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A sorrow

June 21, 1925 - May 6, 2020

A Memoir of William Twain Morrow
Dedicated to his beloved family and friends

To Whom It May Concern:

It is the Year 2007; the World Almanac says there are currently over 6 billion people on planet earth. We all share some common characteristics and yet, each is different, "like the one-of-a-kind snowflake," or that each of us has a unique set of fingerprints unlike any other. I suppose this narrative can be called a memoir and I considered not doing it on the grounds that it might be viewed as narcissistic and ego driven, but actually it is being written by request.

Autobiographical, I suppose, since it deals only with one man's perspective. It will emphasize the contrasts of the past nearly 95 years, the enormous technological changes in medicine, communications, genetic research, social transformations, transportation and every other facet of contemporary life. When in recorded history have there been so many profound changes in so short a time? It boggles this finite mind. Having grown up in the economic

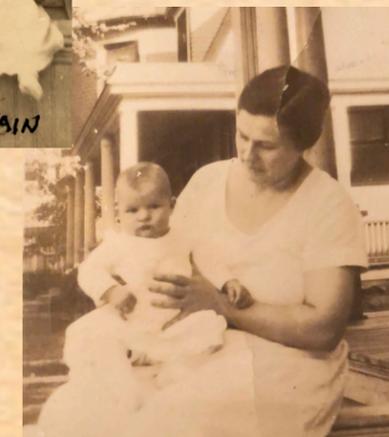
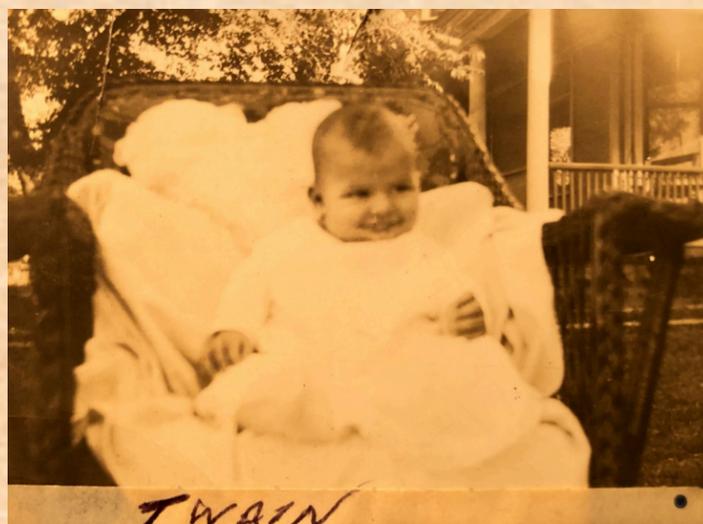
depression era of the 30's, who could have predicted the life changing experiences of the post World War II era? Now in the autumn of my years, I wish I would have had more in-depth conversations with past kin, but the chance was wasted and the opportunity long gone. It didn't seem quite so important at the time. I shall make every effort not to focus on prideful good deeds, nor shall there be a confession of past or current transgressions; one will just have to speculate about those matters, since someday they will be reconciled between the "Maker" and me. These random recollections are as factual as the diminishing memory serves and they won't be embellished upon or exaggerated for effect.

William Twain Morrow



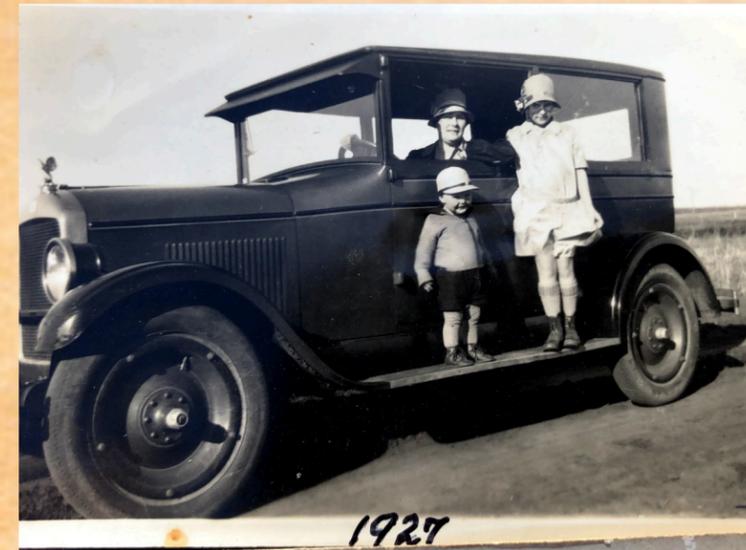
So, my certificate of birth reads, 11:30pm, Sunday, June 21, 1925, "lying in" hospital, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Baby boy Morrow, 9lb, 2oz., parents, W.C. Morrow, age 37, Mother, Winnie Bell Stephens Morrow, age 27.

As the story goes, following delivery, the doctor came out to the waiting room and said to my Father, "well, it's a success". That reminded Dad of the very same comment Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, casually made when he first saw the Pacific Ocean. Father Bill was fond of the author's flippant quote "it's a success," hence the name Twain.



The family was living in Oklahoma City where Dad worked for the Harlow Publishing Company as a linotype operator and foreman of the print shop. My sister, Ethel Louise Morrow, was 7 in 1925. Dad had gone to linotype school in Macon, Georgia. He, Mother and Ethel had lived in Nashville, Tennessee where he worked, before coming to Oklahoma City.

My first recollection as a walking, breathing homosapien was in 1927 at age 2. One evening, our family had gone to the circus; there was a boxing ring occupied by a muzzled bear, whom I assume was declawed. He was wrestling with a shorts-clad man. They grappled with each other for a while and I've no idea who won, but after the spectacle, we were walking back down the sidewalk to where we had parked the car, our 1927 Whippet, four-door sedan. It was no longer there. I've no idea how we got home but the next day, I remember us going to the city auto pound to view the charred remains of our burned out, wheelless vehicle. As we say today, "it had been totaled."



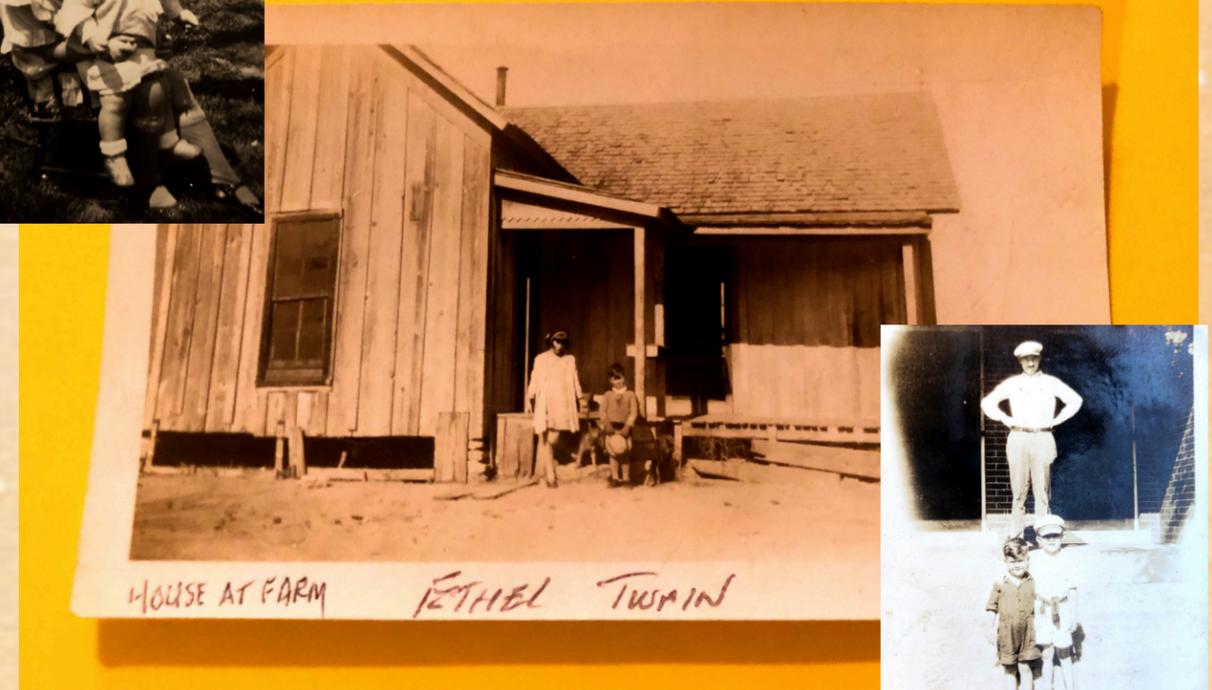
1927



BILL



ETHEL TWAIN DAD 1927



HOUSE AT FARM ETHEL TWAIN



TWAIN & MICKEY OKLA. CITY

Dad had been doing well professionally and life was good. Shortly, however, we did have another minor setback. Air conditioning didn't exist then and people usually slept with the windows open, particularly in the summertime. The doors were most always unlocked when retiring for the night. Dad had a habit of hanging his trousers over the foot of the bedstead. One balmy evening a burglar crept slowly in and crept out with Mr. Morrow's wallet. We heard the culprit as he hurriedly exited the back door. Such was the tenor of the times.

Among unusual sights in Oklahoma City in the early 20's were touring cars with the top down, occupied by a driver, and in the back seat would be a "red faced" American Indian*. He would have feathers in his hair and be wrapped in a brightly colored blanket. These displays were the result of recently discovered oil found on Indian lands.

*Epithet in context of time period; author does not condone discrimination

One day when I was about three, Mother took me next door to visit her neighbor. The fine lady had just baked a cherry pie. I had been taught not to meddle with other people's property and pretty much adhered to that rule. For some reason however, I punctured that pastry with one extended finger--why? At the time it just seemed like the thing to do. Consequently, I received the appropriate reprimand, but the nice lady offered me a treat,



the piece with the hole in it. (To digress for a moment, some of the recollections may be out of sync chronologically, since they have lain dormant in the subconscious for a long time. You will probably find some punctuation flaws, "misspelled" words and grammatical errors contained within--I make no claim for computer literacy and as a matter of fact, my last typing class was 63 years ago.)



During the family's four-year stay in the capital of the "sooner state," Mother, Ethel, and I would make a periodic sojourn to Fort Worth, via the train, to see relatives. In 1929 Dad became ill and couldn't work. He thought he had developed a stomach ulcer, which ultimately turned out to be toxic lead poisoning, the result of handling lead ingots produced by the linotype machine. That year, 1929, we moved to Fort Worth. Dad was jobless but had a meager insurance policy from his former employer, the Harlow Publishing Company of Oklahoma City.

We survived on that for a year. He bought a house at 2121 Lee Avenue. He said he purchased that particular house because it was on an elevated lot, about 10 feet above street level, and should there be any breeze, we would benefit from it. Though not well, Dad took a job on the only newspaper in Gladewater, Texas. Mother preferred not to move again so we stayed put. I started school and Mother took a job as a seamstress, lining fur coats. After a spell, Dad returned and landed a job with the Fort Worth Press, a local, daily newspaper. This was during the height of the depression. We weren't actually starving but some people we knew were being fed at bread lines. Some of my classmates at Circle Park Elementary School were malnourished and received dietary supplements during the school day. I owned a single pair of shoes. On the last day of school, they came off and were not worn again for 3 months.



HOUSE AT 2121 LEE AVE - BOUGHT BY BILL MORROW 1929



During the summer the soles of my feet became so calloused and tough, I could walk on broken glass, grass burrs, and scorching hot sidewalks with little or no discomfort. Our house was on the corner of 22nd and Lee Avenue. Both streets were unpaved. There wasn't a lot of auto traffic but occasionally a car would come by and stir up an enormous dust cloud. Ever so often whooping, hollering cowboys on horseback would come charging down those dust laden streets driving cows, horses, or mules on their way to the pens at the stockyards.

Suffice it to say, I enjoyed the spectacle.

Though our house was within the city limits, we kept livestock in the backyard: a cow, sometimes a skinny ole horse, goats, ducks, and rabbits. There was no city ordinance against keeping barnyard animals at home. Ironically, I wasn't allowed to have a dog; guess it would have had to be fed. For that matter, I never owned a bicycle. I think it had something to do with an incident in which some careless kid on a bicycle was nearly hit by Mr. Morrow's car. There was a vacant lot across the street and it was my job to take the horse or cow, attached to a chain, and stake it out to graze each morning and bring it in each night. Dad heard that goat's milk was good for ulcers so he and Mother shared the milking chore. The chickens were productive if you could keep the stray cats at bay. Dad had a kind of creative urge, though rudimentary. Most of his projects were of the amateur status. He came home one day with 4 ducks. We excavated a plot about 4 ft. by 5 ft as a marine playground for those little web footed amphibians. We mixed and lined it with cement. The only problem was, it wouldn't hold water. Well, nothing ventured, nothing gained!



Our diet, I suppose, was adequate for the time. There were beans, potatoes, cornbread, an occasional chicken or rabbit. One day it was decided there was a need to supplement it with some fresh pork. Dad had bought a pig and we took it out to the acreage he was trying to invest in. Hog killing time, according to the old timers, was a cold weather event.

So one frigid winter's day we shot the thing, scraped the hair from the hide and proceeded to butcher it, as had been done in the "good ole days." Dad had constructed the semblance of a smokehouse where you were supposed to hang the meat to cure it with smoke and salt so it wouldn't spoil. Our smokehouse was about as utilitarian as the duck pond in that they both leaked. OK, so we had fresh pork galore. The problem with that scenario is that unless pork is properly cured as described, digestion wise, it can result in gastronomic distress. Oh, it tasted great but there was a price to pay.



To add to the "fun and games," as we were processing "porky pig" that day, a rabid dog appeared upon the scene. It was frothing at the mouth, as hydrophobic canines are prone to do. There was an old house on the property, so Dad hustled Mother and me inside. The dog was circling the house at full speed. Dad positioned himself at the corner with a 2x4 board. At the third completed lap, "wham," and the rabid dog crisis is over. One day when I was about age 7 or 8, a neighbor

presented me with a cute little domestic rabbit, a young buck. Dad somehow came up with a doe.

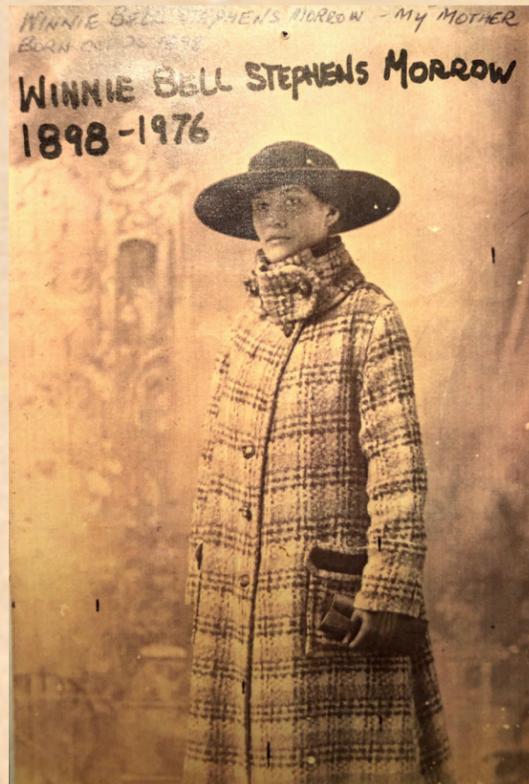
Before long we had a backyard full of long-eared, short-tailed little mammals. The gestation period for rabbits is about 30 days. Dad built pens but we couldn't keep pace with our growing number of rabbits. So, we devised a plan. Why not provide a ready-made source of protein for our under-fed neighbors? A free market economy at work! Dad would kill, skin, and dissect our surplus bunny population. On Friday afternoon, I would peddle them in the neighborhood for 25 cents, "two bits," a quarter of a dollar. They were great for Sunday dinner and business was booming. The customers were happy and there was no Food and Drug Administration to deal with.

I had a 50-cent angora goat. In the summertime, that vaulted breeze didn't blow much so Mother rigged me a bed outside in the backyard. I liked the idea and so did the goat. There's something to be said for sleeping out under the stars. I could have done without the dew that settled in the early morning, however. My goat was sort of a pet and he had a habit of finding his way upon that bed and "tapping out." That was fine with me, but every morning I could hear the back door slam. It was Mrs. Morrow. She came with a broom and would "whop" that "bunk mate" of mine off my bed.

As a matter of fact, I guess he didn't smell too good and I wasn't the one who had to wash those sheets. Reference "The Wash"--there were no electric dryers then, so all wet clothes, etc, were hung out on the line. If the line happened to droop just a bit, said goat could decimate part of a pair of socks or a shirt tail in nothing flat.



My mother was kind, loving, patient, generous, capable, and pretty; an excellent cook and had a sweet, unpretentious disposition. She came from a rural background and had a loving family of 7. Living on a farm, she was no stranger to hard work. On her 12th birthday, she labored out in the hot sun to pick 200 lbs. of cotton. Like most country kids of that era, she had no more than a 5th or 6th grade education in a one-room schoolhouse, but she was practical and wise beyond her years.



In 1916, she came to Fort Worth and took a job with the phone company. She dressed well, was creative, an excellent seamstress, and had a quality about her that can only be described as "class." I loved her dearly! In 1975 she suffered two heart attacks. Dad was near 87 and couldn't provide personal care. She wouldn't come live with us, so she spent the few remaining months in the Lake Worth Nursing Home, Just before she died she said, "Son, take care of your Dad; he's had a tough life."

The loss of my sister to cancer at age 51 was devastating to us all, as well. She lived two years with the deadly malady and suffered greatly but was cared for lovingly by her husband, Cliff Truman.

She never complained and in her darkest hour, I recall her unquestionable faith when she said to me, "Dear brother, never once have I said, why me, Lord."

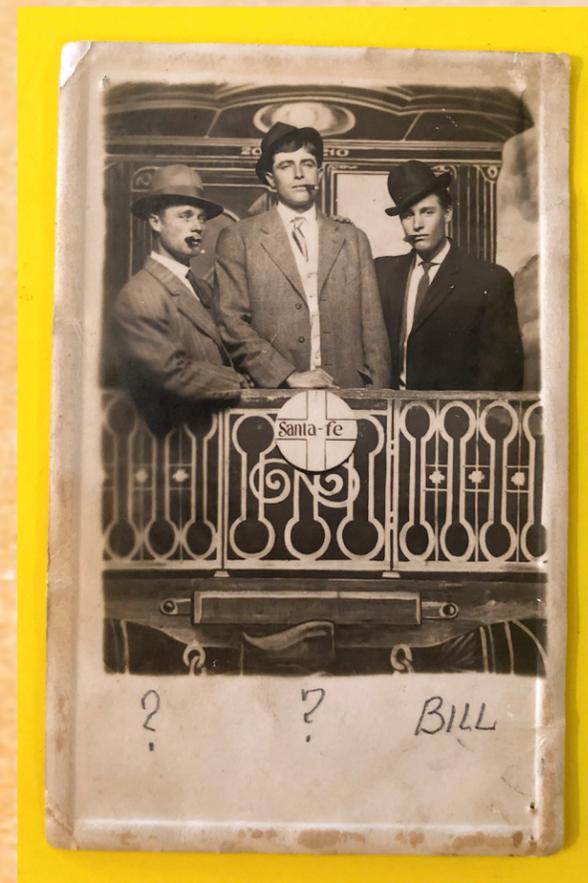


I would agree that Dad did have a hard life. He was born in a log cabin on the Bosque River. The structure had a dirt floor. The only remark I ever heard him make regarding his own father was, "He taught me how to work."

He once told me a story about a time when he was 12. He had ridden a mule to church on a Sunday morning and when he came out, he looked to the south and saw an enormous black cloud. He said he loped that ole mule



home, put it in the barn and it started to rain. He said it rained all day, all night and all the next day. That was what remained of the Galveston, September 8th hurricane of 1900 that killed over 6,000 people and is said to have been the most devastating loss of life, natural disaster in the history of the United States.



As a boy, father and his dad drove a wagon with a team of mules from Stephenville, TX to New Mexico to explore the government land grant program that would deed plots to settlers who agreed to live on it for two years. He said all they saw were abandoned mud huts from previous prospective settlers. It was arid territory and unfit for farming, so they sold the wagon and team and caught a train back to Texas. On one particular day, still a teenager, he was chopping cotton. It was hot! He said he walked over to the shade of a tree, laid down his hoe, and, in effect, left home. He joined a traveling carnival as a "barker" and "roustabout," worked in a bottling plant and dug ditches for 50 cents a day. Later he went to Colorado and walked from Manitou Springs to the summit of Pikes Peak, 14,000 feet. That was 30 miles. He spent the night on the floor of the park ranger's cabin and walked back the next morning. Later, he rode a freight train to Fort Worth and slept by the tracks in the tall grass. Though he said that he was tired and hungry, he never once considered stealing in order to survive. He found a couple of minimum wage jobs, lived in a boarding house and eventually saved \$800.





He met my Mother in 1916. They were married on December 10, 1917. On December 10, 1918 my sister, Ethel Louise Morrow, was born. He never had more than an elementary education but had a good mind and was what one might call "cerebral." He had a certain, strong moral ethic. Yet coming from a culture of segregation, he wasn't totally devoid of racial intolerance. He read much and had an exceptional memory, said his father taught him to be too honorable to lie, too sensible to

loaf and too honest to cheat. He never amassed much materially, but at age 85, needing cataract surgery, he refused Medicare, saying he didn't believe in welfare from the government if you were able to work, so he paid the doctor himself.

He was somewhat socially repressed, reticent, and insecure in a crowd and was not overly affectionate. He honored, loved, and respected his wife of nearly six decades. At age 86 he crawled on an unbroken horse, which fortunately didn't pitch. The next year he scaled a ladder to repair his roof. I once saw him hoe weeds in a watermelon patch on a hot summer's day and, for five hours, never take a drink of water. When through with this task however, he consumed a "six pack." He was very appreciative of having a home and insisted on remaining there till the end at age 92.



I never heard my parents raise their voice to each other. They may have had disagreements, but never openly subjected Ethel or me to any verbal tirades. I can only remember on two occasions when my mother was critical of him. Once, when she thought he had given me a job that was obviously too difficult and once, when he pulled a silly stunt on my cousin and me. It was when my uncle and his son were visiting. I was about six, we kids were sitting around listening to the adults talk. Eventually the conversation turned to "snipe hunting." It sounded interesting and we kids were "all ears." Naturally, we wanted to know more, not realizing that the whole thing was a hoax.

It went like this. The hunters (we) were to go off into the dark of night with a "tow sack," sometimes referred to as a "gunnysack," and a box of kitchen matches. We were told to hold the sack open on the ground and ever so often, light a match. These fictitious "snipes" would be attracted to the light and come crawl in the sack. This "scam" was pulled off on a moonless night at the local schoolyard. About 100 yards away, the perpetrators of this nefarious scheme would snicker, giggle, and get some perverted kick out of watching two gullible kids hunkered down on a red ant bed, and serve as the butt of a ridiculous joke. My mother didn't think it was at all funny and once the matches had all been struck and no "snipes," neither did we.



These were depression times and we were barely getting by. Dad saw fit to meagerly invest in an old rural track of land about 25 miles west of town near a small burg called Reno. He justified the expenditure by saying, "they're not making any more land" and then he would quote Theodore Roosevelt who was reputed to have said, "nothing gives a man a sense of independence like owning a little piece of property."

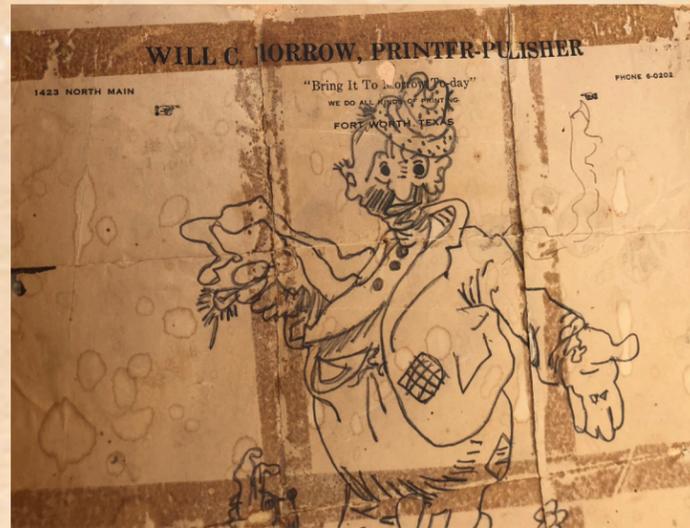
We were therefore, absentee farmers, but Dad bought 6 or 7 sheep. He should have known that sheep are vulnerable to predators if left unattended. In about a week, our entire herd had been obliterated by a pack of stray dogs. Well, bereft of sheep, Dad bought a cow that soon bore a calf. It was then that I learned a lesson. Naive as a child can be, I asked if that calf could be mine and the answer was "sure." Well a promise made is a debt unpaid. I named the young bovine "Saucy" and was a proud owner till I discovered that the former owner, Will C. Morrow, had sold my calf. What a disappointment. That little episode taught me about facetious "gift giving" to children.

I was much disillusioned, but then Dad never had a course in psychology 101.



About that time we had an old 1932 Nash automobile. It, like many cars of its day, was not a self-starter. It needed to be cranked manually and this could be a dangerous maneuver. Should the engine fire and start running with the crank in hand, it could reverse spin, which was a good way to break the arm of the "cranker!" Another way to start the car was to coast it down a hill and then suddenly shift it into gear. There were no automatic transmissions then. Fortunately, we lived on a hill. We had no car garage and therefore parked on the street.

My elementary school was called "Circle Park" and it was one block from the house. I could walk home for lunch. Most kids brought theirs in a brown bag. I liked kindergarten. Once in the 3rd grade I had a slight trauma. A bunch of kids were



"horsing around" playing a game called "pile on," meaning everyone jumps on everyone else creating a mound of flailing bodies. Guess who, on this day, was on the bottom? The result was one broken left arm and it smarted "big time." I was taken to the nurse who called my Mother at work and then took me to the Fort Worth City & County Hospital at 4th and Jones St. The old building is still there and it is now the Van Cliburn Performance Hall. At the time I was hurting pretty bad, but not nearly so much as when that doctor who was holding my arm suddenly gave it an unexpected jerk. It's the nearest I ever came to fainting. I don't know if anesthetics were available then, but they were not used in my case. They put on a plaster cast and sent me home.

While we're on the subject of health care and medicine, such in the 30's left much to be desired. For internal disorders, there was a product called "castor oil" and an equally foul tasting mess, the consistency of axle grease and peanut butter, called "black draught." I would swear it could "gag a maggot." As a cough suppressant, you might get alum and sugar concoction. For a chest cold, there was a poultice; usually a wool rag, soaked with coal oil and turpentine. It would be pinned to your nightshirt or pajama top. Leave it on all night and you could be sure of a blistered chest come morning.

Penicillin and sulfa or other antibiotic drugs had not been discovered yet. For a sore throat there was tincture of Merthiolate, a red liquid applied with a cotton swab. For cuts and scrapes, there was Mercurochrome, aka "monkeyblood." Recovery time for most ailments was much longer than those of today. I stepped on multiple rusty nails but never had tetanus shots. Just lucky, I guess. I don't recall ever visiting a doctor or dentist's office until my mid teens. The order of the day seemed to be "heal thy self."

Theme parks were non-existent then, and there were no organized sports programs for kids. Those who wanted to compete athletically would just get together on a sandlot or school playground and choose up sides. There was no television, but there was a small movie theater at



24th and North Main called the New Isis. We kids would usually gather there on Saturday morning for a double feature film, mostly westerns, cartoons, and serials that had no conclusion, so you would have to come back next week to see what had happened to the "Green Hornet" or "Buck Rogers." Fox Movietone News provided limited world and national happenings that would be at least a week old. Comedy short features with characters such as "Spanky," "Buckwheat" and "Alfalfa" were good for a laugh. The full admission price was 10 cents, however for the enterprising, should you scour the back alleys and trash dumps for five cardboard bottle caps from a quart of "Harvey's Milk," admission would be a nickel. The theater was about a 10-block walk from home but walking was what we usually did.

One summer day, my mother suggested that it would be nice were I to go spend a few days with my maternal grandmother, Emma Stephens, about 30 miles out in the hinterland. I loved the old lady and agreed to the idea. After a few days of that quiet pastoral scene, I'd had enough. The rural silence had become deafening. In addition, I'd gotten into some poison sumac and scratched my way through the night. I began to clamor for the bustle of the big city. There was an uncle who lived about 5 miles east of there and we got word that he was taking a load of eggs for sale to the hospital in south Fort Worth on Saturday morning. I begged off and asked if I could go with him. I'd had my fill of the corn shucking, berry picking, watermelon thumping, coal oil lamp reading, butter churning, early morning cock crowing, and outhouse trips to last a while. My sweet, kind, loving grandmother that she was, would arrange it. Uncle Sessions couldn't come get me so I would need to walk down to his house. He lived about 5 miles away and I had a suitcase half as big as me stuffed full of clothes, toys and other non essential items. Even so, gathering all those worldly goods with steely resolve, I bid farewell and started off down that dusty road dragging my satchel. A snake saw fit to slither across my path but I gave him a wide berth.



In retrospect, I once had an interesting experience while at Grandmother Stephens's. One of the necessary chores each day was to draw water from the well, their only source for this precious commodity. The well was near the house and was a rock-lined hole in the ground about 6 feet in diameter and about 15 feet deep. You'd drop an old wooden bucket attached to a rope down there and haul up a bucket full. If you peered down into that well, though it be midday and cloudless, you could see a clear reflection of the stars. I know there's a simple scientific explanation for that phenomenon but it was amazing to me.

In any case, I arrived at the Sessions house about sundown, fatigued and hungry. They offered to share their supper with me, a two-course special of cold cornbread and a glass of warm "clabber" buttermilk. Though famished, I respectfully declined. At sunup, we lit out for town in Wawfield Sessions' rickety, beat up, 1930 Ford truck. I arrived home about mid morning. What was a guy to do? I rounded up a nickel and beat a familiar path down to the movie house, my comfort zone. Some routines and ingrained habits are hard to break.



The north side of Fort Worth where we lived then, was a multi-ethnic community: Czechs, Poles, Germans, French, etc., sustained by the two major employers, the meatpackers: Swift and Armour. Those two companies would hire emigrants right off of ships arriving at Galveston. Many were non English speakers but glad to have a job. Suffice it to say that since our area was the largest mule, cattle and swine market in the U.S. at that time, you knew when the wind was out of the east by the very distinctive foul order that would waft across the neighborhood. It was almost as if fresh air smelled peculiar. You didn't need a meteorologist to tell you about air quality.

On Sundays we would walk up to the Chestnut Avenue Christian Church, about a mile and a half north. That was due to Mother's insistence. Though Dad had been introduced to Christian doctrine as a child and could adequately quote scripture, he probably could be classified as agnostic. He wanted certitude. At Mother's prodding, in his later years, he was baptized by his cousin, the Church of Christ reverend, J. Williard Morrow.



As for free time, it just seemed natural to try to be creative. My sister had given me an old tennis racquet. There were some courts on the school grounds about a block away and over time I learned to play and became somewhat proficient at it. We kids would make stilts and walk all over the neighborhood. One of our most favored activities was called "rubber guns." All auto tires had inner tubes and worn out ones were relatively easy to find. By cutting them into rubber bands, we had ammunition. You'd simulate a gun made from a board, cut some notches in the top of the handle and stretch a rubber band from the end of the barrel to one of those notches. When ready to fire, you'd use your thumb to dislodge that taunt rubber band and zap your victim. The firing range was best from 10 to 20 ft. Should you be closer, you could sting him pretty good and maybe leave a red whelp. I don't recall anyone ever being injured during a rubber-gun fight. The most dangerous part of the operation was loading the thing. Once I was going to make myself a high-powered type rifle. Scrounging around I found a plank about 4 ft. long, smooth, shiny and straight. Little did I realize that it was the leaf from my Mother's dining room table. By the time I had cut, sawed and mangled it beyond recognition, it certainly wasn't fit for the dining room.

When she found out, Mother was pretty well miffed, but as usual, she kept her cool, didn't overreact and we all survived the ordeal. I was never prone to getting spanked, nor were my parents necessarily prone to do so. I like to think I seldom gave them "just cause." However, I remember one day some kids up the street were having a makeshift, impromptu circus in a garage. Unfortunately, I didn't bother to get permission but I went, participated, had a fun time to the extent that I lost track of it (time that is). That afternoon, I saw that mother of mine coming down the street seeking her wayward child. There was fire in her eyes and a peach tree switch in her hand. The consequences were a pretty good swat, but I must admit, it was deserved.

Once when I was about 6, I was bugging Mom and Dad to let me learn how to swim. There was a community pool about 7 or 8 blocks away called Marine Park. One day at my insistence, Mother said, "OK you can go, but stay in the shallow water." So, I hurriedly shot off down there, did what she asked and before the day was out, I'd taught myself how to swim. I'm sure she had some misgivings about that decision, but I really appreciated the confidence she showed in me. Yes, there was an element of danger involved but because of her trust, as agreed, I stayed in the shallow, waist-deep water, I wasn't reckless, she wasn't overanxious, and it worked out just fine. I hear some kids today complain of being bored. I was never bored, there was always something to accomplish, to strive for, to test oneself against, even to occasionally fail, but to rise up and give it one more try.

A rodeo was held at the North Side Colosseum each February, which was actually the site of the first indoor rodeo ever held in the U.S. It was referred to as the Fort Worth Rodeo and Fat Stock Show. The "fat" title was due to the fact that most of the cows, then, were grass fed and comparatively lean. It was a big event for the North Side and for 25 cents you could buy a "standing room only" rodeo ticket along the rail of the arena. There was a midway, or what was usually referred to as "carnival grounds." Adjacent to the colosseum, near the rides and sideshows, was a poultry and rabbit exhibit. I was there viewing the critters and as usual, hungry, but only had a 5-cent piece. In the poultry pens were several recently laid eggs, from obviously contented hens. Being somewhat ravenous at the time, I liberated a couple of the white ovals. Nearby was a hamburger stand. I walked over and posed a question to the cook and proprietor, who was by profession, a preacher named Joe Sumac. I asked what the going price was for frying my "hen fruit" and encasing them sandwich style and fortuitously, he said "a nickel." We had a deal and it was as tasty, satisfying and succulent a meal as I'd ever had.



My sister, Ethel Louise Morrow, was an excellent student and graduated North Side High in 1936. I was 7 years her junior but our relationship was always compatible. Naturally our interests varied, but never do I recall any vestige of sibling rivalry. She married in 1938. She had learned to play the piano, so the folks offered me violin lessons. I really lacked the interest, but did complete the first day. In 1937 I matriculated at J.P. Elder Jr. High. Unfortunately, I only had one pair of trousers and they were a heavy weave of sticky wool. I resorted to wearing pajama

bottoms under the trousers for relief. Shoe repair shops stayed pretty busy. Most people owned no more than one pair. The custom was that when you wore a hole in the sole, you'd line that sole inside with cardboard. It would work for a short time, unless you were caught out in the rain.

In 1939 I entered North Side High. The school building was new. It had been constructed the previous year by the W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) initiated by President Roosevelt to put people to work and stimulate the economy. All we knew was that a lot of unemployed people suddenly had a job and were shaking off the economic effects of the depression. My high school years were relatively pleasant. In 1938 we had moved down to 1414 Lee Avenue and Dad's mother, Eliza Morrow, came to live with us. None of her other children would, or could, provide for her.

We had gotten a phone, though it was a 3-way party line, which was common in those days. Dad had pretty well recovered from his illness and decided to start a printing business. I worked there that summer: set type, fed the hand press, and became what I guess you could call, an "apprentice." Dad then decided to publish a weekly newspaper. He called it the "Marine Messenger." He was the publisher, Ethel was the editor, and I was the type setter, press feeder and delivery boy, which meant I carried that thing to homes all over the North Side once a week. It would take all day. One afternoon I got so hot a nice lady gave me a quart of ice water, which I ravenously drank and consequently was sick for three days. The paper was supposed to be supported by advertising. Problem was the advertisers were as broke as we; therefore, most payments were done with goods and services (barter). You could have your "push type" lawn mower sharpened. The barber would cut your hair for free. The cobbler might repair the run-down heel on your worn out shoes.

The Rose Theater paid in show tickets. That old theater was at 14th and North Main, right across the street from the print shop. Billie and I attended a show there last month, the first time for me to be in the place in 70 years. It brought back fond memories of the "country store." Every Friday night back in the early thirties, about 8pm, they would stop the show and have a drawing on stage. You had the stub of half of your admission ticket. Should they draw your number, you won a sack of groceries. It was a very welcomed prize. People wanted that stuff: products such as Taystee Bread, Best Yet Salad Dressing, O.B. Macaroni, assorted can goods, and a new soft drink on the market, "7-UP." One month, I was a three-time winner. Mother would smile every time I came in lugging that big sack.



Unfortunately, independent newspapers can't survive without revenue; therefore, the well-intentioned Bill Morrow converted the defunct print shop into a tavern called "Treasure Island." It offered imbibers a choice of the fermented, alcoholic beverage brewed from malt and flavored with hops, commonly called "beer," with names like "Southern Select: Grand Prize," "Pabst Blue Ribbon," and "Jax." The "Treasure Island" was not the swankiest of bistros, but neither were its clientele the most sophisticated, intellectual, upper class citizens of the area. Most were "blue collar" laborers but generally, hard-working people who were not opposed to springing for a "frosty brew." The place began to show a profit and subsequently was moved down to 23rd and North Main, and renamed the "The Pioneer Club."

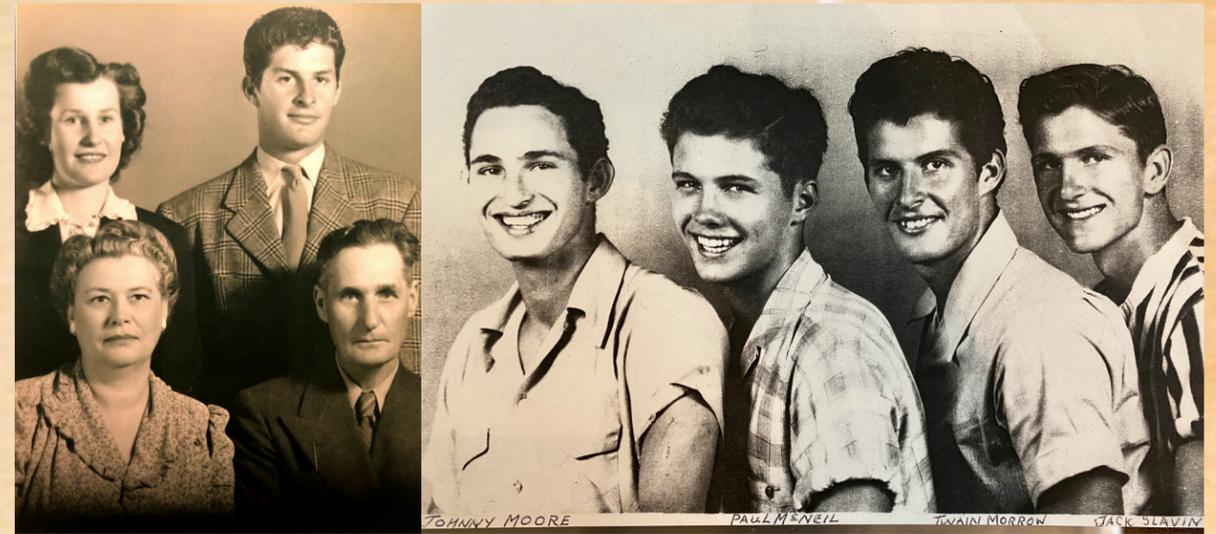
As far as I know, my mother never had a drink of distilled spirits in her life, nor had Ethel or I. It was never kept in the home and we didn't visit the libation-serving establishment. Dad of course was not a stranger to "John Barleycorn" but only in moderation, or so it seemed. He would frequently offer a mild apology for becoming a saloonkeeper. His legitimate business efforts had not gone well and with the new venture, things seemed to be looking up. We got a better car, though it was an old ex-taxicab Buick with over 100,000 miles on it. We got our own straight-line telephone; no one would eavesdrop on our phone conversations any more. I'd gotten a driver's license at age 13 but had nothing to drive. In fact you could count with one hand the number of high school kids that had access to an automobile.



About that time, I got an urge to enter the labor force. A friend had been hired by the North Fort Worth Ice Company to deliver block ice to homes in the neighborhood. He needed an assistant, so I joined up. Our conveyance was a four-

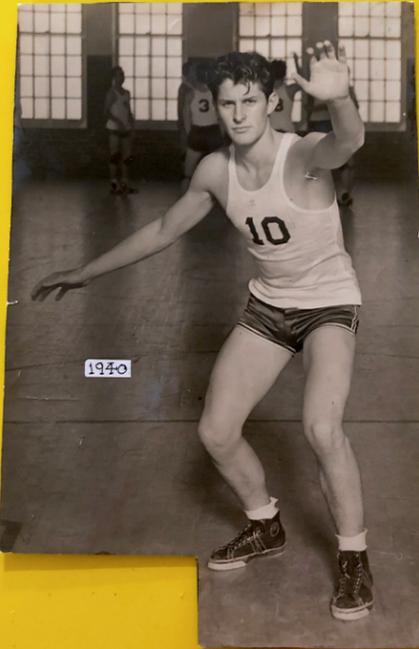
wheeled wagon about 10-foot long, pulled by two mules, which we harnessed before sunrise. The wagon was already loaded with 50 lb. to 100 lb. blocks of ice. Most people had an upright, wooden icebox with a metal lined opening at the top that could accommodate a 25 lb. to 50 lb. block. The 100 lb. blocks were grooved to where you could separate it into smaller sizes using an ice pick. The company provided the customer with a card sign to be put in the window, indicating what size block was wanted. Most purchases were of the 25 lb, variety and we who delivered, had a leather apron on our back. With a pair of metal tongs, we would silently haul those blocks through the unlocked doors. It was appropriate to move quietly since the customer was usually asleep. Payment money would be in a conspicuous place. 25 lbs. might last for two or three days unless you chipped away enough for the real treat, iced tea. In the summer of 1940, I was offered a job at the Renfro Rexall Drugstore No 4 at 7th and Main Street.

The pay was 10 cents an hour, 10 hours a day, 7 days a week. The job required the employee to have a bicycle. I had none, but a friend loaned me his, which he seldom rode anyway. The job hours were from 12 noon till 10pm. I delivered prescriptions, pharmaceuticals, prophylactics and anything else the store would sell. I even delivered cokes in a paper cup to business offices in the area. This was in the day before automatic drink machines. At 10pm I'd peddle that bike from downtown to home on the North Side about three miles. At the end of the first week, my \$7.00 wages bought two shirts, socks, a pair of "Red Goose" shoes, and there was some change left over.



My next job was blowing up tree stumps with dynamite in Haltom City for my brother-in-law, Cliff Truman. We were clearing a lot for his orchard. I then went to work for the Nichols Poultry Company on North Main Street dipping dead chickens in a vat of boiling water and plucking their feathers. You can imagine how much fun that was. I also peddled the two most popular magazines of the day, The Ladies Home Journal and The Saturday Evening Post. In 1942, I was hired at what we commonly called the "pig mill": Swift and Company, meat packers extraordinaire, and had three or four "cultural experiences" there. One was hauling sheep carcasses. That began at 6am.

Eventually I graduated to the Cooper Shop that made 85 to 90 lb. oak barrels and wooden boxes. We were at war then and those boxes were used to package cans of a product called "Tshonka." This was shipped to the Russians who were under attack and siege by the Germans. "Tshonka" was half a can of pork parts and half a can of lard. We were told that the Russians just loved the stuff. Wages at the packinghouse had risen to 62 cents an hour. Men with families were working at that price. It was all labor, but it paid for my school clothes.



Then one day a few months later, a most memorable, life changing experience occurred. A fellow classmate of mine, James McAlister, asked if I would like to join him on a tennis team sponsored by the Phillips Funeral Home in south Fort Worth. Phillips provided a shirt with their name stitched on the back. Why not? One could always use another shirt. We had a scheduled match on a Sunday afternoon in Trinity Park. We rode the city bus out there and were to return home the same way. The bus went through downtown Fort Worth. I had a little change in my pocket, so I

decided to get off and take in a movie at the Majestic Theater at 10th and Jones. I don't recall what movie was featured but there was a short subject on the bill about the prophecies of Nostradamus.

Suddenly the screen went dark and the house lights came on. Some announcer said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the Japanese have just bombed Pearl Harbor." That was December 7th, 1941. Everyone was saying, what's a Pearl Harbor? It didn't take long to find out. The next day the Germans also declared war on the U.S. and for the next 4 years America was officially at war in Europe and in the Pacific. Europe had been battling the Germans since September 1939. Needless to say, the war years resulted in rationing. There were acute shortages on the home front for meat, sugar, butter, rubber, gasoline, shoes, and all other consumer products. Conscription, (the draft) was enacted. Manufacturing plants and defense industries sprang up all over the country. For the first time, a lot of women left home and entered the workforce.

Finishing high school in the fall of 1943, I chose to go to the Navy. That was two years prior to the war's end. I qualified to enter the Navy V12, officer training program but most of my buddies had already joined the rank and file of the non-commissioned military. Wanting to remain with friends yet not realizing that we would be scattered to the four corners of the earth, I foolishly waived that opportunity to attend college (the officer training program) at the government's expense. It was a mistake to have missed that chance, but those were unusual times for teenage decision-making. I'd never been out of the state of Texas, except for the early years in Oklahoma. But I was about to receive an education in the ways of the world.



I boarded that troop train out of Union Station in Dallas and headed west to San Diego, California boot camp. Several hot, dusty, days later, tired, sleepy, hungry and already somewhat homesick, we arrived and suffered all the usual indignities: shaved heads, vaccinations, verbal abuse. We were poked, prodded, and subjected to all the other unpopular, demeaning experiences that raw recruits were to endure. Following the six-week boot camp, I entered signalman's school, where I was



taught semaphore, naval flag recognition, Morse code flashing light, which are hardly skills one could convert to civilian life. Even today, though, 74 years later, I can send and receive the flashing light messages as if it were yesterday. I had one peculiar experience during signal school. In the military, personal hygiene and cleanliness are justifiably required. Each man does his own laundry. An area is provided outside the barracks for such a task. One afternoon at the designated wash table, I struck up a conversation with a fellow sailor nearby and after a while, I thought, that guy looked familiar. Soon, it dawned on me that I'd seen that face in the movies. He was a friendly sort, so we spoke about his acting career. The man's name was Doug Fowley. He'd had an extensive career as a character actor in the movies. I later saw him in the films "Singing In The Rain," "Battleground" and countless others.

A couple of days later, the chaplain came to me and said, "Son, your Dad has been hurt and is in the hospital. Would you like an emergency leave? I can probably arrange one for 10 days." Well of course, I wanted to go. That afternoon, Doug Fowley came to me with a fist full of money in his hand: enough to buy a plane ticket to Fort Worth. He had gone to the guys in the barracks, most of whom were totally strangers and had taken up a collection. What a kind, unselfish, and generous gesture. I flew home. Seems that a drunk Hispanic soldier who had been denied service had attacked Dad in his establishment. He had suffered an 8-inch abdominal stab wound and though hospitalized, the stab was not life threatening. After 9 days I went back to California. Soon thereafter, we were sent to a facility outside San Francisco, a place called "Tan Foran." It had been a racetrack for horses. On February 20th, 1944, President Roosevelt authorized the internment of some 100,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry whom the government thought might be subversives and therefore a national security risk.

Many were temporarily housed at Tan Foran. When those people were resettled in a more permanent detention camp, the Navy took possession of Tan Foran and we inhabited the vacated living quarters. They happened to be horse stalls complete with beds and in most cases, with hay still on the floor. One wise guy said he thought "Sea Biscuit" had previously occupied his bedroom. The grandstand served as the mess hall and the food was actually excellent - fattening us up, I guess, for things to come. We had no duty there and were given every-night liberty in San Francisco, should one wish. I definitely wished. Bus transportation ran all night; the only requirement was that you make muster each morning at 8am. It was good duty, I'd have to say. I caught the bus every afternoon, went through Daily City, the Haight Ashbury district, and on into San Francisco proper. There was much to see and lots to do. The Stage Door Canteen and other hospitality houses catered to servicemen. The "bubble" however was soon to burst.

The next morning we were awakened to the sight of land. Someone said, "That's Diamond Head", which meant Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The ship docked and we were informed that no one would be allowed ashore. A 10-foot chain link fence surrounded the dock area. So anyone with the thought of "jumping ship" was out of luck. About 75 yards away was a shack with a sign that read "Dole Pineapple Inc." Desperately we appealed to the O.D. (Officer Of The Day) to let us off just long enough to get some fruit. He hesitated, but fortunately relented, so down the ladder we scampered. What little money we had was used to buy cans of crushed pineapple and peaches. Transferring it into our canteens, one can't imagine how tasty that stuff was in augmenting our meager diet. Later that day, we shoved off and again headed west, for more of the tedious same, Days lapsed into weeks and still no inkling as to where we were going. Eventually it was "land ho" again.

This time it was Kawajalein, a small atoll in the Marshall Islands. It had been taken from the Japs about 4 months prior to our arrival. It was another barren landscape. The attacking forces had decimated most of the palm trees and there was no dock, but we were told that we could jump from the fantail into the lagoon if we wished. It was about a 40-foot leap but the adventurous welcomed the opportunity to cannonball onto jellyfish. Near the shore the water was clear, azure blue and green with a white sandy bottom. Suddenly I shared the territory with a large "manta" or "stingray," I know not which, but I gave him a wide berth and after about an hour, it was recall. So, we climbed back aboard: up the flexible ladder, back out to sea, and after an interminable time we arrived at Eniwetok, another atoll in the western Pacific, Marshall Islands.



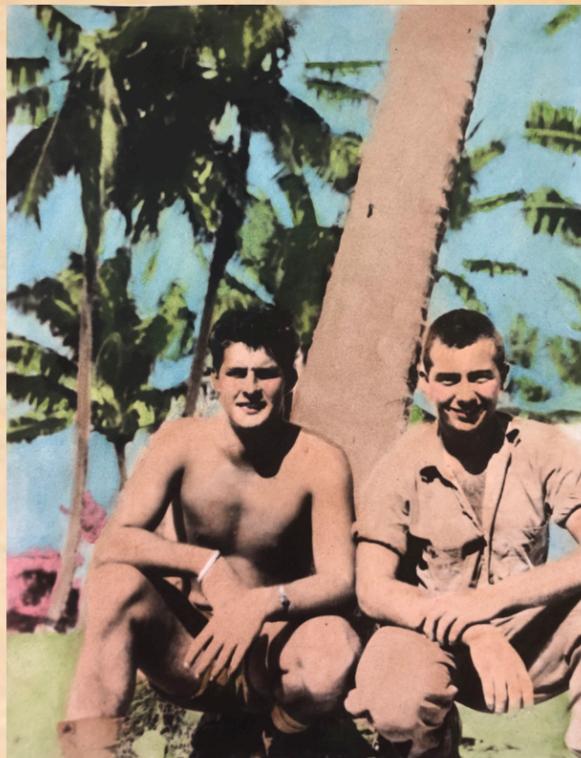
Later it was off again on the odyssey. Then on the 42nd day of that miserable junket, we were awakened and told to prepare to abandon ship. Off in the distance was one more palm clad, coral, atoll. We were told that we were in Polynesia, a Japanese held island, called Ulithi in the Caroline Island group which, of course, no one had ever heard of before. It was about 9,000 miles from Fort Worth, Texas.

The main island, "Asor," we learned had been strafed and bombed three days earlier and the native king's daughter had been killed. Resistance from the Jap* defenders, we were told, had been light and not expected to be a problem. So why did they give us a carbine rifle, with ammo? There was a backpack with shovel, chamber pot, helmet and orders to climb down the cargo net and over the side of the ship into a "Higgins Boat." After complying, we struck out for the beach, Marine style, toward Asor Island. We hit the beach, dug a foxhole as instructed and awaited orders. Night fell and we spent it with the sand crabs. The next morning, we awoke to the sound of someone trying to open a green coconut, which is not an easy task for the novice, and then the most bizarre thing imaginable happened.



*Epithet in context of time period; author does not condone discrimination

Suddenly there was music in the air. Coming around the beach was a group of Navy musicians, all black, playing the song, "Take The 'A' Train". What a totally incongruous sight. They had evidently been put ashore elsewhere. I said to a big fat trombone player struggling along in the sand, "Hey man, what the hell is this all about?" Says he to me, "We is here for your morale." Little did he, or the one who sent him know that my morale needed more than that stupid sight to be uplifted.

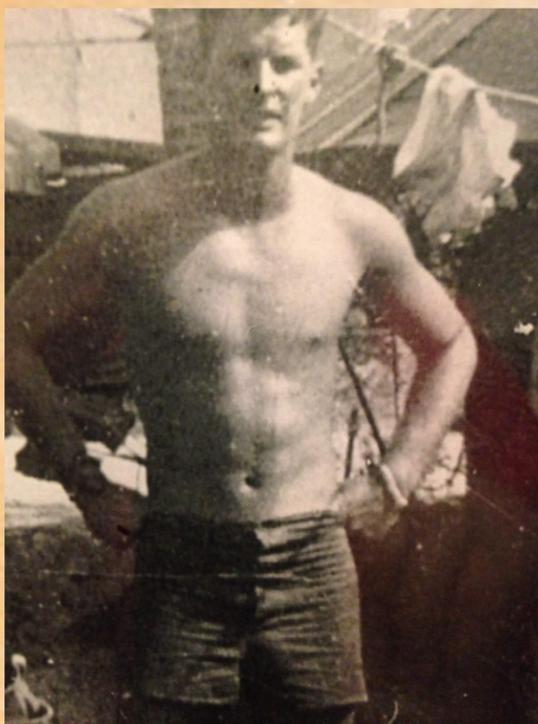


About that time an officer emerged from amongst the trees and announced probably the most rhetorical question I'd ever heard, "Are you guys hungry?" He then said that a field kitchen was being set up in a tent nearby and that some pancakes might be available. Enough said! We sprinted over to the tent and got in line. Having not had a hot meal or anything substantial in 7 weeks, "slap jacks" sounded fine. A couple of spaces ahead of me in line was a khaki-clad officer of some sort; I paid no attention to his rank, figuring he might be as hungry as I. The mess cook serving the "pancakes" dished up a couple on the officer's tray, to wit, the officer picked them up and immediately flung them back at the server. "Listen sailor" he said, "my men don't eat cold pancakes." My first thought was, the hell we don't. Cold or hot, fat or slim, black or brown, it mattered not to me. Somebody in line said, "Do you know who that was? That's admiral "Bull Halsey"... William F. Halsey just happened to be the Supreme Commander of all Allied Naval forces in the South Pacific.

I didn't really care and chose not to pursue the subject any further. That afternoon, the Seabees erected canvas four-person tents among the trees. We were issued folding Army canvas cots and a paper-thin mattress. A week on that "back breaker" and some ingenuity was called for. I scrounged up some 2x4 boards from the Seabees and made a bed frame. From the motor pool, I got an old inner tube, cut it into strips and fashioned a sleeping device much better than what the government issued. It wasn't on par with a "Beautyrest" or "Posturepedic" but it was a vast improvement and held up for 15 months.



Ulithi Atoll was the second largest fleet anchorage in the world, about 8 miles wide and over 20 miles long. At one time we had over 800 ships anchored there. Many were from Allied nations, but most were American fighting ships of every kind. Asor Island was only about a quarter of a mile wide and less than a half mile long. It once belonged to the Germans who had bequeathed it to their Axis war partners, the Japanese. Digressing for a moment, I just recalled another incident regarding our first night ashore on Asor. I guess it was an object lesson on behavior modification. Two mild mannered, non-combative type guys I'd met on the ship seemed the least likely to engage in fisticuffs. Once we got ashore the 2nd evening they had a petty argument over some insignificant matter. The night was pitch dark and the next thing I know, these two are attacking each other like two pit bulls. They were hard to separate. Having been so pent up physically and psychologically for so long must have contributed to their acting out in a manner contrary to their usual personalities. It was just an indication of what effect prolonged stress can have on the psyche.



I also noticed that a lot of non-smokers suddenly took up the habit. It's been said that many smokers start when dissatisfied with the status quo. There was no surgeon general's health warning back then and after all, the U.S. government gave them to us free. There were 3 other small islands nearby: Fallalop that had a small, short airstrip, Mog Mog used as a recreation site, and Sorlan that was a base for small boats. On Mog Mog you could play softball, drink beer or just sit. As previously stated, we were literally in the

dark for many days, except for kerosene lanterns. Eventually electric generators became operational. Strange, but in the tropics there's minimal twilight. Everything goes dark in a hurry. "Taps" (lights out) was at 9pm, no exceptions. Early sanitation facilities consisted of a 3-inch pipe stuck in the ground topped with a funnel. The "outhouse" was a trench dug out in the open. This was of course an all male operation. "Equal opportunity" women in the military were forbidden from serving in combat zones.

There was no fresh water source on the island. The natives drank the juice from green coconuts. It would shower every afternoon but be dry in 5 minutes. The Navy set up "lister bags," a canvas bag with a spigot and hung from a tripod. It was filled with some kind of chemically treated seawater. As Gunga Din said, "It was crawling and it stunk."

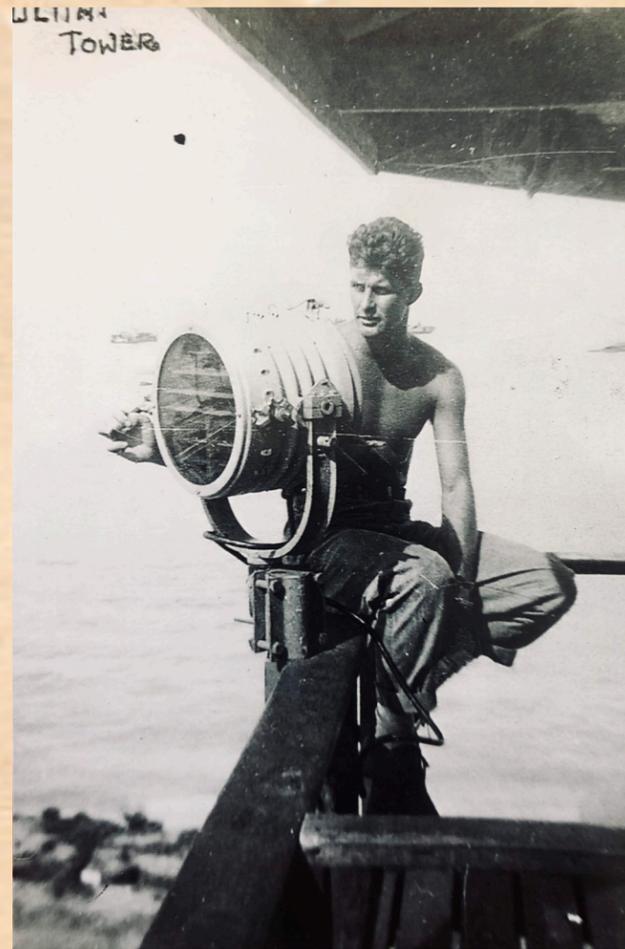
We lived on "C" rations, Spam, biscuits, etc. Eventually we got a "Quonset Hut" mess hall. Down near the water was our steel signal tower facing the lagoon. I'd guess it to be 85 feet or more high. It had one 36 inch carbon arch light, which put out a powerful beam. We were warned not to stand in front of it, less we wanted to be rendered impotent. This was my assigned workstation for more than a year and 3 months.

Admiral Halsey actually set up his headquarters adjacent to and below our tower. Our job was to send and receive Morse code (flashing light) messages to ships in the lagoon. There were at least two of us signalmen on the tower, day and night. We were well staffed and only stood a four-hour watch every day or so.

Since our living quarter tents were among tall palm trees, we were compelled to wear our helmets when in the area to protect from falling coconuts, which were frequent. Some of the 8 or 9 lb. variety had a lethal sound when they hit. Eventually, an outdoor theater was built, as was a water purification system, a chapel, beer garden and the aforementioned mess hall. The beer garden was opened only on Friday evenings and frequented primarily by those who cared to imbibe warm beer. After the first week no one cared to frolic in the surf. A softball diamond and a concrete basketball court were laid out.



There were so many ships in the anchorage that most were clear out of sight over the horizon. Frequently, during the mid-watch (midnight to 4am) when business was slow, I would shine that big beam on a cloud, several miles in the distance and communicate with ships anchored there, over the horizon. I'd inquire if there were any Texans aboard, if so, any from Fort Worth. Occasionally I'd get an affirmative answer and once in a while discover an old friend or acquaintance eager to share personal information.



Mail call was the most anticipated event any and every day. Nothing was as important as a letter from home. Our out-going mail was censored, ostensibly for security purposes. I resented some "shave tail" lieutenant reading mine. We were not supposed to reveal our location, the old slogan being "loose lips sink ships." I frankly didn't feel that the Japs cared a tinker's damn where the Morrow boy was, but I thought the family might care to know, so I designed a plan to beat the system. The first letter home was addressed to Mrs. W (U) Morrow, the second to W (L) Morrow, the third to W (I) and so on. I don't think my subterfuge compromised the war effort any, but at least they knew where their only begotten son was hanging out. After I got home, they told me they had a heck of a time finding Ulithi on the world map.

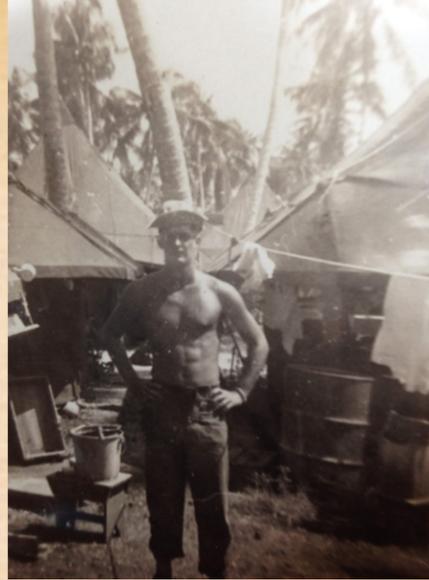
I may need to apologize for these recollections not being in chronological sequence...case in point...harkening back to that first day after the pancake incident we spied an officer off in the distance standing by what we recognized as a slender, bushy-haired, dark skin native who was carrying a long machete. The officer seemed to be in the process of communicating with the man, whom we learned was called "Renfro." We were told that he had been a fierce Jap killer on a nearby island. He appeared friendly enough to us and we noticed that he was chewing what appeared to be coal tar. We were told it was beechnut. He proceeded to demonstrate how to shimmy up a coconut tree, monkey style and whack off a large green one. He and the officer walked away and I never saw either again.

There were several native families living on Asor when we arrived, but within a week they had all been relocated to a nearby island called Fassari. They were peaceful and friendly and were fascinated by anything mechanical. They loved to ride in the back of our trucks. One of the cooks got ice cream from one of the ships, and offered it to them. They spit it out, having never tasted anything cold before. They were simply childlike in their exuberance and manner. The native graves on the island were made of large flat stones placed above ground because of the water table. There were no other stones on the island, so they must have been brought there from elsewhere in their outrigger canoes, probably from Yap Island some 80 miles to the north. We fenced off the gravesites as a sign of respect and I never saw one of them desecrated.



As previously stated, there were only a few Japanese soldiers on the island when we arrived. I did see 4 Jap prisoners taken into custody and jailed in a portable cage out in the open. It was interesting the way they just squatted on their heels, for hours, Mahatma Gandhi style. They would remain mute, but followed our every move with an intense stare. A friend said he saw them spit through the bars if one of us got too close. That may have happened but I didn't witness any such incident. The story circulated that later that night some of our own men, allegedly, sneaked down and lobbed rocks through the bars. I couldn't verify that actually happened, but wouldn't be surprised, given the mind set and attitude of some of our "Rambo" type characters.

I mentioned the beer garden. It was a fenced area with some outdoor tables and benches. It was opened each Friday afternoon about 5:30. I didn't drink, but would go for the socialization. Each man was entitled to two cans, though unrefridgerated. Some of the more experienced "boozers" did gripe about the inferior quality offered...A.B.C. Ranier, and some brand called Narrangsett. No one got drunk on the 2-can limit. The officers had access to hard liquor at their own little pub called the "Black Widow" Club. Although very much against regulations a few enterprising amateur "boot leggers" manufactured their own "rot gut" or "white lightning" by fermenting canned fruit stolen from the mess hall and combining it with pilfered alcohol from the sick bay. It was reputed to be potent stuff, however once discovered, that misdeed was dealt with severely. I knew one guy who was sentenced to 10 days on bread and water and confined in a small makeshift brig (jail) for that offense. Every three days he would be led down to the waters edge and washed off, he was absolutely incorrigible.



They finally put him aboard an oiler in the lagoon, lowered him over the side in a bosun's chair every day with a chipping hammer and a paintbrush. That's how he spent the rest of the war. He could paint or drown.

The Ulithi "chow" was anything but "Cordon Bleu," nothing was fresh; it was either canned, powdered or dehydrated. They served an "ersatz" lemon drink. What was left over was used to bleach the concrete floor. After about a year, we received a shipment of real potatoes. I mentioned our open-air theater...a full-length movie was shown every night, It might be the one you'd seen for the last 4 evenings, but swapping movies with ships in the harbor didn't seem to be a priority. You had better bring your poncho (raincoat) because there was a shower each and every evening. How else would we get our bath water other than runoff from the tent into a 55 gallon barrel? Every so often, a Navy "Hell Cat" fighter plane would fly over at treetop level and spray our "enchanted isle" for mosquitoes. We didn't get the U.S.O. (United Service Organization) shows that traveled around the Pacific as a morale builder. Once we had a brief stop from a singer, a hypnotist and two minor movie actors, Eddie Bracken and Peggy Ryan. Close to the theater was a Navy cemetery. Battle casualties from ships at sea were brought ashore for burial. Nearby was an interdenominational chapel with a thatched roof. After about 10 months the "Seabees" built the officers a tennis court. It seemed a little out of place but another non-com and I were invited to use the facility on occasion and we did. In fact, we usually defeated our officer opponents. There was ample time to read, write letters, walk the island and play ball. Dress was casual, shorts and no shirt, We had an athletic director, Mickey Vernon, who had been a major league baseball player with the Washington Senators. He was a nice guy. He arranged for us to go to Peleliu and play their Marine softball team. Peleliu was an island 6 miles long and 2 miles wide.

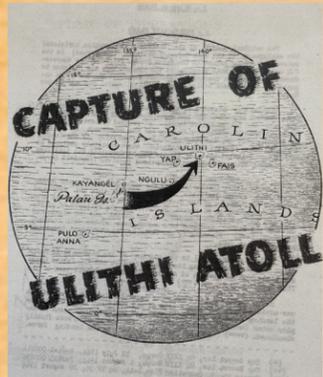
Peleliu was an island 6 miles long and 2 miles wide. When it was taken from the Japs in September 1944 it became one of the bloodiest campaigns in the history of the Marine Corps...over 5,000 casualties. I respectfully stood in the middle of an enormous military cemetery, and was truly moved and contemplated the sacrifice made there by so many brave men. When we arrived at Peleliu we were loaded into a truck and told not to drive under 50 miles per hour since there were still Jap snipers up in the hills. Our instructions to the driver were "step on the gas." Just getting to Peleliu from Ulithi was eventful in itself. We took a "Higgins Boat" over to Fallalop and crawled aboard a C47 transport plane bereft of seats. There was barely enough room for a takeoff. At the end of the runway was about a 50-foot drop down to the sea. The pilot rived up the engine to its maximum and away we did go. When we had used all the runway the plane did an abrupt dip. It was like being on a roller coaster. We were barely above sea level for what seemed like forever, but eventually gained altitude.

This was a Marine pilot, with a somewhat goofy attitude it seemed. We were flying along and he announces that up ahead was a by-passed island called Babbleshap with 30,000 starving Japs. He then proceeded to cut the engines. It may have been a joke to him but none of us were particularly amused. Fortunately, we all returned in a few days back to the Ulithi routine. I guess there were worse places to be serving. Aside from the estrangement from home, not knowing how long all this would last, the tedious nature of your duties, that you were in a war zone and that there was a hostile enemy nearby that might rejoice in taking your life; there was much speculation about the upcoming assault on the Japanese mainland where the casualty estimate was in excess of one million.

The future was definitely questionable. Only twice were we actually exposed to a combat experience. One night during a movie two Japanese "Betty" bombers from who knows where, probably Yap, flew low over the theater and proceeded on to hit the carrier Randolph doing extensive damage with loss of life. The Randolph crew had been watching a movie on deck when the attack came. The other plane hit Sorlan, the small island nearby killing 12. It was believed that the second bomber mistook Sorlan that was small and configured like a carrier. Aircraft carriers were always prime targets for suicide planes. The attitude of the American military man was to fight, but to live. The warped mentality of the "Bushido" code of the Kamikaze (Divine Wind) suicide pilots was to die for the emperor. We are seeing the same misguided mentality today with the self-destructive suicidally inclined fundamentalist Muslims.

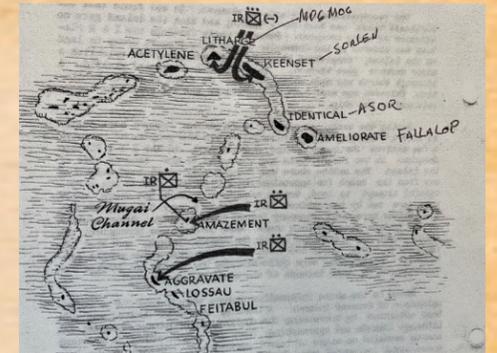
There was an anti-submarine net covering the entrance to Ulithi lagoon. The rest of the anchorage was protected by coral reefs. The net was lowered anytime a ship entered or left. On the afternoon of November 20th 1944, we had a crisis. As one of our ships was entering the harbor from the open sea, the sub net was lowered and a miniature Jap submarine called a "Kaiten" which was actually a manned suicide torpedo, followed in the wake of the preceding ship. Once inside, the sub fired its torpedo into an oiler A.O. 59. The oiler's name was the Mississinewa. There was a terrific explosion and she went to the bottom with great loss of life. I happened to have duty that afternoon and from the tower saw all that black smoke rising. For several days, body parts washed up on the shore of Asor Island.





Sometime during the first year, our tents were finally furnished with electricity. We were allowed to receive small radios from home. Being where we were, located on Asor, there was some limited program offerings, Armed Forces Radio provided some music and limited news. We could pick up the "Tokyo Rose" broadcasts. She was an infamous American woman who broadcast propaganda on behalf of the Japanese. Our radio listening was minimal since Taps was at 9pm. On August 6th, we heard about a city in Japan, Hiroshima, and that it had been destroyed by a single blast from something called an "A" bomb. We considered that incredulous. Three days later we got a similar word about Nagasaki but no details. We still didn't realize the impact of such news and went about business as usual. Then 6 days later on the night of August 15, 1945 again Taps played and we, like always, drifted off to "dreamland." Suddenly the lights came on. There were shrieks and blood curdling screams. I thought we might be under attack. Someone on the radio shouted, "the war is over" the Japs have surrendered.

Such jubilation I had never seen before or witnessed since. There were back slaps, hugs, handshakes, "ya hoos" and leaps in the air. The beer garden was opened and the two limit was waived. Some of these goofy guys were climbing trees and bringing down whiskey bottles, How they got those things to begin with, I don't know and didn't care. Needless to say, many of my veteran friends and neighbors proceeded to get "plastered". Military discipline for the moment didn't exist. In fact, the atmosphere was so charged that a couple of the unpopular officers thought it wise to vacate the premises and spend the rest of the night aboard some ship in the harbor. Come the dawn and the revelry had pretty much subsided. But the morning muster revealed some rather sad looking "swab jockeys", everyone was present and accounted for.



The question now was when can we get off this "God forsaken" place. Of course, no one had the answer... as expected. We soon learned that it would not be immediate. There was the business of restoring the place to near its original condition. We knew that military discharge would be based on a point system with factors such as marital status, length of time served, age and other criteria. With sixteen million men under arms, logically, we recognized demobilization would be a lengthy process. In the meantime, we went about the business of dismantling what had been built. All was to be restored to the way we found it. Never mind how wasteful it was; but motor vehicles and machinery of all kinds were hauled off and dumped in the ocean and to the chagrin of some, an enormous stash of "loud mouth lemonade" (beer). I asked why we were destroying all the reusable equipment and was emphatically informed, "it was orders," ours not to reason why. I'm convinced that the job probably could be done in a week or ten days but frankly, they didn't know exactly what to do with us, yet.

One day, a couple of months later, we were ordered to dismantle the tents, meaning we had spent our last night on the premises. By that afternoon, we had the place "ship shape" and ready to abandon. Each man that wanted one was given a 25-caliber Japanese rifle. The barrel was spiked so it couldn't be fired. We weren't allowed to take it with us, but could mail it home, which we did. Some of the officers got the much-prized Samurai Swords; one more example of rank having its privilege. With our trusty sea bags we proceeded down to the dock and were loaded on an L.C.I. (Landing Craft Infantry); a flat-bottomed ship with ramps on each side that could be raised or lowered. It was off to Guam in the Marianas, 400 miles to the north. Once underway, I don't ever recall looking back.

The open sea that day was rough and choppy. For a bonafide landlubber, it was mighty uncomfortable. Forget about chow time, nausea was the order of the day. There was no Dramamine back then. For the next few days, I again questioned why I ever selected the Navy. I'm not sure how long that "nautical nightmare" lasted but eventually we pulled into the harbor at Guam, exited the ship and boarded a bus headed for some barracks. We were then told that we would be here for several days and that it would be ok to unpack, and do laundry, so we proceeded to do just that. I completed the wash job and was in the process of hanging it on the line; when some officer shows up and announces that contrary to previous instructions, we were being moved elsewhere in 15 minutes, wet laundry and all. Suffice to say, no one was particularly surprised.

Though the frustration level was approaching critical mass, and tolerance limits were dangerously high, we complied; with the thought in mind that once civilian status was attained, all the S.N.A.F.U.s (Situation Normal, All Fouled Up) would eventually pass prior to Armageddon. For the next four or five days we lay around, sort of in "limbo". There were no duties to perform. There was an athletic field nearby and the more energetic of us would go exercise and seek a little stress relief. I had previously made a friend of a black man from the Ulithi softball team and he and I would kick and pass the football around. His name was Larry Doby and after discharge in 1946, he became the first African-American baseball player in the American League. He played for the Cleveland Indians and had an illustrious career. Last year I read where he died at age 79. He was absolutely the best athlete I've ever seen. On about the 6th day after working out, I'm walking down the road back to the barracks. Approaching was another ordinary looking, nondescript sailor. As we passed, I looked up and suddenly recognized that this stranger was none other than a former high school football teammate of mine, Billy Pugh.

What a coincidence, or could it have been providential? I don't know, but we were definitely glad to see each other, however unlikely. We swapped stories and I learned that Bill was a yeoman in the fleet replacement office there on Guam, the very place where reassignments were made for guys like me. Bill allowed that he could pull some strings and get me on a ship that was going stateside soon. We met the next day and he took me to see the captain of the Sperry, a triple-decked submarine tender, a sixteen thousand ton vessel, due to leave for the states in less than a month. That ship just happened to be the first Navy ship launched at the start of World War II.

Come that fateful day, and we eased out of the harbor headed east. I soon made some new friends and was delighted to be aboard. We pressed on and each turn of the screw brought us closer to home. About a week later we awoke one morning and were ordered to change from the usual dungarees into the more formal "dress whites", and line up on deck. We could see land. It was the submarine base at Pearl Harbor. The entrance was a narrow channel and as was the custom, a pilot was to come aboard and do the intricate navigation. After he took over, I thought to myself, I'm not steering this ship, but we seem to be moving pretty fast, with much momentum. There was a barge type vessel tied up along side the channel I thought to myself, I don't know if that pilot is really drunk, but we are about to collide, and sure enough, immediately we sideswiped that barge and didn't or couldn't stop. The collision made the usual racket of metal against metal and my first thought was, how long would we be here for damage repair. It was more than a little fender bender, but we inflicted more damage than we received.



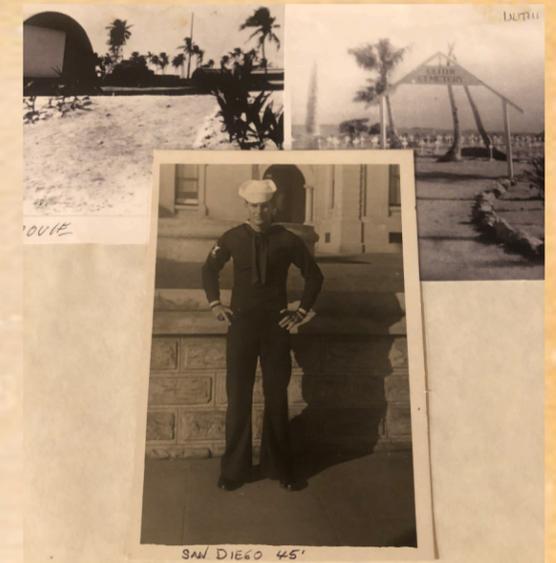
I never knew the final disposition, but I'd bet that there was an official inquiry and somebody was in a heap of trouble. Evidently the damage was less to us, as stated. We stayed in Pearl Harbor 4 or 5 days, did liberty in Honolulu, and set off again for southern California. About a day out of Hawaii, one absolutely strange phenomenon occurred. I was not under the influence of any intoxicant and it was no dream, but while on the bridge, as part of my four-hour watch, though it was early morning and an overcast sky, suddenly there were snow flurries, very light but definitely frozen precipitation, (snow). I'm thinking, we're supposed to be in the tropics. Yes, it was brief and melted as it hit. Meteorologically, I couldn't explain it but it definitely happened. One of the "old salts" later told me that amazingly, he had once seen it too.



There's nothing but a vast expanse of saltwater between Hawaii and California. We plodded on with the boring routine except for the "man overboard" drills and an unfortunate "root canal." You've not really lived less you have had that procedure while pitching and rolling nautically. I don't remember the exact date of arrival, but it was frankly glorious for the one thousand assorted sailors of all rates, stripes, and rank. Ceremoniously the Red Cross with the usual donuts and coffee met us at the dock. Later the ship moved out to the harbor and dropped the anchor. Fortunately, for us the skipper must have felt generous, for he approved every night liberty for those who wanted it, like me. The rule was, just be back for morning muster. I had made \$50 a month for the last 17 months and there was nothing to buy on Ulithi so I sent those meager wages home, except for a small portion sent to a girl who bought 78 r.p.m.s (big band records).

So here I am back in the land of the free, with another one hundred and fifty or more days to serve. San Diego in addition to the ideal climate had the Trianon Ballroom, and the Pacific Square Dance Pavilion. There was the fashionable Del Coronado Hotel on the seaside, the U.S. Grant downtown, the excellent world-class zoo, and all the sunny beaches. With a weekend pass, it was possible to hop the train north to Los Angeles, which at that time was smog free. You'd go through Oceanside, Capistrano, Laguna, Long Beach, Santa Monica, and various other little hamlets. In L.A. you could attend the Palladium where the big bands played to overflow, enthusiastic crowds and explore the glamorous and legendary Hollywood.

It was a revealing experience to see all the cultural West Coast aberrations that most of the homegrown Californians seem to take for granted. You could rent a cot in a V.S.O. gym with a hundred other guys for the nightly fee of two bits (25 cents). The 125-mile trip back to San Diego late Sunday night was ok provided you didn't mind stepping over and around "hung over" G.I.'s zonked out on the floor. Most of the seats were already occupied but hey, you're young, recover well, and can handle whatever adversity comes along, after all, we were all comrades in arms... at least temporarily. If I was going to continue to do all of this next week, it wasn't going to be in government issued clothes. So I bought myself a tailor-made gabardine, bell-bottom, dress-blue uniform. No one was going to mistake this Central Texas native some for some "redneck yokel" fresh out of boot camp. It was a status thing and my over developed vanity seemed to dominate.



Then one fine day in early May, I was told to board the train for Norman, Oklahoma and discharge. I hastily bid adieu to the guys on the Sperry, climbed on board and some 48 hours later stepped off in Norman, spent 4 or 5 days being what they called "processed." Finally one bright and sunny Oklahoma morning I was told, "OK man, you're free to go." It was about 10am. They said that a bus would leave that afternoon. I pondered my options and then walked out to the curb on Highway 77, stuck my thumb out like most hitchhikers used to do. A guy in a pickup pulling a trailer full of furniture stopped, said his cab was full but I could ride in the back if I wanted. Sounded good to me, so I crawled on a tied-down mattress. After about a three hour, or longer, windy saunter we came upon a sign that said "Fort Worth City Limit." Not expecting portal-to-portal delivery, I thanked my benevolent chauffeur, departed at a gas station and called home. Both parents came and picked me up. The odyssey was over! That was May 15, 1946, as the poet aptly said, "mid palaces and pleasures, wherever ye may roam, be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

Looking back on that time, it was apparent that most returning veterans had no interest in talking about their experiences. Generally, it was an unpleasant episode of interrupted lives and impacted families, it needed to be repressed in memory in so far as that was possible. Like most, I never felt the least bit heroic.



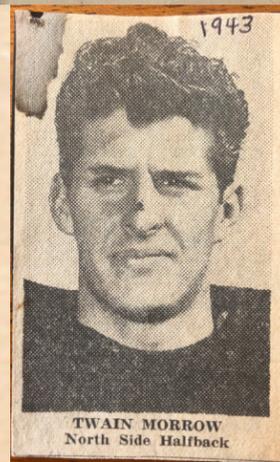
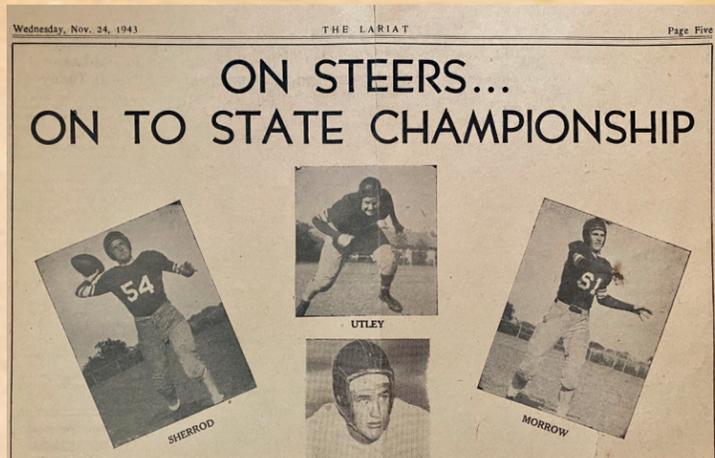
It's been said, "a single death is a tragedy, a million are a statistic." The World Almanac reports that 45 million people died in World War II. Fortunately, I didn't add to that horrendous statistic. I don't know what effect my Mother's prayers had, but I know they were earnestly submitted. We're being told that the World War II vets are now dying at the rate of 1,000 each 24-hour period. I give John Kennedy credit for expressing it most succinctly when he said, "some men are killed in a war and some are wounded and some men never leave the country."

I hear people say, "Why can't we all just get along?" The question might be, "Why did Cain slay Abel?" The residual effects of war are not always immediately evident. Some psychological traumas have a long shelf life. I feel blessed for having endured relatively intact, but for a long time, I used to dream of still being over there and was always thankful to wake up. I sympathize with guys I knew who gave up to 4 years for the cause and were in harm's way much of that time. It's easy to make light of post stress maladies 'less you participated. I don't mean to be overly critical of the U.S. Navy, it was the best in the world and (at the risk of sounding like some "super patriot") so is this country, even with our faults and problems. No nation can compare. My relatively short military career was less than enjoyable, but given the same circumstances, I'd willingly do it again. Thanks to the generosity of the United States government and for the G.I. Bill enacted in 1944, I eventually received two tuition-free college degrees.

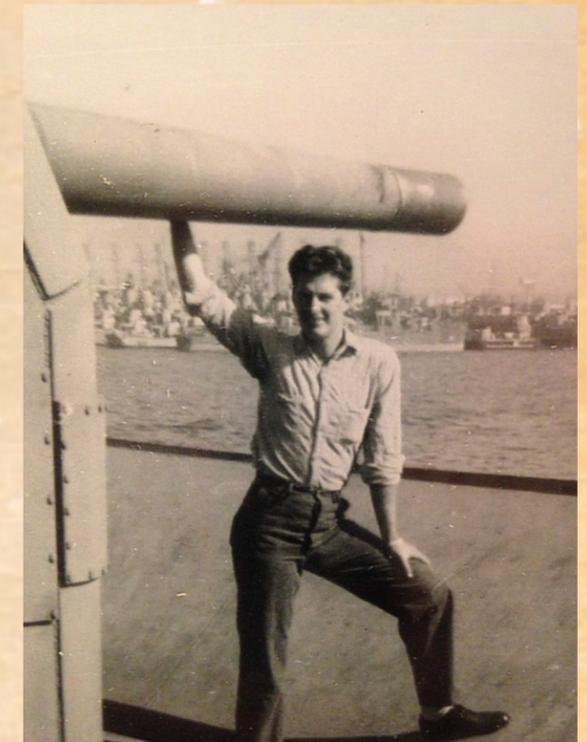


I often hear this question. "Were it possible to relive this life, would you do it the same?" Some might say "yes, but sooner." I can only say "probably." So many experiences seem to be the result of mere chance or circumstance; some can be attributed to careful contemplation and planning; others born of impulse, obsession, or other unconsidered acts. One might think that willful mistakes, as well as good fortune would always teach a lesson, but not always. Have there been regrets? Yes. I'm sorry for having initiated some deeds and made particular statements that have negatively affected others. I wish I could have been able to provide more in the way of financial support to the sons when they needed it. I would have liked to have had a brother but Dad said he couldn't afford another child. I hope this doesn't sound like sour grapes but during the first 17 years of my life, I can't ever recall receiving a gift, or even a congratulatory or supportive comment from my Dad. It wasn't his style and I suppose alien to his personality. He wasn't abusive but any encouragement or praise always came from my Mother.

That's not to say he was uncaring or "stingy." I guess he was acting on what behaviors had been modeled for him and monetarily, he had little with which to part. Anyhow, I recall one exception. In the fall of 1943 our high school football team was undefeated. The coaches and sports writers chose me to the all-city team. The country was at war and I was scheduled to leave soon for the Navy.



A couple of days prior to departure, Dad unceremoniously and without comment, came to me with a "token gift"—a silver dollar, minted 1925. A gold band was affixed across it inscribed with the words "All Star." This was on a Friday and I was to board the westbound train Sunday morning at Union station, Dallas en route to the San Diego Naval Training Center. Thinking it wise not to miss that 8am departure I thought it best to spend my last free night in Texas at the Dallas Y.M.C.A. The folks drove me over, we said our goodbyes and I went to the desk to register. The clerk suggested I check my valuables, billfold, watch and newly acquired silver dollar medal. I watched as all this was sealed in a manila envelope and placed in the safe. I went to bed, awoke early and proceeded to check out. Surprisingly, someone had already forged my signature, signed for and absconded with my possessions. I suspect the thief was the guy loitering at the counter next to me when I had registered. It's ironic that Dad's one overt act of generosity was short lived by an act of thievery--Que sera sera. Needless to say, the 3-day hot dusty, sleepless trek to California was, for want of a better word, miserable. Some 40 years later, when Dad was in his 90's he had me drive him down to Stephenville (West End Cemetery) where most of his kin were buried, mostly in unmarked graves. He had bought some small granite headstones and we placed them there. It was an admirable and generous gesture on his part.



Speaking of the enormous changes during this lifetime, my Mother used to tell the story of how she and her father in the early 1900's, would make a trip to downtown Fort Worth from their farm, about 30 miles west in Parker county. The purpose was to purchase salt, flour, sugar and other staples that were not readily available to people living in rural areas. They traveled in an old 4-wheel wagon pulled by a team of mules. The round trip took up to 4 days. They would bed down under the wagon at night. Today, I can cover that same route both ways in less than one hour... in the same amount of time astronaut John Glenn in his Mercury-Atlas space capsule covered 20,000 miles zipping around planet Earth in 1962.



Back in the 1930's, our family would occasionally visit the maternal grandparents there in Parker County, Sunday morning we would all attend service at the Knob Hill Methodist Church. Then it was off to the old house for lunch. We kids would chase down a couple of chickens, ring their necks, pluck the feathers and cut up the birds for frying. Grandmother had already started the stifling hot, wood-burning, cast-iron cook stove. Though sweating profusely, and with a towel around her neck she made biscuits from scratch, gravy and

prepared whatever veggies were on hand. When all was done, the adults were summoned to eat. Kids had to wait for what was called the 2nd table. That meant that we kids would get the "leftovers." Usually there were ample biscuits and gravy but our chicken, if any, would be the neck, gizzard, liver or a skinny wing. Even so, we kids didn't really feel deprived. It was an adult world so naturally our expectations in the pecking order were low--How Times Have Changed!



I've been asked on occasion, do you have a philosophy of life? As a child I couldn't say I recognized any particular "calling." I was taught to be respectful of my elders. My parents kept their vows and remained true to their code for over 58 years. What effect genetics may have had on my attitude, motivation and behavior, I don't rightly know. One psychological premise says that we can't know anything for certain and so we rely on faith. I subscribe to that concept.

Life is replete with paradoxes. But at times I've considered myself to be a rational being and even pragmatic, at other times idealistic, occasionally industrious and ambitious--followed by periods of sloth and inertia. As the poet, W.M. Blake said, "sometime I see the world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower."



Conversely, I'm not sure as to why opposites attract. I wonder why God felt the need to create mosquitoes and poison ivy. Why does the game fish swim upstream? I really don't care how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. I may ponder determinism vs. free will, good vs. evil, love vs. hate and indifference. Yet instinctively and even empirically I'm convinced that there's a creator that deserves to be worshipped: a transcendent, omniscient, yet imminent spiritual, loving force we call God. It would be dishonest of me to say there have never been doubts. Ironically it seems that just when we know how to live, it's time to die, but even that conundrum makes sense when we embrace the notion that this existence could just be an interlude between two eternities and that the providential plan, as I understand it, has never considered the end of this earthly existence to be designed as evil.



And so, I guess I should cease with this elongated personal discourse. I might have described the ups and downs of a 36-year professional career, a marital union exceeding half a century, life saving medical surgeries, international travel experiences, a few good deeds, and like number of transgressions. This I know for sure, I was fortunate to be alive when 3 fine sons first saw the light of day and when 7 equally precious grandchildren were born to loving, responsible parents.

How blessed I've been! When all's said and done,

"The Lord Does Truly Work In Mysterious Ways."

-William Twain Morrow

