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Chapter 2b – My life in Patterson (1945-1954)

Early 1945 the Bradley Mining Company took over an old established tungsten mine, the Ima Mine, near Patterson, Idaho.

The locals that had been working at the mine were not cooperating and the operation was not going well. The company decided to send a team of managers from Stibnite to take over and straighten things out. Dad was selected to be the Mine Superintendent and Assistant General Manager. So, off we went around January 1945. I was in the middle of the 3rd grade.

We departed late on a snowy day in the 1941 Chevrolet. It was problematic if we could get to Cascade. Snowbanks were high on each side of the road. We made it and stayed overnight in the only hotel in Cascade.

The next morning we continued on to Boise and stayed in the Idanha Hotel in downtown Boise. I was the proud owner of two small turtles that I left in the car overnight. The next morning my turtles were frozen solid. However, they survived after slowly warming them up.

Mom's uncle "Frosty" Nixon and family lived in Mountain Home, so we stopped to see them for a while. Frosty was an airplane mechanic at Mountain Home Air Base. He got us onto the base to look at the bombers even though we were at war. We left Mountain Home and it was dark as we went through what is now the Craters of the Moon with wind and snow blowing across the road. There was a cafe open in Arco and we pulled in to get something to eat. All they had was luke warm watered down potato soup. Garry eventually threw his soup up across the table and that ended that ordeal. I never liked Arco after that. Even though it was late and dark we continued on to Mackay and stayed in a hotel above the Perk's Bar.

Strange that LaRue and I ended up moving to Arco in 1995 when we bought the DK Motel.

Patterson, Idaho and the Ima Mine

The next morning we continued on to Patterson by way of Challis and down the Salmon river to Ellis where we turned up into the Pahsimeroi valley. It was sunny and nice as a January thaw was in progress. We pulled into Patterson and it was mostly mud from the melting snow. It looked rather bleak with no trees and the whole valley was a barren landscape. Sure was a stark contrast to Stibnite.

Patterson consisted of a few old log buildings, a tall wood water tower, seven or eight recent government built apartment buildings that had six apartments each, and a rec hall. The buildings resembled those built during the war for the Japanese internment camps.

The rec hall had a big room where movies could be shown. It also served as a meeting room and a dance hall. There was a small privately owned store with two gravity flow glass fuel pumps, and two bars on opposite sides of the street in the old log cabins.

A third bar with a cafe opened later in a log building. It was owned and operated by Herb and Mabel McPheters, the parents of my soon to be best friend, Richard.

There was a one room white frame school house for grades 1-4 and a one room log school house for grades 5-8. They were situated about a quarter mile down stream on Patterson Creek.

The town site was at the mouth of Patterson Creek canyon and the mine was a little over a mile up the canyon. The first building was the mine office and adjacent was the mill where the ore was crushed, and Tungsten extracted. Further up were the support facilities. Diesel generators generated the power for the mine and town site until the REA brought power in the early 1950's. There was a main tunnel at ground level and another tunnel about 1,000 feet up the mountain. It was accessed by a hoist at the top that pulled up a small car on rails called "the skip". Once inside the mine there were other tunnels connected by shafts with ladders to go between the different levels. There were a few old houses, a bunkhouse, and cookhouse for housing single miners.

We moved into an end apartment and our belongings arrived in one of the mine dump trucks. The apartments had two bedrooms with a bathroom, kitchen, living room and was probably about a total of 1,000 sq ft.

Living in Patterson did not have the feel of being in the back country like Stibnite. In Stibnite if you went 80 miles to Cascade or beyond you were going "out". We never had the same feeling in Patterson even though the nearest towns were 55 miles to Challis and 67 miles to Salmon. The roads were still gravel but there were no passes to go over.

The Pahsimeroi Valley lies north and south. It always seemed odd that if you went south you gained elevation and went over the summit at Summit Creek. When you went north you lost elevation all the way to Salmon which is about 2,000 feet lower in elevation than Patterson.

After a while a house on the hill on the left side of the road north of Patterson became available and we moved there.

There were two houses below us on the other side of the road. One was a log house built on a slope with walk out basement and the other was a nice three bedroom home that the new General Manager, Tony Mecia, and family lived in. That house and the one on the hill are still there today along with one unit of the apartments at the town site.

The three houses got water from a spring high on the mountain above us that was gravity fed down the mountain through a buried pipe. The main town site got their water from a well at the mouth of the canyon. In the winter the water would freeze up in the main town site and our water was the only available. There was an outlet outside the log home where anyone could get water and the mine ran a water truck around the apartments as well.

When the larger log home became available we moved down there. I liked the basement as I could work on my bicycle after I finally got one after the war was over and a long wait. The downside was there was no indoor bathroom. That outhouse sure was cold in the winter. After a while a bathroom was built onto the house. We lived there until about my sophomore year in high school. Then we moved into the nicer house when Dad was promoted to mine manager. I helped Dad plant a lawn and build a white picket fence after we moved in. He always had to have a white picket fence.

A Kids Life In Patterson

There was not much to do in Patterson for kids growing up. We climbed all over the mountain and the cliffs, skated on the ice on the tailings pond, shot jack rabbits, and fished Patterson creek. The creek was polluted with tailings below the mine so we would get up early and hike about seven miles up the creek to some beaver ponds. We could catch a 100 or more bull trout in no time, and we would give them to people in town. They were a little mushy after the long hot hike home in a gunnysack.

Richard and I had three campsites scattered around where we would cook and camp out. It was something we really enjoyed. Our dinner was usually hamburger or pork chops, fried potatoes, and creamed corn.

There was a natural cave on the mountain above Patterson . We would hike up there, build a fire with sagebrush, and throw potatoes in the coals. When they were black we would fish them out, peel off the black and enjoy eating what was left. While the potatoes were cooking we

would roll big rocks down the mountain towards the townsite. There were no trees or anything to stop them. We would hold our breath hoping that we didn't hit anything or anybody. One time we nearly hit the first apartments. We were ordered to stop that fun little practice.

We found one diversion that got us in real trouble. We wanted to swim and started eyeing the big wooden water tower that was over 50 ft high. A ladder went up to a walkway that went around the water tank. From there a ladder went up the side of the tank and on top there was a trap door into the tank. From there you could drop down to some planking over the water. It was a frightening endeavor the first time. We succeeded and became comfortable with it. We had a stash of comic books and maybe even some smokes. It was a nice place to cool off, relax, and read. All was going well until Harry Blessinger was walking by and heard splashing up there. We were quite surprised when he poked his head in. The fun was over. There was quite a backlash as we were using the town's water supply for our swimming hole. Being the boss's kid didn't help my situation any. Dad took charge and the tank was drained and a fire hose brought up to wash the interior. It took several hours. No more swimming for us.

Richard McPheters dad gave him an old Ford Model A panel truck. Richard was in about the 8th grade and I was in the 7th grade. I don't know what his dad was thinking as we took it everywhere and got into some scary situations. We liked to race herds of antelope and wild horses going wide open across the sagebrush flats. This often led to flat tires or blowouts. We walked home across the valley many times when we could not patch a tire or run out of gas.

A favorite pastime was to set the throttle on the Model A at a good jogging pace then get out and run alongside as it continued on its own. One day it started angling towards a barb wire fence and Richard was trapped and knocked down. It then stopped on his upper leg. He was ok after I got the Model A off him. Just some tread marks to show for it.

One excursion we came close to not coming back. It was a Sunday around December 1949 when we decided to take a ride. I could not go unless we took my brother Garry who was about five, so we relented and took off. The valley is about 10 miles across and about 50 miles long with a lot of area to roam. We decided to go across the valley and see if we could go over Double Springs Pass. We got there and it was snowed shut, so we decided to go south to Howe in the Little Lost River valley. Rather than back track and pick up the road south we cut across on a little used trail and picked up the road over the summit to Howe. There were no tire tracks in the snow coming from Patterson and that nearly caused our demise. We were pushing through over a foot of snow when we passed the ranch and a reservoir near Summit Creek. About a mile further we ran off the road on a slight curve and was stuck solid. No problem, we will walk to the ranch and get them to pull us out with their tractor. We decided it was too far to back track on the road and about another half mile up their lane. The shortest way was on a

diagonal across the reservoir which was about a mile through deep snow. We made it to the ranch house to find they were gone for the winter. We found a way into the house thinking we could get warm, find something to eat, and hole up there. There was only a couple cans of pork and beans in the cupboard. We built a fire in the cook stove and devoured the beans. By then we worried about being found and decided we had to get back to the Model A, get it out of the ditch, and head for home. In hindsight we should have stayed at the ranch.

We got back to the Model A and it was getting dark. There was no way we were going to get out of the ditch. We contemplated going back to the ranch house but decided we would not get there in the dark and blowing snow. We decided to stay with the truck and burn the small wood racks in the back and then one tire at a time if we could get them off. It turned out to be the right decision for the situation we were now in.

It was around 8pm, pitch black, and blowing snow when we saw headlights bouncing around and coming down the road behind us. We were fortunate they got to where we were stuck. It was three guys that had been fishing on the Salmon River and decided to take a short cut back home to Blackfoot. Lucky they got to us as they were driving a Lincoln Zepher sedan that was ill equipped for the conditions. We joined up with them and got the car turned around. They shoveled and pushed for miles. We arrived in Patterson around midnight and there were lots of cars parked at the McPheters bar and café. Our rescuers were fed well with steaks, drinks, a full gas tank, and some travel money to take the long way home back through Challis, Mackay, and Arco.

Our parents were so relieved to see us alive that we were not in trouble. They had started looking for us in late afternoon. They did not follow the road south as there were no tire tracks in the snow after the junction to Double Springs. They searched elsewhere all over the valley and were going to resume the search with airplanes at daybreak the next morning. We surely dodged a bullet that night. The Model A spent the winter buried in snow.

After that incident Richard's dad decided he needed something more reliable, so he got Richard a Ford sedan which was around a 1940 model. In the summer of 1950 we loaded our supplies and went for a two week camping trip up Morse Creek just east of May.

We had a lid off a 50 gallon barrel and sat it on four steel rods pounded into the ground and a fire ring underneath. It made a great stove top for cooking and making toast. We kept our meat in covered aluminum pots in the creek and caught fish. We did not have a tent, so we slept on the ground. We sure missed the Model A panel truck. It had neat little wood racks lining the inside that was a perfect fit for our canned goods, and we could sleep in the back.

One night we were telling bear and cougar stories trying to scare each other. I woke up at dawn and here comes a big adult cougar walking towards us. I started whispering cougar to Richard and he thought I was trying to scare him and ignored me. Finally, his little dog Mickey started growling and barking. The cougar finally turned around and bounded off into the trees. After that we slept in the car, one in the front seat, and one in the back seat, and it was not comfortable. At least the cougar couldn't get us.

Then the car keys came up missing. We searched for two days everywhere we had been. The car could not be hard wired as the ignition was in a cast steel enclosure on the steering wheel. We were stranded. Early one morning we took some canned fruit and water and set out for May about ten miles down the canyon and across the sagebrush flat. Leaving camp we saw a big bear footprint and a small cub footprint and they were fresh. We were pretty nervous getting out of that canyon. The nearest building in May with a phone was the Forest Service office and we called for help. Our Dad's showed up later and used a hacksaw to saw into the ignition and hard wire the Ford. We elected to end our camping trip.

The Adult's Life In Patterson

There was not much to do for the adults in Patterson either. Tony Mecia and his wife Betty played bridge so they gave bridge lessons in the early days. Mom and Dad both got to be very good and played the rest of their lives. I remember them having big bridge parties after Dad replaced Tony as the General Manager in 1950, and we moved into the big house. The players were ranchers, Julia and Sherm Furey, the Kirkpatricks from down the valley, as well as the McCall's, the Miller's, the Collins, and Godloves from the mine, the Scoresby's who owned the store, and the McPheters who owned the bar and cafe. They ate and drank and played a lot of very competitive bridge. In the summer mom would move the party outside on the lawn with floor lamps from the house for lighting.

The Mecia's were native Californians and they introduced us to artichokes. I don't know how they got them to Patterson, but we had them. Jack Bradley lived in Burlingame, California and he would fly up in his plane quite often, so he must have brought them. I know he brought cases of whisky. He flew a big Cessna 195 tail dragger with a radial engine and plush leather seats in the cabin. It was gleaming silver trimmed in maroon and was an impressive airplane. I always liked it when he flew in as we would all go to Gus's cafe in May for steaks.

Gus was known far and wide for big steaks and big hamburgers. He raised and butchered his own beef. He would bring a big slab of beef from his cooler and cut the steaks as you watched.

As a teenager I was a big steak eater, and he had a special large platter just for me. If one steak was not enough he would cook another one for you. One time I was ready to ask for another when mom kicked me under the table. He served fried potatoes, a vegetable, and salad all family style in big bowls. There was always more if you wanted it.

Gus was a character, quite big, and his nose was flattened on his face from a truck accident. The Bradley's loved to come to Patterson, have a good time, and trips to Gus's place.

Gus passed away while I was overseas in the Air Force and his daughter Norma continued to run the place. Norma and her daughter Jackie were characters also. Later in life if you wanted to know what was going on in the Pahsimeroi Valley just stop and talk to Norma and Jackie, which we did quite often.

The Bradley's needed instant communication with their far flung interests. We had a two way radio in the house with the call sign KOE998. It was about 3 feet tall, 2 feet wide, 2 feet deep, and was beside one of the lounge chairs. Mom was the operator if Dad was not there. Dad had a radio in the car with the call sign of KA8710. Bradley Field in Boise and Stibnite also had radios as well as did the airplanes, so everyone could be in touch. It was necessary as the only phone line in and out of Patterson was a party line. It was single wire that ran through the trees over Double Springs to a ranch at Dickey between Mackay and Challis.

They also needed airplane access to the mines to minimize travel time. Stibnite had a backcountry airstrip but when we arrived at Patterson there was no place to land airplanes. They scraped off the sagebrush about 10 miles from Patterson and a wide landing field was scraped out.

Jack Bradley wanted Dad to be a pilot and provided a company plane that was a Luscombe (NC2825K). It was parked with a fence around it at the new landing strip. Smith Stoddard operated the Salmon Air Service and he would fly in to give flying lessons to dad and others.

Smith Stoddard flew P-51's in WWII out of England and had interesting war stories. He was a great guy and one of my heroes. He crashed up Iron creek south of Salmon while returning from the backcountry and was killed in August 1952. I have done some research via the internet and found the serial number of his P-51, and a war time picture of it. It survived the war and was one of several sold to the Swiss Air Force, who flew it until 1955 when they converted to jets. I also found pictures of his P-51 with Swiss Air Force markings. There is no record of it after that although several went to Brazil.

We spent many weekends around a bon fire while Smith gave lessons. He had a Cessna 140 that was about the same type and size airplane as the Luscombe. He would stay in the guest apartment on Saturday night and give lessons again on Sunday. Once instead of the drive across the valley when lessons were over for the day he asked if I would like to fly with him. We would land on the county road going into Patterson from the south. That was a no brainer, and I was hooked. I was about 11 at the time.

Landing on the county road at Patterson was more convenient than driving across the valley, so the narrow gravel road was widened another 50 feet to make it safer. A cross wind strip was added, although it was never used. The road ran uphill towards Patterson Canyon and the mountain, so airplanes always landed uphill and took off downhill. Herb McPheters built a hangar for his Cessna and the mine built one for Dad's Luscombe. A parking area for visiting airplanes was scraped out of the rock and sagebrush in front of the hangars. That became the Patterson airport rather the one in the middle of the valley.

We stopped there a couple of years ago to look around and everything is gone except for a few boards. I was looking around and I found a tin lid from a Copenhagen container out in the sagebrush. It had to be Dad's as he chewed Copenhagen. He called it "snoose". When he passed away in 1993 we placed some in his casket.

After the war ended the 1941 Chevy was pretty much worn out. The first car to hit the market was the Kaiser and Frazer. Dad got a 1947 Frazer that was built pretty much like a tank and was a good car. Then a sleek new 1951 Kaiser came out and dad came home in a 1951 two door black deluxe model. It was the prettiest car I had ever seen. I ended up with exact same car much later in life.

Jack Bradley thought Dad should drive a General Motors car, so the company provided a new green 1952 Oldsmobile Rocket 88 four door that we dubbed "the Green Hornet". It was fast and really looked official with a long whip 2 way radio antenna attached to the rear fender. Dad installed a horn that sounded like a bull bellowing. I would get it for a while when they were in Salmon. I would roar into LaRue's with the bull horn bellowing, and the 2 way radio antenna whipping around in a cloud of dust. Must have made an impression. I don't know what her parents thought.

On October 31, 1951 Dad, was still learning to fly and he and an experienced pilot were flying to Salmon. Close to 12 Mile Creek south of Salmon the engine quit. A small field was spotted, and they put it down and applied the brakes. The field was covered in frost and they were sliding towards a cliff with the Salmon River below. They were lucky that they hit an irrigation

ditch that flipped the plane over and stopped them. They were upside down hanging by their seat belts with pigs staring them in the face. They were not hurt, and Bradley Field recovered the plane, repaired it in Boise, and returned it. Dad's logbook notation is "Patterson part way to Salmon - 20 minutes".

In 1955 Jack Bradley thought a bigger and faster airplane was needed. A low wing North American Navion (N91189) replaced the Luscombe. It had retractable tricycle landing gear, a sliding canopy, upgraded 300 horsepower, and comfortable seating for four adults. It was red with white trim and was a striking airplane. I was away in the Air Force so never got a ride in it. I located it in 2004, and it was in the Los Angeles area.

Bradley Field in Boise played a big part in Idaho aviation, so it was fitting they participated in the annual Idaho Flying Farmers trips down into Mexico. The folks and several others would fly in three or four of Bradley's planes with the Flying Farmers as far down as Acapulco and beyond. They landed for the night one time in Acapulco, and went to a hotel. Then caught a cab to a restaurant where they could watch the cliff divers. When they were ready to go back to the hotel nobody remembered the name of it. They waited a long time hoping the same cab driver would come back. Eventually he did.

Ima Mine Annual Picnics

After the war ended the Bradley's sponsored a picnic for all the residents of Patterson and anyone in the valley who wanted to attend. The mine provided all the eats, soda pop, and beer all day long. The first one was in a large open space in the town site. A large brick and stone oven was constructed large enough to roll in a huge rack loaded with beef roasts. A wood fire was maintained by volunteers and the meat roasted all night.

The annual free bar-b-que in Mackay does the beef roast in the same manner today. I don't know who copied who. The Bradley's gave speeches and the picnic lasted all day. It was a huge success. More space was needed so a larger permanent location was set up. It became an annual event that the whole valley looked forward to. It was a great PR coup for the Bradleys and the Ima Mine.

My Patterson Grade School Years 1945-1950

We had one teacher for four grades in each of the two school houses that had one room. A single oil heater in each building provided the heat. There was no electricity or running water and the

outhouses were out back. The older kids took turns hauling water to the school in a 10 gallon milk can and were paid a small sum by the school district. The hauling was done with a wagon or snow sled depending on the season. I seem to recall the pay being \$2.50 for two weeks hauling water. At least it wasn't up hill both ways, and I liked the pay.

I probably didn't get a good education in Patterson. At least I could read, write, and knew arithmetic. I did not have English class in the 6th grade because the teacher didn't like to teach it.

My teacher the last two years was Fauntella Smith who was single, and it was her first teaching job. She was a good teacher. She went by Teddy to adults instead of her first name. She caught the eye of Jack (Bus) Miller who supervised the mine surface operations, and they were soon married. Teddy, as of 2017, lives in Salmon and we often visit her when we are in Salmon.

I finished the 8th grade and graduated from Patterson grade school in May 1950 in a class of four. Dad asked me what I wanted to do in life. I responded, "be a Mining Engineer". He said, "well let's spend a day in the mine". We spent all day climbing ladders, walking through hard rock tunnels exposed to the noise of air driven hammers and drills, and dripping water and heat. I made the decision that day not to be a Mining Engineer.

My High School Years 1950-1954

High school meant a daily bus ride to Challis, a round trip distance of 110 miles. My friend Richard was a year ahead of me and his parents elected to rent an apartment in Salmon. Richard and his mother lived there during the week. Then the McPheters bought a house and offered to let me stay with them. So, it was Salmon for high school. We would leave Patterson Sunday evening or early Monday morning and return on Friday evenings or Saturday morning. The roundtrip was 134 miles, but only once a week. In the winter it was a wonder we didn't end up in the Salmon River. We had some close calls.

My years at Salmon High were pretty mundane. I was that kid from Patterson that nobody had seen before. All the pretty girls were spoken for and I was timid. The only girl I had physical contact with was when I was a freshman. It was a little blonde girl with pig tails in about the seventh grade. Richard and I were roller skating and she was flying around the rink. She came up behind me, shoved me out of the way, and I hit a cinder block wall. That girl was LaRue, but I didn't know her name until I was a senior and she was a freshman.

My freshman class was about 75 students and I didn't know anybody. Most of them had been going to school together for several years and were clickish. My first class was science and the

teacher was Gilbert (Tommy) Farr. It was his first teaching job and his first class. He was not very tall and a faction of the class (including me) thought they could intimidate him and take over. Were we ever wrong. Mr. Farr took command instantly, put everyone in their place, and invited anyone who thought otherwise to meet him in the back room. There were no takers. Little did we know that he had been a tough combat pilot in WW2 providing close air support for the troops. in Europe. He became my favorite teacher, and is another hero of mine.

I organized our 50-year class reunion and I contacted him in Bellevue, Idaho to invite him to the reunion and speak. He accepted and rode his motorcycle to Salmon at the age of 86. He told me the pay was so poor teaching school that he left after four years and went to the Forest Service in Ketchum and retired there. We happened to run into him while getting onto a ski lift at Sun Valley around 1976. He remembered both of us.

Another favorite teacher my first year was Harry McCarty. He taught Algebra and I did pretty well in it. I was always drawing airplanes, rocket ships, and dreaming of going to the moon so he nicknamed me "Supersonic". He was a smoke jumper in the summer and I thought that was something I would like to do. It was his influence that moved me towards math and statistics in the future.

I also took Latin that first year as I was thinking about being a doctor and our family doctor and friend, Dr Goggins, recommended it. It was nice that the teacher was the best looking young female teacher in the school. I also took English but that was a different story. Everything was confrontational in that class. I also took 4th year English from her and earned an A in class work. However, my report card came out with an F because of deportment. We negotiated a B afterwards. Her name was Mrs. Gwartney and I never liked her. I also took typing along with several other guys because the teacher was an attractive female. In my later years I was thankful that I knew how to type.

It was in the spring of my freshman year when a tragic event occurred. I was with a friend, Jimmy Pike, and we were drinking a coke in a small stand across the street from the Main Theater. We were adjacent to the Roxy Theater (now named the River Theater) as Salmon had two movie houses. We saw a lot of smoke coming out of the Main. Two bodies were removed and one was the step father of my friend Jimmy. He was a volunteer fireman and got trapped in the smoke in the basement and perished. Jimmy and his mother moved to Idaho Falls at the end of the school year. He wrote in my freshman year book "Roses are red, violets are blue, some people stink, but I l like you. Lots of Luck, Jimmy Pike". He later went to BYU then started and starred in a group called "The Letterman", and became famous. His picture in my year book looks nothing like his picture on "The Lettermen" albums. In later years he lost his voice and sold his rights to the group. His voice came back later and he started a new group called "The

Legends". We caught a performance in Idaho Falls and visited with him. I couldn't recognize him with white hair as it was black in high school. I tried to get him to attend our 50-year class reunion but he couldn't make it. Well, he could make it if I would organize a concert and guarantee \$25,000. I checked with the Salmon Arts Council and the Rotary Club to see if it was possible, and it wasn't.

After my freshman year I was nominated often for class officer positions but would lose to one of the locals. With one exception, I was elected class secretary my Junior year. I guess they were beginning to accept that kid from Patterson.

A big event occurred May 17, 1952 my sophomore year when my Sister Beverly was born. Mom and Teddy Miller were due around the same time, so they went to Salmon and stayed in a motel to be near the doctor and the new hospital for when the time came. I was home for the weekend by myself when the word came that Beverly had been born. Richard and I got the only package of pork chops out of the freezer and went to one of our camps for a cookout.

My Work Experience During High School

After my freshman year in high school Jack Bradley gave permission for me to work at the mine during the summer. The locals grumbled because their kids could not work at the mine, but the boss's kid could. Rank has its privileges, and that is the way it was.

I worked until my pay equaled what the income tax deduction was for dependants. It seems like it was around \$600 and took about 6 weeks. The bookkeeper would track it, so I wouldn't exceed that amount. The only trouble was he would let me go over and I would end up working for free for about a week. When I was done the folks could still claim me as a dependant. In those days \$600 gave me enough disposable income on top of my weekly allowance to easily get me through the school year. At the end of the school year I would have enough left to buy new gloves and new boots to go back to work. I had my own bank account and check book, so I was right up town among my peers.

I worked on the surface of the mine and stacked lumber and straightened logs when they came on a truck from Sawmill Canyon. When that was done I usually cut brush. The canyon was very brushy and it was a goal to clear it for a trailer park for the miners. It was a tough hot job. A perk was that it was behind the cook house and the cook would have a big slice of pie and koolaid for me in the afternoon. She would call me in for my treat and my boss, Bus Miller, would drop by to see how things were going. I think it was on purpose. He would sort of frown

and grumble, "sure need to get all this brush out of here". I really didn't care. Fire me and I'll go to Yellowstone Park and work.

Another job was to smooth out the widened part of the county road that was the airfield. I would go up and down all day picking, throwing rocks, and filling holes. I would come back the next day and it seemed like a new batch of rocks had sprung up. It was a never ending job that was a filler when I was caught up with other things. There was no shade, so it was miserable.

I also hauled garbage, and on rainy days worked in the diesel generator shack wiping oil of the diesel engines and the floor. I also loaded lumber on the skip, went up the mountain with it, and unloaded it at the mine portal. While up there I would crimp detonating caps on a length of fuse and poke it into sticks of dynamite for the miners to use on the evening shift. I envisioned blowing myself up even though I was told it was safe as long as no sparks or fire was nearby.

One day I was riding the skip down. It was attached to a cable and went up and down on mine car rails and was attached to a hoist at the top. The rails were on a 6-8 foot high wooden trestle above shale rock. I was coming down and the skip derailed and was going over the side of the trestle. I jumped as far as I could and luckily hit in small shale rock and tumbled downhill to get out of the way. I hiked down and the two carpenters in the framing shed below had been watching and were having a big laugh at my expense. They said I put on a good show. After that I never liked riding that thing and was always ready to jump.

I ate lunch in the cook house with a few night shift single miners and we were fed really well family style. A dollar or maybe two dollars a week would be held out of my paycheck. I was always trying to gain weight for football and I ate enough for two miners. After dinner at home I would go to the cafe in the new recreation hall after it was built and have a milkshake to try to gain weight. I would walk slow so I didn't work it off, but it didn't seem to work.

I hauled in the dirt and planted the lawn for the new recreation hall when it was built about my Junior year. Today it is the Mormon Church for the whole the valley and my lawn is still there.

We worked ten days on and four days off at the mine. It was a long stretch. I was ready to go Salmon after ten days. Harry Blessinger, a young miner, had a new 1954 yellow and white two door hard top Buick the year I graduated from high school. He was single and I would ride to Salmon with him. All he wanted to do was party for four days and did not need a car in Salmon to do it. So, he would give me the Buick and I would go impress LaRue with it. I would pick him up Sunday evening and drive him all hung over to Patterson.

After I was done working at the mine I would go to Uncle Donald and Aunt Mary's (Mom's sister) who managed a ranch on the Oregon Slope between Ontario, Oregon and Weiser, Idaho. There was no pay involved there. I would haul hay bales and cut thistles. It was something my cousin Raymond and I had been doing when we were much younger and sort of became a tradition. The pay was an occasional soft ice cream sunday at the Dairy Queen in Weiser. Then a pack trip and fishing in the high mountain lakes north of McCall before the start of school.

Uncle Donald would load the horses and supplies in his stock truck and us kids would ride with the horses on a platform behind the cab. We had a rodeo or two on those trips. One time I was riding at the rear and the pack horses and everyone was ahead of me. A bear spooked the pack horses and they wheeled and were coming at me with packs flying. My horse wheeled around and took off. I was trying to bail off to the side, but the horse kept running under me. I finally hit the dirt just before I smacked a tree. After that I elected to walk and it was all day in steep country. We saw a cougar and bears spooked the horses nearly every night. It was good fishing though.

My Football Experience at Salmon High School

We did not have organized sports in Patterson Grade School and there was no TV at the time. I had never seen a football game before high school and only weighed 110 pounds so did not go out for football as a Freshman. Also, I had never played basketball or seen a basketball game so that was out also. By my sophomore year I had grown a little and went out for football. Since I was sort of quick Coach Golden Welch made me a right guard. They pulled and lead nearly every play in the single wing offense. My sophomore and junior years Salmon High had an outstanding football team, so I hardly played. Four players and Coach Welch made the Idaho all star team my junior year. Those players graduated so in my senior year I had a big role to fill as a 160 pound right guard on offense and defense. Our specialty was end sweeps and reverses and I had to pull and lead nearly every play. After a few sweeps I would plead for a run over my hole so I could get a rest. In a home game against Rigby our fullback gained four yards in a cloud of dust over my hole, and I told the quarterback to keep calling it. He kept calling the play and we went 80 yards and scored. Coach Welch was yelling and looking mighty perplexed on the sideline and we ignored him. The reason for the cloud of dust is that the field was alkali dirt.

Stan Allen was a cowboy and was the right tackle next to me. Nobody could run through our side of the line when we were on defense. By the fourth quarter I was worn out playing offense and defense and Coach Welch would move me to the other side of the line to left tackle. A couple of the games we had a lead but the opposition would go through my old spot and score to beat us.

I was not used to hearing praise from Coach Welch. In my senior year he said he liked my blocking and tackling and, "way to go knocking down the defensive end on those end runs". I would get the end and then go after the linebacker. After the game at Firth, which we won, I was rewarded with a steak and the rest of the team got hamburgers at the North Highway Café in Idaho Falls. I remember hitting the quarterback when he was passing and the ball landed in the hands of Stan Allen and he ran for a touchdown. Man, we were a team.

We played Challis at Challis and Mom came to the game. Two Patterson boys, Gussie Popejoy and David Arehart were playing for Challis. Arehart was a halfback and fast and we were told he would run all over us, and we were worried. I had a great day tackling Arehart at the line of scrimmage or behind it. Porkey Gonder, our quarterback, was tackled out of bounds in the rocks and gravel and knocked out cold just before half time. He came to and thought he was at a rodeo. He watched the rodeo from the sidelines the rest of the game. In spite of that we won easily. I rode home after the game with Mom and she gave me heck for being a mean bully to my Patterson friends.

I thought I might be contacted to play football at a college, but nothing happened. I guess 160 pound linemen were not anything they wanted.

My Life Boarding in Salmon the Last Two Years

The McPheters sold their house in Salmon in 1952. Richard and I then boarded in a rooming house operated by Clarence (Smitty) and Olga Smith. We had a room upstairs in their house and had our meals with them. Richard was there one year before going to college, and I was there two years. Richard by then had a 1949 Chevrolet and we went to Patterson on weekends.

For my last year they moved me downstairs into their son Bill's room since he was away in the Marine Corp, and their daughter Joanne was away to college. They treated me as family, and I had free reign to do as I wish. I was careful to come in quietly late at night or early morning, but Smitty was aware of everything.

I did not go home a lot of weekends that last year since I did not have car. I went to the movie every time the movie changed two or three times a week. I also spent a lot of time at the Rexall Drug Store soda fountain. A small fountain coke was five cents and a bunch of us would try cokes with all kinds of flavors added. I kind of liked a chocolate coke. On a Saturday several of us would be there all afternoon. I'll bet we drove the owners crazy. The Rexall also had the greatest milk shakes around. I think the price was 25 cents. My favorite was chocolate banana

with chocolate ice cream. If we won our football game we would get one on the house, but we didn't win a lot of games my last year with a team lacking experience.

I finally got brave enough to invite a junior classmate, Sharon Noh, to the Junior Prom. She had been the steady girl friend of LaRue's brother, Val, but he graduated and was gone. The date was ok but did not lead to any other dates as she was never available. At least not for me. At our 50-year reunion she said she had a cowboy friend in Challis that she was after at the time. They got married and settled in Arco. She was a teller in the Wells Fargo Bank in Arco when we had the DK Motel (1995-2002) and we often had a chance to visit. Val came to visit us and wanted to go to the bank and surprise his old girlfriend, Sharon. She had no clue who he was but when told she said, "gee, I used to be able to reach completely around you".

A pastime in the evenings was cruising main street going back and forth with u-turns at each end. My friend, Denny Hawley, would get his dad's old Chevrolet sedan and we would cruise. During my Senior year we would have a little beer to spice up the evening. George Benson's parents owned the Motel Deluxe and the Smokehouse Bar and Café. He had ready access to cash for the evening. I would walk in the front door of the pool hall, drop the money on the bar, pick up a case of beer, and exit through the back door. We would stash the case of beer on the hill behind the cemetery, and get a few bottles when we needed them. One night the case of beer was not there. It was a mystery until 2014 when I was telling the story to former classmate, Vaughn Ziegler, and he started laughing. The property belonged to his father and he had observed us coming and going. The mystery was solved at last over 60 years later.

We did not get into trouble as long as we kept the speed down and were not reckless. The sheriff and city cop left us alone.

We had a big scare. I was in my senior year when we decided to go to the state basketball tournament in Pocatello. We needed sleeping bags, so we could bunk up with friends going to college at Idaho State. A classmate said he had a few that we could borrow. We asked why he had so many nice sleeping bags. He sort of rolled his eyes at us and shrugged his shoulders. We loaded up Larry Fisher's Pontiac and took off.

We were in Pocatello about two days when Frank Sorenson's parents showed up and told us there was a problem with the sleeping bags we borrowed. They had been stolen from the BLM warehouse. Did we know anything about it? We didn't, but we had our suspicions. Would that implicate us? The sheriff thought he knew who did it, but was not saying who. We were mighty scared and headed back to Salmon. We thought the sheriff would be waiting for us, so we sneaked into Salmon on the back road from Lemhi. We laid low for a day then figured we better

go see the sheriff and turn ourselves in. We were absolved but our friend who loaned us the sleeping bags was in the hot seat.

I went home the next weekend and did not tell my folks about it. We were sitting around the living room and low and behold the sheriff knocked on the door. I thought I was going to be arrested and about had a heart attack. He was there for another matter and never said a word about the sleeping bag heist. I decided I better be up front with my parents.

The guy that stole the sleeping bags got off lightly with probation. He joined the Navy later and while in Florida he and a buddy robbed a bank. They got away cleanly and returned to their motel. Someone walking by their open window heard them dividing up the money and called the cops. He did time on that one. No one saw him until he came to our 50 year class reunion. We didn't discuss those incidents. I write about this now since he passed away shortly after our reunion.

My Senior Prom and the Blond Freshman Girl

Shortly after the Pocatello trip the Senior Prom was coming up. Since I was a Senior I thought I should attend, but there were no girls my age available. I had been noticing a blonde freshman girl walking through town and up the hill to where she lived, which was about a mile. I knew who she was and wanted to get closely acquainted but didn't have a car to offer her a ride. One day Olga was quizzing me about going to the prom and we discussed various options for dates. I mentioned the blonde girl and she instantly knew it was LaRue Gibbs and said, "go call her". I wasn't very brave and kept putting it off. One day Olga said, "you know a girl should have two weeks to get ready, so you better call her today". I summoned the courage and did. To my surprise she knew who I was and accepted. Even sounded kind of excited about it.

Before the prom I was riding around with Larry Fisher the evening of April 14, 1954. He had to go by the high school and pick up his girlfriend, Renee, after a school function. Renee and LaRue came out together and LaRue climbed into the car also. and joined me in the back seat. We got acquainted and it was an impromptu sort of double date. We double dated a few times before the prom as we seemed to click. Olga was pleased and Smitty razzed me about dating a freshman girl.

My folks thought I should have a car to drive to the prom and they came to Salmon for the night. I think their real motive was to see and meet my date and pass judgment. I got to pick up LaRue in the Oldsmobile "Green Hornet" and we had a great evening. Mom and Dad gave their approval. We seemed to be on our way as girlfriend and boyfriend.

Graduation came, and I graduated in a gown and baby blue suit that my parents bought for me at McPhersons. They could not attend graduation as Jack Bradley had a big trip planned for them to Hawaii. It was a pretty big deal and I felt they should go.

After graduation we all went to the Salmon Hot Springs for a while and LaRue came with me. Afterwards an all night party was planned at Jim Schafer's house. LaRue could not be out all night, so I took her home early. I drank coke graduation night as LaRue would not allow anything stronger. I didn't seem to mind the sacrifice.

I worked at the mine that summer until I reached the cutoff point for income tax deductions. I was going to the University of Idaho in the fall so the folks bought a used 1953 Chevrolet 210 four door sedan for me. It was white with a red top and stood out. Every weekend I would be in Salmon to see LaRue and would stay with Smitty and Olga like I was part of the family.

My Army National Guard Experience

I joined the Army National Guard the beginning of my senior year. The unit had just been formed and seventeen year olds could sign up. The unit was Company B, 882nd Aviation Engineer Battalion and built airfields, roads, and such. Our unit was mainly Korean War veterans and high school seniors.

I was made the demolition guy since I had handled dynamite and caps at the mine. We had war surplus army uniforms and combat boots that we had to spit polish and lots of weapons. We spent many hours cleaning cosmoline out of M-1's, carbines, and sub machine guns that had been stored since the Koren War. I loved it all and got a quick promotion to PFC then Corporal in one year.

I went to Guard Camp the summer of 1954 for two weeks after I graduated. During the day we trained out on the desert towards Mountain Home. I was given a jeep and a trailer loaded with dynamite, caps, fuses, and small barrels of TNT known as cratering charges, and told to head to point x in the desert. A Sgt met me out there and we blew things up, We nearly blew up the field mess one day. The plan was to dig a hole and put a cratering charge in it and set it off to see what it would do. The only problem was the field mess arrived and set up nearby for lunch. The officers arrived first and filled up their mess kits and scattered about to eat. The Sgt said not to worry and told me to set it off. Dirt and rocks flew really high and the blast was deafening. The officers were diving under trucks and equipment to get out of harms way. I don't know how we got away with it, but nothing was said. Maybe they thought it was a war simulation thing. After thinking about it, that is probably what the reason was, but I wasn't clued in. Can

you imagine a 17 year old (18 in a month) with all of that dangerous stuff? Later I went around the desert and set off dynamite just to get rid of it. The rest of the guys drove road graders, bulldozers, and dump trucks.

My University of Idaho Experience

I took off for Moscow that fall in my 1953 Chevrolet. It had been arranged by Jack Bradley that I would stay at the Sigma Chi fraternity when I arrived as a guest of Governor Smylie's son. That place was too snooty for me. I then moved to Pine Hall a relic of a dormitory that was more of an army barracks.

I was intrigued by Naval ROTC as it was a four year program and it was possible to get paid the last two years if you qualified. I took the long test, passed, was accepted, and selected the Marine Corp if I made it all the way through. It was a tough program that required a lot of study and work. I also enrolled in 19 hours of pre-engineering courses, which was a heavy load for the first year. A few Salmon guys I knew were in the TKE fraternity. I hung out with them and all we did was party. I had not had to study in high school and didn't realize I would have to buckle down in college. After two or three weeks things were not looking good. I realized I was not ready for college and would probably flunk out. The Korean GI Bill was ending in January 1955, and I decided I should go into the military, qualify for the GI Bill, and then go to college. I went to the Dean of Engineering and he looked things over, concurred, and said that if I left right then I could get out without a bad record. I Would also get a full refund of my tuition. Sounded like good advice. I withdrew and departed the next day. A fork in the road.

I arrived in Salmon about 5pm and parked in front of the Rexall Drug Store to get a milk shake and think things over. In a few minutes I was face to face with an excited LaRue demanding what I was doing in Salmon. She was walking to work at the Roxy theater and was passing the drug store when she spotted my red and white Chevy. Was she ever surprised and upset also! I decided not to go on to Patterson that night and picked her up after work. After all she needed a ride home about a mile up the hill. I didn't go home the next day either as the Smiths welcomed me back and I had a place to stay. My folks heard that I was in town and came to Salmon to see what was going on. They were disappointed but not too upset. The Dean had contacted them.

I disappointed a lot of people, but my plan was to make up for it later. It inspired, drove me, and gave me the tenacity to get a degree later in life, which I did.

My Beginning Military Life

The next thing was to drop into the National Guard Office. They had not processed my discharge and I had some options. I requested to be put on active duty for two years in Army Airborne. They said it would take a couple of months to process everything.

I was in town later killing time until I received my orders. Porkey Gonder and I were sitting in my car down on the island watching the river go by, since LaRue was in school. He said he wanted to join the Air Force and since he didn't have a car could I drive him to Pocatello to enlist. A little excursion sounded great to me and we took off.

I went into the recruiter's office with Porkey to wait while he was being processed. After a while the recruiter asked me if I would be interested also. I told him what I had going on and it didn't back him off at all. He asked about my interests and if I would like to be a pilot someday. I bit and said "sure", and he said he had an aptitude test. I took the test and sure enough passed and according to him with "extremely high scores". All I had to do was enlist and apply for the Air Cadets. I swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. I told him I had a problem in that I was waiting on orders for active duty in the Army. No problem because you do not have the orders yet. You will also enter basic training with your two stripe Army National Guard Corporal rank. So, I enlisted in the Air Force for four years along with Porkey! Then I found out that I could not apply for the Air Cadets until I was eighteen and a half years old which was five months away. What a snow job that recruiter did.

We walked out of there with orders to report to Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City in a week. We were stupid enough to be excited and happy about it. Recruiting had been good and we would be going with a large group from southeast Idaho called the "Flying Spud Flight" to Camp Parks, also known as Parks Air Force Base (with no airport or airplanes) near Pleasanton, California.

We got back to Salmon and I went to see the National Guard people. They were upset about it but there was nothing they could do as active Air Force orders overrides yet to arrive Army orders.

While in Salmon I talked to Frank Sorenson who wanted to be a pilot also and tried to get him to sign up and go with us. He said he would apply for the Air Cadets and wait and see if he got selected rather than enlist first. He was accepted about a year later and became a jet fighter pilot and retired from the Air Force. He was in no hurry and turned out to be the smart one.

I don't think mom and dad knew what to say when I told them. What was done was done. They put me on the Salmon River Stage at Ellis one morning and I met up with Porkey, who had

boarded earlier in Salmon. We had our manila folders in hand containing orders, which instantly identified us as new recruits. We stopped at Challis, Mackay, Arco, Blackfoot, and got off at the end of the line in Pocatello. After a layover we caught a Greyhound Bus and arrived in Salt Lake in the middle of the night, and got a cheap hotel room across the street.

The next morning we reported in at Fort Douglas and started through the process of physicals and testing. It was fairly civil and we spent two or three days living in an army barracks without any hassle. Then we took the oath and were sworn into the Air Force on October 13, 1954 for four years. Things changed instantly, and the yelling and orders began.

We were flown to Oakland and were met with fanfare and a photographer since we were the "Flying Spud Flight" complete with a banner. We then boarded a bus to Camp Parks and were met by our Drill Instructor (DI). He was not impressed and called us, "The Mashed Potato (bad words)" and ridiculed us nonstop. We wanted to get rid of the banner by then. He was a New Yorker and totally obnoxious.

In a week we were shaped up and marching together really sharp. He even threw in some razzle dazzle routines that we enjoyed doing. I think he was proud of the way we marched together and would call for the razzle dazzle when others were watching enviously.

We had to pay twenty five cents for a buzz cut (I already had a short crew cut but still got a buzz cut). Training was nonstop close order drill, physical training, guard duty, bivouac, night exercise's, escape and evasion, gas chamber, rifle range, class work, and testing.

We took batteries of aptitude tests and one of them involved morse code. They gave us the dit and dah patterns of several characters and when we heard one we were to write down the character. I was not sure of anything, totally confused, and figured I blew that test. The results came back and radio operator was one of my highest scores. My test scores were good, and I could have my choice for advanced training. I requested Airborne Radio Operator, figuring that I would be on a flight crew, fly around the world, and get extra flight pay. For a change I got what I asked for. (I thought)

A strange thing about the Air Force if you were walking and had to turn a corner it had to be precisely square. I never understood that one. We had two guys that couldn't take the rigid ways of basic training and went AWOL one night and that caused us all some grief. I couldn't figure that one either as it was not our fault.

Basic Training was 12 weeks and we had a completion date the week after Christmas. We would be advanced two weeks furlough and travel time before we reported for advanced training. We thought they would let us out early to get home for Christmas but that didn't happen. We finally graduated and most of us were promoted from Airman Basic to Airmen Third Class which was one stripe. The Air Force did not honor my National Guard Rank of Corporal as the recruiter promised. I tried to get it later, to no avail.

LaRue sent a letter after I was at Camp Parks saying they were moving to Laramie, Wyoming so she would not be around when I got home. A big disappointment. That started me planning how I was going to see her. I was to report to Keesler AFB, Biloxi, Mississippi in mid January for Airborne Radio School and I would drive my car. My plan was to go home and spend some time then travel through Laramie on my way to Biloxi. Two friends that lived in Salt Lake were going to Biloxi also and said they would catch a train to Laramie and ride to Biloxi with me.

Don Schell from Blackfoot had a pilot friend that would fly down and bring him home. Don was also the smart one. He was accepted into the Air Cadets before entering the Air Force and was just taking basic training with us. His friend would fly into Hayward and since it was a big plane two or three more could come along. So I jumped on it as well as Chuck Powell from Idaho Falls. We got to the airport that morning and were wowed that the airplane was a red Stagger Wing Beechcraft with a huge radial engine, upper and lower wings, and a huge comfortable leather interior. I was impressed. The airplane is a classic today. The weather was worsening, and the pilot said we would land and wait on the weather in Wells for a while. A limo came out and took us to the casino. I think the pilot wanted to gamble and the weather was reason enough.

We then flew low hugging the highway to Idaho Falls where he dropped the two of us off. I had written the folks that I would fly into Idaho Falls but did not tell them how or the schedule but to meet me at the airport. They were not there so I went home with Chuck Powell. I finally found the folks later at the airfield. They were looking for me on a commercial flight and not a private plane. We stayed for the night in the Bonneville Hotel and Dad and I went to a professional wrestling match. I was a big hit in my uniform in the Bonneville Hotel coffee shop.

While in basic I had ordered headers and dual exhausts with glass pack mufflers to jazz up my mundane Chevy, and the parts were there when we got home. The folks thought it was frivolous. I got it installed in Salmon . The sound was loud and terrific with a real rumble.

I hung around home as long as I could. It was boring as everyone I knew was gone or off to school somewhere. I didn't know how long it would take to drive to Biloxi and I wanted to spend at least two days in Laramie. I was anxious to hit the road.

My Trip to Biloxi, Mississippi

I departed Patterson on a dismal winter day. Roads were one lane each way as there were no freeways in those days. I had never driven more than across Idaho, but I was full of confidence. I did fine, but it was long way across Wyoming in a snow storm.

I drove all the way to Laramie arriving in the early morning and got a room in a downtown hotel. Then I was up early to see LaRue before she went to school. We had a great time for two days and my buddies arrived as expected on the train. Then it was time to say goodbye to LaRue after school and head for Biloxi.

We departed Laramie in the late afternoon for Denver then continued south through the night across the Oklahoma panhandle to Amarillo, Texas where we got a motel room for the night. Leaving Amarillo a couple of guys in a 55 Chevy started following us then pulled up along side. We didn't know what was going on. They liked the sound of my 53 Chevy, wanted to know what was in it, and would we like to race! No thanks. I knew a 6 cylinder against a V8 would not be a race that you could win. It was kind of like a scene you see in the 50's movies.

My uncle Dallas was still in the Air Force and stationed in Dallas, Texas. I had arranged to stop and see him. That was our next stop for a night. From Dallas we drove straight through to New Orleans. Driving along the swamps and bays was a strange experience for us mountain boys. We were two days ahead of schedule, so decided to get a motel room and enjoy New Orleans, which we did. I remember going into a nice seafood restaurant and the restroom had ice cubes in the urinals. Now that was something to talk about! I even wrote home about it.

My Time at Keesler AFB

It was time to report for duty at Keesler AFB and back to military life. We drove up to the gate and I saw a big frown on the Air Policeman's face. He was yelling, "Get that loud (bad words) out of here and park it in that lot over there". So, the Chevy stayed in the lot and we continued on to report in. We would be restricted to the base for the first six weeks of training. Plus my class would not start for two weeks and I would have KP duty for a week of that. That meant

rising at 4am, getting back to the barracks about 8pm, and dog tired. Life in the Air Force was miserable again.

Then the bad news. The Air Force did not need Airborne Radio Operators and I was going to be an Intercept Radio Operator. Another disappointment in my Air Force career. They tried to smooth it over in that it is an elite group with a top secret mission in a special unnamed unit and your assignment will be overseas. You will also be investigated by the FBI to ensure you are of the utmost highest character. Not much you can do, but do as you are ordered. Anyway, I would soon be applying for the Air Cadets and be out of there. Then I found that I had to complete the full six months of training before I could apply. Another bump in the road.

I survived the week of KP. I was ready to start six months of Morse code and radio operator training, and moved into my training squadron barracks. There were four WW2 two story wooden barracks with two on each side of a big open square of sand. The sand was to be swept smooth at all times. It was the place where we formed for morning roll call, marching to the mess hall, and to school so it was messed up regularly.

The mosquitoes and cock roaches were terrible. We had to have netting draped over our bunks to keep from getting eaten alive. It was also hot, humid, and rained a lot. Saturday mornings we had to march in a parade on the flight line. Several guys would keel over while standing at attention. I had a difficult tooth extraction one Saturday morning and thought I would be exempt from the parade. I had to march anyway.

Training began with one of the classes being typing lessons. I was already proficient from high school and after a test was exempted. I got to clean halls and latrines while the others learned to type.

Hour after hour was spent learning Morse code by typing what you heard over the headsets. We had to pass certain speed levels before moving up to a higher speed. The target was 20 groups per minute, with a group being 5 characters, in order to qualify for graduation. I think I made it to 22 but do not remember for sure.

Having the car off base was inconvenient. It was time to figure out a way to get it cleared. Someone came up with stuff metal chore girls, that you use to clean cooking pans, up the exhaust pipes. So, we stuffed a bunch in both pipes with a broom stick and took it for inspection. The Air Policeman said, "rev it up" which I did lightly, and it sounded great. Then he said, "rev it up higher" which I did, and all was well. The next time he said, "to the floor" and chore girls came flying out like cannon balls. Good thing he was out of the way. After

getting reamed for a while he said, "and scrape those Idaho Vandal stickers off your windows". We retreated and I bought two regular mufflers, scraped off the decals, and got the car on base.

A hazard when you were an airmen driving around was the crooked cops and sheriffs pulling you over for some alleged infraction. I was coming back from Pascagoula one evening and was pulled over by a pink Ford coupe. The guy was in a cop uniform and wanted a large sum of money on the spot or I was in a heap of trouble. I was lucky I had it on me. Another time we were cruising around Gulfport in the late evening when I still had the loud glass packs on the car. I got pulled over and told that I "disturbed the judge". I didn't have the money and was hauled in which required notifying the Air Police. They arrived and I got out of it, but do not remember exactly why. I think the Air Police were on to what was going on and just took over and got me out of there. The cop told me not to come back to Gulfport.

After six weeks we were issued a permanent weekend pass and life was better. Now I can go places. Downtown Biloxi was a rip off area with dive bars and shops for taking your money. We liked to go to Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Pass Christian, Pascagoula, and New Orleans. Pass Christian was a favorite since there was an all girls school located there. However, it didn't do us any good.

We were at the Mardi Gras in New Orleans and got banned for bad behavior from Pat O'Briens, a famous place that is still there.

The South was segregated and we had to learn how to deal with it. One time in Biloxi I saw a black classmate walking towards me. Without speaking he got off the sidewalk and kept going.

When we graduated he needed a ride to Mobile, Alabama to catch a plane. I said I would take him. I put him in the back seat between two big white airmen. He was a little guy and he scrunched down with a blanket over him. We held our breath going out the gate, through downtown Biloxi, and got him to Mobile. Job well done and in the deep south a lot of risk.

Since I was slated for overseas assignment that required a top secret clearance I had to fill out forms disclosing everything about my past for investigation by the FBI. I was also given three choices for where I wanted to go, and requested #1 Japan, #2 Germany, and #3 England. When I got my orders it was for #3 England and specifically RAF Chicksands. So much for getting what you want in the Air Force.

I had some good news in a letter from LaRue. They were moving back to Salmon after school was out. She would be in Salmon when I get home on furlough.

I made it through training, graduated in mid July, and was granted a 30 day leave before going to England. At that time I found that I would be in the US Air Force Security Service (USAFSS), which nobody knew about. We would joke later that we don't exist.

The first thing I did after graduating was beat it to the orderly room to apply for the Air Cadets as I was out of tech school and almost nineteen. The response was, "You are on overseas orders, therefore you cannot apply until you get to your posting. Also, a regulation requires you to complete half of your overseas tour before you can apply." Wow, my tour is three years. It would be eighteen months before I could apply. I have been beaten by the Air Force again.

Two buddies were riding to Salt Lake with me. We departed in the afternoon and drove straight through. We only stopped for gas and to change drivers. After about two and half days we arrived in Salt Lake in the early morning. I dropped them off and headed north to Idaho. There were two ways to Patterson. It was through Arco, Mackay, and Challis on highway 93 or through Idaho Falls, Leadore, and Salmon on highway 28. I chose the later, for good reason. I could stop and see LaRue. I stayed a couple of days with the Smiths before I went on to Patterson. The folks had already heard that I was in Salmon. The grapevine worked good.

It was a great 30 days and I spent time in Salmon seeing LaRue. I turned 19 and brought her to Patterson for my birthday party. We bought matching shirts that were checkered pink and white and wore them often. Mom went to Cambridge to visit her Mother, and later Dad was going to fly the plane to Cambridge. I wanted to see my grandparents and Uncle Donald and Aunt Mary, so LaRue and I went in my car. It annoyed me that she would sleep in the backseat while I drove.

While we were gone Larue's sister and brother-in-law, Loa and Max, arrived in Salmon on vacation. They couldn't believe that she was allowed to go to Cambridge with me. LaRue was sixteen (seventeen in November) so her parents must have trusted us. However, if we sat outside in the car too long after I brought her home the porch light would start flashing on and off.

My Uncle Dallas and family was in Cambridge while we were there. He was being transferred to Air Force Headquarters outside of London and was home on leave. He was pleased to hear I was going to England also, and said he could get me reassigned and a much better job at headquarters with him. He took a copy of my orders so he could get them changed. I got a letter sometime later and he said, "I don't know who you work for, but I work for the Strategic Air Command that has number 1 priority on everything, and I cannot get your orders changed".

We got back to Salmon and the time came to say goodbye. Three years is a long time and LaRue still had two years of high school remaining. We made no commitment to each other except to write often. I wondered if she would still be around when I returned. It was a long drive back to Patterson that night. I just hoped that I would be back in the United States in eighteen months as an Air Cadet, but that didn't happen. I was overseas even more than three years.

end

chapter 2b