. Since it was important to get as far away as possible from our downed planes during the first 24 hours, we knew we had to lighten our loads. The many canals and ditches full of water which lace that part of Holland provided us an answer to part of our problem. We took off our wet parachutes and G-suits and threw them into a ditch full of dirty water. We started walking again trying to be as quiet as possible. When we heard some voices, we stopped walking and hid behind some bushes. We could make out a path and on it were two German soldiers and a dog. Since we were not too inventive, we did the same to ourselves as we had done to our parachutes and G-suits. Unlike them, we had to hold our breaths while we were underwater. The Germans evidently did not see us nor did the dog pick up our scent in the rain and sleet. After that we started walking more towards the west.

A short time later, our planes were discovered and somebody fired a burp gun (the German's rapid fire submachine gun). Thinking we were being fired at, Mark T. and I climbed to the top of a large pine tree. We were scared! We stayed up there for quite a while. Pretty soon, two soldiers and their dog got under the protection of our tree. After smoking, they started walking again. We stayed at the top of the tree for more than 30 minutes. After coming down, we started walking again. We did not see any more Germans searching for us on the remaining trails. When we reached the southern side of the wooded area we saw a wide canal and a highway running parallel to one another. Since we still had on our Mae Wests, we took our third, cold, dirty bath of the day. It turned out this canal was only chest deep. We made up our minds to get rid of our Mae Wests as soon as we could hide them. Next, we climbed up an incline to the highway. We checked east and west and could not see any traffic. So we walked across the highway and looked down. On the other side was another canal with a cemetery south of it. We took our fourth bath of the day. Then we went into the cemetery. Like Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, when it became dark it was a spooky experience for us. We found a recently filled-in grave where we hid our Mae Wests under partially frozen mud. We left the cemetery at 8:00 P.M. It was as dark as the inside of a glove so we

walked west on the side of the canal. There was no electricity in Holland. There was an enforced curfew. All buildings had black-out curtains covering the windows.

When we came to a large building and no dog barked at us, we knocked on the door at the front, left side of it. A man opened the door. He seemed to recognize who we were, two pilots who had gone down that afternoon; so he waved us into the kitchen. The large building was actually a barn with the living quarters built into the front of it. His wife sat us on the sides of a cockle (stove) which was burning turf (peat). Then she brought each of us a hot cup of ersatz coffee. The husband brought each of us a pair of dry woolen socks. In turn we gave him our wet socks. When we finished our coffee we thanked them. Since we were too close to where we went down, we thanked them again and then left their warm home.

Initially, we stayed off of roads and walked in the muddy fields. This was difficult because of the mud and the darkness. Because we had been briefed to stay out of the villages and towns, we had to walk through many more canals that night. I didn't know what the temperature was, but I can assure you that our outer clothes froze after each bath. We stayed in the fields until 11:00 P.M. that night, but because of injuries and fatigue, we decided to walk on a side of a highway. After we got on the highway, we were walking in front of a farm house when two German soldiers rode by on bikes. We walked into the farmyard hoping they would think we were farmers. They hesitated a moment and then rode on. We ran out of the yard, crossed the highway into a field, found a dry ditch and laid down in it. A few minutes later a German car came by flashing a spot light on the highway and surrounding fields. We realized we couldn't walk on the highway, nor did we have the strength to walk in the soggy fields again. Thus, we started walking a side road.

About 2 A.M. the next morning, we realized we had to get into some kind of shelter. We saw a farm house and knocked on its door. The people would not let us in. It was obvious that they were extremely frightened. I don't blame them. After all, Holland had been occupied since May of 1940. Thus the majority of the population knew that the Germans would kill Hollanders who helped guys like us.

We continued to walk on the side road until we found a large farm building with a small outbuilding behind it. It was 4:00 A.M. on February 26, 1945. We went into the small building and found there two small pens with young livestock in each of them. Above each pen was a straw loft. Since Mark T. was in considerable pain, I helped him up into one of the lofts. Next, I started covering him with straw. I was so pooped out that I kept falling asleep on top of Mark T. He would shake me awake and say, "I can't sleep with you snoring my ear." My solution was to lay next to him with one arm and one leg on top of him. When Mark T. became warmer he fell asleep. During our first night in Holland we had walked 22 miles in 10 hours.

During our 15 hours in the loft we managed to sleep for five hours. We huddled together next to an exterior wall in order to insure that no one could see us in the loft. We were hungry so we opened our survival kits. The contents of each were exactly the same: one compass, an escape map, a container of matches, some money but no food. Mark T. wanted to smoke so he pulled out a package of cigarettes which were so wet they came apart when he tried to get them out of their package. We both chewed on the straw to compensate for our needs. Next, I pulled out my first aid kit and my hunting knife. With the knife, I enlarged the holes in Mark T's flight suit and long johns. When I saw the wound it appeared that only his flesh was damaged, so I sprinkled sulfa powder on it and I put a pressure bandage over it. Last, but not least, I gave Mark T. a shot of morphine. When it hit him he reacted as if I had given him three double shots of straight gin. Either he fell asleep or passed out.

Around noon, the farmer came in to take care of his animals, two half grown sheep and a medium sized pig. First he fed them, then he cleaned out their pens, and finally gave them new bedding. As a result, Mark T. and I got some exercise dodging the farmer's pitch fork.

At 7 P.M. we left the building we were in. The exterior of our clothes was frozen, our bodies were stiff, and both of us were concerned we might catch pneumonia. We made up our minds to get into the farmer's home. Prior to knocking on the door, we pulled our guns out of their shoulder holsters. When the farmer opened the door we had our weapons aimed at him. He looked at us and then made signs to hide our automatics. Then he let us know he did not want us to talk by placing a finger in front of his lips. He led us into the kitchen. His family were at the table and included his wife, a baby, two seven-year-old girls who were twins, a 16-year-old son, and a 21-year-old daughter. The man sat at one end of the table. In front of him was a plate on which I thought was a piece of fruit cake. He cut it in half and gave me and Mark T. an equal share of it. It wasn't fruit cake but black bread.

When I realized he was risking his life and the lives of his family, I nearly broke down and cried. He must have realized my problem because he pointed at the twins and then placed his index finger on his mouth again. Later we learned the twins were in school, and the father did not want them to know we were Americans. After the twins went to bed, the mother gave Mark T. and me a cup of hot coffee. Then she had us sit next to the cockle where she and her daughter cut off our frozen outer clothing. The father came in with dry socks, long johns and blue coveralls for each of us. When the ladies left the kitchen, Mark T. and I took off our wet clothes and replaced them with dry ones. Then we sipped our coffee. The mother and daughter, who spoke English, came back. The daughter told us she was going to see a friend who was the leader of the underground in the area of

Hornsterzwaag, Holland. When she left home her mother and father took us to the hay loft in the main barn. With his pitch fork he dug a hole in the hay and Mark T. and I laid down in it. The mother covered us with a quilt. The father covered the quilt with hay. What a bed! It was dry, soft, warm, and smelled good.

The next morning the 21-year-old daughter came into the hay loft many times. She would softly call our names and when we would raise our heads up she would give us the silence signal. After the twins had left for school, she came in again and gave us a towel, small mirror, a bar of soap and a pan of water. While I was washing my face I painfully learned about the cut below my nose. I didn't know about it before, but had learned about the three-inch slice in my left leg the night before when I stripped down. We went into the kitchen where the mother gave each of us a slice of brown bread and a cup of hot ersatz coffee. That became the standard breakfast we ate each day. The daughter told us that a medical doctor would come by shortly and later in the day a man from the underground organization would visit us. The doctor arrived on a horse. He was a good-looking man in his forties who spoke English with an Oxford accent. He examined Mark T.'s knee wound and asked me how I had treated it. Since I still had sulfa powder and pressure bandages, I showed him. He asked me if I had any medical experience. I replied, "No," but what I had done was based on a training movie I had seen. He told us the wound was healing and to continue treating it. Next, the doctor looked at the cut from the bottom of my nose to my upper lip. He cleaned it out with something that burned. Then holding it together, he applied three small butterfly bandages. He did a perfect job. For a few years I had a scar which eventually disappeared completely. He looked at the cut on my left leg and said it was healing. For years it itched. Now, fifty years later, I still have a three-inch scar as a souvenir. Both Mark T. and myself thanked the doctor and he rode off on his horse.

Shortly after the doctor left, Anne De Vries, the leader of the underground in the area of Hornsterzwaag, Holland arrived. He was a year younger than I, and both of us were blonde, 5 feet 9 inches tall and weighed 160 lbs. Prior to becoming involved in the underground, Anne had been a member of the Holland Merchant Marine.

He didn't waste any time. First he asked for our guns, knives, survival kits, and dog tags. He kept all of them except he did return our dog tags. Then he stated there was some doubt about who we were. We asked, "Why?" He told us that Mark T. had spoken German when he asked for drinking water in the only home we had been in on February 25, 1945. Mark T. explained that he had studied German in college. Then Anne asked us where we had disappeared to for 23 hours. We answered that question and all others as honestly as we could. After all, our briefers had told us that if we became involved with an underground organization, it

was wise to be honest with them and to follow their instructions. Before Anne left, he told us that he wanted us to go to a certain clump of trees on a nearby road. He said we would be met by a couple of his men by 8 P.M. When Anne left, he carried not only our guns, etc., but our cutup flight suits and jackets. This was the only and last time we ever saw Anne De Vries because he was captured by the Germans three weeks later.

Mark T. and I left the family at about 7 P.M. It was extremely emotional. In Mark T.'s and my case, it was because the family had been very kind to us and we knew the risk they had taken in helping us out. We didn't know they would be eliminated by the Germans after the capture of Anne DeVries!

When we reached the clump of trees we went into them and hid. Around 8 P.M., a very large man and a smaller one on a bike showed up. We remained hidden. Pretty soon the big guy started calling out our names. When he did we appeared and introduced ourselves. The larger man was Pier Dykstra and the man on the bike was G. Luik. Both of them lived in the area of Hornsterzwaag, Holland, and were members of Anne De Vries' organization. They told us they were going to take us to a family whose son was being hidden by the underground. This practice of relocating males in Holland was common because all men between the ages of 17 and 35 were subject to being sent to Germany as slave laborers. The four of us started down the road in a single file, with G. Luik functioning as an advance scout on his bike, Pier Dykstra in second place, Mark T. behind Pier, and myself as tail-end Charlie.

When we came to a crossroad we were met by five men who knew G. Luik and Pier Dykstra. Each of these men were fluent in the English language. They asked Mark T. and me many questions, and we realized they were verifying our answers to the questions posed by Anne De Vries on February 27, 1945. About three weeks later, the same five men came to see me about a different matter. This time they told me that they were members of the secret service. They informed me that they and the underground no longer had any negative doubts about Mark T. or myself. Then they started questioning me about the so-called "different matter."

After the interrogation at the crossroads, the four of us went to Jan Minkes' farm. He met us at the door, and Dykstra and Luik introduced us to Jan and then left. Jan took us through his kitchen and into what we thought to be his living room. He introduced us to his wife, 22-year-old daughter and a 12-year-old son. We were told their 24-year-old son was living with another farmer and family. Jan's family was eating something that looked like hot, lumpy oatmeal. The mother brought Mark T. and me each a bowl of it. Since we had very little food during the past three days, we thanked her. As I raised my spoon to my mouth and swallowed its contents, I nearly gagged because their dinner smelled and tasted like hot vomit.

I looked at Mark T. and the lady, and then Mark T. and I rubbed our stomachs and said, "Good, good!" Fortunately we never again had to eat the special treat (it was). After that, the family sang some songs which were verboten by the Germans. One of them was "Roll out the Barrel," which Mark T. and I later learned to sing in the language of Friesland, the northern most province (state) in Holland. Singing verboten songs was a pleasure to the people of Holland and guys like us. After singing, Jan Minke started taking off his outer clothes. All of us followed his example. He and his wife got into the wall bed next to the kitchen. Mark T. and I were told to get into the wall bed next to the one of the mother and father. The daughter made a bed on top of a couch. The son pulled out a trundle bed from under her couch. Their living room turned out to be a complete living and sleeping room!

Our days with the Minkes were basically the same each day. For breakfast we had a slice of brown bread and a cup of ersatz coffee, for lunch we had a boiled potato and a cup of ersatz tea, and for dinner we had a slice of black bread and a cup of tea or coffee. Mark T. and I started to lose weight. As time went on, I became very ticklish in the ribs. When the daughter learned this, she loved to give me a nudge in the ribs just to see how high I would jump. When Jan got up in the morning, the rest of us got up. Since it was still dark, Mark T. or I would say, "O.K. Vay Say?" which asked was it okay to go to the outhouse (water closet)? They did not let us go to the outhouse during the hours of daylight. During the days, the only places we could stand up were in the barn, kitchen, and doorway between the kitchen and the living room. The people of Holland love to have people look into their living room. The living rooms all had large picture windows which were kept uncovered during the daytime. Mark T. and I used the living room floor to exercise, argue, pray and make chewing tobacco for Jan Minkes. As far as exercise was concerned, we went from 25 repetitions once a day to 100 repetitions twice a day. As for praying, I never prayed for myself but only that my wife, father and sister would somehow know I was alive. Mark T. and I argued about many things. One example was the correct pronunciation of names. Mark T. said that the mother's name was Folkya, I said it was F-kya. I asked the lady, "Your name Folkya, or F-kya?" She replied "F-kya." That was the only bet I ever won from Mark T.

To feed the cows, Mark T. and I went out in the barn portion of the building. First, we cut up sugar beets and gave them to the cows. Their second course was hay. To top off their meal, we gave them fresh water. While they were drinking we cleaned out their stalls. Finally, we gave them fresh bedding.

We were permitted to have a one bath per week. The mother would give us a small piece of soap with sand imbedded in it, a pail of cold water, clean underwear.

and socks; and one towel for both of us. With all the exercises we did, you can imagine how we smelled during the majority of each week.

Whenever the wife wanted us to make some chewing tobacco for her husband, Mark T. and I would go to the hay loft where there were some tobacco leaves curing. We would take a couple of them and return to the living room. The wife would bring us a broken straight razor, a small tin with a cover, and section of newspaper. We would shred the tobacco into the tin, Then the wife would put some syrup on the tobacco, cover the tin and place it on top of the cockle to bake the chewing tobacco. While making the chewing tobacco, Mark T. would take a few shreds and make a few cigarettes out of the newspaper and smoke them. One day I tried one, it was so strong I hiccuped after each puff. Although I only smoked three cigarettes over a two week period, I became addicted to them. The first time I smoked some British cigarettes (very mild), I smoked two packages of them in a single afternoon.

There were two incidents during our third week with them that had a negative impact on my relationship with Jan Minkes. His son would visit his parents once a week. He was bigger than me with Popeye type forearms and strong hands from years of milking cows. He demonstrated his manliness by grabbing my stomach with one of his hands and twisted my arm with his other hand. His father thought his son was very funny. I didn't! In fact, I made my mind up, if the son ever tried that stunt again, he was going to pay for it. On his second visit he tried to grab my stomach again. Immediately I put him in a head lock and put him on his back. I noticed that his father was not laughing this time, so I put his son's feet down next to his head and then I spanked him on the rear end. Then I got up and laughed.

A couple of days later, I was standing in the doorway between the kitchen and living room when the daughter came through the doorway. I did something she had been doing to me for over a week, i.e., I nudged her in the rear ribs. In return, she pushed me into the living room. With that move, the old man who couldn't speak English started screaming at me. The mother and daughter tried to convince Jan Minkes that I had not done anything wrong. When they failed, both of the women started crying. That was not the end of the incident, because the five guys who had interrogated Mark T. and me at the crossroads on the night of February 27, 1995 arrived. First they talked to the father, mother and daughter. Then they took me out into the barn. My interrogation ended when they were convinced that the mother, daughter and I were telling the truth. Prior to leaving, the interrogators told me they might have to move me into town where I would be placed with a married woman whose husband was being hidden in a different location. I asked about Mark T. They told me he would remain with Minkes'. The last thing they told me was a threat. They said, "If we place you with a married woman, do not



touch her because if you do, we will take you for a walk in the woods." This was their way of saying they would kill me.

The next morning on March 21, 1945, two men knocked on the door of Minke's home. Each of them had a bike with them. They were from the underground. They told us that we had to leave with them because Anne DeVries, our first contact in the Holland underground had been captured by the Germans. In such circumstances, the interrogations by the Germans included physical torture. Thus the underground was in the process of changing locations of all people Anne De Vries knew about.

Jan Minkes brought two bikes from his barn. We thanked him and his wife for helping us. After shaking their hands, we started walking across a field following the men from the underground while carrying our bikes. As soon as we came to a road, we started riding our bikes. This was the first time since February 25, 1945 that Mark T. and I had been outside in the daylight. It was a clear, sunny day and we enjoyed it.

After riding for about an hour, we entered the town of Lippenhuzien Friesland, Holland. We stopped and the Hollanders told us we were going to be taken to two different locations. Since Mark T. and I did not want to be separated, both of us complained. The fellows from the underground just looked at us and said, "You are going to do what we say to do." So, for the time being, Mark T. and I did as we were told. I was taken to the home of Mr. Hendrick, the postmaster of Lippenhuzien. He took me into his living room. Next, he brought me a cup of coffee, a secret radio and a large box full of packages of British cigarettes. He told me that because of the fear associated with the capture of Anne De Vries, they were having difficulty finding a place for Mark T. and myself to stay. Then he turned the radio on to BBC. This was the station in England from which the Holland underground received their orders from their leader, Prince Bernhard, the husband of the daughter of the Queen of Holland. Prince Bernhard was a German prince who was loyal to Holland and its queen. The rest of the day I listened to BBC, smoked cigarettes, ate a boiled potato and a slice of black bread, and dozed.

While I was enjoying my VIP environment, Mark T. was bending the ears of underground people he was in touch with. Whenever he had a chance to volunteer our services to the underground, he did. On that day he touched the right buttons and solved the dilemma we were in. Early that evening I was taken into the kitchen. Initially I couldn't see too well because the light in the kitchen was provided by a lamp comparable to an old-fashioned miner's lamp. In its bluish glow I could barely make out the postmaster, Mark T., and three other men in long leather coats. To me it was like they were playing a scene for a spy movie. After I sat down, Mark T. and I were informed that we had been cleared to become

members of the Holland underground. Thus, we would be taken to one of their headquarters that night.

Thanks to Mark T.'s efforts we were back together again! During our walk in the darkness, I told Mark T. that being active in the underground was going to be a lot more dangerous than making chewing tobacco for Jan Minkes. Mark T. told me not to sweat because after we had helped out the underground, he was going to convince them to capture a German airdrome so we could steal an aircraft and fly back to Duxford. Mark T. was a very quiet man but his attitude was always, "Come on Charlie, let us go back in and fight the war."

Later we arrived at a farm south of Hemrick, Friesland, Holland. After knocking, only one of four escorts went in with us. He introduced us to Tj. E. Nyboer and left. Nyboer took us into the living room and introduced us to his wife and to the Popka Swierva and his wife. The Swiervas lived in a house boat about 100 yards from Nyboer's home. On a windup record player was a song my mother used to sing to me prior to dying when I was four years old: "Yes, sir, that's my baby, no, sir, that's my baby now." This was like all of our meetings--music, laughter and togetherness. Afterwards, Nyboer took Mark T. and me up to the attic above his living quarters. When you walked on the right side of the attic you could locate an alcove by finding some loose boards. By lifting up those boards, you could reveal a tiny room containing a double bed and a trundle bed. Every night, from March 21, 1945 to April 12, 1945, Mark T. and I slept in the double bed and a different Hollander slept in the trundle bed. We found out that each of them was a "terrorist" but not in the modern vernacular, i.e., they did not go around murdering/bombing innocent people, or taking hostages. Instead, they kept track of the Judas (collaborators), black marketeers, robbed ration offices, and attempted to rescue people like Mark T. and me prior to them being captured by the Germans. They were the only paid members of the underground at \$32.20 per month. In every case, each terrorist had been a slave laborer in Germany before escaping back into Holland.

The next morning when Mark T. and I woke up, the Hollander was already gone. Mark T. and I went downstairs and met Nyboer and his wife. We said, "Okay. Vay Cay?" and the wife looked outside and said, "Okay." After Mark T. and I returned from the outhouse we washed our hands and faces. The four of us had the standard breakfast. While we were eating, Nyboer told us that if the Germans came to capture us, we should fight them because the Germans would accuse us of being spies, then they would torture us prior to killing us. Nyboer told us the Germans normally made such raids at about 2 A.M. when human resistance is at its lowest ebb. Therefore, he wanted us to keep loaded Sten guns in our attic bedroom.

After breakfast, Nyboer took us back to the attic. He removed a couple of floor boards, under which were Sten (submachine) guns, Bren (machine) guns, bazookas, and ammo for same. All of which were covered by cosmoline, which had to be removed prior to their use. We pointed this out to Nyboer and suggested we be permitted to clean them up each morning until they were all usable. He agreed with us.

A couple of nights later, we learned by experience of the danger of having loaded weapons in your proximity while sleeping. One night Mark T. woke me up because he could hear someone in the attic. We grabbed our Sten guns and aimed them at our entry to the attic. Fortunately, we kept their safeties on. At that moment, our current roommate walked into the alcove. When he saw us he stopped. He had been using the night pot in the attic!

Just prior to noon, Nyboer took us to the Popka Swierva's house-boat which was fastened to the south bank of a small canal that ran east to west. This walk was repeated from 22 March 1945 until 12 April 1945. We would spend the majority of our main meals (boiled potatoes--sometimes with gravy), afternoons, and our late meals (black bread) with the Swiervas in their house boat. Prior to each meal, Popka would read aloud a passage from his Bible. In those days, the people of Friesland were very religious. Before the war, Popka and his brothers (whom we met) were butchers. Whereas Tj. E. Nyboer was the leader of the underground in the area of Hemrik, Holland, Popka Swierva was the boss of the local terrorists.

We were located a relatively short distance south of Hemrik where 1200 German paratroopers who had been recovered after the battle for the Island of Crete, were stationed. They had been equipped with tanks which they didn't operate while we were there until one night when they all moved out of Hemrik. Thus, the paratroopers were a common sight whenever they were permitted to roam. The other common sights were small children with swollen bellies and faces of elderly people. They had been starving in southern Holland until the underground of northern Holland sent down teams to rescue them. That is why our terrorists were constantly stealing stamps from the ration offices because no one could eat unless the required ration stamps were available. In addition to the children, people like Mark T. and myself ate as the result of stolen ration stamps. I lost 30 pounds while I evaded capture for 49 days. I enjoyed every bite of bread and potatoes I ate while I was down. In fact, even after 50 years, I still like coarse bread and boiled potatoes.

The women of Holland played an important role in the underground. They were the couriers. Since the younger men had to remain hidden and no operating telephones existed, all messages were carried by the women. In the early years of the war, young women escorted allied personnel from Holland, through Belgium and

France, into Spain where the men were interred for a period of time and then sent to England. During our final weeks, Mark T. and I got to know a famous courier. She was the daughter of a banker in Amsterdam. Before the war, she was an Equestrian Champion in Europe. She had accompanied many allied personnel to safety in Spain. One day, she showed up at the house boat. She handed us some books. They were in English but had been written for young girls. I can remember one of them, "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm." Just before the end she visited us again. This time she gave each of us a hanky with her family's crest of arms on it. She wanted my Saint Christopher medal in exchange. So like a fool, I grinned and said, "If I give you my Saint Christopher medal, what else will you give me?" She responded with a round house slap in my face. Since I had grinned, I gave her my Saint Christopher medal and told her I was only kidding. A year later she wrote a letter to Bonnie and me. She asked us if we knew some gangster in Chicago who would give her a job. She said that since the war had ended, she had found life to be very boring.

In January 1945, the Russians liberated Auschwitz, the German concentration facility in Poland. As a result, we finally learned a little bit about the atrocious acts being committed against Jews, Gypsies, et al., by the Germans in their concentration camps. One day Popka Swierva brought a stranger to his house boat. Popka introduced us to the man who was about 25 years old, nice looking and quiet. Popka told us that he was the last living Jew in Friesland and had been evading capture by the Germans since May 1940. Mark T. and I were speechless but we shook his hand and patted him on his back. Still, it was a shock to us to learn at such a late date that we had another just cause for fighting the Germans and destroying such targets as Dresden on February 12 and 13, 1945. The military reason for the missions was to support the Russian drive to the Oder River.

During the majority of days Mark T. and I cleaned the cosmolene off our weapons. One afternoon I was doing the job in the well of the house-boat's stern when someone spoke to me. I turned around and saw a German soldier standing on the north bank of the canal. So I got up and dropped my shirt (I had been sunbathing) on the broken down weapon. I went into the cabin and told Mrs. Swierva about the soldier. She went out and talked to him. When she returned, she told me that he was 44 years old and wanted to buy an egg for his birthday. She didn't have any eggs, so he left.

This incident about the German soldier and the egg he wanted for his birthday gave Mark T. and me something new to argue about. It was about how you could squeeze an uncooked egg without breaking it. Mark T. was convinced that if you held an egg parallel to your fingers, thus by applying pressure to each end of the egg, you couldn't break it. My theory was you could squeeze it without breaking it by placing the egg across your fingers and applying equal pressure to the

egg with each of your fingers. One day, much to our surprise, Mrs. Popka gave us each an egg to eat. So Mark T. and I decided to determine who was right about squeezing an egg. Unfortunately for me, he convinced me to try his technique on my egg because he said it would be safer. I used it and proved my point—it squirted all over. However, he won, because he ate his boiled egg and potato, while I ate my potato.

Finally on April 1, 1945, we completed our job of cleaning weapons and started working with the terrorists at night, laying road blocks and damaging the raising mechanisms of draw bridges. This was done to slow up the retreat of the Germans. To be honest, it was more fun than scary. By this time a Canadian Armored Division which had fought in Italy charged north on the German/Holland border. As they moved north, they destroyed the German towns on their right and liberated the Holland towns on their left. As soon as a Holland town was liberated, the Holland underground controlled the Judas and black marketeers. Those that deserved it were taken for a walk in the woods. As a result, there was only one publicized trial in Holland in comparison to the many in France which went on for many years after World War II. The one trial in Holland was about an artist who convinced the court that he sold only his copies of famous paintings to Goering, not the originals! He was cleared by the court.

One morning we were informed that the British were going to drop arms for the underground that night. That afternoon, Mark T. and I were in the house-boat when we heard aircraft overhead. We went outside and saw eight Canadian Tempest fighter aircraft strafing targets in the area of Hemrik, Holland. It turned out that these strikes were the preamble to what was going to happen that night. About that time, one of the aircraft started a strafing run on the house-boat. Mark T., the Swiervas and I dove on the south bank of the canal next to the house-boat. When the pilot started firing, the four of us dug into the bank. Seconds later the pilot started pulling up. When he was a couple of hundred feet high, a German anti-aircraft shell hit his plane. Somehow the pilot managed to bail out. His parachute popped open and then plummeted. The pilot hit the ground. Our terrorists managed to get him prior to the Germans. Unfortunately, the pilot was dead.

That night was a night I will never forget. After dark we went to the weapon drop area. It was a large field southwest of Hemrik. At the northeast corner of the field was a road which went directly to Hemrik. Three Hollanders were positioned at the west end, center, and east end of the drop area and each carried a flash light. Their job was flashing their lights when the RAF Lancaster bomber carrying the weapons flew over the drop area. Mark T. and I were given the responsibility of guarding the road from Hemrik. When Popka Swierva told us of our responsibility, Mark T. and I objected. Both of us told him that we would

not guard the road but we would warn him and his people if the German paratroopers came up the road. Popka laughed and told us that was what he wanted us to do. Shortly thereafter, several C-47's flew above us to Hemrik. Out of them came flares, French paratroopers, and small dummies in parachutes. In the lights of the flares, the dummies looked like live paratroopers. After they hit the ground, each of them detonated small explosives which sounded like they were firing weapons. In addition to increasing our "pucker factors", all the noise and lights woke up the Germans. Mark T. and I could hear orders being given. Next, they started up their tanks. Then the tanks and German paratroopers started moving out of Hemrik. What a racket--tracks clanking on the road, and metal rubbing against metal! It took them quite a bit of time to leave Hemrik but none of them used our road. After about an hour, a Lancaster bomber flew over the drop area at about 200 feet and our flashers flashed. The aircraft made a 360 degree turn to the left and came back over the drop area at 100 feet. It dropped 27 containers into the drop area. When their parachutes opened they sounded like explosives going off. We spent the rest of the night carrying the containers to horse pulled wagons and then covering them with straw. All of the 27 parachutes were buried in the ground. Last, but not least, we hid ourselves under the straw in the wagons. Later we arrived at Tj. E. Nyboer's farm. His wife had the record player playing. On the table was a glass for each of us. Each glass was full of schnapps and one green, sour gooseberry. Why the celebration? It was Tj. E. Nyboer's 33rd birthday. We sang, Happy Birthday to him. I also know I said a silent prayer, thanking God for protecting us during the day and the night before.

When the Canadian Armour Division was in the vicinity of Alemelo, Holland, they stopped traveling north on the German/Holland border. Instead, they made a turn to the left so they could drive across northern Holland thus sealing off the Germans south of them. By April 12, 1945, the Canadians were operating out of Oldeberkoop Holland, which was only a few miles from where Mark T. and I were located.

On the same day we received a coded message from England via BBC which translated into, "The milk cooked over." This meant our segment of the underground was authorized to take action in the open against the Germans. The action to be taken was determined by Nyboer and Swierva, i.e., they would send men to three different villages which contained draw bridges. In each instance, the men would attempt to hold the bridges until the Canadians arrived.

On the following day, April 13, 1945, Mark T., myself and five terrorists rode bikes into one of the three villages. Each of us carried a loaded Sten gun. We went to a store across the road from a bridge, we captured the store owner and his family and there locked them up in the family quarters of the store. We then secured the store and waited.

That night, a German demolition team entered one of the villages over which the underground had control. As a result, a fire fight occurred. In the process, four Hollanders were killed, and the bridge was blown up. However, two American evadees and one Hollander escaped. Shortly thereafter, the three of them encountered a German roadblock. The three men shot their way through the roadblock and rode their bikes to where we were. The two evadees were Sergeants from a B-17 which had gone down 13 months before. Both of them were from the same home town in Michigan.

Prior to daylight on April 14, 1945, Popka Swierva and a friend showed up. He came directly to Mark T. and me. He said he had a present for us and then he gave us our automatics and hunting knives which we had given to Anne De Vries on February 27, 1945. Then he handed each of the four Americans one thousand guilders. Popka told the four of us he knew that a group of German demolition people were going to make a move on the villages the underground were still holding. Naturally, when asked we agreed to go for help from the Canadians.

At daylight the four of us rode single file down the road to Oldeberkoop, Holland. We kept a 20-foot separation between each of the bikes. All of us had long hair, were skinny, wore grey suits and black overcoats. In other words, we looked like Hollanders. We rode for about an hour when we saw the German demolition team coming up the other side of the road. These men were like our combat engineers, skilled in their specialty and well armed. Mark T. told us to maintain our separation distance, not to talk, but to nod in a friendly manner. Since there were over 40 Germans to our four evadees, the odds were against us, but Mark T.'s technique worked for us.

When we rode into Oldeberkoop, Holland, we saw an armored vehicle. As we approached it, we saw a number of Hollanders standing around and crying. We rode up to the vehicle and asked the Canadians, "Where can we find your commanding officer?" They didn't say but instead asked us "Where did you guys learn to speak English?" Mark T. drawled Dallas, Texas, I said San Francisco, California, and the two sergeants said Iron Mountain, Michigan. Then we asked them why so many people were crying? They told us that our President Roosevelt had died on April 12, 1945. All Hollanders I knew felt F.D.R. was their hope for the future.

The Canadians gave us some cigarettes and candy and then took us to their commanding officer. We gave him information about the German demolition team, the bridges, movement of German troops, etc. He thanked us and told us not to worry about our Holland friends because he already had five hundred men in the area of the two villages.

This story could not have been written a few years ago because after being interrogated in Nijmegen, Holland and Paris, France, Mark T. and I had signed statements which precluded us from ever revealing names of people who had helped us, or places we had been while evading capture. When that ban was finally lifted, I was able to assemble the specifics required by this story from data provided by the National Archives.

This is a true story written in honor of Mark Twain Wilson who has died. He was a quiet, good man, a can-do sort of a person with a strong desire to make every moment of life the very best. God bless you Mark T., You were always the bright light at the end of our 49-day tunnel.