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Chapter 8b-Our Life in Las Vegas (1964-1965)

I had to wait for a clearance again before getting into the inner sanctum. The AEC clearance required was for a higher level than the AEC required in Berkeley. By now I was accustomed to waiting for a clearance. There were several of us working in a common bull pen office. It looked out on the main runway of McCarran Field, and across to the Strip. We could see the Dune's sign from there. When the Dune's sign came on in the evening we knew it was time to go home.

We took notice of two white jet passenger planes with a red stripe down the side and no other markings. They would depart in the morning and return in the evening, and park in a big hangar next to our building. We were told they were EG&G airplanes and they were doing air sampling work over the Nevada Test Site. I learned many years later they transported workers to and from the super secret Area 51. The red and white paint scheme were the colors of the EG&G logo. The logo was a white oval and the center was EG&G in red. We called the company the "egg" company. A truck pulled in one time looking for the egg warehouse. The name was a shortened version for three scientists (Edgerton, Germeshausen, and Grier) at MIT that founded the company. Their high-speed photography expertise was utilized for filming nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site and thus EG&G became the prime contractor. *(Years later I ended up working again for EG&G in Idaho Falls).*

My clearance came through and I began working in the computer center as a systems programmer on the CDC 1604. I helped maintain the operating system and began learning about keeping the system running and diagnosing and fixing problems. The CDC computers were much different than IBM's computers as they were designed for solving scientific and engineering problems with better numerical accuracy, and they were faster. I became a big fan.

Living in Las Vegas we got a lot of visitors. I would get home on Friday night and there would be a strange car in the driveway. Some people called ahead, and some dropped in. At first we would get a sitter and show them the town. After a while we told them where to go and would stay home and watch all the kids. We even loaned money to a couple who we did not know but their parents were friends of mom and dad. They were broke and needed money to get home.

We did not gamble, other than put pocket change in a slot machine as we passed by. We did enjoy going to the lounge shows that were excellent and free. We especially liked the Kim Sisters at the Stardust and Louis Prima and Keely Smith at the Sahara. One night at the Sahara Don Rickles was at a table nearby and was constantly heckling and disrupting the show.

Our neighbor was a pit boss at the Riviera and anytime we wanted tickets to the main show he would comp them. He was an older guy and his daughter was attending Stanford, so I am sure he did well. I was convinced he was mafia and he looked the part. Mafia was very present in Las Vegas. Friends of ours from Salmon lived across town and their backyard neighbor worked

for the mafia, and he was very open about it. Nice people too.

It was just before Christmas 1964 and I went out one evening to do my shopping. I was crossing the street downtown beside the Golden Nugget and a car going through the intersection honked, yelled my name, and pulled over. It was my old friend in Scotland, Ed Smith, and his wife. What a surprise that was. They were in Las Vegas for a couple of days then moving from Salt Lake to Denver. He had dropped out of the University of Utah and was working in the design of fire suppression systems. He was moving to Denver to design and install fire systems for Frontier Airlines. That was our last contact until I found him 55 years later.

Christmas Eve came and Kathleen and Brian were hyper and excited. We decided to get them out of the house and go to Shakey's pizza. Shakey's had a big window where they could stand and watch the workers make pizza. That entertained them and got them out of our hair. Pizza on Christmas Eve became a family tradition that we enjoyed from then on.

1965

One morning I arrived at the office and there was a turbo prop passenger plane crashed in our parking lot. It belonged to Bonanza Airlines and was on a training flight when it went out of control and came down next to our building. The airline company hurried and painted out Bonanza on the fuselage. Their airplanes were painted orange, so everyone knew who it belonged to anyway. Another one of their planes letting down for landing in Las Vegas hit a mountain and killed everyone on board. We watched the helicopters from our office as they brought in the bodies.

I had to fly to Los Angeles for a one-week training class and I was booked on Bonanza. I was highly nervous about it.

We had acquired a cat before I departed and the last night in Los Angeles I got a distress call from LaRue. The cat was sick from what looked like distemper. I got home the next day and the cat was dead, so we went out on the desert and had a funeral and buried it. I let Kathleen drive the Rambler very slow while we were out there. She was about six years old.

A secretary at work announced she had a batch of new puppies that were a cross of schnauzer and miniature poodle. We went to see them, brought home a black one, and now we had to name it. Wilson was the husband's name and we thought it sounded and fit perfectly. So, the pup got the dignified name of Wilson. The secretary said her husband was highly flattered. Wilson turned out to be quite a character.

In the spring we enjoyed a couple of camping trips to Death Valley. One night the wind blew so hard I backed the Rambler up close for a wind break and tied a rope from the roof rack to the top of the tent frame. While I was doing this Brian announced he would hold the tent up. A family that was with us had an old wall tent with no floor and sand and rocks were whipping through all night. They were not impressed with Death Valley.

We enjoyed going to the Valley of Fire to picnic and hike. From there we would continue to Overton in the Moapa Valley so the kids could see farms with cows and hay fields. It was nice to get away from the glitter of Las Vegas and see normal people. Picnics were also enjoyable in the evening at Lake Meade even if it was hot. In those day's turtles were a hazard on the road that you had to dodge around. Many turtles got splattered and today you never see any. A big turtle even meandered through our back yard one evening.

We decided to go to the north rim of the Grand Canyon over the 4th of July. LaRue got whole chickens and cut them up and fried them for our trip. We arrived at the north rim after midnight and the campground was full. I pulled off into a flat area and set up the tent and we went to bed. I got up the next morning and we were on the edge of the canyon rim, and it was about a 1,000 foot drop. Glad we didn't wander around in the dark. We waited until someone pulled out of the campground. We got a nice spot and enjoyed the Grand Canyon.

We got back home where it had been around 110 degrees all weekend. I opened the front door and the smell about knocked me over. I closed the door and then it dawned us that we had not taken the garbage with the chicken parts out when we left home. I held my breath and dashed in , grabbed the garbage, and went out the back door gagging as I went. That was the worst smell ever. Since then we always double check the garbage when we leave on a trip.

The summer of 1965 I took vacation time to get away from the Las Vegas heat and we went back to Logan to visit LaRue's parents. While there I visited the Utah Sate Alumni Office and got to know the director, Swede Larson. We talked about things I could do in Las Vegas which had a lot of Utah State alumni living there. Utah State was playing Arizona State in Tempe in the fall and he gave me the idea of sponsoring a bus trip to the game. Swede gave me the list of alumni and when we got back to Las Vegas I started working on it. I sent out an invitation to everyone in the area and followed up with phone calls hoping I would get enough people to fill a bus. I didn't get anybody. We ended up farming the kids out with our friends and LaRue and I drove to Tempe by ourselves. We were guests at a big reception for alumni, attended the game which we won, and had a great time.

A builder with a development across town had many new homes for rent. They were new, five bedrooms, low rent, and no lease obligation. The house we liked was off East Charleston at 5317 Del Rey. It was new and better neighborhood than we were in. We were not sure how long we would live there as we were having doubts about raising children in Las Vegas, but decided to make the move.

A month or so later I saw an ad in the professional magazine, Datamation, that caught my interest. Lawrence Radiation Laboratory (now known as Lawrence Livermore Laboratory) in Livermore, California was advertising for a special type of programmer. The Director's Office was specifically looking for a Fortran programmer to write programs analyzing financial cost and budget data using scientific computers. This sounded crazy as scientific computers and Fortran are not suited for this type of application.

Livermore had the world's fastest supercomputers for scientific work and was known as the most advanced supercomputer center in the world. Their policy was to acquire serial #1 of the fastest supercomputer available. They had just installed the first CDC 6600 designed by Seymour Cray, were getting the 2nd one, and preparing for the future CDC 7600 serial #1. They also had the one of a kind Livermore Advanced Research Computer (LARC) specially built by Univac, an IBM 7030 Stretch that was the first of only nine produced, and an older IBM 7090. Business applications ran at the Berkeley lab on a Burroughs computer. The Berkeley Lab could not or would not generate the close to real time information the Livermore Director's Office needed. Therefore, they decided to utilize the Livermore scientific computers. It was odd that they advertised outside for a programmer when they had some of the best in the world working there. I saw this a great opportunity to work on the largest supercomputers ever produced and pioneer new applications. It was an opportunity of a lifetime.

Before I graduated from Utah State I applied at the Livermore Lab and was told they could not employ relatives and my Uncle Fred worked there. I could now apply as he had left the lab and went to work elsewhere. I decided to send a resume and see what happens. They responded within a week and invited me for an interview. It was Thanksgiving week and we could drive up for the interview and spend Thanksgiving with Loa and Max, and the rest of the family in the bay area.

The interview went well, and an offer arrived shortly after we got back to Las Vegas. The lab would pay all moving expense. This was a unique opportunity to work on the world's fastest supercomputers and a challenge to develop what the Director's Office required. That and the fact Las Vegas was not a great place to raise a family made the decision to accept the offer quite easy. I hated to leave the people at EG&G, and my management tried hard to get me to stay.

I gave my notice and we were on our way to California. We quickly found a newly completed three-bedroom house in a new sub-division at 334 Coleen Street for \$19,800. With my VA loan and no down payment required we closed in about three days, and moved into the house a week before Christmas. What a whirlwind.

end chapter 8b. Continued on chapter 9b Livermore lab