

# Cleo Albert Smith

## Autobiography

Born December 1, 1919, passed away after a 2nd bypass surgery in 1992 at the age of 72.

In 1992 CA purchased a computer and being the techie he was took to it immediately, learned to use the word processor and wrote this document. It is 43 pages and presented here as they were entered into the binder. There were some other pages at the end (pages 22 - 29) I suspect were removed and retyped to include some changes he made after the first printing. There is a difference in the type for these inserted pages, darker perhaps because of a ribbon change in the dot matrix printer.

Prepared by his son, Jackie Smith in Tulsa, OK  
August of 2012



CA and Lee in 1944 in front of the First Baptist Church in Lake Charles 1 year before they were married. She was 16 years old and on the way to be baptized.

BIO  
PP 1-6

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CLEO ALBERT SMITH  
DECEMBER 1919 TO PRESENT

The following biography will be written strictly from my memory, some dates and places may or may not be accurate, however in my military career, statements in this Biog are verified by military records.

I was born on December 1, 1919 in a small village called Acme Oklahoma that is three miles west and one mile North of Rush Springs, Oklahoma. My Father was John Albert Smith and my Mother was Leura Ella (O'Dell) Smith. In future references to my father, in this document, I will refer to him as "Dad".

My grandfather, James H. Smith and Dad bought a general merchandise store in Acme in 1913 from a man named Talley. It was located near a Cement/Plaster Mill, and their customers were primarily employees of the Mill, and of course surrounding farmers. They operated the store until 1929 when the great depression hit and they had to quit, the Mill closed also. Thus begins my part of this BIOG.

I was Ten years old when the big depression hit, Grandad owned a 160 acre farm three miles West of Acme, so Dad and Mom moved us out to the farm into the main house, a two story structure built by Grandad and Sons. They dismantled the Store Building at Acme and built Grandad and Grandmother a two bedroom house on the North eighty of the farm. A small building was constructed just a few hundred feet West of Grandads house to store the leftover merchandise in, that included a lot of canned goods, hardware, drygoods, etc. Dad had given out many dollars in credit to his customers because there wasn't any money in the community to pay for the merchandise. He was never paid one cent for his generosity.

We all had a hard struggle on that farm, when we did have a good crop of Water Melons, cotton, corn, etc., there was no market for it. I have seen watermelons sell for five to ten cents each at the field, and if you hauled them to the railroad in Rush Springs you might get a few cents more for each of them if you could find a buyer. Dad had bought two beautiful work horses to farm with, and harness, I remember he bought the harness from Montgomery Ward. Mom raised chickens, sold eggs and some milk from the cows. The farm had to be mortgaged to buy equipment to start farming. It was a struggle, but we did manage to survive and there was always food for the family.

My Brothers included Brunell and Charles, Brunell was the oldest of us children, followed by Myself, Imogene, Lorene, Ruby Jane and Shirley. A brother named Jackie and a Sister Peggy had died in the 20's in their infancy. Charles wasn't born until WWII had been going on. Mom and dad had a total of nine children.

I attended about four years of grade school at Acme, and when we moved to the farm I went to "Oak Grove", a two room

school 1/4 mile west of the farm. I remember while we were still at Acme, the School Building burned down, and they hired us kids and some adults to chip the cement off of the bricks at about one cent each for constructing another schoolhouse. I graduated from the eighth grade at Oak Grove, and attended one year at Cement Okla., they changed up the bus routes the next year and I went to Rush Springs High School for two and a half years. I was very active in the Future Farmers of America during my three years at Rush Springs. I had many good friends I attended HS with, my closest friend was a neighbor 1/4 mile West of the farm, his name was Jack Tomlinson, we corresponded some after the War, but I haven't heard from him since. We played on the HS softball team, we were good, had a good coach.. During the the depression in the early 30's, money was tight, so dad and some relatives took up a new occupation called "moonshining". Dad made some high quality booze and some of his customers were in some pretty high places up in Oklahoma City. But since the state was "dry", the sheriff took a dim view of their activities and "raided" the place, destroying the still. Dad was given a term at El Reno and out in Arizona, but wasn't gone very long. Brunell and I had to attend to the crops and the stock on the farm, I don't remember what we did raise, but it was rough. During this time, Jack Tomlinson and I decided we wanted to make some wine with wild grapes. We swiped yeast, sugar and glass jugs from our parents stock, crushed the grapes, took the juice and put it into two one gallon jugs, we put in the yeast and sugar, punched a hole in the corks and inserted a hose in just above the liquid and buried it in the woods beside a tree. We put the other end of the hose in a jar of water and watched the bubbles! Boy that was some good wine! I don't think our parents ever knew about that venture.

In the year 1936, Dad leased a farm West of Fletcher, OK and I had to leave Rush Springs High and move out there. Dad could not manage to work that farm by himself and Brunell had gotten married to Linda and had a family to support. I desperately wanted to finish High School, but it just couldn't be done, because the finances were just a little to tight. We raised grain crops primarily, some cotton, alfalfa and feed crops for the stock. Dad bought several milk cows and we milked eight to twelve cows twice per day so we could market the milk to buy the necessary staples for food. Mom still had her chickens and sold eggs weekly, she also raised fryer size chickens for the market. We could not have had our necessary food without her special efforts.

The farm family adjoining us on the North were old family friends from the Acme era, their names were Ridley, they had three boys that were very hard working guys. We traded labor with them, including grain thrashing equipment, tractor work and many other jobs necessary to keep a farm going. About the only money I ever had to spend for myself was during grain and cotton harvest time, and that was short lived, but I did manage to buy my clothes and a few other necessities. I remember well, I could go to Fletcher with a dollar in my pocket, go to a movie, eat a hamburger and a bar of candy and a coke and come home with change in my pocket!!

Well, after many hot and cold days on that farm, I decided to go out on my own and try to do something for myself, so I joined the Civilian Conservation Corps, (CCC's). I was assigned to Company 870 in the Wichita National Forest near Cache. We built all kinds of recreation camps, fences, (which are still standing), dams and other conservation projects. I spent most of my enlistment there carrying the mail from Cache to the two camps that were in the Wichita's, 859 and 870. I also delivered the mail to Forest Headquarters and to the Rangers Homes that were located there in the forest.. I did enjoy the job, but it wasn't what I wanted for a career! I attended forestry classes with the Rangers, cruised with them in various patrol vehicles, rode horses in the forest with them when they were out checking the wildlife such as Buffalo herds, Elk, Deer and other animals located in those Mountains. It was a very interesting experience, and all that training came after I had made two mail runs from Cache. The Forest Service there came under the Department of the Interior.

I lived in a one story barracks with approximately 25 other boys who were of the same financial status as I and many other young people in the U.S. During my stay in the CC's, I must say I did a lot of growing up, learning to live with boys from all walks of life. We had a good recreation hall, a good woodwork shop and a PX where we could buy our necessities at Army prices. A pack of cigarettes cost ten cents! Our monthly salary was \$30.00, of which \$22.00 of that went home! But I did manage to buy mom a Maytag Washer out of that, gasoline powered of course because there was no electricity out there on the farm!

Well, since I had started playing the fiddle and guitar when I was about eleven, (I had been taught the "fiddle" by my grandfather O'Dell, he was an excellent fiddler), some of the guys and myself organized a Country/Western band there at the Camp. We had a Banjo player named Penny, Guitarists Ed Havlic and "Red" Harris, piano player named Hood, a clarinet player and drummer that I do not remember and my-self on the Fiddle.. We spent many hours playing in the rec hall entertaining the "troops", and also played for many dances on the weekend around the Lawton area. We made more making more playing for dances than we ever could in the CCC's, and enjoyed it much more!!

During the summer of 1940, Hitler had started his ravishing Europe, and the obvious was quite clear, it was just a matter of time until we were going to be right in the middle of that war. A very close friend of mine there at camp, Thomas Good, and I talked a lot about that situation quite often, the U.S. had just started up the draft, so we thought we would get the jump on that and enlist in the Army. So we went to Fort Sill and enlisted in the Army on 19 September 1940.

We were assigned to Batter "C", 1st Field Artillery BN. We were trained on the 75MM field piece, but after a winter of that we were assigned to the motor pool where Tom was a driver and I was assigned to the dispatcher duties, we had Jeeps, trucks, command cars, motorcycles and were also responsible for the maintenance and record keeping of all those pieces of equipment

including the 75mm guns.

In the early Spring of 1941, the entire Battalion was shipped to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Now that was something else, that Post was one massive mud hole when it rained, and it was quite miserable at times.. One night, I was on guard duty on the Battery Perimeter and it was cold. I was carrying a .45 Calibre pistol, my canteen, flashlight and other gear required for that type of duty. As I was walking along, I stepped into a hole where a tree had been pulled out and I went up to my chest in cold muddy water! Well now, that wasn't a very pleasant thing to happen to anyone, but the Sgt. of the Guard sent me to the barracks and relieved me of Guard Duty, it took a while to get all the mud washed off however!! We did not have a firing range for our cannons up there, so we did what was known as "dry" firing on our field trips, just go out in the fields or woods and pretend to fire.. But the fishing was good up there in the Gasconade River.

In the middle of the Summer of '41, I was assigned as a CO runner one weekend, this entailed riding a motorcycle on Sat. and Sunday from Regiment to Battery C with the correspondence and mail. During one of my runs, I was reading a document or General Order that stated that any enlisted man who can qualify may transfer to the Air Corps if approved by higher authority than Battery level. Tom Good, a clerk named Alexander and myself typed up our own transfers on Sunday. We hand carried them through Battalion to Regiment and they were approved. (The Battery Commander was furious, but he was over ruled by the Regiment Commander.) I was assigned to Post Field right back at Fort Sill, Tom went to Kelly Field at San Antonio and Alexander went to March Field in California. Thus began my long career in what was to be known later as the Air Force.

After I was assigned to my outfit, the 15th Observation Squadron at Ft. Sill, about the only thing I was qualified for in that organization was the motor pool, so I drove trucks, motorcycles, etc. most of the summer of '41. Then one day I discovered a Morse Code practice machine on the bottom floor of one of the barracks. I sat down, managed to figure out how to turn it on, and in a matter of a few days, taught myself the alphabet in Morse. One day I was practicing on the key and an Officer (pilot) walked in and asked me where I had learned the code, I told him I was self taught, so they assigned me to communications where I started training in message forming and transmitting messages, primarily in the code practice room, but I still had a long way to go to be proficient in communications duties. About October or November, I took my first flight in an aeroplane, an O-47 three place single engine aircraft used primarily as a photo recon aircraft. I knew then I was going to try for Airborne Radio Operator duties, but before I could be sent to radio school, the Japs hit us and we were off to Ellington Field near Houston for patrol over the Gulf. I had been put on flying status, but at that time I still drove various vehicles because of the shortage of drivers. My duties consisted of flying and driving vehicles for fourteen to sixteen hours every day, there were no days off, and we were restricted to Base

seven days per week, no passes off base except emergencies for a period of over three months, so driving someone to Houston in a staff car was a treat.

While on patrol at Ellington we received a couple of Douglas A-20's, but the shortage of pilots we had took its toll, we didn't have enough pilots or crew members to cover them, since our host base was primarily Pilot Training, our Commander "borrowed" instructor pilots from the school occasionally. The hours we flew on patrol were unbelievable, sometimes we were in the air from daybreak until dusk, then the B-24's would take over for night patrol. I was flying strictly as an aerial gunner and observer. However, none of us "gunners" were actually qualified as aerial gunners, it was necessary that we attend the gunnery school. About the middle of July, another Corporal and I was sent to gunner school at Harlington, Texas. That was the hottest summer I had ever witnessed, and the mosquitos were so thick we had to fan each others backs while practicing ground fire with the 30 and 50 calibre machine guns. But we made it and graduated in August of '42, we were promoted to Sergeant and sent back to our Squadrons.

When we arrived at Ellington, our Squadron had moved out to Godman Field, Ft. Knox, KY., without telling us. So off we went to 'ol Kentuck and when we got there, no Squadron!! We found out that they had gone on maneuvers somewhere in Louisiana, so off we went to Louisiana in search of our outfit, boy this was getting pretty darn hilarious!! I don't remember how we did it, but we did find them near Many, Louisiana flying out of cow pastures or any other place you could get a plane in and out. By then we were equipped with all A-20's, boy what a great ship!

While were at Houston flying patrol, I was called in to the commanders office one day and informed that I would be assigned to a special mission, (of course my crew), The nature of the mission was highly classified, so they could not tell us what we were in for. My pilots name at the time was a Lt. Hallmark from Dallas and was home on an emergency leave because of a death in his family, so they scratched me from the mission and sent another crew out, however Lt. Hallmark did return and was sent on to the mission training grounds in Florida, I was assigned another pilot and crew there at Ellington. Those events probably saved me from certain death, because the mission was the training for the DOOLITTLE RAID ON TOKYO!! Lt. Hallmark was shot down over Japan and executed, along with his crew!

Since my friend Freeman and I who had graduated from gunnery school with me were promoted to Sergeant, rank came pretty fast and we were promoted to Staff Sgt., someone up in the Pentagon had found out that the crew members that were captured in Europe were treated as Officers, so they made all flying enlisted men Staff or higher.

During our duties on maneuvers in Louisiana, Freeman and I decided that we wanted to get into combat, so we volunteered to go overseas. We were sent to North Carolina and assigned to the 47th Bomb Sqdn, 97th Group. They had A-20's, and they were all

new planes. Another crew member named Thomas was also sent to the same outfit at the time we were. The next day after arriving the Commander called us three new men in to his office and informed us that he had only asked for one man. So the 1st Sgt. wrote our names on separate pieces of paper and had the Commander pull one name out of a hat, the name he drew was Freeman's, so he was chosen to stay with the Squadron. Well now, this was the beginning of a crazy tour of duty for Thomas and I.

Sometime during the afternoon, the 1st Sgt. called Thomas and I in, (Thomas was one grade lower than I), and informed us that he wanted us to go into Greensboro that evening for MP duty, well we were issued MP armbands, a nightstick, and we had our own .45 cal pistols, and took a jeep and headed for Greensboro, about six miles away. The Group was out in the woods at the Highpoint Airport. We reported to the Chief of Police and were told to call the Provost Marshal at Ft. Bragg, about 60 miles to the South, he informed me that I would be Sgt, of the Guard there in town and would send me some MP's that evening. After completing that tour of duty that night (Friday), we returned to Greensboro Airport and found that the entire Group had shipped out during the night. One tent was standing, our gear was in that tent, including our parachutes and B-4 bags. Our records were gone, we had nowhere to turn, we had our gear, a jeep and nothing else. So I turned the tent and cots over to the Airport Officials and returned to the Police Department in Greensboro. Again I called the Provost Marshal at Ft. Bragg, and told us to bunk in with the Police Department and remain on MP duty until our records could be located. We were issued meal tickets for the restaurants in Greensboro, and were informed that a tracer would be put out to find our records. Well, that took nearly three months, and during that time, we had only our flying pay books good for about \$30.00 per month, and that was all. I had gas tickets for the Jeep, and we would go down to Ft. Bragg occasionally to buy our necessities. Ft. Bragg sent me about ten or twelve MP's on the weekend, but Thomas and I had the town during the week, it was pretty rough, I was cursed, bitten, hit, kicked and slapped around by drunken soldiers from Ft. Bragg, but the Police there at Greensboro kept us from getting injured badly..ha..The MP's from Ft. Bragg were seasoned MP's and helped us out very well.

Well our records were finally located, they went to England with the Group, we were assigned to the 23rd Recon Squadron at Pope Field, Ft. Bragg. And there I got rid of that Jeep! The Squadron there had a few A-20's and some lighter aircraft including Piper Cubs. The Commander at Pope decided that Thomas and I had earned some time off, so he gave each of us a 20 day leave to visit our families.(Thomas was from Oklahoma also). I had a good visit with Mom and Dad, also my sisters and brother..

Well, to continue this, upon my return to Ft. Bragg after my furlough, the 23d was sent to a little field out of Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri where we were flew observation duties for the Army, we were near Vichy Mo., just off of highway 66. I was sent to Radio School at Scott AFB, Illinois from there. The Radio Operator/Mechanics course was 31 weeks long. Since I was already proficient in Code Operating and message handling, my code speed progressed to about 35 words per minute! So occasionally they put me in the main control room for code classes and put me to work teaching code. After about four hours in the code room, I would attend another four hours in the Radio Mechanics course, including theory and trouble shooting airborne radio equipment. During my stay at Scott, the Squadron at Vichy would send a plane and pilot up there to get my four hours of flying time required to receive my flying pay each month. Upon graduation, I returned to Vichy (23d Sqdn) and continued my flying duties. An ex-airline pilot named Capt. Graybill was my pilot most of the time, he was an excellent pilot but a little reckless at times.

Well, the Air Corps decided that Airborne Radio Operators/gunners had no business in an outfit that had no airaborne radio equipment for us to operate, so they packed me up and sent me to a one-lung flying field in North Texas, That was a silly mistake, for they had no Airplanes that fit my qualifications either, so they packed me up and sent me to Will Rogers Field at Oklahoma City, I was in Texas less than a month. I was assigned to a B24 Photo Mapping Squadron, well that was a joke also, they had no machine guns on those ships, just cameras and radio equipment, this was getting to be a big bunch of recurring mistakes and I was getting pretty disgusted with the stuped mistakes of so-called personnel people.

I was reading the bulletin board one day and discovered they wanted crew members to volunteer for duties in Meduim Bomb outfits. So I went to the Orderly Room and applied for a transfer. I was sent to Barksdale Field, Louisiana and was assigned to a crew in B-26 Bombers. I was very happy about this, but they had dubbed the B26 as the "Flying Prostitute", for the wings were to short and had no visible means of support!!Ha. But we flew them any way..My fellow crew members were= Lt. Pederson, Pilot, Lt. Stauffer=Co-Pilot, Lt. Roberts Navigator/Bombadeer, Sgt. George Engineer, Sgt. Hickman=Tail Gunner, and myself Radio Operator/Waste Gunner. This crew was very compatable, and we got along very good, and of course continued on into Combat, which I will describe later. By this time, the Martin Company had extended the wingspan of the B26, and we felt much safer in it.

We were sent to Lake Charles Army Air Field, Louisiana for our combat training. We were very compatable as a crew, we seemed to "hit it off" right from the start. Some of the B-26's at we flew there was in pretty bad shape, the props were electric control pitch, and took a lot of current, so if we had a generator go down the batteries went fast and the props would "run away". If this happened on a take off roll it got pretty

hairy, but most of the time we discovered those discrepancies on taxi out.. We only had one crash landing while there, the nose gear had been sabotaged and when we let the gear down for a landing the nose wheel remained cross-ways, some one had sawed the pin that locked the gear in place, so we had to land with the nose wheel in a crosswise position. Lt. Pederson did a great job in keeping the nose up on touch down until our speed had reduced quite a lot, but the wheel broke off immediately on landing, scraping metal on the runway and creating a lot of sparks and fire, but no one was hurt and the plane sustained a minor amount of damage. We had 25 B-26 crews training at L.C., consisting of 6 men per crew.

During our training there, we did our bombing and gunnery missions over the Gulf of Mexico, they would set up targets on un-used small islands, and we would bomb mostly with 100 pound practice bombs consisting of black powder and sand. For our gunnery practice we used floating targets primarily. We did a lot of cross country training flights all over the U.S., and I did get a lot of practice at Radio Navigation. I used a Radio Direction Finder, and it was very accurate, using the triangulation methods, I could pin point our position within a five mile radius.

Well, while at Lake Charles, I attended church in a small Baptist Church on North Shattuck Street one Sunday and there I met the cutest little Cajun you ever saw. Her name was Elva Lee Materne, better known among her family and friends as "Lee Lee". She even winked at me in church!! Well now, that was the beginning of a long and lasting romance..Ha.. We had very little time to-gether, because I was about to ship out most any time. I met her family and was invited to a Sunday dinner, consisting of some very good Cajun food, it was fantastic. Lees' Dad was one of the finest men I ever met, he was a commercial fisherman and ferry boat operator. He knitted his own nets, and they were up to 24 feet long in the shape of a cone, called "hoop" nets, he put out up to fifteen nets at a time in the river there and caught tons of fresh water fish, consisting mostly of catfish and buffalo. He taught me so very much about that trade, of course this came later after Lee and I had married.. We shared a lot of fine experiences, however it took a little time to convince him that an "Okie" farmer was all right, we got along perfect..

When the B-26 crews shipped out of Lake Charles, they sent us to Hunter Field, near Savannah, Georgia to be distributed to our overseas assignments. The original plan was to fly new planes to somewhere in Europe, but due to late delivery of the planes, we did not get them in time to fly them over, so we went on a ship. We were sent to Camp Patrick Henry, Va. and awaited our time to sail. We sailed on a troop transport on the 6th of June '44 and arrived in Oran, Algeria in North Africa on June 14th. The trip was un-eventful, we passed a large convoy just outside of the Straits of Gibraltar, and when we were preparing to dock, we heard some explosions and were told that the German Subs had sunk one of the ships in the convoy. Our speed during our travel over was much faster than a sub could cope with, so we were never in any real danger. During our stay in Africa, we

were in a re-assignment camp East of Oran, and we did quite a lot of hiking around the battle grounds that Patton and Rommel had fought. We saw many tanks, trucks, artillery peices and other vehicles, including shot down aircraft, all destroyed of course.

While we were waiting to be assigned to our Squadrons, a couple of guys from our group and I decided to go on a little hike around the desert, we saw quite a lot of vegetable farming the Arabs were doing, even swiped some potatoes which we later roasted in hot coals! We approached what we thought was an oasis, but instead were stopped by some M.P.'s and arrested, we had approached the camp water supply without knowing it, and that water processing plant was guarded like a fort! It took some doing to get out of that one, we thought we were going to go to the guard house or maybe get shot, but our officers came down and got us released! Thus ended our hikes on the desert!.

We spent a couple of weeks there at that camp, but one day our Squadrons flew in to an airfield near Oran to take us to our combat outfits, but while they were circling to land, one those darn African sand storms blew in and you could not see fifty feet. We had to constantly move our bags and gear to keep them from being covered up with sand, we even had to wear our goggles to keep the sand out of our eyes, and scarfs to keep it from going down our collars.

We arrived at Decimo, Sardinia on 3 July and was our crew was assigned to the 437th Bomb Sqdn., 319th Group. The rest of the crews were scattered to Squadrons in the 319th and 320th Bomb Groups. We were introduced to our fellow Squadron members and orientated on what to expect in our duties there. On the 4th of July, there were a lot of guns sounding off, but I was layed up in my tent with a bad tooth the dentist had just worked on, so I missed the 4th of July celebrations!

I flew my first combat mission on the 7th of July, we bombed an ammo dump in Italy, the mission was uneventful, no flak or fighters, but we got that ammo dump!

Our 2nd mission was a railroad yard at Novi Ligrue, Italy, we had light flak, but not close.

My 3rd mission was aborted because the enemy had "smoked" the target over and we dropped our bombs in the Sea on the way home to Sardinia.

The 4th mission on the 13th of July was a pontoon bridge at Parma Italy, flak was heavy and close but none of our ships were hit. We destroyed that bridge.

While in Sardinia, my buddies and I spent a lot of time on the beach in Cagliari, that water was crystal clear and very salty, floating was a snap, and swimming was excellent there. We had a lot of fun in that Sea. Special Services had built some floating docks off shore, and we would swim out to them for diving. There wasn't much to see in Cagliari, most of the buildings down town and on the docks were destroyed, the Germans had been building engines for their fighters just outside of

town, but the buildings and engines were put out of commission.

On our 5th mission, we bombed a bridge on a river in Piogenza, Italy, we had no flak or fighters and the bridge was destroyed. Our 6th mission was another bridge in Italy. Got it! This was on the 19 of July.

We had some bad weather, and we didn't fly another mission until July 26th. It was our 7th mission, and we bombed a Railroad Bridge near Alma Italy..

Our 8th mission was a bombing run to Italy, but again the target was smoked over, so we were diverted to an alternate target in LaSpesia Harbor, (Near the Leaning Tower). We bombed a ship in the harbor there and it had the markings of a hospital ship, well we were a little disturbed about that, but when we got back to home base, we were told that it was really a German Troop ship loaded with troops and war supplies. It really erupted into a large explosion! We got an Air Medal for that one.. The Italian underground kept our intelligence informed of such things.

On the 8th of August, my crew and I flew to Corsica for a Public Relations Mission, all the combat aircraft in that theatre was to fly in formation for picture taking.. Well now, that was quite fete, for fighters, bombers and transports just can't fly at the same speeds! But we managed to get it done anyway, we had British, French, Canadian, Australian and American Aircraft flying to-gether. I think that Life Magazine was in on it.

On my 9th mission, we bombed and destroyed a bridge in Southern France. The bridge was over 2000 feet long and was pretty hard to knock out. This was our first mission over France.

Our 10th mission on Aug 9th was pretty exciting, we bombed an airfield at Bergamo Saroti, Italy. We had a P-47 escort and they went in ahead of us and softened things up, there were lots of German fighters on the field, but they were surprised, since we had hit them at daybreak and not one of them got off. After dropping our bombs, we went in a low level and strafed that field with our fifties, that was some sight. I never did learn what the enemy casualties were, but neither did I care to know.

Aug 10th, 11th and 12th we went to the Beach in Cagliari and enjoyed swimming.

Our 11th mission on the 13th of Aug., we bombed a gun in Toulon France known as "Big Bertha", this gun was capable of firing many miles out over the Medeteranian and when the Germans fired it, they would roll it back into a cave on rails and it just couldn't be hit when this happened! But the Allies set up a trap, sent some battleships toward Toulon, and we went in around the "back door" and caught the gun in firing position, well someone got a direct hit on that thing, and that was the end of Big Bertha. But it took a lot of planes and bombs to get it and the flak was heavy and accurate, our group took a lot of hits, but no one was hurt seriously. Our Bombadier took a light

hit on his forehead from shattered plexiglass when a small peice of flak came in the front while he was on the bombing run. But the wound was very slight, just enough to make a little blood and scare the pants off of us..He got the Purple Heart anyway!!ha..

Our 12th mission was on the 15th of Aug., and was a dandy, we bombed the beachhead in Southern France in preperation for the invasion. That invasion force was a sight to behold, we saw ships of all kinds the Allies had for landing troops and firing onto the mainland..There were planes taking off from aircraft carriers strafing targets up and down the coast. (This was the Riviara). We saw landing barges carrying troops to the beaches, paratroopers going inland and equipment being put ashore. It was something I will never forget.

We had no more missions on the 16th, 17th and 18th, but on the 19th we flew our 13th mission. We went after some gun installations at Marsielle, France. We had very heavy anti aircraft fire on us, and we lost one plane from our Group. None of the crew got out alive, the ship exploded.

Well on that mission, a little humor took place, but mayby not so humorous for one guy! As we were coming off of the targets, one of our planes took a hit and it knocked out the hydraulic system that closes the bomb-bay doors. Well the pilot told the crew that he was going to try to make it back to base with the ship, however if things got worse the crew might have to "bail out", since they could not close the bomb-bay doors. Well, the Bombadeer came from the nose of the ship and plugged in his headset, and all he heard was the pilot say "bail out", so he just stepped into the bomb bay and dropped out! We were all quite surprised and puzzled at why he bailed out. We watched his descent to the water, and when he landed, the PT Boats went in to pick him up, but the Germans had other ideas and opened up with heavy fire, keeping the PT's at a safe distance. So the Lt. swam ashore where the Germans were and when he approached them, they took him inland a few miles to a German Garrison where he was introduced to the Commandant who informed him that the main invasion force from the Allies were French, and they did not want to be taken prisoner by the French, so they surrendered the entire garrison to that U.S. Leiutenant! The Commander even gave the Lt. his Sabre, had his troops stacked their arms in the street to await American Soldiers to take them prisoner. It was announced that this was the only garrison that was captured by a single GI in the entire war! Of course we learned of this fiasco when the Lt. returned to Group! He briefed us on the entire thing, and showed off the Sabre in front of hundreds of Airmen! It took several weeks for him to get back to us from France, but he sure was a happy guy to be back with his men.

The above episode was published in the Stars and Stripes and a number of magazines, and we were informed that that Garrison was taken prisoner by U.S. troops.

My 14th mission was on the 22 of Aug, we bombed a Bridge in Italy, we had heavy Inaccurate flak, it was radar controlled, however one of my duties was to throw out "fence", (just like

Christmas tree tinsel), cut at different lengths, to deflect the German Radar, it worked, and many bursts went off behind us. The reason I threw it out was because I had two open doors where my fifty cal. machine guns were mounted and I could handle it quite easily.

During a tour of duty as Sgt. of the Guard, we had a tragic thing happen out among the planes. One of the T/Sgts I had attended radio school with in Scott was one of my guards doing patrol with another NCO in a Jeep, they got out of the Jeep to look at a disabled German Fighter, and he stepped on a land mine, killing him and wounding the other Guard. The guy that was killed was a Sgt. Meadows, and was a very good friend of mine, I had to be one of his pall bearers, it was rough..

My 15th mission was another bombing run to Marsailles, France on 27th Aug., and the Allies still had not taken that town. We bombed a gun installation from 9,900 feet and hit an ammo dump, there was a very large explosion down there and dust and smoke came up to nearly 2000 feet! The flak was very heavy and we had to descend rapidly to get out of it before the gunners could re-set their altitude settings. When we descended, that was when we saw the column of smoke and dust.

Our 16th mission was to North Eastern Italy on the Adriatic Sea, we bombed a large bridge and it was destroyed and we were told this helped in cutting off the retreat of Germans back to Germany. This was our longest mission to date, 6 hrs & 20 minutes. We couldn't make it back to Sardinia, so we stopped over in Rome for Gas. We had no enemy opposition on that mission, and it was on 31 August. '44.

On our 17th mission, we bombed another bridge in Italy, it was destroyed, they shot some flak at us, but no one as hit. This was on the 4th of Sept.

Our 18th mission was another bridge near Piagenza, Italy on the 5th of Sept. The bridge was destroyed, and there was no flak, we bombed from 11,200 feet, and man it was cold up there!

About this time I had acquired a German Army BMW motorcycle, and it sure ran good, I scooted around all over Sardinia with it..

My 19th mission was North of Florence, Italy, we bombed heavy troop concentrations, we used 100 pound fragmentation bombs, 30 to each plane. We had heavy innacurate flak and was escorted by our P-47's. The 47's did some dive bombing and straffing, it was quite a sight to see. This was on the 11th of Sept. '44

On the 12th of September, we learned that we would be moving North to shorten our bombing runs to our targets, I loaded my motorcycle on a Bomb trailer to be transported to our new field.

I flew my 20th mission on 13 Sept., We bombed a Railroad Bridge near Genoa, Italy. We had light innacurate flak coming off

of the west coast, we had dropped 30 frag bombs from an altitude of 11,200 feet.

The 21st mission was a dud, we went to Italy and a heavy overcast and rain prevented us from completing our mission and we came home without dropping our bombs, this was on the 15th Sept.

On the 16th of Sept., we started on a mission to Italy, but we had a prop failure and had to turn back to base.

On our 22nd mission, we bombed a railroad bridge at Casale Monferato, Italy. This was a long mission, and we had to go into Adjacia, Corsica for gas. The bridge was destroyed. No flak.

Our 23 mission was on the 18th of Sept., we made a bombing run on a target in NE Italy, but we missed it. We had a long run and had to go into Rome for gas, when we arrived back in Sardinia, we had rain and clouds with visibility nearly zero. We circled the field for an hour and was about to bail out when Pete found an opening in the clouds and set her down!!Whew!! That was a close one.

Our mission was cancelled for the 19th of September, bad weather. This was the anniversary of my enlistment in the Army, (19 Sept '40), and I made Tech. Sgt. to-day, what a coincidence.

On the 20th, we were preparing for our move to Corsica, the entire 319th and 320th Groups were involved.

On the 22nd of Sept, we moved to Corsica, near Seragia, and on the 23rd, my tent mates and I swiped some cement from somewhere and poured a floor for our tent, it took us two days to complete that floor. We dug a hole in the middle of the floor and put a lid on it to hide our "goodies" in such as a few bottles of beer and any other food we may have acquired. on the 25th, we built a wooden door for the tent, walled up the bottom of the tent to about three feet with some "dobe" bricks we managed to acquire.

We flew our 24th mission on the 26th, bombed a bridge somewhere in Italy, it was destroyed. We had heavy inaccurate flak, but no one was hit!

We worked around the Squadron and tent making ourselves comfortable the next few days, and on the 27th my crew and I and another crew flew back to Sardinia to pick up a B-26 that was left behind because of mechanical trouble and had been repaired. Pete put me in the co-pilots seat and I flew the ship for 45 minutes, it was quite a thrill, he wanted his crew members to know how to control the ship in flight should the need ever arise. When we got back to Corsica, I spent the next few days visiting some buddies in other Squadrons that I had known back at Lake Charles and on the way over to Africa.

Our 25th mission was a flop, on the 1st of October, we bombed a bridge and missed the darn thing. Oh well!! That was somewhere in Italy..

My 26th mission was with another crew, the radioman was ill and I flew in his place, bombed another bridge, light 20mm flak. This was on the 3rd of Oct. '44

On the 5th of Oct., Bill Hickman and I rode our motorcycles to Bastia, Capital of Corsica. We saw Napoleone Bonaparte's birthplace, it was a small two story dobe or concrete building on the road to Bastia and the bottom floor was a bar. Good wine!

On the 15th of Oct. we flew our 27th mission. We bombed a fuel dump near Nervesa, Italy, we got it. We had light innacurate flak, no hits.

Our 28th mission was to Peschiera, Italy, we bombed another bridge, it was destroyed. The 440th was jumped by ME-109's but managed to fight them off, no ships were lost. We were not attacked at all and we didn't complain. This was the 19th of Oct.

A lot of rain and bad weather kept us on the ground until around the last of October, and on the 30th, we flew to Naples in our B-26's and picked up some new B-25's, but we still had a few '26s on hand.

On the 31st I flew my last mission in the B-26, bombed another railroad bridge in N.E. Italy, missed it and hit a highway bridge. Oh well!! A bridge is a bridge. 29th mission.

On the 3rd of November, we flew our new B-25 on practice bombing runs over a small un-used island off the coast of Corsica. We were enjoying that B-25 very much.

On the 4th of Nov. we flew our first mission in the '25, it was our 30th mission. We bombed the railroad bridge near Piazzole we had previously missed and got it that time by golly. That B-25 was a great ship, noisy as heck but a great Bomber! I was proud of my new radio equipment, it worked just great.

Our 31st mission was on the 7th of Nov., we bombed a railroad bridge near Paove, Italy. We had 100% hits on that bridge, so that '25 was doing its job for us..

On the 9th of Nov., our flight surgeon, Dr. Carter (Major) decided that a couple of us guys needed to go to rest camp, so off we went to Naples. A guy from Hq. Sqdn went with me, and we shopped around Naples a couple days, but the town was pretty well bombed out and nothing to buy. About the only place to go was to the Red Cross Club for a sandwich and something to drink. We stayed in a hotel run by the Army. The USO was a little better, but not much.

On the 11th we sailed on a small yacht to the Isle Of Capri to finish out our rest leave. There wasn't much to see there except the Blue Grotto Cave. We went in while the tide was out, for you could not get in nor out when the tide was high. It sure was beautiful in there. We went back to Naples on the 15th, the sea was rough and the boat nearly tipped over a few times. We flew back to Corsica the same day.

On the 17th of Nov. the Squadron flew a mission, but we were not scheduled to fly, we lost one plane and crew, hit by flak. A very good friend of mine was on that ship, and a Lt. Betsill was the pilot. He was a good friend of all of us..

Our 32nd mission was on the 30th of Nov., Payday! We bombed some troop concentrations near Balogna and Piagenzia, we covered the target quite well with anti-personnel bombs, we were commended for that one!

The 33d mission on the 24th was to Piazzola, Italy, we bombed troop concentrations again, we dropped fragmentation bombs and they were quite effective. We had heavy inaccurate flak.

On the 29th, Col. Holzapple, Group Commander, pinned an air medal on our entire crew.

My 34th mission was a special Weather Mission, we took off in a single ship run with a Meteorologist aboard and flew to North Italy. I radioed the weather observations back to our Group, in Crypto. My notes tell me that radio reception was very good. We were in the vicinity of Remini, Italy, and were back at Corsica by daylight. Those kind of missions were a little touchy, since we could not have any kind of escort!

Well on my birthday the 1st of Dec., there wasn't much to celebrate with, maybe a bottle of wine and some "C" rations! But we were still alive, so that was something.. 25 to-day.

Our 35th mission was on the 2nd of December, we bombed another bridge near Nervesa, Italy, it was destroyed. We had heavy flak and one of our ships was hit and had to make an emergency landing, they landed all right in Allied territory. A Sgt. Givins was on that ship, he had been a classmate back in the States at Scott AFB., he told me later that no one was hurt on that mission. GREAT.

My tent mates and I spent the rest of that week working on the floor of our tent, we didn't have very good luck with the first one! We also hauled some gravel and sand and made walks around our tents in the Squadron, each of the tent occupants did their own part of the walk-making. We also had put up some fighter wing tanks that had washed up on the beach, one on each side of the tent on scaffolds, we put water in one for running water in the tent and the other we put gasoline for our heater. We made a burner-blaster out of an 'ol German 37mm shell casing, it worked great, but it is a wonder we didn't blow ourselves up! ha..

On the 10th of December, we flew our 36th mission, we went to Brenner Pass in North Italy, the South side of the Alps. We were trying to bomb the mountain so the rocks would cave off on the railroad and block the pass, but the Germans would clear it out and have it back in operation over-night! We took a hit on the right stabilizer of our '25, made a big hole but nothing to keep us from returning home, we had very heavy flak.

When we were coming out of the pass, we were jumped by ME-109's, I was flying in Bills tail turret while he was taking pictures out of my waste windows, he was the official photographer for the Squadron on that mission. Well those darn tail guns kept jamming on me, but I still managed to get in some pretty good shots. I saw one enemy plane go down on fire, didn't have time to look around much, I was too busy shooting at those darn fighters. They were sure beautiful airplanes, and good ones too. Got some good hits, but they kept coming back!

The British Spitfires came in from above us and made short order of those Krauts, we learned later that out of about 27 fighters that jumped us, only about four or five escaped the guns of the bombers and the Spits. We had carried six 1000 pound bombs for that mission, an overload for us. It was kind of an exciting event, no time to get scared. When we got back to the Squadron, Bill and I were sitting on our bunks and the full

realization hit us of what had happened. Then he said, "you know, those Bastards were trying to kill us". That Bill was quite a guy, and a good tail gunner.

On the 13th of Dec., we flew our 37th mission to Italy, we were suppose to bomb flak barges, but the weather closed in on us and we didn't get to drop our bombs, we were escorted by P-47's.

There were no more missions flown by our Group until after Christmas. I visited Lt. R.C. Choens from Elgin over at another Squadron. I also developed pictures I had taken, we had to use steel helmets for our chemicals.

On the 24th of Dec., we had a Christmas Eve party at our club, (a large tent), we had a swell time, and on the 25th we had a wonderful Christmas dinner, frozen turkeys had been flown in!

On the 26th, we flew our 39th mission to Italy near the Austrian Border. We bombed a Railroad Bridge, we had no flak and were escorted by P-47's, so the German fighters didn't bother us.

We went to Remini on the 29th to pick up a B-25 that had been hit and repaired. While there I saw a Spitfire fighter land that had been in a dogfight and hit, it caught fire, but the pilot got out with no injuries.

We flew our 40th mission on the 30th of Dec, we went back to Brenner Pass, we carried 1000 pounders again, and we had moderate accurate flak at the target, we got hit with a few bursts and I brought back a peice of flak, still have it. No one was hurt. Our P-47's were in escort again, what a beautiful welcome sight.

My 41st and last mission was to Northeast Italy near the Alps, but again due to bad weather we did not get to drop our bombs on the target, so we dumped them in the sea and went back to Corsica. This was on the 31st of December, when we arrived back at base, Col. Holzapple announced we were GOING HOME!

We spent New Years Day preparing for our move to Naples to get aboard a ship for the U.S. We arrived at Naples on the 9th of January, left our '25's at an airfield there and went to a bombed out Italian College dorm to await boarding the ship. It was very cold there in that building, no windows. We would wrap up in newspapers that had caught up with us, and put blankets around them, we slept very warm that way.

We sailed on the U.S.S. AMERICA that had been converted into a troop ship, we left Naples, Italy on the 16th of Jan., and arrived at Boston Harbor on the 24th of January.

We processed at Bradley Field, Conn. for our trip home, I had called my sweet Cajun for our wedding plans and left Bradley Field on the 27th. Choens and I shared the same stateroom on the train since we were going to the same State, Okla., They had loaded the 319th Group on the train and lined them up in cars according to States. I stopped off in St. Louis to get a decent

uniform for my up-coming wedding. I finally arrived in Fletcher Okla. on the 29th of January '45.

On the 31st, Dad and I went to Lawton and I bought a '34 Plymouth convertible for my trip to Lake Charles to get my bride! Choens had agreed to go with me and be my best man at the wedding.

On the way to Lake Charles we stopped off in Dallas and there I visited my Aunt Ruby, Moms sister, I also saw Mom's youngest brother Bud who had just gotten back from the South Pacific. Grandad O'Dell rode down with us to visit Aunt Ruby.

I went on to Lake Charles on the 6th of Feb., and I saw Lee at 6:30PM. What a sweet reception! We were married on the 7th in the Cavalry Baptist Church across from her house, the same Church she had winked at me in some months before!

Lee and I shopped around Lake Charles on the 8th, and left for Oklahoma on the 9th. We stopped off in a motel near Fort Worth, and the next day we visited my Uncle Roy and Aunt Ethel in Fort Worth. He was working for Consolidated building B-24's.

We arrived at Dad and Mom's farm on the 11th of Jan., Mom and Dad loved my sweet wife! When we first arrived there it came a big snow, Dad and Lee got into a snow fight in the front yard, she had never seen that much snow! We had a great time there in Oklahoma, we visited a few of my relatives around Lawton. We drove out to Cache to see Tommy Good, my very close friend that I had joined the Army with. He was severilly wounded over in India by a Jap bomb, and he had a silver plate in the back of his head where he had been wounded. He told me he was unconscious for nearly five months. Tom was and is a good Christian, I had attended church with him in Cache when we were in the CCC's.

On the 1st of March '45, I had to report back to the 319th Bomb Group at Columbia Air Base, South Carolina. I arrived there on the 3rd of March and processed into my Squadron. (437th) When I had finished my processing on the 6th, we were called into the theatre and informed by the Group Commander that any one who had over 30 missions could volunteer to stay in the States. The Group was going on to the Pacific War. Well now, that took no trouble to decide!

I immediately took off for Columbia, rented a room in a private home and sent for Lee, she was still on the farm with Mom and Dad. On the 10th of March I went up in the pressure chamber to 30,000 feet, (I was still on flying status), and when I came out there was a telegram from my sweet wife and she was on the way to South Carolina by train.

Lee and I didn't spend very long in that room, for we had no cooking facilities, so we rented a one room apartment near downtown Columbia. Our kitchen and bedroom was in that one room! We shared the bath with other GI's, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard. We had some good times with those people, and my bride and the others were having a ball cooking and sharing meals! She

was making me the happiest guy in the world..

I do not recall the dates, but I was assigned to Florence Air Base in South Carolina and we moved up there. We didn't have much to move, just our clothes and my gear! When I was assigned to my unit there, we took another Furlough, hopped on a train and went to Lake Charles to visit her folks, then we went on to Oklahoma to pick up our car and went back to Florence.

We had some interesting experiences in Florence, we rented an apartment in a private home, and we discovered the landlord was a little bit kookie, he jumped on Lee because she had slammed the refrigerator door, that didn't work very well anyway, also informed us not to flush the toilet when we just wee wee'd because it ran the pump! He and I nearly came to blows, but I got it straightened out. But we moved anyway, to another apartment. Lee tried working in a five and dime store while we were in Florence, but she didn't like it very well so she quit!

We drove around South Carolina some, went fishing on a river there, but about all I caught was an EEL!

They were discharging service men on the point system, and I had enough points to get out. I was working as Control Tower Chief, for I had gotten off of flying status. I had been Radio Line Chief for a Squadron of A-26's, but my former Group Comm Officer when I was in combat wanted me in the Tower, so that is where I went, that tower was a mess. We kicked out some operators, cleaned up the tower and got things back in order to control air traffic.

I was discharged from the Service in August, 1945. Lee was very homesick, she was pregnant with our Jeannie by then. We went to Lake Charles and visited her folks, I went out with her Dad on the river running those nets, it was so great. Lee was a very happy wife, being pregnant with our first-born and visiting with her parents and relatives. We hadn't seen them for six months, and she had never been away from home before.

We went on to Oklahoma and I started looking for a job. I must say it was quite an ordeal! We stayed with Mom and Dad on the farm, and I landed a job in Walters working in a radio repair shop, but it didn't work out, I only worked one month, and we had rented a house there! The guy that had worked there before the war came back and the boss let me go without any notice, I had a hard time getting payed what I had coming. It was quite a let down for me, getting from my first private job!

So back to the Farm with Mom and Dad, and started looking for another job. I was hired by the Phillips Petroleum Company out at Borger Texas to work as an electrician. Now that was something else, it was cold out there, Lee and I had rented a mobile home that was furnished by the Government for returning veterans, it had a gasolene cookstove, no bathroom, and we had to go across the street to bathe and use the bathroom! It snowed a lot while we were there, but we were young and in love and handled it pretty well. Lee was getting bigger, with our baby on

the way, but I'm sure she was pretty uncomfortable living under those conditions.

I was working on residence utility electric and trouble shooting around the plant, but I had a good supervisor and he sure taught me a lot about industrial electric work. One day he and I was working in a high tension transformer bank and there was a lot of snow on the ground, as he was coming out to the gate, he slipped and his shoulder came in contact with a high tension transformer and it knocked him out and broke his shoulder. While he was in the hospital, I was assigned to a power line crew, I had never climbed a pole, but was ordered to one day and I had received no training in that kind of work. Well I decided that wasn't the kind of work I could handle, so I went in from work that afternoon and resigned my job!

Lee was very happy about that, and we left for Lake Charles immediately, for she wanted to be with her mother when our baby was born. While at Borger, my sister Lorene and her husband George Duncan was also out there, he and I had both gotten jobs there after our discharges from the service. Well he quit also, and headed for the farm in Oklahoma with Mom and Dad! We still had that little Plymouth Convertable, and it wasn't the warmest thing to be in, the top was worn and Mom had sewed some cotton sack material to fix a hole in the top!

When we arrived in Lake Charles, we were pretty happy to be back in the South, it was a lot warmer down there. Lee's Uncle Willie Ryder took me down and signed me up with the union, for that was the only way you could get a job down there. I went to work building a refinery near DeRidder and was working as an oiler for Uncle Willie's drag line, he was a master on that thing. We stayed in a rooming house during the week, and went to Lake Charles on week ends.

While I was working there, the main machine operator that took care of the welding machines, compressors, and power plant had an emergency back in Chicago and had to leave in a hurry. His boss, an experienced iron worker from Chicago, called me in to his office and asked me if I could operate those Diesel Welding Machines, that is starting, stopping and keeping them fueled. I had watched the operator and even helped him sometimes and saw nothing complicated about it, I had operated all kinds of machinery on the farm and in the Service, so I told him I'd sure give it a try.

I took care of about six Diesel welding machines, an air compressor, power plant and oiled Uncle Willies drag line! I even drove a small catapillar tractor, dragging huge sections of steel to be welded to-gether for those high pressure round tanks. This sounds like a lot of work, but it wasn't hard at all, I would fuel my equipment while the welders were having their noon meal.

Lee and I rented a house next door to her Mother and Dad, and she didn't object to that at all. When we finished the job at DeRidder, I was again out of a job. The Superintendent wanted

me to go on to Texas for another job, but I didn't like the idea with Lee about to have our baby, so I declined the offer and went to work in the control tower out at the Air Force Base.

I have already mentioned about how Lee's Dad did his net fishing, but I do want to write about Lee's parents and other relatives around Lake Charles. Her mother was a excellent cook and believe me, that Cajun cooking can't be beat. I spent many happy hours on that river with Murphy Materne, and being a seafood lover, I was in hog-heaven down there. But the pay wasn't very good in that control tower, and the future looked kind of grim for us. But we made out all right, and kept our heads above water.

While working in the control tower at the base, (it was still under the ACS Command), I decided to re-enlist in Air Force. Jeannie was born in April 1946 and I reenlisted in May. We were very happy with our baby, and I have never seen a more radiant mother than my Lee was. When I reenlisted, I took over as tower chief, and the civilians that I worked for were working for me, they were eventually replaced with all military personnel. But during the summer of '46, they closed the Base at Lake Charles and I was assigned to a Detachment at Brookley Field, Mobile, Alabama. With Squadron Headquarters at Maxwell Field Montgomery, Alabama.

While at Brookley we lived just off of the Base about a block or less, I would come out the back way from the tower, and our Jeannie, who was about 1 1/2 yrs. old would watch for me to come home, (we had no car), and when I came in sight she would start yelling "Honey" at me! She called me that because that is what her mother has always called me. We lived in an efficiency apartment, even had a wood burning cookstove that heated our water also. I took a Commercial Pilots course on the GI Bill while there at Mobile, I had gotten my private license while we were at Lake Charles. But as I look back on that school, I sure wish I had never done it, because it took me away from my wife and baby to much. But when I started it, I couldn't back out. I did get a lot of good flying experience in about six different kinds of aircraft, but didn't get to graduate because the Air Force shipped me out to Germany.

I was sent to Germany for the Berlin Air Lift in the Fall of '48, on what they called a priority shipment as a radio technician. Lee went back to Lake Charles until I could get her over there with me. Well they sent me to Rhine Main Air Base, and when I got there, the Air Lift was in full swing. When the personnel people checked my records, they saw where I had Control Tower experience, so instead of technician duties I was ordered to the control tower as a shift chief. I didn't like that at all, but there wasn't anything I could do about it until the Airlift wound down.

That Control Tower at Rhine Main was the most nerve racking experience I have ever had. The name of the game was to get as many C-54's off of the ground with food and supplies for Berlin, and get the empties back in to be loaded again!

We had about 180 C-54's on base, and we had to line them up for takeoff sometimes as many as ten deep awaiting takeoff, we lined them up on the North and South side of the runway, big numbers on the North and small numbered aircraft on the Southside. When the takeoff aircraft started his roll, we would bring in a return from Berlin and he would usually touch down as soon as the takeoff aircraft was off. When the landing aircraft came over the end of the runway, we would line up an outgoing plane on the runway, when the landing aircraft turned into the taxi strips, we rolled the one on the runway. This went on twenty fours per day seven days per week when weather permitting.

Our Son Jackie was born on the 10th of December at Lake Charles, and I was right in the middle of that darn air lift. But I was about the happiest guy in the world to hear about our new son. I started processing paperwork to get Lee and our two children over there with me. I was told that the Army would not let her travel with a baby under a certain age, I don't remember what it was, but later I found out that was erroneous.

The Defense Regulations required that I have quarters established before they would issue orders for her to travel over there. The housing office consisted of people out to make a buck off of us unfortunate guys that had no control over housing assignments, if you had a few bills to slip them under the counter you could get quarters! There were two of us guys in the tower in the same fix, wanting our families over there with us. Well, 'ol fate took over again and things started going my way.

During a tour of duty in the tower one night, a Navy C-54 cracked up on approach and an investigation ensued. He had tried to land strictly against my orders for him to abort and go around. Since I was Chief Operator on duty, three of us had to appear before the Operations Officer and a Board of Officers to determine exactly what happened, this is routine procedure. Well, while we were in there, the door opened and in walked Gen. John Cannon, my former 12th AF commander in combat, also with him was Col. Charles Lindberg who had flown the first solo flight across the Atlantic! When the Ops Officer dismissed me, I went out in the hall to await my other operators release, I was talking to Col. Lindberg and General Cannon came out and asked me where he had met me. I had flown two combat missions in Italy with the General flying as co-pilot, he did this often with his crews, when I told him he had pinned a couple of medals on me he said "you were in Holzapples outfit weren't you"? He had an incredible memory. Then he bombed me with questions, and asked me if I was married, I told him I was and about the quarters situation at Rhine Main, he became very upset and told me that quarters were abundant there, and for me to hot foot it to the housing office immediately. He told me that he was going to the Officers club for breakfast, and if they would not give me quarters to call him there, he was a four star General.

Well I took off for the barracks and got my buddy who had been hounding the housing office with me and off we went to the office down the street a few blocks. As soon as we walked in, this German woman working the front desk said "you are wasting your time, we have no quarters". At this point I asked to use the telephone, I called the officers club, and a Msgt friend of mine was NCOIC of the club answered the phone, I explained what General Cannon had said and the Housing Officer, a 1st Lt. over heard me and came out of his office in a huff..Well by then I had General Cannon on the phone and he said, "Sgt. Smith, let me talk to that Lt." The Lt. didn't believe me, but when I handed him the phone, his face turned pale, all he could say was yes sir, yes sir, he dropped the phone and ran out of the door headed for the Officers Club, about two blocks away. About fifteen minutes later, the other Sergeant and I were given about ten sets of keys to inspect quarters that we could take our pick from. General

Cannon fired everyone in that Housing Office, including the German woman!

Well, since I had worked the midnight shift that morning, I had a couple days off, so my buddy and I went to the motor pool and checked out a jeep and started looking at quarters. I decided on a house in Buschlag, about three miles South of Rhine Main and started the paperwork to get Lee and the children to Germany. The quarters I decided on was a two story house with three bedrooms upstairs, living room, dining room, kitchen and large basement. When Lee and the children arrived, I was very happy, however, that Jackie was a young baby with the collic, and he cried in that taxi all the way to our quarters in Frankfort, we had arranged for until we could get to Buschlag.

Our quarters were still occupied by an NCO and his family, but was suppose to go back to the States within two weeks. I figured it would take more time than that to get Lee started over there, but the Sgt. in the house was delayed in getting out, and Lee was on the way sooner than I had anticipated. So we stayed a few days with another family in Frankfort until we could occupy our quarters. When we moved in, the quarters were completely furnished, including all linin, dishes, silverware, crystal and very nice furniture. We were also furnished a maid who lived in with us, the U.S. Government paid her. Her name was Hilda Homer, she came from a small village in the French zone up the Rhine River. Her father was an artist, and we still have a painting he gave us. Hilda was raised in the Nazi movement, however she understood we did not discuss politics in our house, and she always honored that rule.

Lee and I were very happy to be to-gether again, especially since we had Jeannie and Jackie, we loved them so very much. After we had been in Buschlag for a while, I acquired a German Shepard Army Guard Dog that had been detrained and was getting to old for the Service. Well, that dog, Rex, loved our kids, he would lie down in the yard when Jackie was learning to crawl and Jackie would get on top of him and sometimes go to sleep, but Rex would get up very carefully and walk around the yard with him on his back! No one could come in that yard with Rex out there unless I was there to control him.

One of our favorite stories about Jeannie was her ability to make friends with the German people, especially the ones who worked on the street in front of the house. One day, Hilda came to me and said, "Mr. Smith, come and see what Jeannie is doing". Well, our refrigerator was in the hall, and Jeannie had swiped two bottles of beer and gone out to sit on the curb with two German workers, she traded the beer for a slice of Black Bread with Margarine on it! She loved that Black Bread, she was such a lovable little girl, and there is no doubt in my mind that she did more to improve relations with those Germans than any adult could do. She learned to speak the German language very quickly, she could hold a long conversation with any of them. I told Hilda that we would never interfere with her doing what she did that day! I wouldn't trade that moment we witnessed for anything, she was so cute and subtile about it.

Lee and I had some good times in Germany, I had bought a surplus Jeep, and we took a trip to Garmisch in the Alps and attended the Passion Play put on by the Germans, it was a great play, but was in German, so we had to follow along in a program that translated to English and it turned out all right. We stayed in a beautiful hotel run by the Army Special Services, it was right on a beautiful lake. Also it was at the foot of the highest mountain in Germany, the Zugspitz, we went to the top of the mountain on a cog railway, that was quite some trip. From the peak of the mountain, there had a cable car to another peak that contained a huge cross made of metal on that peak, I went up there on that cable car, but I couldn't get Lee to go on there. The mountain was so high the hotel up there could not boil water, so they pressure cooked everything. We had a great time there in the Alps, it was such a beautiful place, and all the lakes and streams were clear as crystal. The Jeep that Lee and I had was in pretty good shape, I had the Germans build a body on it with two doors, it worked out fine, and I painted it green!

Well, the Airlift was beginning to wind down, and the Radio Maintenance Officer, Captain Johnston knew I wanted to go back to work as a Radio Technician, I was pretty fed up with that air traffic control, it was very nerve racking. So the Captain had me transferred to his section as a Radio Technician.

The main terminal across the field there at Rhine Main was where our communications center for all Air Forces in Europe, we had about fifteen radio operator positions, with two receivers and remote equipment for transmitting, using both CW code and voice. I was made NCOIC of maintenance for the center, and it took on a huge responsibility, I also had charge of the large transmitters located off base. I had several GI's and one German National working for me. The German was Hans Deutsch, and he was the best radio technician I had ever worked with, he could fix anything, and believe me I leaned on him! We also had the responsibility of the control tower equipment, and it was in pretty bad shape and it kept us hopping to keep that junk on the air, but we did it! I was promoted to Tech. under Johnston, he had made Major just a few months after I started work for him. (I had come back in as a S/Sgt)

When we got our communications equipment in good shape, Major Johnston moved me out to the Rhine Main Radio Range, a low frequency Nav aid that guided planes in on the so called "Beam" when they were on the final approach to the runway. The building was not in very good shape, it needed paint and other clean up jobs, the NCOIC I relieved didn't seem to care what shape it was in. So I set out to put it in shape, we painted cleaned up, waxed and polished the floors until the equipment lights reflected from it! That floor did shine, and we kept felt pads by the door for people to scoot on across the floor, or pull off their shoes! We had two large Diesel generators for back up power of our German electric, and we did have the lowest outage record in Europe. That was a feather in my cap! ha..

There were several radio beacons scattered around Germany for aircraft homing purposes, so Major Johnston tapped me again

and put me in charge of two other beacons and another communications center, I had a GI Jeep to travel around in, it was a full time job, but I sure did like it. We finally got some good NCO's to take charge of each of them and it made my job much easier. I was home with Lee and children every night.

During this time, my first cousin, George Smith, was stationed at Frankfort Military Post, and was NCOIC of the Rhine Main Customs Unit at the main terminal.

A couple more of my friends there in the Air Force, TSgt. Hurd and T/Sgt Cox and of course George and I did a lot of Wild Boar and Deer hunting in Germany, we killed mostly boar and not many deer. We killed many boars, because the Germans were not allowed to have guns and those wild hogs were destroying their crops! I never kept count, but I'm sure I killed at least 75 Boar while I was over there. That Boar meat was excellent to eat, they fed on root crops and would not touch garbage. I belonged to the Rhine Main Rod and Gun Club, so we distributed the meat we brought in through them to orphans homes and displaced persons camps, and other needy people. Going out on those hunts was just about the most fun I ever had at any Sport, we had to have a German ranger, (Yeager) with us on all hunts, and we found them to be fine people who were dedicated to their forestry work. Since they were not allowed to own guns, we would occasionally hand them one of our rifles and let him shoot a boar, this was against the Regulations, but who was to know and it made them very happy with us.

There was a large rabbit in Germany, and we hunted them also with shotguns, they were larger than our Jack Rabbit, and Jeannie loved that meat, as did Lee, Hilda and I. One set of hind quarters of the rabbit would make us a meal! My buddies and I hunted all over Germany, saw some beautiful sights and had lots of fun. TSgt. Cox was an ex-pilot and Lt., so when the Korean war broke out, he got his commission back and was promoted to Captain, I don't know how he made out, he was a great guy. His wife Barbara and Lee were good friends.

During '49 & 50, Hurd and I started playing a little Golf at Frankfort, the Army Special Services had taken over a good golf course near Frankfort, not too far from Rhine Main, the fairways were narrow and a pretty rough course. There were two German golf pros there that got us started out and were excellent instructors. But I never developed into a good golfer there!

During the years of 1950 & '51, Jeannie and Jackie both had health problems, mostly bronchitis caused by the high humidity there at Rhine Main, we were in between the Rhine and Main rivers. The doctors informed Lee and I we had to get them out of that climate. Of course at that time, Lee was very homesick for her parents in family in the States, so she went home in early '51. I couldn't get out of there until September, when my three year tour was up. I surely did miss my sweet wife and kiddies, but it was better for them.

Well, shortly after Lee went to the States, Major Johnston

called me in and told me he wanted me to move out to a small beacon East of Darmstadt, I had worked very hard in cleaning up and maintaining stations around Germany and he decided I should spend the rest of my tour at that station where there wasn't much to do! I had turned in our quarters and had moved to the Base, so I wasn't very happy to be back on base, so I welcomed the move down to that beacon. All I had was two small transmitters and five or six Airmen to work for me. We lived in a small village called Ober Rahmstadt, the Army had a tire rebuild plant there and we were assigned to them for quarters and rations. There were about eighteen Army guys and us six or seven from the Air Force, we had our own dining facilities and were given ration allowances. We all ate in the same dining room, and our meals were prepared by the Germans. The groceries were bought in the commissary at Darmstadt Military Post. Each of us NCO's above rank above S/Sgt. had to do a months duty of grocery buying! But the food service people made up the lists for us, all we had to do was pick it up and give it to the cooks, man we ate some very good food there. The Army Personnel there treated us Air Force guys very well, we had our own private club in the basement of one of the buildings, all ranks belonged. It was on the honor system and when someone drank a beer or soft drink, he would mark it down on a roster kept at the bar, it was kind of amusing, when we tallied the roster on payday, there was always more money than the inventory showed, the guys would get a little high and forget how many marks he made.. ha..We didn't serve hard liquer there, but you could put a bottle down there with your name on it and it would never be bothered..

I continued to do a lot of hunting while down there at the Tire Rebuild shop, George Smith and Hurd would come down from Frankfort, or we would go up there to hunt. The Army guys were great to hunt with, and we got a lot of game..

Well, I was sent back to the U.S. in September of '51, bought a car in New Jersey and headed for Lake Charles to get my sweet family. We were assigned to Sewart Air Base, near Nashville Tennessee. So we went from Lake Charles to Oklahoma to see my folks, they had not seen Jackie yet, and we had a great time showing him off. Dad had moved out South of Elgin while I was in Germany, and he later moved to Lawton, after selling out his farm equipment.

While we were stationed at Sewart, our Rebecca (Becky) was born! She was born exactly 9 months after I had returned to the States and gone to Lake Charles to pick up my family! How about that?? While I was at Sewart I was alerted for Korea, and that made me pretty mad, for I had just gotten back from my three year tour in Europe. We were in a Detachment at Sewart, with Headquarters at Scott AFB, Illinois, we had no officers in the detachment. I found out that another NCO at a detachment at Ft. Campbell Kentucky with the same name and job as I had pulled some strings when he was alerted and got me put on that shipment! But I had reenlisted in Germany three years before this, and was on a special enlistment giving me the right to resign from the Air Force at any time I saw fit. So I went to the Air Inspector at Sewart and he strightened them out, and I resigned. I was

discharged in early 1953.

But while at Sewart, we had lived out in the country in a farm house we rented from a Mr. Lowe, he had retired from farming. We liked it out there, but the base had built some quarters and we had to move into them. They were nice quarters and all electric and brand new.. Lee's Mother had come up to Sewart and when I was discharged, we all headed for Lake Charles.

We went to Oklahoma from Louisiana, I had applied for a job at Tinker AFB, but my appointment had not been put through yet, so I worked as a Radio Technician at Browns Department Store down town Okla. City.

My appointment at Tinker came through pretty fast and I went to work on Civil Service as a Technician in Ground Radio. That job required me to do a lot of traveling, but we managed to make a little more money that way, I traveled all over the North Central U.S., and I did miss my family very much while on those trips. We bought our first house there in Midwest City on Bowman Drive, and were we proud of that! We moved into our new house on a Friday, and our friends Dale and Wanda Page who we did not know at the time, moved in on a week end and had not gotten their water turned on, Dale came over with a bucket and asked me for water to put in the commode, well that was the start of a lasting friendship, that was in 1953, and at this writing in 1992, we are still very good friends. We ran a hose from my faucet to his house and filled up his pipes and hot water heater until he could get the City to turn on the water the next week! Wanda was pregnant with their first son Mike.

I was assigned to the Ground Radio and Electronics shop, and we were primarily prime on Air Defense Radar Sites, that is why we had so much TDY. We had to climb 60 and 90 foot poles and towers to keep antennas in working order, that was hard work. I had signed up in the Air Force Reserves at Tinker, and was assigned to the 1881st Installations and Maintenance Squadron, part of AACCS. I went ahead and applied for recall in the Air Force so I could finish out my retirement, I had over 12 years in. I was accepted in the Summer of '56 and was assigned in the engineering section of Nav Aids. It was a fine job, and I had to keep records on installations of nav-aids all over the world, it wasn't hard to do, for we had about five active duty people doing that, including a couple of officers.

Well, that assignment didn't last long, in September of '56 I was shipped off to Alaska. After processing at Fairbanks, I was sent out to Campion Air Force Station, Galena, Alaska, located on the banks of the Yukon River. The equipment was in very bad shape, the transmitters would not function properly, and most of the land line equipment was in bad repair. I was told by the Comm Officer to try to get this stuff back in working order, there were two S/Sgts under me, one at transmitters and one at the receiver site. The Receiver NCO was a good technician, and his receivers were in good working order, but the NCO in charge of transmitters was a dud. We reassigned him and I went to work

on that bunch of messed up transmitters. After about a month, we had about ten transmitters that had been down back on line! I had some good technicians working for me and we got along just wonderful. The biggest problem of being assigned up there was that I could not have my family with me, it was a "Remote" station. It was cold there, and we only had about one or two hours of daylight per day, and the temperature was 50 below zero at times, but we had good arctic clothing and kept comfortable.

Well the Air Force works in strange ways, they had contracted the maintenance of the communications equipment out to Philco Radio Corporation, so they reassigned all of us Air Force guys all over Alaska. I went to an Air Force Station near McGrath, called Tatalina. What a hole, and no way out of there except by air! The equipment was in just as bad shape as I found at Campion AFS, but I found that we had some good technicians there and it didn't take long to get things back in working order. Some of our UHF equipment was in so bad shape, I called in a Depot Team from Anchorage and they brought new or overhauled equipment in and replaced the bad stuff, we had no adequate facilities for overhauling that equipment. I had worked on that kind of equipment at Tinker AFB when I was working as a civilian at Tinker, so I did determine that it had to be replaced.



While I was at Tatalina, I took the exam and received my Amateur (Ham) radio license, I was assigned an area call that included Oklahoma, and it was K5MGD, I still have that call. We had a club station at Tatalina and that call was KL7FAM, Since we had no private facilities for phone or other communications out of there, my Comm Officer and I, he had a ham license, ran "Phone Patches" for the guys in the Squadron. I would work the station in the afternoon and the Captain would work it during the morning hours, we were the only two licensed operators in the Squadron. We ran nearly 400 patches from about February until Oct. '57, when I returned to the states. I hooked up with a ham in Tulsa and he would patch me through to Lee and the Children just about every Saturday around 1300 Alaska time, but around 1800 in Okla. It helped me keep my sanity to hear my sweet families voices, and the reception was usually very good. I will always be very grateful to the "hams" all over the U.S. who ran these patches for the personnel and myself in the Squadron. I even talked to a lot of my relatives scattered around the Country.

The weather at Tatalina was terrible, we had some real bad snow and ice storms, and the temperature dipped to 50 and 60 degrees below zero. But when the thaw came in the Spring and Summer, we did a lot of fishing and hiking. We caught a lot of Grayling, they were a very good fish, very tasty. We had hundreds of black bear there, especially around the garbage dump, those bears would not bother you at all if they were left alone, the only danger was if a cow had a small calf, she wouldn't let you in close at all, and we respected that!

Our Radar and Communications equipment was located on a 5000 foot mountain, we had a narrow road going up, wound around the mountain, however we had a tram that was about 1 1/4 mile up that mountain! One afternoon, there were four Airmen in the Gondola and the support cable that was about 1 1/2 inches in diameter jumped out of its cradle on one of the towers, the tow cable which was about 3/4 inches in diameter cut through the tow cable and down it came, about 300 feet from the side of the mountain, but by the Grace of God, that tow cable held! The slack in the tow cable allowed the Gondola to stop about 75 feet from a ledge, and we had escape ropes that they descended on and got on the ledge. There was a bunch of groceries in there, but they stayed in there, frozen of course until they managed to get that darn thing up to one of the towers and go up and lower it, that was about two months later! I had gone to the cable car house to go up with them, but was too late, I never complained!

Besides my ham radio at Tatalina, I did quite a lot of leather work in the hobby shop, I made purses, billfolds, belts, etc. I enjoyed passing the time in the hobby shop, but we did have quite a lot of long duty hours, it was during the cold war with Russia, and we were on alert frequently. Their fighters would slip into our airspace quite often, but the people in the U.S. didn't hear about that! During the Summer, we only had about two or three hours of darkness, and during the winter we didn't have any daylight! ha.. We played softball on the flying strip in the Summer, sometimes as late as 11:00 PM, and it would still be light.

The tour of duty there was one year, and it was the longest year I had had ever witnessed, I was very lonesome for my family, and there was nothing I could do about it until the last of September when I rotated back to the States. When I was there, Alaska was still a Territory. Wanda and Dale Page lived two doors from our house, and they were wonderful at helping Lee and our Kiddies out, we are still close friends at this writing.

I left Alaska in September of '57, and the day the bush pilot came in to pick me up, it was in the first snow storm of that fall! But he was a good pilot, and good friend of mine, he took me to McGrath to catch a Commercial Flight to Anchorage for my return to the States. I was assigned to Scott AFB, Illinois as a Radio Instructor.

I returned to Midwest City to my sweet family, and after a few days getting prepared to move to Illinois, we were shipped off to Scott AFB. We found a house in Trenton, Illinois, about ten miles out of Scott on Highway 50. It was an old house, but very well taken care of and Lee made a home out of it for us.

It was quite an experience there in Trenton, the town was divided by Highway 50, and the Catholics were on ones side of the highway, and the Protestants on the other! Not true in all families, but the majority was as I stated. I built my first ham transmitter when I arrived there, it was a Heathkit DX-100, and was a 100 watts of AM, I bought a Hammurlund Receiver and went on the air, it was quite an experience, I worked all over the world with that thing using a vertical antenna. But the battle had just started, all the telephone lines there were above ground, and my signal got into them quite often! The High School principle and I were the only ones there with Amateur Licenses, and he had the same problem. We worked together to try to suppress the interference, but we could never solve the problem completely.

My instructor training as an instructor lasted about 12 or 13 weeks of formal classroom work and then we were assigned to classrooms under supervision to start teaching. It didn't take long until I had my own classes to teach, my first class was teaching Radio Teletype Receiving equipment. We were teaching several nationalities of military personnel, we had Koreans, Turks, Vietnamese, Germans and many others that I do not recall.

After teaching in the classroom about a year, they moved me to a Tech Writing Branch. I wrote a book on Radio Receiving Equipment, also the Teletype equipment I had been teaching. We applied these documents both to OJT and Extension Courses that Air Force personnel took by mail. I also wrote an extension course book on a Radar Set, I don't recall what it was, but it was sure interesting and it took a lot of research for me, for I had not been experienced much in Radar Theory. This was in 1958. The Training Command moved the entire school from Scott to Keesler AFB, Biloxi, Mississippi in the summer of '58.

Lee and the children & I lived in a little village between Gulfport and Bilixi called Mississippi City, (it does not even

exist now, it is part of Gulfport). We lived right next to a railroad, and boy that was an experience, those trains rattled the windows! The children attended school there and seemed to get along fine adopting to their new surroundings. I remember when Jackie would come home from school on his bike he would peddle over that railroad hump and start yelling "hey mom, I'm home", he was quite a guy, and never got into any trouble. Lee and I were involved in the scouting program there, she was a girl scout leader and I was Cub Master, I had about 200 boys in several cub scout packs, but I had plenty of help and enjoyed them very much. I was also involved in Little League Sports, we had a baseball and football team, I worked with a Warrant Officer on both teams. Jackie was on the Baseball team, but was never very good at it, he seemed to be a little afraid of that ball, so he never developed into an ace ball player! Our football team never won a game in two years, but those little guys worked at it!

During our stay there, our landlady, Mrs Bertha Perry lived next door, and believe me she was quite a character. She had been active in politics in the past, and it was said when any one wanted to get elected to a local office they contacted Mrs. Perry! We also attended a small Baptist Church there in Mississippi City, where I taught an adult Sunday School Class.

I was active in Military Affiliate Radio System at Keesler, (MARS), I had assumed duties as Net Control at least once per week, it was quite a demanding job, but my experience as a radio operator made it quite easy. Also I was very active on the Ham bands, and spent a lot of time building various kinds of antennas and operating. I was notified during the Summer of '59 that I could transfer to Lackland AFB, Texas to take over Training command MARS, and was quite excited about it, but fate took another turn for me!

One day, they called about 150 NCO's to the theatre and informed us that about 20 of us would be sent to the Missile and Rocket program to teach Electronics, at various bases. Well, out of that 150 people, only about 25 were eligable. Our records had to be clear of any blemishes, no hot checks, courts-martials, even company punishment, so I qualified and was selected to go to Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls Texas. It was quite an honor, being free from any kind of past black marks on my record! But my transfer to Lackland was canceled.

We were sent to Sheppard in late '59, where I was assigned to the Atlas Program, it was pretty rough for me, because I had not had much electronics in years other than Radio Theory, so I had to burn the midnight oil to bring up my math!

The family and I rented a house on the West Side of Wichita Falls on Iowa Park Road, and attend church across the street in a small Baptist Church and made quite a lot of new friends. But as soon as we could, we purchased a house on Longview in Sunset Terrace, it was a frame house, but it was all we could afford at the time. We liked being stationed at Wichita Falls, Mom and Dad lived in Lawton, just 50 miles from us, and it was the first time

we had been stationed any where near them!

During my duties as an instructor at Sheppard, I taught Guidance and Guidance Checkout Test Equipment on the Atlas "D" Missile. It was quite a challenge, and my fellow instructors were all like me, just in from the field a short time, and quite a lot of catching up to do on our Electronics! But the Atlas "D" became obsolete quite fast, and was replaced by the Atlas "E", which was all inertial guidance instead of Radar Guided as the "D" was. I was assigned to another rocket called the "Blue Scout", it was a solid fuel research rocket that put small payloads in orbit for many military functions. I went to Cape Canaveral, Fla., to see a launch of one, but it failed and was destroyed in the air. LTV Dallas then got the contract to build the Scout, and did a bang-up job of it, they even built the launcher there, and was disassembled and trucked to Vandenburg AFB, California. In late '62, Lee and I bought a nice brick home over on Ruidosa Drive, next to the Skyline Golf Club, it was a very good house and my Lee loved it dearly. A tornado came through and missed us by about four blocks, so the Good Lord was looking out after us.

The Blue Scout team of instructors from Sheppard was sent out to Vandenburg to teach launch and Technician crews. There were several launches of that rocket from there, and it was a tremendous success, better than 95% completed missions.

I was at Vandenburg for about three months on TDY, and upon my return to Sheppard I was just about out of a job, but was assigned as an attrition Instructor. But I didn't get any students and sitting around doing nothing was quite boring! So I went to work in a safety office run by a Warrant Officer Bean that I worked in the Boy Scouts with. Most of my duties consisted of Missile Safety concerning both electronics trainers and exotic fuels safety. Some of that stuff was extremely hazardous.

Due to remote possibilities of promotion in the Training Command, (no instructor had been promoted during my tenure as an instructor), and this wasn't very encouraging. So Lee and I decided to retire from the Air Force, which I did on December 31, 1964, and we embarked on a new career! I saw my name in the Air Force Times as being selected for Master Sgt., but because I had put in my papers for retirement, it was cancelled. Oh well!

Before retiring from the Air Force, I had gone down to Dallas and to a test from Philco Radio Corporation. Because of my many years on Air Force Communications Equipment, I nearly aced that test, it was very long and took over four hours to complete. The person who tested me said that the score I had made on it was the highest that had ever been achieved, that made me very proud, but I realize that my exposure to military communications equipment for 20 years had accounted for that, in addition, I had over four years at Tinker in Depot Level work during the '50s. So the old saying goes, pour water on a sponge and some of it will soak in! ha.. But the Philco people wanted me to go over seas, or travel to various bases in the U.S. to

teach OJT on equipment. I had just about enough of the travel stuff away from my family, and declined to accept their offers.

Our income was pretty low, Lee had to work in the food service departments at Sheppard to keep our heads above water, I was working at a TV shop in Electra, Texas, but the pay wasn't very good, and working on those tv's and other appliances just wasn't my cup of tea! I went to work in a Satellite Tracking Station near Archer City, Texas as a shift chief, but again the pay was not good, but the work there was great, we had ten fifty thousand watt TV transmitters we sent a curtain of signal out in space to track anything traveling over the U.S. in orbit.

Again, fate took over and a Warrant Officer I knew in the Missile Department was Branch Chief of the telephone switching school at Sheppard called me and wanted me to go to work for him. I had wanted to get back to Civil Service, so I took him up and went back to Sheppard as a Civilian Instructor. I had no experience in Telephone Circuits, but he assured me that with my electronics experience I could sit through a class and teach it. This proved to be correct, for the circuits in Telephone were quite simple, and I loved to teach them. The one drawback to that job was that it was only temporary and could be terminated at the end of one year, but I did get my "foot in the door" so to speak to get reenstated in Civil Service.

I called my friend Charley Gordon I had worked with at Tinker in the '50s who was a division chief in Ground Electronic and Radio and asked him if he had a job for me. He informed me that he had been trying to get in touch with me and that he did have a position I could qualify for, with a promotion. Well now, I was feeling pretty good about that, and off I went to Tinker and was reenstated. This was in the Fall of 1966.

Lee and I hated to leave our lovely house in Wichita Falls, but we had to improve our income and establish a job that we could depend on. Our kiddies were well established in school there in Wichita, and it was hard to make the decision to get out of there. Jeannie had married Joe, but Jackie and Becky were in the band at their high school.

After moving to Midwest City, in 1966, I was again on a travel status, but not for long periods. I didn't like the idea, but Charlie did get me a GS-9, he tried to get me an eleven, but personnel wouldn't go along with it..

During one of my trips, Lee had found a house she liked near the High School, (Carl Albert), and had made arrangements to buy it. We had been living in a rented mobile home, and it was quite small. So we moved into the house on Waltz Way. Lee again went to work for a Vending Company down in Oklahoma City to supplement our income so our children could have what neither of us ever had! Lee was ever thoughtful of mine and our childrens needs, she was a very kind and generous person when it came to those kiddies and she had some pretty trying times during the many hours working and traveling in that heavy traffic. That is something I will never forget.

I worked with Ground Electronic for about four years, but during that time, that travel status was getting to me, I was about to get ulcers, and a doctor at Tinker told me that being away from my family so much was causing all my problems. I asked to be put on another job, and I landed a job with Operations Division in GEEIA, and it required no TDY, except may just short trips occasionally.

But while I was working for Charlie, I attended a computer technician school at Keesler, also a Radar school later, I did enjoy those schools and broadened my scope of communications in the Air Force.. Lee and the kiddies joined me at Keesler one summer while I was attending School, but had to go back home when school started.

During the winter of '69/'70, GEEIA, the organization I was assigned to was being re-organized and the position I was on had been eliminated, so I was out looking for another job at Tinker! I was told by my supervisors I would have to wait it out to be called to Personnel for interviews, if any jobs existed. This went on for several weeks and I realized no one was going to do any thing for me at all, so I went on my own to Civilian Personnel, and immediately found three positions that I could qualify for. I went for the interviews and accepted a job in the A-7D Program as a Logistics Officer in Avionics. (Aviation Electronics). I worked for three and 1/2 years on that job and the last six months of my Civil Service duties I was assigned to the Time Compliance Tech Orders for the A-7, that proved to be a very pleasant job. and since the Viet Nam war was going on, it kept me very busy shipping Modification Kits out to the Squadrons as they demanded. We had 300 A-7's all over the globe, and I had about 100 kits per aircraft to get out and keep up with!

About 1972, Lee and I bought some lots on Lake Eufaula, they were back in the woods very near the Cove at Southport Addition. I then retired in 1974, combined my military time with the civil service and it turned out to be a good deal, our income kept increasing over the years as COLA's increased. We had bought a Mobile Home in Okla. City and moved it to our lot, but it was a pretty bad mobile home, I had a lot of work making it livable, and Lee worked like a horse making a home out of it..We had a lot of trees and brush to clear out to park that thing, and make some garden space. The varmints, especially Copper Head Snakes were very numerous there, and kept us on our toes..

We had to go to Congressman Synars Office in Muskogee to get our pay straightened out, the Government had fouled it up pretty bad, and short-potted me a couple hundred dollars per month, but after about five or six months they got it straightened out and I received the correct pay, including back pay that had been withheld.

Lee and I bought a Troy Roto Tiller, put in a big garden, and that wife of mine turned into a MASTER GARDENER! We had more garden produce than we could possibly use, and had two deep-freezes full all the time.. But that land down there turned out to be a tremendous job, we worked ourselves to a frazzle! Lee

worked in a Clothing Factory at Eufaula for a while, to bring in a little extra income. I picked up an electricians license at Eufaula, and it kept me pretty busy. I did jobs that contractors would not do, such as putting in outlets for dryers, air conditioners, etc. including wall plugs, lights, door bells and many other small jobs. I did make a few extra bucks doing this, however, most of the people there were on Social Security or other low income and I just could not charge inflated prices for my work.

We built a large living room on the Mobile Home, re-modeled the Kitchen/Dining room and had all new cabinets put in the kitchen, they were sure beautiful. We took out a partition in the kitchen and dining room and it gave us more room.

Lee's sister Marie bought a lot next door and moved a Mobile Home on it, she was working as a cook on a Tug Boat on the Mississippi River and didn't spend much time there, so we had a little extra duty of looking after her property, but it didn't take much to so it, she had bought a riding mower and I used it to keep both places in order..

Well, since our home there was all electric, I installed a wood burning stove in the living room we had built, also put in some ceiling fans to circulate the heat and air, it worked pretty good. The fans would circulate the heat to the rest of the house, also help with the air conditioning in the summer, we had three window units.

While at Eufaula, I was very active in the Masonic Lodge, I worked up to Worshipful Master in 1982, that took nearly eight years! Eufaula Lodge was Number 1 in Oklahoma, so it was quite an honor to be elected to Master there, and during my reign as Master, we started and built a new Lodge Building out on highway 69. We finished the lodge building in 1983, but there was a lot of friction in that lodge, more than there should have been, but I did brave the storm and was happy to get out of that officers line with my faculties! I had joined Del City Lodge #536 in '69. and after working in the line, my friend Wayne Paddock had put me in, I resigned from the Junior Deacons position because I was moving to Eufaula.

In 1981, I came up with a little heart problem, and had to have three or four by-passes put in. The doctors at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Oklahoma City performed the operation, and also cleaned out the arteries in my neck to allow a better flow of blood to my brain!

I want to dedicate a few paragraphs at this time to my Wife and family, especially Lee, for example, she stayed with me in that hospital room for twenty eight days and nights, she nursed and took care of me while recovering at home. She drove back and forth from Eufaula to the City for my follow-up exams, this was over 250 miles round trip. Not only did she do all of this, she took care of the garden, did all of the shopping and running around required to keep our home going. I must say, this did bother me a little, but she never complained, even though I knew she was exhausted much of the time. This was devotion over and beyond the duties as a wife. But I knew she loved me, and I did realize that the bonds of love was bound a little tighter.

Lee is a very good devoted Christian and person, she will go out of her way to give aid and help other people when they need it, and enjoy every minute of it! I want everyone who may read this biography to know this and always remember what I have written about her, and in addition express my eternal gratitude for the kind of wife I have.

She is a devoted Mother and Grandmother, Jeannie had married Joe Whitmire while were in Wichita falls, and gave us two lovely granddaughters, Joy and Jennifer. Our Son Jackie, did a hitch in the Air Force, but had an unsuccessful marriage, but later married a girl with two children and he is very happy with her, and her name is also Jeannie! Her two children, boy and a girl, is Scott and Catherine. He made a fine choice, Jeannie is great.

While we were at Midwest City and later Eufaula, Joy and Jennifer spent every summer with us, and believe me we did have a ball with those two girls. They spent a lot of time swimming in

the Lake and entertaining us! Joy loved to stay all summer, but little Jennifer would get homesick, and Joy couldn't understand this at all, but we did, she missed her mom and dad a lot. But that Joy could adopt to any situation, and is still that was! Well, that Rebecca, (Becky), being the adventure type, joined the Army, and after completing her Boot Camp and a school of Journalism in Indiana, took off for Korea. She told her mother and I that she was going to get a baby over there, and by golly she did! When she came home, she had a beautiful little girl she called "Jackie". At this writing she is a Teen Ager, and we love her dearly. She was such a little bundle when she arrived in the U.S., it is hard to believe she's growing up. She is a full blood Korean, and is growing into a beautiful young lady.

While at Eufaula, Lee and I realized we were doing too much on that acreage, so in 1983, we bought a 30 foot Winnabago Travel Trailer. I didn't have anything to pull it with, so we bought an old '75 Cadillac, it was fully equipped with a trailer pulling package, and did a good job of it.

We rented our place out and took off for places unknown! We first went to Oklahoma City, camped in the Fam Camp at Tinker for a few days and then on to Wichita Falls, where we stayed for a while. From there, we went South to the Gulf Coast, visited her Brothers and Sisters around Lake Charles, and after a few weeks down there with her Brother Terry out in the Country, we came back to Oklahoma for one of my check ups. We wound up camped on a Lake on Fort Sill, in the Wichita Mountains, there I bought a Ford Pickup with a camper shell, the Caddie was getting shop worn and I was getting a little afraid she was going to conk out on us at the wrong time! We gave it to Terry and he came up on the bus, picked it up and drove back to Lake Charles.

We traveled the Gulf Coast mostly, went to Dauphin Island off of the coast of Mobile, Alabama, had a great time and plenty of sea food. While we were on the Coast, Lee's Uncle Willie passed away, and also her Brother Floyd. This was quite a loss to her, that was the first of her brothers to die. We also did some camping on Lake Ponchartrain at New Orleans. We attended the Mardi Gras in New Orleans and it was just wonderful. We also did a lot of sight seeing around that city.

We came back to Oklahoma VIA Houston, also spent some time on a lake in Louisiana, visited Debbie and her family and on to Oklahoma for another of my checkups. While we were camped out on Lake Ellsworth, North of Lawton, I took a physical exam at Fort Sill and they discovered a cancer on my Prostate, so we had to stop and have that fixed. We moved to a Mobile Home Park in Lawton and I took 37 Cobalt treatments. It wasn't a pleasant thing to do, but it saved my life, and again, my sweet wife was nurse and keeper of the household! She took excellent care of me and did all the driving for my treatments.

We had sold our property in Eufaula to a guy from Del City, and while we were at Lawton he paid it off and it gave us enough capital to put a down payment on this Solitaire Mobile Home. We had gone to Waurika, Okla., where they build them and toured the

factory, this sold us on the quality of the home. So Lee and I set our sights on a Solitaire. We sold the travel trailer and moved the Mobile Home into the same park. We also had enough money to buy furniture and other necessities for our home.

We stayed in Lawton from '85 until '89, I played a lot of Golf at Fort Sill, I had three partners that put in a lot of time playing golf with me. One was a Polish guy, one an Irishman and an Osage Indian. We were a very compatible group, during those few years we never at any time had a cross word between us. At this writing, the Polish guy, Adam has passed away a couple years ago, he was a great guy and retired from the Army as were the other two partners.

But Lee and I were not satisfied with Lawton, there just wasn't anything there for us except my golf, and that had to take a back seat! One Sunday, I was reading the Oklahoman and was looking at the Classified Ads and saw where a mobile home park manager would move us to Oklahoma City at no cost to us. Well now, that was all Lee wanted to hear, she could hardly wait until Monday to call and see what we could do to move up. We came up that week (Feb) and picked out a lot. They came down and moved us here to Shelter Estates, and my total cost was only electric and phone hookup. (Our Mobile Home is Total Electric) It was March when we moved here, and I must say we were very happy to be back in Oklahoma City, Lee always liked it here very much, We are very centrally located here, just three miles from Tinker, about three or four miles from a good hospital, and just about eight minutes drive to down town Okla. City.

Jackie and Jeannie live here in the City, and that pleases us very much, more about how he has helped me later.

Lee and I have gotten involved in community affairs, we go to Rose College to take Water Aerobics, I have been enrolled in Computer classes the past year and a half, and I also belong to an organization called "HI VETS" that was organized by a lady in the Veterans Hospital, who works in the audio clinic, and the name derives from Hearing Impaired Veterans. I am past director of that organization, and we have a very good group. I also belong to a local Chapter 10 of the CCC's I was a part of, I was secretary for two years.

Lee took classes in Horticulture at Rose College, and she has flowers and garden here that is outstanding, we have the best looking lot in this park. I also work as a volunteer in the Tinker Hospital Pharmacy one half day per week, I have met some very wonderful people there, and it is a very busy place!

I play golf with my friend Dale Page when at all possible, however I can't go out in the hot sun, so we go out in the early morning hours. Lee and Dale's wife Wanda are the best of friends, they are more like sisters than just friends, she takes water aerobics with us, but Dale just plays golf! ha..

Well at this writing, we discovered a few months ago that my cancer had re-appeared on my Prostate, so an operation followed to

cut down my Male Harmones, and I am doing fine. That was in the spring of '91.

Well, about February of '91, Lee and I purchased a computer that I enjoy very much. Now I want to add something about our son Jackie. He is an accomplished computer operator, and when I get into trouble, he gets me out of it, and that is often! I could never have gotten as far as I have without him, I am still not a good computer operator, but I do have a pretty good working knowledge of this thing, and it is very comforting to know that Jackie is just a phone call away if I get back into trouble!

Jackie has become an accomplished musician, he plays a mean guitar! We get together for a "Jam" session once in a while, but I have certainly lost a lot of skill playing the "fiddle", I didn't play at all for a period of 25 to 30 years, but I enjoy every minute of playing with him. I sometimes wonder how he puts up with me!

Well, another good thing has come into our lives, our neighbor Camille Fulton gave us a Lhaso Aphso puppy about six weeks old. We named the little tyke "Skeeter", since I had been called that name in my youth because I was always so small. This little dog is two now, and has filled a gap in our lives. I had already built a backyard fence, so we had no trouble keeping him out of the street. We have spoiled him rotten of course, but I suppose it was meant to be that way. During a visit out to San Diego last year to visit my sister Lorene, Skeeter stayed on the back seat and was a very good traveler. I took him for a walk in a park there, and he didn't know what to do about a large flock of Sea Gulls feeding in the grass, he got in a lot of running and barking! He has a box full of toys in the hall, and will scatter those toys all over the house and demand we play with him. He is a very intelligent pet, we can't fool him in any way. We had a pretty hard time house-breaking him, but one day he decided to go outside, and that was it, no more messes on the paper! We reward him with a "dinner mint" even now.

Lee and I have made quite a lot of good friends here in the park. We tried to organize a neighborhood watch program, but the tenants in the park just wasn't interested. Mel and Lurline Homewood down the street has been our good friends, he is a very talented woodworker and makes many wooden toys and other things for children and adults. We had a very good pair of friends who were in the Air Force, but they both retired and moved to Alabama.

Lee and I are trying to keep our health in check at this writing, we see our doctors on a regular basis, and get all of our prescriptions at Tinker, this saves us a tremendous amount of money. We are very happy here, we enjoy each other so very much, and we do many things to-gether. Having Jackie just across the City from us is a very comforting feeling.

Our Daughters Jeannie and Becky keep in touch with us on a regular basis. The last of May & in June '91, we planned a family reunion of Lee's family in Louisiana, it was hosted by her

sister Nell, she lives near DeQuincy, La.

Now that was some reunion, all of our children and grandchildren were there, and that was about the best time I ever had at any gathering. There was a lot of Cajun food, and wonderful fellowship.

Well on the 1st day of July '91, we had returned from the reunion, we were there the 15th, 16th & 17th of June. All of our families had shown up there except Margeret and her family. There was one in Debbies family that was not there, her husband Steve could not get off of work, he is a driller on an oil rig. We missed him very much, but we spent a night with them in Houston on the way down, and saw Steve then. He is a wonderful person.

One of the exciting highlights of our stay in DeQuincy was the Motel there, it is a run down dump, but many of us stayed there and dubbed it the "DeQuincy Hilton", and we did have a very good time. At least the beds were clean and comfortable..

We did some crabbing down near Cameron, La., below Lake Charles, but the alligators kept getting our bait! But it was a bang up success, since most of these "Okies" had never seen an alligator in the wild, they would stay in the water of course, I never saw one out on he bank, they just came up to the edge of the shallow water and grab the crab bait. I was very amused at all of my children, especially my grandchildren and Chris being exposed to those crabs and alligators, it was quite a sight.

Our Joy's boyfriend Chris Pruitt attended the reunion, and this was his first encounter with a group of Cajuns, he was quite impressed, especially with that fine food. But having all of our children and grandchildren down there was such a blessing. Jackie and I did some Fiddle and Guitar playing, this was the first time I had ever played for Lee's relatives.

Well, in the writing of this document, I want to thank all my friends and relatives for their prayers during my trying times with this 'ol cancer. We know that prayer is the most powerful tool known to man, and I know beyond all reasonable doubt that it has worked for Lee and I. We all know that the Good Lord has a plan for each of us, and it cannot be changed in any way.

On the 17th of July '91, Joy, (Working for Contentental), came up from Houston, she brought her wedding dress to be altered for her up coming marriage to Chris. It is white and she is just beautiful in it. Jackie took several photos of her in it, she is very happy and excited about her wedding plans.

This paragraph is late, but in April, 1990, a reunion of three CCC Companies was held in the Wichita Mountains, Co. 812, Co. 859 and my Company 870. Jackie went down with me and we spent a couple of nights in a motel in Lawton for the reunion. My son had a ball down there, and I did see a few of my 'ol CCC Comrades. While a busload of CCC Vets including Jackie and I had gone to the North East Elk pasture to a small lake called Elm Lake, Jackie was taking pictures of snakes and other subjects, I saw a depression where a bulldozer had pushed debree from the dam up on the side of a small hill about 75 feet, I saw an object sticking out of a rotted wood pile that didn't look like wood. Well I kicked it with my foot, and it was an iron bar that was used in the forest for many tasks, including workon the dam, well when got back to the assembly area, the ranger, a female, gave me the bar! I had used the same kind of bar when I joined and worked in the CCC's on those fences digging holes. I still have it, and intend to will it to Jackie!

In October '91, Joy had quit the Airlines and was married to Chris Pruitt. They spent some time here in Oklahoma City with trying to get some leads on a job. I also took a blood test this month for my cancer check and it was negative, .3 PSA., so we are glad we made the decision for the surgery.

On the 26 of October '91 I announced at a Board of Governors meeting that I would not serve another term as Secretary. I could not serve another term, because two years is the limit according to the By-Laws., I would not have served another one anyway. I am still in Computer school, taking WP-51, and enjoy it very much.

Well, the winter of 91 was quite uneventful, we had a mild winter, I believe it was the mildest winter we ever witnessed in this part of the country. Lee and I are very happy here, attending our Water Aerobics at Rose and other activities.

But in May of '92, I had a little problem, I had some chest

pains, and Lee took me to emergency at the hospital, and Dr. Weissman diagnosed a stopped up artery of one of my by-passes. Well he put me in the Intensive Care, and later performed the "Balloon Surgery" on me, well it seems to be working, I have not witnessed any more extreme chest pains..

Also in May, Lee and I signed a contract to buy a house over in Midwest City, well we have to sell the Mobile Home to be able to qualify for a loan on the house, and at this writing, July 5 '92, we have not been able to sell this Mobile Home. So if we don't sell it, we will just remain in it, we are comfortable here, but don't know what the status of the Shelter Estates Park is, rumors fly, but the Good Lord will decide what he wants us to do.

On 28 June, 1992, the Smith Family had another reunion, we met here in Shelter Estates Clubroom. We had over 50 in attendance. All of our children and grandchildren were here, Becky came from Colorado with her Jackie, Jeannie, Jennifer and Jennifer's boyfriend were here, Joy and Chris Pruitt came from Dallas and our Son Jackie, wife Jeannie and Katherine was here. Our Daughter Jeannie now lives in the Dallas area.

We had a lot of relatives from both sides of mom and dad's family, but none of the Smiths from Rush Springs were here, that is Uncle Roys family. Most of the O'Dells and their families were here. Jackie and I entertained with fiddle and guitar music. All my brothers and sisters were here, including most of Shirley and Elmers children and grandchildren.

This was the third reunion that Lee and I had participated in, we had one in Virginia at Ruby's home, and we had met at Lawton in the Clubhouse where Lee and I were living in a Mobile home park. Since we had the reunion in Virginia, Ruby's husband Mike and Loren's husband George have passed away.

Becky and Jackie spent a week here with us after the reunion, and I must say we surely did enjoy her, she had a birthday while she was here, she was 40! And that's our baby!

While Becky was here, she went down to the Police Department in Oklahoma City and took the Preliminary exam for a Police Woman, and she passed with flying colors. Now she must fill out some extended applications and await for another Police Academy to start, which will probably be in the Spring of 1993.

We have had a tremendous amount of rain this spring and summer, and it has taken a toll on our garden. But we are now getting some tomatoes, peppers and a lot of good squash from it. The Corn didn't turn out to be good, but I got a few good ears that are mature, Lee has frozen some and we ate a few a short time ago. This is the 7th of July '92. Lee and I are back in our aerobics classes now, and I am back in my Word Perfect Computer classes, we were interrupted by the reunion and the 4th holidays. The park pool is open and Lee is taking advantage of it, I haven't been in there yet!

# Cleo Albert Smith Autobiography

This concludes the original pages in the document.  
In October of 1992 CA entered the hospital for  
another bypass and did not recover. He has been  
missed by all who knew him.

Hopefully this autobiography will provide some insight  
into the life he lived and who Cleo Albert Smith was.

