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Chapter 5b -My Return to Civilian Life and LaRue (1959)

I was discharged December 15, 1958 after four years, three months, and three days in the Air Force. I would be in the inactive Air Force Reserve until I accumulate eight years of obligation as required by law.

My parents were living in Guatemala and I was in no hurry to go there after just returning to the United States after three and a half years overseas.

I felt totally lost but free to do as I pleased. I decided to fly to Salt Lake City and look up my old Air Force buddy in Scotland, Ed Smith. Then after a few days make my way to Salmon.

I got an airline ticket from Charleston, South Carolina to Salt Lake for \$152.74 and still have the carbon copy receipt. That was a lot of money in those days.

However, I was reimbursed the amount the train ticket would have cost. I flew to Midway Field in Chicago on National and changed to a United flight and arrived in Salt Lake in the early evening. I didn't have Ed's phone number or address so went to a phone book. There were a couple pages of Smiths. I had a vague memory that his phone number started with an IN prefix, but then most of them did. I was on about my eighth call when the lady who answered said she was Ed's mother

and he was out for the evening. She would come and get me. I still have the list of names that I called and checked off. Ed was surprised to see me when he got home.

We visited Ed's hangouts in the evenings, and I shopped for a car. I found a used gray and white 1956 four door Ford Fairlane that looked to be in good shape and low miles. It was one of the first cars to have seat belts. It was around \$1,200. I peeled off my per diem checks from Turkey and paid cash for it. The salesman was impressed.

The car dealer was in South Salt Lake and I had to take the car to the State Court house on the hill in North Salt Lake to get a temporary sticker on it. I had not driven in over three years. I was nervous about driving again, and my Idaho drivers license had expired. The salesman rode with me to help me get there.

In those days when you pulled into a service station an attendant pumped your gas, checked your oil, and washed your windshield. I liked the idea of having seat belts in the car and used them. However, before I pulled into a service station I would unhook my seatbelt and tuck it away. I didn't want them to think I was a wimp!

After a few days in Salt Lake I was ready to take off for Salmon. I headed north around December 20. First stop was where I boarded in high school to see Olga and Clarence (Smitty) Smith. They took me right in.

I got my car registered with Idaho plates (2L1311) and a new drivers license. I took my car to the Ford garage to get it serviced and was told the tie rods were shot. I had them replaced and wondered how they could be that worn with the low mileage showing in the dash. It looked in good shape otherwise. Later, however, I began to wonder if the mileage had turned over after 100,000 miles. Much later I concluded this was probably the case. We drove it until 1962 and traded for a 1960 Ford Falcon station wagon in California.

About a month before I was to depart Samsun I mailed a metal trunk of my stuff to the May Post Office. I drove to May and it was there. I took it to the house in Patterson. The folks had locked the door and left with everything in it. I sorted through my stuff and took what I wanted, which was civilian clothes, my new slide projector and 35mm slides.

There were only two or three guys around Salmon that I knew and a night or two going around with them was enough. I ran into Pat Skinner, a long time friend and classmate of LaRue. We visited for a while, and she asked me if I was going to look up LaRue. I told her no even though I knew I was going to. I wanted to leave all options open.

That evening Olga said to me, "LaRue is in California and you should go right in there and call her". I did and we finally connected. I had no idea what her commitments were but thought it would be fun to see her again. I told her I would be going to Guatemala to

see my folks and I might drive down and fly from San Francisco. If I did I could pass through Walnut Creek and see her. I also had in the back of my mind that I would need a place to leave my car.

After three nights in Salmon I was ready to hit the road and see my grandparents in Cambridge, and Aunt Mary and Uncle Donald on the Oregon Slope.

I arrived in Cambridge and knocked on the door of Grandma and Grandpa Hathhorn. There was no recognition by Grandpa when he answered the door. I told him I was an encyclopedia salesman and that got him flustered. Grandpa let me in then I told them who I was. They had no idea of my whereabouts and were surprised. I spent the night with them and visited Grandma Edmunson and then went to Uncle Donald and Aunt Mary's on Christmas Eve.

My Reconnection with LaRue

I was restless Christmas day at Uncle Donald and Aunt Mary's. I decided to leave in the afternoon and drive part way to California. My plan was to drive to Winnemucca and stay for the night.

I got to Winnemucca and had a steak and decided to keep going. Next it was Reno and over the mountain to Sacramento about 1am. No use stopping as I was not tired. Too excited, I guess. I proceeded on to Walnut Creek. I arrived about 4am and got a motel room. It

turned out to be about four blocks from where LaRue worked.

I had no idea how seeing LaRue would go and had no expectations. It could be hello, how are you, a short visit, and continue on my way. She could have other obligations.

I hoped at least I could leave my car for a while when I went to Guatemala. My backup plan in case things didn't work out was to visit Uncle Jim and family. He was a professor at the University of Nevada in Reno and they lived in Sparks, Nevada.

I was up early and called the house. Loa answered and said LaRue had gone to work at the bank. I found the bank easily as it was nearby. I turned a corner too fast and my new portable transistor radio flew off the passenger seat and cracked the handle, which upset me. I told myself to slow down.

I walked into the bank and saw LaRue walking behind the teller cages. She was a more mature version of the girl I remembered. She saw me and ran out into the lobby causing everyone in the bank to take notice. We could not talk long. I came back, picked her up, and we went to Loa and Max's for lunch.

Loa invited me to stay with them and said I could have their son David's bed. I was all set for what I figured to be a couple of days before I moved on.

Max was home from the firehouse that night and we all gathered in the living room. It was a strange feeling being reunited with LaRue.

Max and Loa were having a martini and asked if I would like one. Knowing LaRue was against alcohol I declined. I had been wondering how I would handle this issue. Then she said she would have a drink! I was surprised and backtracked in a hurry.

We were rather reserved that evening. She sat on the couch across the room and we all sat around and visited. I wondered if this was how it was going to be. I might not be here long.

I brought in my slide projector and slides and gave them a slideshow on Scotland and Turkey. All in all my reception. was good, but LaRue and I were somewhat distant.

Relations warmed up quickly in the next couple of days. We were happy to be together again after three and a half years.

I had planned to stay in Walnut Creek two or three days, but I was easily convinced to stay over New Years.

Max and Loa were going to a New Years Eve party and said we could have a party at their place. Larue's sister Jane and brother-in-law Jerry and another couple were invited. I went to the liquor store and stocked up with

four bottles of good booze. Max was impressed with my selection and had to sample them all. We had a nice quiet New Years Eve party.

New Years Day I suggested we go to Reno. My thoughts were to visit my uncle Jim and family, but left that out. LaRue said, "to get married or what?". It totally surprised me hearing "married". We had talked before I went overseas about getting married someday, but that was ancient history. We had gone our separate ways as she had 2 more years of high school. Now we are back where we were in our relationship.

We did not go to Reno. We went to see Uncle Fred and family in Cloverdale about a 100 miles north.

Monday morning I went to Samuels, a well known jewelry store in Oakland. I picked out a ring, and paid cash for it.

I had Larue's niece, Maxine, get a ring of LaRue's out of her jewelry box so I could get the ring at Samuels sized properly.

I showed the ring to Max and Loa and they were impressed. Very impressed that I bought it at Samuels

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It all worked out and I presented the ring Friday night after she got off work. She accepted! I had stopped to say hello and hopefully leave my car and we were engaged!

Our plan was that I would go to Guatemala, come back, and we would figure out the next move.

I didn't have a passport but could go on a tourist card for a limited time. I had no idea how long I would stay. I thought it might be a couple of months working with my Dad at the small mine on the remote mountain surrounded by jungle.

My Trip to Guatemala

Max, Loa, and LaRue drove me to the San Francisco airport. I boarded the plane and thought about getting off. I could see LaRue looking out of the window, and really didn't want to leave.

I departed San Francisco January 6, 1959 at 5pm on Pan American #515 to Los Angeles, then to Guatemala City. The one-way ticket was \$143.56 and required a Guatemala tourist card for \$2.

I had sent a telegram saying that I would arrive at 6am. Mom, Garry, and Bev met me at the airport. Dad was out in the jungle working. Mom sensed that I had something to tell her and was not surprised when I

gave her the news. She said, "Why didn't you bring her with you?" It had not occurred to me. She said she expected LaRue to get off the plane with me. They used to run into each other in Salmon while I was gone, and mom always liked her.

Brother Garry was in high school and sister Beverly was about the first grade. The folks had a decent two story house with a big wall around it with a gate and had a maid. Guatemala was getting two or three big earthquakes a day and it was rather unsettling. They shook the house really good. There was no doubt that it was an earthquake. Guatemala was too much like Turkey and I decided I would not stay as long as I originally thought.

Dad spent all week out on a big mountain in the jungle where he had established a small lead producing mine. He found this location after covering Guatemala on horseback and on foot. We decided to go visit him and got on an old DC-3 and flew to Huehue Tenango and landed on a grass field. Dad met us and we went to the hotel and got rooms. That evening we were sitting in the courtyard and dad asked if I would like a beer. I had never drank in front of them so I declined. Garry said he would have one and I changed my mind in a hurry.

I had written earlier to LaRue telling her I was going to Huehue Tenango and that it was sure an odd name. I wrote, "maybe we should name our first child, Huehue

Tenango, ha, ha." Funny attempt at humor at the time, I guess.

The mine was about ten miles from town through the jungle. Then it was a steep road up the side of a mountain that dad had someone make with a D8 Cat. He had a Jeep station wagon for going back and forth and hauling supplies. Where the new road started up the mountain we were going up through a big wash and a boa constrictor was hanging across a tree in front of us.

The mine was located in pine trees at a high elevation. It consisted of dad's adobe shack, a diesel for electricity, and a kiln for melting lead out of the rock brought out of the mine. The mine itself was a small hole that went in and snaked around following the veins containing lead. I could not stand up in the tunnels as the Indian miners were small and not over 5ft tall. It worked for them but not for me. It was really claustrophobic. After the lead was melted from the rock it was poured into wooden molds resulting in heavy lead bricks that dad had to haul out. You had to be dedicated to live there and operate a primitive mine like that.

We decided to take a jaunt in the Jeep up the Transamerica highway to Mexico to buy items that were very expensive in Guatemala. Carlos, who is Guatemalan and dad's interpreter and assistant, drove the Jeep. The highway was a dirt road and a spring broke on the Jeep, but we were able to keep going. I

kept seeing bodies laying beside the road and Carlos said they were Indians that had consumed too much tequila and passed out.

We got soap and a few items, had a late lunch, and headed back to the border. We were worried about the border crossing as Guatemala and Mexico were in a border war with each other. We got to the gates and the two sides were having a party together and paid no attention to us.

We flew back to Guatemala City on the DC-3 that was really loaded. I remember people standing in the back and crates of stuff in the aisle. I also noticed that the fence posts were cut off low at the end of the grass runway so the plane could clear the fence.

I went to Guatemala thinking that I would stay two or three months. LaRue and I were exchanging letters almost every day, and we were not happy being apart. We were anxious to get on with a life together. A lot of decisions had to be made about getting married, getting a job, and where to go to college. She was wanting to know what we were going to do and when were we going to do it. At this point I had no idea. She wrote that she was acquiring dishes and stuff for married life. She even asked what kind of pillow I like. I wrote back, "it doesn't matter as I am not used to having a pillow." I never had a pillow in Turkey.

Before I left for Guatemala I briefed LaRue on the quirks of the 56 Ford as she would be driving it. It was

hard to start on cold mornings, so you had to pump the gas. The gas gauge was faulty. It would be empty when it shows 1/4 tank. It leaks engine oil, so check the oil level. She wrote that rain was leaking in the back window getting the back seat wet. Max was going to help her put some clear caulk around it. She had also found front floor mats for \$5 as she was concerned about the rainy weather and the carpeting.

After two weeks I was ready to get back to the United States and LaRue. My return ticket was on Pan American for \$159.87. I paid an additional \$16.65 excess weight charge. I still have the receipts. It was Pan American flight #516 departing at 6:15pm on January 22, 1959.

We had to take the back streets to the airport as a revolution was underway to overthrow the government. Tanks were rolling on the main avenues and sealing them off. I was glad to be leaving.

My Return to the United States from Guatemala

I arrived in San Francisco at 4:30am Friday, January 23, 1959. I had sent a letter when I would be arriving and was hoping LaRue would be there to meet me. I waited for a while and decided she wasn't coming as she might not have received the letter yet. I caught an airport bus from the airport to the bus terminal in San Francisco and got a ticket on Greyhound to Walnut Creek. I arrived around 8am and got a taxi to Max and Loa's. I saw LaRue briefly before she went to work.

Dad had told me to call his old boss, Tony Mecia. He was now the President Of Utah Construction based in San Francisco. Tony had told dad that if I needed a job when I got out of the Air Force that he would have one for me. I called Tony. He was in a board meeting but came out of it to talk to me. Utah Construction had a project in Rock Springs, Wyoming. All I had to do is show up and I would be put to work. I had been spending a lot of money and figured this was the best thing to do until I could start college in the fall.

Our Plan for the Future

We planned to get married as soon as we could work it out. Since her folks were in Salmon we felt we should get married there. We decided that LaRue would quit her job and we would move her back to Salmon. I would go on to the job in Rock Springs. LaRue and her Mother would get the wedding planned and I would return from Rock Springs. That was the plan.

LaRue gave notice and we had two weeks to kill. We went to see the newly released movie "South Pacific" in San Francisco and did tourist things. We visited Golden Gate Park, the San Francisco Zoo, China Town, and Fisherman's Warf.

Return to Salmon

Loa had a bridal shower for LaRue on February 6th. We headed for Salmon about February 9th rather late in the day. Everything fit in the back of the 56 Ford. Even her large portable record player that took a good part of the backseat. I didn't think it was necessary, but it was her new toy and she still owed payments on it.

We were going over Donner Summit which back then was a winding two lane road. There were snow banks about eight feet high on both sides. The heater quit working and the car got colder and colder inside. We bundled up and kept going as it was Sunday and the garages were all closed. We were in Elko the next morning and got it fixed at the Ford garage. Luckily it had not been bitter cold like it can get in that part of the country.

We got to Jackpot which was a wide spot in the road. LaRue told me about the time she came through Jackpot with her folks and her and her dad had a great steak cooked rare in a place about where Barton's 93 is today. So, we stopped and had a steak.

We got to Salmon in the evening. We stopped first to see Olga and Clarence Smith where I boarded in high school. They had seen our engagement notice in the Salmon paper and were thrilled we were together again. They gave me my old bedroom for as long as I wanted to stay. I told them I would not stay long as I had to get to the job in Wyoming. We then unloaded LaRue at her place. They had no problems with us

getting engaged and married. Her parents had always liked me (I think).

Our Big Decision

I dreaded going to Wyoming and hung around a few more days than I had planned. I decided I had to get going the next day which was Valentine's day, February 14, 1959.

We went to a basketball game at the high school and then stopped at the Crescent Club to talk a while. The evening wore on and LaRue said, "why don't we elope tomorrow. It's Valentine's Day". That was a stunner, but sounded good to me, and I would not be leaving her behind again. We rationalized that my folks would not be able to come to a wedding from Guatemala, and we didn't want to burden her folks with the expense. So, eloping would be the best way to go. I dropped her at her folks and went to Smith's with a lot on my mind.

I woke up the next morning thinking about what I had agreed to the night before. I thought I would sleep longer as I was not sure if this was for real or not. Maybe LaRue changed her mind. I also knew she was not an early riser. I heard the phone ring and Olga soon yelled, "LaRue is on the line". I knew then that it was for real and got moving.

I believe Olga and Clarence knew exactly what we were up to as I was packed up and in a hurry to get out the door. They were all smiles.

It was Saturday and getting married that day seemed impossible. I picked up LaRue and she had her bag with her. Her parents had gone somewhere that morning so there was no problem there.

We had to get a marriage license, a blood test, and get moving. My friend Denny Hawley's mother worked at the court house, which was closed, and she was off. We went to see her at home. She agreed to go to the court house and issue our marriage license. Pat Skinner's stepmother was a nurse and she agreed to come to the hospital and do our blood test. There was normally a three day wait for the results. Somehow she got it accomplished.

Pat Skinner was going to college at Idaho State in Pocatello. LaRue called her to see if she could line her bishop up to marry us that evening. Pat would work on it.

The next stop was to get money out of my savings account at Idaho First National Bank and visit Colvin's Jewelry next door to pick out and purchase wedding bands. By 1pm we were on our way to Pocatello.

We had not had time to eat anything so we stopped at the little store in Leadore to get some snacks. I was longing for shrimp and we got canned shrimp, a big

package of Oreo cookies, and Cokes. The lady in the store found a can opener and opened the can of shrimp, and we were on our way again.

We arrived in Pocatello around 6pm and called Pat Skinner from a pay phone. She said we were on for our wedding around 8pm. We had time to find a motel and change clothes. I registered nervously as Mr and Mrs expecting to get challenged, but nothing was said.

. I changed into a gray suit that was one of two tailored suits that I bought in Scotland. I chose it because it packed and travelled well with no wrinkles. LaRue changed into a white dress that she had purchased in California. It looked like a short wedding dress, but she said she didn't buy it for that purpose. (Our grand daughter, Summer Redd, tried it on in 2024. It fit her perfectly, and still in new condition, so LaRue gave it to her.)

We found the bishop's house. near the ISU campus. Pat Skinner was there and had her brother Reed with her to stand up with us.

The bishop of the college ward was young, and it was his first wedding. He was nervous and we were nervous. I was repeating the vows and said, "I LaRue take Harry to be", and that loosened us up a little. It didn't take long and we were a married couple. LaRue was 20 and I was 22. It was nearly five years from the time we first met in high school.

A lot of water had passed under our bridges. We had withstood the test of time and distance between us. We absolutely felt that it was meant to be.

Afterwards we took Pat with us for a nice dinner at the Bannock Hotel, which was the place in Pocatello for social functions and fine dining. We had Manhattan's before dinner and then prime rib. Later we went by the telegraph office and sent telegrams to her folks and my folks. It was quite a day and a major fork in the road.

Our Honeymoon

We spent the next day in Pocatello deciding what to do next. We felt we should drop by her brothers in Ogden, Salt Lake, and Springville, Utah to apprise them of the fact that we were married. The first stop was Gail and Carma in Ogden.

Gail asked me what I was going to do with my life, and I said I was going to college but did not know where. He informed me Weber Junior College is in Ogden and they were on break between winter and spring quarters. Would I like to look them over. I didn't think it would hurt and away we went.

Weber at the time had just moved the campus from downtown to South Ogden. The new campus consisted of four new long one-story buildings, a student union, and was quite small. Gail knew the registrar, and we went straight to his office. We talked

and toured the buildings. I ended up enrolling for the spring quarter starting in a few days.

We never considered the job in Wyoming after that. It was a good decision that brought resolution to all of the questions we had been asking ourselves. I was starting college much sooner than I thought possible. Wow, another fork in the road.

We hurried along and saw Val and Loi in Salt Lake and Gene and Wanda in Springville. While there we went to a jewelry store in Provo and purchased a diamond wedding ring to match her engagement ring. I felt she needed more than a wedding band.

We decided to make a quick run to see aunt Mary and Uncle Donald and my grandparents in Cambridge. On the way we traveled on highway 30 from Burley to Twin Falls and stopped at a little pullout at the Perrine Bridge and I took photos. From there the highway turned left onto what we now call Golf Course Road. We passed a half mile south from where our home is now. We kept remarking how beautiful the farms were through Twin Falls and Jerome. Little did we know that 50 years later we would be living here.

After Cambridge we hurried back to Salmon via Arco and Challis to face the music and pack up and move to Ogden. I didn't have to stay with Olga and Clarence anymore.

LaRue's folks were disappointed in not getting to put on a wedding, but accepted what took place. We had a nice reception that made up for it. We were officially recognized in Salmon as married. We surprised a lot of people and old classmates. We beat out our friends Carol and Grant that had a wedding date a few weeks away.

end chapter 5b