

I agree that conversations with Mr. Ogden Williams regarding events in the period 1956-57 will be regarded as privileged information until cleared by Mr. Williams. In the meantime such information is for background use only.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry H. Hunt", written over a horizontal line.

November 9, 1984

A long, horizontal, wavy handwritten line or flourish in black ink.

OGDEN WILLIAMS

An Oral History Interview by Harry Maurer, who was writing a book in 1988

His career in Vietnam spanned 20 years, from his first tour in 1956 until a visit just before Saigon fell. Now he is retired from the government and living in a small, book-strewn apartment in Washington.

"I had been in World War II in the Air Force. I got out in 1946 and went to Harvard Law School and became a lawyer in New York for about three years. About that time I got an invitation from an older friend who I respected greatly to come down to Washington to be interviewed by somebody for something. It was going to be very exciting, he said. I said I'd give it a try. Sure enough, it was the CIA. Now, CIA in those days was the most exclusive club in town and the most prestigious agency in Washington by far. That would have been 1950. The whole place looked like the New York social register. The secretaries were liable to be Vassar graduates. It was like the OSS, all terribly on the inside track.

"I was attracted to the idea of the CIA. My father had been a very successful New York lawyer, and I knew what that life would be. It would be very disciplined, doing good work, riding the subway everyday, getting one month's vacation in the summer, making a lot of money in the end, and dying. That was what it was going to be. He'd

done that, and he'd done it far better than I probably could. So what was I doing there?
Try something new."

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After a tour in Germany from 1951-53, I had a chance to get out of Washington again in '56, which I welcomed. That was because a man named Ed Lansdale, who was a big figure in Vietnam in those days, was President Diem's primary adviser. Lansdale needed somebody, so I got a chance to go. I said, Great.

This was the Cold War period. The Cold War was not an abstraction or a theory or a psychosis. It was something we perceived as being very real and very physical and right there. For example, at the end of the war the Russians took over Eastern Europe. That was fresh in our minds. The U.S. reacted with the Marshall Plan. Then the Communists started to take over Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean, and we reacted with the Truman Plan. Then Truman ordered the Soviets out of Iran, and they left because he had the bomb and they didn't. Then, going down the line, there was Korea, 1950. So the issue of Communist expansion was not something people debated about.

The U.S. under Roosevelt had opposed French colonialism re-imposing itself in Vietnam. But by 1949, when the Communists won in China and opened up a flood of arms to Ho Chi Minh's people, we began to take a different tone.

After the French defeat, along comes little South Vietnam and says, in effect, "We fought against the French, too, and we don't want to be colonized. But we also don't want to be communized." They wanted to be a third force, and they turned to us for help. For the U.S., as the leader of the free world, it was entirely natural in the context of the 1950's to say, "Well, of course. Obviously. That's what we stand for. We have to man the ramparts wherever they are." Furthermore, we had a feeling in the '50's that the U.S., having come out of World War II the only really successful nation on earth, which totally believed in itself and was totally believed in by everybody else, that this was our normal mission in life. We had the feeling we could do anything. For too many Americans in Vietnam, the question wasn't, "What is the reality here?" The question was, "What reality are we supposed to create here?"

There I was, brand new, never been to the Far East before, and knew nothing about it. They just put me on Lansdale's team. I suppose I was going to fit in where he could use me. It turned out he could use me for an interpreter. I speak French, and the Vietnamese spoke French in all their offices.

Lansdale was just the kind of man to learn from, because he'd had so much experience and insight. He had been successful in the Philippines working with

Magsaysay. Then somebody—it might have been John Foster Dulles—had handpicked him and said, “Do for Vietnam what you did in the Philippines.” He was assigned there in 1954 and threw his weight behind Diem. In very short order he ingratiated himself to the point that he had Diem’s full confidence. He also had a direct line to Washington and was able to pull strings fast. And he was quite the personality. He dominated the scene in those days.

Lansdale ran his own show with his little team—not more than 10 of us, maybe 8. Down in the embassy, there was also a regular CIA station. There was no love lost between them and Lansdale. He regarded them as a bunch of fuddy-duddies, and they regarded him as an uncontrollable wild man, not subject to them, which automatically made him bad. Furthermore, he had much more talent than they did. On the other hand, they had much more discipline. So there was a natural kind of bureaucratic confrontation.

Lansdale had the energy of two or three men, but in many ways the mind of a woman. I’m not talking about his sexuality. Women notice what you’re wearing, what you’re thinking, the little mannerism you have. Whereas when a bunch of American men meet, they look at the business on the table. All the thought is on the business, the plan, the concept. Lansdale hears that, but like a woman, he’s observing these people. He’s psychoanalyzing them and figuring out what makes them tick. He rapidly figured out that Diem had two passions. Probably the reason he kept Madame Nhu around was to guarantee a family dynasty. Diem was a bachelor, but his brother Nhu and Madame Nhu

had children. Diem was very dynastic. He no doubt thought that in due time he'd groom his family to succeed him in government.

The other thing he was interested in was photography. And I think Lansdale helped him set up a darkroom. That would mean more to Diem personally than getting a million-dollar loan.

Our idea in Vietnam was: This is a new nation being born. It has to be something. And naturally, we Americans were convinced that the "something" should be our system of representative government, the best in the world. Furthermore, we were the guys who were there. We had the sense of mission. We were the nation that had won World War II and was honored throughout the world. To serve the United States overseas was a dream in those days, because you had a very high standing—even low-level Americans did. We had enormous prestige in that period, which we didn't lose until everything blew up.

And Vietnam was an ideal place. It was enormously attractive in those days. It even stayed attractive to many people forever, including me. There was that sense of a young country, which was very inspiring. It was a small country, which meant you could identify with it as a project. There was a very graceful, traditional culture, an enormously pleasant way of life. Saigon was an elegant city. The beautiful tropical foliage, the flamboyant trees, the cabarets, the overly slim women in those gorgeous ao dais. The whole thing was just elegant and romantic as hell. It was a dream country if you left it

alone. Very seductive. So when you combine the seductive ambiance with the idealism of what people were trying to do—Well, my life in Vietnam was life in Technicolor, as opposed to black and white. It was always an enormous letdown to come back to the States.

South Vietnam had been a country, legally speaking for several years. In May, 1956 the last French troops marched down Rue Catinat and got in the boat and left. I saw that. It was the end of an era. Diem had been consolidating his power against the various warring factions. By '56 he was fully in control and there was no war going on in the country. You could go from one end to the other without anybody shooting at you. Picnic in Dalat, if you wanted to. The war hadn't been turned on by Hanoi yet. And in this period of peace, a hell of a lot got done. South Vietnam was recognized by something like 105 foreign countries. Embassies all over the place. Black-tie dances. I remember going in a black tie to hear Piatagorsky play the cello in the Dai Lam Theater.

But Diem had problems, obviously. He had to pick up the marbles and organize the country. Basic nation building. Lansdale said, "OK, what kind of government are you going to have?" We were trying to promote, among other things, something like an American legislature, a national assembly. This was a new to the Vietnamese. They had monarchies and colonial experience. Getting up a modern political state was a new ballgame. We had a lot of sympathy for that, and sometimes a out of frustration because it wasn't easy to put across. How do you do elections? How about a judicial system? Do you leave it just the way it was under the French? What do you do about agriculture?

What do you do about land reform? What about voting procedures? It wasn't just us—Michigan State University had all kinds of people there, political scientists. Very big on public administration. AID had a mission in there doing everything from teaching English to building hospitals and bridges to figuring out what kind of seed you should plant. Helping the young state get going.

I spent endless hours with Diem, because Lansdale did. I went along as a fairly second-rate interpreter. It wasn't too hard, because Diem was a mono-linguist. He would sit you down, and no matter who you were, from the janitor to the king, he'd talk for hours about whatever was on his mind. Some of those sessions were duller than hell, and it was hot as hell, and the president was a chain smoker. He'd sit there and smoke. When he wanted an opinion, it'd be: "Ah, Col. Lansdale, I wanted you to come in because I want to ask you something. What's your advice on this?" He'd get right to the point. Then: "Ah, yes. Now I understand. We'll do that." Very decisive. No problem. End of subject. All over in 10 minutes. Then after that: "Well, now, you see..." And he'd just start taking. Smoking going up, we're sitting there nodding: "Oui, M. le Presidente." After two or three or four hours, he'd say, in effect, "Thank you very much, it's been really interesting, now you can go." So I didn't have to do a lot of interpreting. Just translate for my boss what was going on.

It gave people pause about Diem—he spent so much time doing this, they'd wonder how he could have time to run a country? He'd spend all day taking to anybody

who would listen. But Lansdale had great patience. He could go all night if Diem wanted to.

Lansdale did something else that was extraordinary for that time. He's an extravert from the word go. A great public relations guy. He was comfortable with the Filipinos, who are the same way—very outgoing, very warm, full of gimmicks. He brought a lot of Filipinos over to Vietnam, and he would try to get Diem to act like a modern Filipino politician. Being carried around by a crowd, shaking hands, doing all the things a Mandarin would normally never do. Trying to develop the popular touch. Diem tried and tried. He learned how to march and smile and pat babies and so forth, but basically he was not that type of man. He was more austere. Lansdale tried to make a Magsaysay out of him. You couldn't do that. But he went a certain distance. There was some nonsense in that, because the Vietnamese are not Filipinos. It was something of a cross Diem had to bear, I think. Lansdale would bring Filipino experts to help write the constitution, do this and that, but Diem at first regarded Filipinos as people who play in jazz orchestras, and that's all. Later on he learned better, because many of them were very effective.

I had mixed feelings about Diem. I didn't easily cotton to a very conservative, fanatical type. A man who if he hadn't been a politician would have been a priest or a monk. Very prissy. Very authoritarian. Rather pompous, as I thought. Though he also could be endearing and outgoing in a personal way. But I respected the man. I think in Vietnam he wasn't particularly popular, but he was always respected. He was a man of

courage, too. What he was, he was. But he was very narrow. It was evident even that early. He wouldn't reach out like FDR or a Jack Kennedy to try and win over elements who were patriotic but not Catholic, not from his background. He would treat them with suspicion, and they would resent it.

I remember him talking about the National Assembly. I can't remember the timing exactly, but I think it had just gotten elected and Diem was confronted with the reality of this thing. He said, "I'm worried about this. I know these people. They're a lot of dilettantes. I know what the country needs, and I know what we ought to do. I want to get on with it. These people are just going to sabotage the whole thing and cause me endless headaches." And Lansdale said, "First of all, M. Le President, it broadens your government. It gets more people involved. And as far as its difficulties, every democratic president has a problem with his legislature. Part of the art of being president is manipulating and leading and making deals and otherwise getting your way. Even Franklin Roosevelt had to manage his Congress."

Diem went "Hmm," and he had a little oriental smile. It seemed obvious to me that he was twisting what Lansdale said to his own mindset, which was, in effect, "Ah, we're talking about a puppet assembly. We're talking about something I can manipulate and control. It'll look good on paper, and it'll satisfy the Americans, but I don't have to take it too seriously." I mentioned it to Ed later. But we were overwhelmed with work, and nobody ever went back and said, "When we said Roosevelt managed the Congress, we meant he persuaded them." So there was undoubtedly slippage in these lessons in

democracy as you tried to translate them into an Asian framework. I dare say, though I can't prove it, that Diem's way of controlling the National Assembly was hardly the same as Franklin Roosevelt's. It was an autocratic state, which didn't make us comfortable, but nevertheless it was a hell of a lot better than what was going on up north.

Then there was the problem of the so-called elections. According to the 1954 Geneva Accords—which the South Vietnamese delegation had objected to—elections were supposed to happen in 1956 to reunify the country. But it wasn't one country. South Vietnam was already a country before the Geneva conference. Two years before that, they'd been given their autonomy and had their own government. They sent their own representatives to Geneva. It was de facto two countries, two adversaries, two systems. Diem would talk about this and say, in effect, "Look, we could have these elections if they're in our interests, and not if they're not. We're not bound to it. And I'm not going to do it for the following very simple reason. North Vietnam has more people than South Vietnam, and they're all under total control. They're going to rig the vote in the North. They'd have to win for that reason alone, even if I could control the voters down here, which I can't. So why should South Vietnam be asked to deliberately commit suicide? Why should we have elections?"

No Americans differed with him on this, as far as I could tell. Eisenhower didn't, nobody did. Quite the opposite. For one thing, the South Vietnamese had objected to the idea at Geneva. Secondly, the Americans had merely said we wouldn't object to it, but with the provision that this represents the will of the people. And it obviously didn't in

South Vietnam. So it presented no legal or ideological issues for us. I don't think anybody in Saigon gave two seconds' thought to it. It wasn't as though there would have been an honest plebiscite. The whole election thing was a farce, as far as we viewed it. Why kid ourselves?

We saw the real issue as a race against time—to get South Vietnam built up strong enough and get its institutions in place well enough for it to resist what was obviously going to be a threat some day. No question about that—it was just a matter of when it would come under attack. And in just the two years of my tour, '56 and '57, South Vietnam started to boom. It was exporting rice, which it had done before the French war. Rubber was going out. It was a free-enterprise state, so naturally along with the embassies came foreign corporations. Foremost Dairies set up a big milk-products operation. These gorgeous resort places like Nha Trang and Vung Tau were beginning to be eyed by people as tourist attractions. Everything was beginning to boom. The country was becoming so delightful, so prosperous, so well-recognized internationally that the Communists had to knock it off before it got too strong. That's why they started the war again. And that's why guys like me fought to the end to stop them.

In those days, when you had U.S. military advisers and that's all, no combat troops, these guys would fall in love not only with the country but also with their Vietnamese unit and their job. At the end of their tours, you had to take them out of there in chains, practically, because this was the best duty they'd ever had in their lives, and they believed in it more than anything they'd ever done. They were helping to build a

little professional army which had a mission against a ruthless, cruel, determined, well-organized enemy. It was quite clear that there were good guys and bad guys. And the good guys needed help. That appeals to something in human nature, particularly Americans in those days. It's not a good analogy, but why wouldn't a scoutmaster become deeply emotionally involved with the scout troop he's training? Or a schoolteacher with his students? Well, an American advisor would be entranced by the country and his job. You could have staffed the whole place with volunteers.

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My first tour ended in 1957, and I didn't go back until 1962. Kennedy was making a big push in Laos and Vietnam. As part of that, they greatly beefed up the AID mission and the MAAG. I resigned from CIA in early '62 because I got a better offer from AID, and I went back as a special assistant to the AID mission director.

In 1962 the Americans still had the same enthusiasm and spirit as in the '50s, but Vietnam had changed. The second Indochina War, starting in 1960, was going full blast. The Communists had realized the elections were not going to take place, so they had better start the war up. And the war they started—which was very effective—was a war of sabotage. They began with political assassinations at the village level. And they told people, "This is a lesson. Don't get out of line." They'd kill the very good officials and the very bad ones. They'd leave the mediocre ones and say, "Ok, you just play along, but report to us."

So our idea was to get in there, try to strengthen Diem, and prevail. Those were the days of counterinsurgency. The theory was the guerrilla is somebody swimming in the sea of people. You try to win the support of the people. Therefore we had all kinds of projects designed to improve rural life. Hundreds, if not thousands, of schools were set up and furnished. Roads, bridges, medical facilities, agricultural projects, better seeds, better fertilizer, hog programs, corn programs, all designed to improve the lot of the local guy. And in many ways they did.

Now we come to a crucial point. One thing I learned – and it can be applied to El Salvador or anywhere else – is that you can take a country under siege like that, and you can first help it to install the most representative government in the world, and everybody has a nice school to go to, and they have social justice, agrarian reform, all the good things that are supposed to solve these problems – it won't do any bloody good as long as

that little guy can come out of the jungle at night and put a gun in the ear of the local official and say, "Listen, all this do-gooding stuff from the government, forget it. We represent the revolution, and unless you agree, something awful is going to happen to your wife and kids, not to mention you. Don't ever forget that. Don't ever think this government can protect you day and night, because we will get you if we want to. Go on doing your job, just don't do it too well. And keep us informed of what you're doing so we can take countermeasures.

That's exactly what happened in Vietnam. All the good government in the world was not going to take the place of security. It takes years and millions of dollars to build a bridge, and it takes 15 minutes to blow it up. Any idiot can blow up a bridge if he just knows a little about explosives. But building one is really difficult. That's true in every aspect of building a nation. So the poor South Vietnamese were constantly trying to build their institutions, train their people, and constantly getting sabotaged.

I suppose in the last analysis, unless everything had been in their favor, the South Vietnamese just didn't have what it would take to hold off the north. I had a friend named Henri Mege, an old Frenchman pushing 70 who'd been a French cavalry officer in Vietnam for 20 or 30 years. Now he was making his living as an artist. He said, "Monsieur Williams, you know, these Vietnamese will be very grateful if the Americans can win this war for them. They don't want to be taken over by the communists. But they won't make quite enough effort to do it for themselves. They don't have the *elan vital*, the energy. The dynamism is on other side. The fanaticism is on the other side." He said this in '64.

South Vietnam, God knows, was war-weary, and world-weary to a certain extent. Particularly the ruling class – not necessarily the young. It had been a quiet colonial backwater for a long time. Great permissiveness. When a society finds itself in that position, it deteriorates. And the North Vietnamese were a tougher breed anyway. The North Vietnamese were the hard Cromwellians against the Cavaliers. Dour types. Scots. And the other guys looked more like Italians. More fun, nicer. If you were a South

Vietnamese officer and you retired, you might want to go live in the delta, because the people were nicer down there.

I never had any ideological qualms about giving everything I could to the cause of the South Vietnamese. Because generally speaking, they were laissez-faire people who simply liked to live and be left alone. They weren't mad at anybody and had no desire to conquer the world. When they got violent or vicious, nine times out of ten it was out of hysteria and stress. Whereas the communists were just the opposite. They always did things for a purpose. They would come into a village and round up all the people, grab the village chief and denounce him working with this "fascist government" or some damn thing. Whatever their ideology said. Then they'd commit the most god-awful atrocities. Kill the children one by one and disembowel the wife and put the guy's eyes out and leave him alive. All in cold blood, not out of any hysteria at all, not even out of any ill feeling. Just to drive home a political lesson. Very effective stuff.

People often said that the most efficient, least corrupt guy in any given province was likely to be the local VC leader. And it may have been true. But that doesn't mean the cause they were representing was more humane at all. Quite the opposite. Let's take France in 1940, at the beginning of World War II. France was a paradise for the American tourist. Everybody loved the place. Charm, everything wide open. Lots of corruption. No patriotic fervor. It was in a state of decadence. And into this came the Germans. Not just the Germans, but the Nazis – and not just the Nazi's, but the SS. A bunch of guys clean and disciplined to the core. Every cell in their body in perfect fighting fitness. Polite when they're told to be polite. Well-dressed. Correct. And fanatical. They went through the French like butter.

The moral is that fanaticism can be built around bad causes as well as good. Lots of people in the '30's said, "The Nazi's are great guys, look how efficient they are." Just like in the '60s, people who didn't know them said that the Viet Cong are great guys, look how dedicated they are. The best advocates in these causes, the best cadre, the best foot soldiers, may very easily be on the wrong side. Some of the communists were

1942 - 1946 A Personal Memoir

My World War II really began when a man named Stephen Galatti came to dinner with my parents at our apartment in New York City in early 1942. Galatti was director of the American Field Service which was then providing ambulances and American drivers to serve the British Eighth Army in the Western Desert of Egypt.

I had accelerated completion of my studies at college and was awaiting the final call of the draft. My brothers were already officers in the Navy, and I aspired to some commissioned status myself. I had applied to the Navy and was turned down because I had had surgery for osteomyelitis in my forehead. The Marines did not seem to object to that and told me I could be an enlisted man but could never qualify for officer training because my eyesight was not good enough. The Army Air Corps was of course out of the question.

In this dilemma, Stephen Galatti provided the solution. He said to me: "Your problem is that you are a generalist, a History Major. For this war, you will need a specific technical skill. Now I believe they will need navigators in every branch of the armed services, so why not get trained while you await the draft?" Next morning I went down to the Seamen's Institute at the lower tip of Manhattan Island, put down a fee of \$100 and enrolled in their Air Navigation Course. The school was run by a Mr. Elfass. We started with basic marine navigation, learned all about Admiral Marc St Hilaire of the French Navy and the astronomical triangle, then passed on to the pre-computed tables of H.O.214, the Air and Nautical Almanacs (and later my personal favorite, the older H.O.208 (Ageton)). Being fresh out of school and only just 22 years old, it all came very easily. Toward the end of the course Elfass called me in and asked if I would join the permanent staff of the Institute as an instructor, assuring me that this position would ensure me permanent draft deferment. I thanked him but said my ambition was to get into the war or as close to it as I could, as my brothers were doing. The Institute had a placement program with airlines like TWA and Pan American, both of which had U.S.

Government contracts to deliver bombers or cargo to Europe and Africa. TWA on the North Atlantic and Pan American via the South Atlantic, and both were greedily snapping up navigators trained by Elfass and his instructors. He accordingly set up, first, an interview for me with TWA at a hangar at National Airport in Washington, DC.

I took the night train down to Washington and presented myself for my first job, keyed up and anxious. My interviewer was a man named Kemper Jacks. He sat at a raised desk with a translucent glass plate forming the wall in back of him, so that I could only see a looming figure outlined dimly against the glare of the window. It was all very scary, but I apparently passed muster and was sent immediately to another room for a pre-employment physical. Here the doctor first took my pulse and blood pressure – the pulse was racing – and asked me why I was overreacting. I told him it was my first job and perhaps my best chance to get into something like war service. He then checked my eyes and said that I did not have 20/20 vision and that TWA did not accept candidates for navigator unless they did, even if the eyesight was correctable with glasses. I felt bitter that my hopes had been raised uselessly, and when I got back to New York told Mr. Elfass of TWA's requirement. He said not to worry, as he believed Pan American permitted glasses.

About a week later, in May 1942, I flew down to Miami to be interviewed by Pan American Air Ferries Inc. for a possible employment. Again I passed muster, subject only to a physical exam. The only hurdle for me was passing the Schneider Test. This involved having pulse and blood pressure taken when lying down, then when standing. Normally pulse and blood pressure should be lower when reclining and rise when standing. With me it was just the opposite. I was so nervous about passing the test that I would tend to panic when lying down, but became calmer when I stood up. So I failed the first test and was told to come back a few days later. More agony followed, and of course I failed it again. I wrote my parents in New York and received would be consoling, replies that getting into the war was not the only thing in the world anyway, etc. – but it was for me. Well, the day came for the last Schneider Test, to fail which meant to wash out. And of course I failed once more – but this time I had the good luck

Perhaps a week later I confidently boarded the plane again, ran off my fixes without difficulty – and promptly found us 50 miles inland over the Everglades! I was consternated. Alexander was cold. I knew that with him one could be a fair-haired protégé one day and a bum the next – it all depended on results. In some panic I took careful star sights on the ground in front of our bungalow and, sure enough, found myself 50 miles away again. Next morning I rushed to the school, confirmed that my sextant had gone out of calibration, and then rushed to Alexander's office to tell him what had happened. He said he was relieved to hear it and would look forward to my next check flight. This went off perfectly again, and my last hurdle was over except for the milk run.

A few days later the phone rang. It was PAAF operations at 36th St. Airport. I was told to report to Captain O.G. "Ace" Corben for the flight to Natal and back. Corben was a veteran pilot, affable, professional. In our DC-3 loaded with cargo I gave him the course for Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico, an easy daylight flight down through the brilliant Bahamas and past Santo Domingo. Borinquen, located at the extreme northwest corner of Puerto Rico, had an officer's club whose spectacular terrace was perhaps 300 feet above the sea, looking directly across the rolling Atlantic with no obstructions all the way to Greenland. It was also the home of the 20-cent frozen Daiquiri – a great combination.

Our next stop was to Piarco Field in dank and steaming Trinidad. Then we flew down past the Guyana's and over Devil's Island of Dreyfus fame, through the inter-tropical front – a wall of water through which the airplane swam as much as it flew, risking carburetor icing – to land finally at Belem do Para (pronounced Beleng) in northeast Brazil. Belem was a sleepy town on the Para River, very tropical with an omnipresent dank and sour smell. We stayed, as I recall, at the so-called Grand Hotel, but in the evenings everyone actually foregathered at Pensao Zésé – all the Pan Am and other crews and most of the other expatriates in town. Pensao Zésé, downstairs, was a tavern à la Somerset Maugham, featuring mostly the local *cerveza* (beer) which was warm but good. What it also featured were the waitresses, who served food and beer downstairs, while offering diversions upstairs, interchangeably. Now, I was easily

recognized by my hard-bitten flying colleagues as a green kid, although I concealed the guilty secret of my St. Paul's school virginity as best I could, a state that at age 22 I was, in principle, almost desperate to get rid of, but how? Well, what happened next – and it was either on this flight or a later trip through Belem – was predictable. The pilots kept asking me why I didn't go upstairs until I started asking myself the same thing, too. In due course I rose to my feet with what I hoped was a suitably casual air and went upstairs.

Soon I found myself in a bedroom in which was a very young, very diffident, almost tiny girl who seem as unsure as I was as to what was supposed to happen next. Desire was definitely not in the air. After a certain amount of confused groping which probably did not technically alter my, or perhaps her, virgin status as far as I could be sure, I hurriedly put more than the going rate in the bowl on the table, thanked the girl politely and went back downstairs. "Well, that didn't last long" was the remark. "Long enough." was my best Humphrey Bogart reply, as I reached for another beer. If they only knew!

Next day we pushed on to Natal, easy to find because it is on the seacoast beyond Fortaleza, discharged our cargo and turned around. Getting back to Belem was something else, as it is upriver in an enormous delta and rainforest where maps were almost useless and with no landmarks for hours en route. The plane had a drift meter, a rotatable glass plate with lines on it, set in the plane's "floor." You tried to put these lines parallel to the trees or waves or whatever as they passed beneath the aircraft, to get your true track over the ground. Anyway, by guessing, constant checking and dead reckoning we came out close to Belem. Corben flipped on his radio compass for the first time and said I had been the first trainee to hit it that close. The rest of the trip to Miami was a breeze.

I should interject briefly an incident which occurred off French Guyana, which made a profound impression on me. It was not on this first flight but on a later one, when part of the crew was a veteran Pan American system radio operator named Dick Gumb.

He could sit and talk with one ear covered by a earphone, while CW (Morse Code) was coming in at 45 words a minute – almost a solid stream of dots and dashes. Suddenly he would hold up his hand and write down a whole sentence, then go back to the conversation. On this occasion we were passing to seaward of Cayenne, the capital of French Guyana, on a moonlit night. Cayenne had a radio beacon at its airport but it was off the air, under orders of the Vichy controlled local French regime. Dick Gumb said to me “You know, I bet I could get that beacon turned on.” He couldn’t contact the station directly because it was on frequencies our transmitter did not have, so he tapped “hey” – no signature. In New York his “fist” or manner of transmitting was instantly recognized, and the answer came back, “hey.” Gumb then tapped a request for La Guardia to contact San Juan, which had the proper frequencies, to ask Cayenne to turn on its radio beacon. Within 20 minutes, what the State Department could not have accomplished at all, Dick Gumb did. Cayenne came on the air for perhaps the only time during the war, as far as I know. What struck me was the thrill there is in watching real mastery at work – in any field, the joy of seeing real professionalism in action. Dick Gumb and the others like him were the last of their breed, I suspect. After World War II, with new electronics, Loran and other navigational aids, radio operators on international flights became obsolete. Pan Am gave them a year’s salary and said goodbye forever.

Returning to our narrative, back in Miami I was now a full-fledged navigator at \$600 per month. There were many such checked-out men in line ahead of me, all awaiting assignment to permanent flight crews, as Captains and Co-Pilots became available. For me this meant that I had only to check in daily with PAAF operations and await the fateful phone call. It also meant that I had the month of August 1942 as a highly-aid vacation, which inevitably brings us back to the subject of Life and Girls.

My father had reluctantly consented to ship my 1939 Mercury convertible (with leather seats) to Miami, so I had the wheels. I also came to have, at least to an extent, a girl. Alan McIlhenny had introduced me to L*** who, with her sister and their mother, lived in a nice house near Coconut Grove. L*** was mischievous and merry, with black hair and blue eyes and definitely the right size and shape. She was also officially

engaged to a fellow a class behind me in Princeton who lived in New Jersey. They were scheduled to marry in the fall. L***, it became apparent, was a bit of a gold-digger, and this fiancé had plenty of gold. He was also totally besotted with her. Occasionally he would come to Miami and I would see them together. He would open doors and dance in attendance, clearly the wrong way to handle L***, who seemed to get along better with me. I, of course, trained or mis-trained by years of New England prep school conditioning, regarded her engaged status as a bar to serious romance – and perhaps I preferred it that way, I still can't say, but we did enjoy each other's company. Every day we would spend at the beach or playing tennis, every night dining and dancing at some exotic spot under the palms or stars. We would end up on my porch or hers, but never quite "going too far." There were lots of rules in 1942. It was all very idyllic, if sometimes frustrating.

There were other interludes, minor comedies also. Surely the worst was the case of H***. Our dissolute older housemate Bill Archer met her and introduced her around. She was vacationing from San Antonio and was very attractive. Bill took her out one night, and the next morning proudly announced that he had 'scored.' Alan and I were fascinated, still trying to learn how one bridged the gap between our upbringing and Life. Bill said H*** clearly liked me, so I asked him for detailed guidance as to how to proceed. He said he had taken room no. x in a certain hotel where there was dancing, invited her upstairs for a nightcap, etc. So I said to myself that's the way to do it. Now, if you can believe this, I went to the same hotel, reserved the same room, took H*** out dancing and then back to the very same trysting place of her earlier evening, following the game plan in every detail. Needless to say, she found my maneuvers too obvious to be romantic but in any case, precisely 20 minutes after we had gotten there, a loud knock is heard at the door and in comes the grinning Archer say, "Oh sorry. Did I by any chance leave my pajamas in the bureau drawer last night? No? OK, Have fun." End of story, except that Gordon Schmitt had a few harsh words for Archer the next day!

Lest these amorous misadventures seem endless, I shall cite only one more. That was when I found myself on the beach in animated conversation with a gorgeous blonde

from Georgia. She had what looked like costume jewelry rings on a number of fingers and a sleek and tawny shape, which clearly got my attention. I asked if she would go to a movie some time, and she agreed, giving me her phone number, so two days later I combed my hair, called her up and made a date for that evening. When I got to her place there was another guy already there which I thought a bit odd, but perhaps she didn't want to go out with a stranger on the first date, etc. So I bought movie tickets for the crowd, and we sat down to wait for the show. She seemed to know the other guy rather well and finally said something to which brought a whole new thought into my head. I whispered to her "By any chance is that your husband?" Well, she hadn't happened to mention she was married, that's all!

A little vignette which was not a misadventure occurred one night when I was taking a late bus down to Homestead Field, south of Miami, and found myself sitting next to a nice young, Florida country girl. After a while, and no doubt influenced by the tropic night and the balmy breezes coming through the window of the dark bus, I took her hand, without a word, and linked her arm through mine. She just looked at me in a trusting way and after a while, if I remember right, leaned her head on my shoulder. We talked a little and then she turned to me her grave and honest little face and asked, "Do you drink or smoke or cuss?" I said yes, I did all those things. I recall she sighed. Soon the bus came to her stop and, looking back at me she left the bus.

* * * * *

World War II has had short shrift so far in this memoir, but its somber shadow sometimes reached even our idyllic summer of 1942. Next door to us lived Jack and Shirley Byers, young newlyweds, down from New York, both very attractive and cheery and obviously much in love. Jack was a navigator for Art Mills, a veteran United Airlines pilot who had been lured into PAAF by the high salaries. One day Shirley came over to our house distraught, saying she had heard nothing from Jack and could we check as to his whereabouts. We found out he had delivered a plane to the British in Freetown or Bathurst, West Africa, and was last seen getting on a Royal Canadian Air Force

converted B-24 Bomber, deadheading back to Brazil and home, then no word. About two weeks later Gordon Schmitt was going through Natal when he was asked to go down to Recife to see if he could identify a body in a rubber raft which had floated up on a beach near there. He did, and could still recognize Art Mills, a handkerchiefs tied over his head as vain protection against the murderous sun, and around his neck ten dogtags, one of them Jack Byers. Apparently the plane had gone down in mid-Atlantic, with ten survivors clinging to one small boat. Tough Art Mills had been the last to die. Poor Shirley went back to New York broken hearted, and we never heard of her again.

* * * * *

PAAF was, among other things, a collection of characters, particularly among the navigators who had in large numbers come from the Merchant Marine, attracted by PAAF's bonanza payroll. We saw a lot of Lonnie Carr from Rockland, Maine, a lean, dark-haired and handsome man of the Gregory Peck type but saltier, full of sea stories told in a true Maine twang and usually on the raunchy side. He remembered one voyage where the owner of the shipping line had decided his son, Stanford, had led too sheltered an existence. He accordingly instructed the ship's captain to put Stanford to work and make a man of him. He specifically wanted Stanford introduced to life. Well, the ship pulled into some port and the boozy old captain promptly rounded up his local girlfriend of some years' standing and sent her on board to teach Stanford about life. Stanford took one look at the frightful old harridan and bolted out of his cabin to the presumed safety of the bridge. The captain was down on deck with Lonnie Carr, supervising the stowage of cargo, and looked up and saw Stanford. As Lonnie told it he promptly bellowed in a loud voice, in front of the whole crew, "Now there, Stanfud, you just go back to your cabin and give that girl a good ____! Nothing to worry about. Known her for years and she's clean as a hound's tooth!" Poor Stanfud!

Then there was Pappy Williams, an old salt of 50 years. When the PAAF contract expired on November 1, 1942, Pappy was taken into the Army Air Force, and because of his experience and panache, became personal navigator to General Tunner, head of the

entire Air Transport Command. On one flight Tunner came forward and asked Pappy how far it was to their destination. Old Pappy reached into his hip pocket, pulled out a flask of Bourbon, held it up to the light, and replied, "Waal General, I'd say about two inches." And he got away with it!

Among the long line of other characters there was one who stood out. I recall his name was Ed. Although a hard-bitten veteran of the sea, in his late 30's or early 40's, Ed came from educated and gentle origins in Kentucky. He was soft-spoken, considerate, a married man of cultivated manners and courtesy. Physically he was slim, not too tall and completely bald. The only remarkable thing one noticed, or perhaps did not notice soon enough, was that he had exceptionally long arms and, at the end of them, broad square hands toughened by years of ropes and ocean spray and which should have been registered with the police as dangerous weapons. Now, also in our student body was a young ex-football star, late of Texas A&M as I recall, named Ledbetter. He was also, when not aroused, a quiet Texan and unofficial leader of our training class. Well, there was a dance one night at a local cabaret and Ledbetter, unfortunately, had a drink too many. Somehow his latent aggressions became focused on Ed who, ever the gentleman, tried his hardest to avoid confrontation. Ledbetter persisted, all 220 pounds of bone and muscle, and at last made the grave error of taking a swing at Ed. My housemate Gordon Schmitt was standing right there and later told us what happened next. He said Ed's right hand started from somewhere near the ground swung up and around like an iron ball at the end of a chain and exploded against Ledbetter's jaw. Soundlessly the giant toppled to the floor and did not move. Ten minutes later they were still trying to revive him. No one ever bothered gentle Ed again.

* * * * *

The sunlit idyll of sand, sea, stars and L***, which was August '42, for me, came to an end on September 1 when I got the phone call so long awaited. PAAF Operations told me to report to Captain Henry E. ("Jimmy") Hix for a pre-departure test flight in a

Douglas A-20 attack bomber, to be delivered under contract to the Russians in Abadan, Iran.

I hurried out to 36th Street airport to meet Hix for the first time. He was a dapper, neatly dressed man who, at 37, considered himself already old. The reason was that he had had to struggle so desperately to survive during the long Depression years as a pilot. Barnstorming, flying old Tri-Motor Fords loaded with chicle (for chewing gum) over the Venezuela jungles, flying for Taca Airlines in Central America, trying to compete with Pan American whose predatory ruthlessness in those days was legendary. Hix told me how Pan Am would even roll out drums on an airstrip to keep a crippled Taca plane from making an emergency landing. After the ordeal of these years and endless anxiety of never knowing where the next dollar or meal might come from, Hix found nothing threatening in flying small military aircraft across the Atlantic Ocean, through tropical fronts and towering cumulonimbus clouds or desert sandstorm. He was so grateful to have a solid paycheck of \$1000 per month that he could not do enough for Uncle Sam. That was why, in only the last two months of the PAAF contract, namely September and October of 1942, he and I delivered two A-20's out of Miami to the Russians in Abadan, Iran, and a Lockheed Hudson bomber to the British in Freetown, West Africa.

I remember that first pre-departure check flight around the Miami area, the afternoon before our takeoff. PAAF was perhaps the simplest and best-organized operation I have ever known. Hix simply signed a contract to deliver the plane as ordered. When we flew, what stops we made, whether we crossed the ocean at night (we always did) or by day, all was entirely up to him, working with me as his navigator. I think we made a great team. Hix's long experience in aviation showed, and was a comforting factor as we flew through fronts over South America which made day seem like night, or set out across the ocean at sunset. He in turn hoped to get wherever we were going, and before we ran out of gas, and for that he relied heavily on me.

Our first real test was when we took off from Natal for Ascension Island in the South Atlantic. I still recall Ascension, it was 1257 nautical miles out there, about six

miles, and the nearest continent was the Gold Coast of Africa, some 1183 nautical miles to the northeast. We took off at dusk so as to have stars to navigate by all night. I was sitting on a parachute, alone in the Plexiglas nose of the aircraft, separated from Hix by a sheet of armor plate. We communicated by intercom. I would ask him to fly as straight and level as possible and would then "shoot" a couple or three stars with my RAF Mark 9 sextant, note the times, plot the lines of position and then run them up for a fix. With luck, in that aircraft and under those conditions, you could find your position within 10 miles. I took these fixes more or less continuously all night as we passed beyond the point of no return, until dawn broke in front of us over a beautiful but desolate and empty ocean. Here the situation for the navigator became trickier because he had only the sun to work with. It was directly in front of the plane, which gave us an easy "speed line", or line of position showing how far we were from the island's longitude line, but no clue as to whether we might be to the right or left of our course. For that you could only refer back to your last star fix, and apply the wind directions you had calculated between fixes during the night, or any drift you could observe from the waves below. Ascension was blessed with a rather weak radio beacon, so that once you got close you could home in by radio compass provided the latter did not fail. If it did, for mechanical or weather reasons, you would deliberately steer far to one side of the island, then turn at the longitude line of the island that you had calculated from a sun shot, and then run up the line until you saw land... or didn't.

I gave Hix a straight course in, and when he switched on the radio compass it checked out close enough for me to pass my first exam. We landed on that blessed rock in the light of morning and staggered off to sleep in a tent.

* * * * *

I came into Ascension many times during the war. We would often swim in the afternoons on a beach of tiny shells, not sand. In the evening we would often gather at an outdoor movie, as the sun was setting in the west. It was always a beautiful, but sometimes terrible, scene. I recall once sitting there, safe and sound, waiting for the

movie to begin but knowing that some fighter planes being ferried out to the island by day from Brazil had not reported in and were down in the sea, somewhere out there. A search and rescue boat would go out, and some scout planes overhead. One reported seeing a pilot on a one-man raft, his face covered with blood, and then losing sight of him in the high seas. We tried, without great success, not to imagine the lonely agonies going on out there in the ocean as we sipped a coke, smoked a Brazilian cigar, and absorbed the peace and safety of the night.

* * * * *

Next day Hix and I took off again, this time northeasterly some 1183 nautical miles to Accra in what is now Ghana on the Gold Coast of Africa. It was an uneventful flight, made easier by the knowledge that we couldn't miss Africa. On the other hand, when you hit Africa you had to know whether to turn right or left, so I usually steered left of course to make a landfall nearer to Takoradi. There could be weather, gas would be low, and one did not want to end up over terra firma but with no place to land.

Accra was all very British and very colonial in those days, with black policemen in, as I recall, red and blue uniforms and white belts directing traffic. I remember having a cold local beer after we landed that time and then staggering off to a cot under mosquito net and sinking into that bottomless sleep of an exhausted 22-year old in a haze of tropical heat and with a cold beer inside him. The last thing I recall was the strains of Judy Garland singing "For Me and My Gal" on a distant gramophone.



In Maiduguri, Nigeria

*Left to right-Williams with side arm, Richardson, French Morrison, O'Hearn, Guido, Howard, Moffatt, Derryberry
Kneeling-McClung*

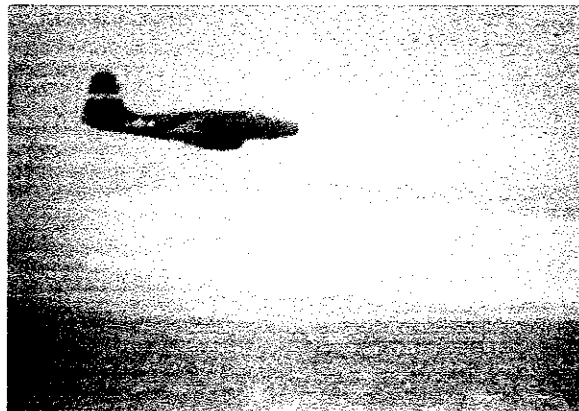
Next day we pushed on the Maiduguri in eastern Nigeria. Pan Am had a small facility there. I recall the beautiful Arabian horses. You could buy one for \$50, and price included the African who took care of the horse. He cost nothing and you bought him, too, as part of the deal. I noticed Hix carried only an oversize pilot's briefcase. It would include shaving gear, soap, an extra shirt, shorts, socks, and tie, plus a small electric iron. With these Hix could circumnavigate the globe while always appearing spic and span. From Maiduguri we would continue east, overflying El Geneina and El Fasher to Khartoum in the Sudan. We landed at Wadi Seidna, near the Omdurman made famous by Kitchener, Churchill, and the Fuzzy Wuzzies. I remember the crushing heat, so dry that you never sweated. You just became dehydrated and could die unless you imbibed water copiously. There were plenty of scorpions, so you shook out your shoes in the morning.

On this first trip through Khartoum, or the second one also with Hix, when we delivered our last A-20 to the Russians in Abadan, some battery acid had somehow leaked down into the innards of the plane and posed a corrosive danger to control cables, electric wires, etc. So we had to have the plane pulled apart and the affected areas washed down with antacids. And to do so that we had first to fly over on a detour to Gura, near Asmara in Eritrea. It was an extraordinary place. Douglas Aircraft Co. had set up a large facility to repair bombers damaged in the Western Desert war, which was raging at that time between Rommel and Montgomery. So there in the Eritrean highlands was a little America with American know-how and ice cream. We spent several days in the bracing climate. I recall one night there was a festive occasion featuring a boxing show. About ten Ethiopian natives entered the ring at the same time, each with an enormous boxing glove on one hand and the other tied behind his back. Then the whistle blew and all hell broke loose. Everybody was clobbering everybody, preferably from behind and unawares. Gradually the field narrowed until only the winner was still on his feet.



Flying up Nile to Cairo from Wadi Farafra, afternoon

Bill Beck, Pilot, OW in nose, Navigator. A-20 aircraft being delivered to Russians in Abadan



A-20 aircraft leading a flight of A-20s up the Nile to Heliopolis, 1943. I am in the nose as navigator

When the plane was washed out and reassembled we continued up the Nile. Over Abu Simbel I recognized the great temple of Rameses II from my Princeton architecture course under Prof. Baldwin Smith. Eventually we landed at Heliopolis, an airport in Cairo totally disguised by having no runways and a takeoff right over the Heliopolis Hotel where we stayed. In the afternoon I went over to the Shepherd's Hotel terrace. Our PAAF uniforms and caps looked much like the U.S. Navy summer uniforms, and had black bars on the shoulders to make us look like officers, so we could go to the places like Shepherd's. In Cairo, I saw for the first time the British class system in action. Every decent bar or restaurant in town had a sign on it, "Out of Bounds to Other

Ranks" – which meant only officers were allowed. I thought they treated their enlisted personnel like dogs. From the Shepherd's terrace I could see living history passing by, in the form of the many uniforms of the British Eighth Army. For prestige, top place on the totem pole went to the New Zealanders. They were at least as good as the Australians in combat and much better behaved behind the lines. All this was a week or so before El Alamein. Most of the Egyptian population believed, and hoped, that Rommel would soon be in town. The pound sterling had plummeted and the US dollar was at a premium.

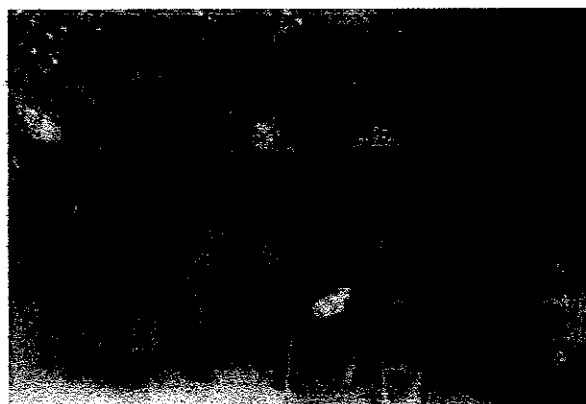


OW at pyramids - 1943

After dark I made my way through the lightless streets, aided only by the reflected glow of the antiaircraft searchlights which weaved back and forth overhead. There was some traffic with only a small cross of blue light showing where the head-lamps had been blacked out. In due course I found Doll's Café – the most popular nightclub at the time. Inside I met some American combat pilots who were based at Deversoir Field outside of Cairo and whose mission was to bomb Tobruk and Benghazi in B-25s. Their sorties in the face of Africa Korps antiaircraft and Hans Joachim Marseille's ME-109 fighters were hazardous in the extreme. Their life expectancies were short and pocketbooks bulging. I joined two of them at a table just as a gorgeous young belly dancer appeared on stage. I admired her out loud and the pilots said "Why not meet her?" and snapped their fingers. A waiter rushed over and the pilots gave him the message. Sure enough, after the show she came over to the table. Her name was **** and years later she became popular, and finally bride of a millionaire. But then she was just getting started. She spoke a little French so I, always the polite conversationalist, started out with

“Combien de temps vous a-t-il fallu pour apprendre a danser comme cela?” Well, she got the “combien” which triggered her quick answer in the only English she knew, “Forty dollars for the night, \$100 for the weekend.” It’s the sober truth! Needless to say I was not yet prepared for life with such a capital L!

Next day Jimmy Hix and I flew over Rutbah, Habbaniyah, and down to Abadan. We landed, gathered up our personal gear, got out of the airplane, a Russian officer signed for the plane and put an immediate guard on it. If it then turned out we had left something behind, forget it. Our “allies” went by the book. They used to remove the navigator’s Plexiglas nose, put in extra cannons and then fly the craft up to the Soviet Union, where, I heard they were used as low-level tank busters at Stalingrad, and elsewhere. For our part we would “deadhead” as passengers back across Africa.



The girl is Ruby Robinson, daughter of British employee of Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., Abadan, Iran. Pool is the Oil Co. Club pool. Ruby told me she was the only girl among ten thousand men and wished for more female company.

I remember ending up at Fisherman’s Lake in Liberia where we boarded a Pan Am flying clipper for the flight back to Brazil. It was a flying boat which, as I recall, didn’t cruise much faster than 75mph, but could land on the water and was equipped like a Pullman with salons upstairs and downstairs, bunks and all. At Natal we transferred to DC-3s for the milk run back to Miami.

Back home we would get one week off, to the day, before PAAF would call again. For our second trip Hix drew a Lockheed Hudson twin engine bomber for delivery to the British in Freetown. The great memory of this trip was the night crossing from Natal directly to Freetown, only about 1600 nautical miles and where the African and South American continents were at their closest. The reason for the memory was that this flight took place on a superbly clear and quiet night when the plane, on autopilot, was as stable as a billiard table. Under such conditions navigation could become close to an exact science. I would take "four-star" fixes on two stars – that is, shoot the same two stars twice to get four lines of position intersecting at a single point. The Hudson, as noted earlier, had an astrohatch which opened to the sky with no glass to obscure the view, and one could get a definite fix within five miles or less – about tops for an aircraft and a bubble sextant. The beauty wasn't only in the weather and the sky full of stars. It was also in the mathematics that underlay such navigation and in the precision, in a small way, of my own role. I recall we hit the African coast within two miles and two minutes of our predictions. After that, Hix would fly anywhere with me, as I with him. I still have the chart on my wall.

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On October 31 1942 PAAF's contract with the Government ended. By this time the USAAF Air Transport Command was deemed to have acquired the training and skills to take over the ferrying of bombers overseas. Gen Harold George and the 4th Ferrying Group took over the South Atlantic operations, still operating out of 36th St airport in Miami.

We ex-PAAF pilots and navigators, for our part, were now deemed to be the most experienced people in the business, so the Army and Navy recruiters flocked to Miami to sign us up. The Navy offered an immediate Ensign's commission to navigators with my experience, while the Army Air Forces, not to be outbid, came up with a direct commission as First Lieutenant, which looked pretty good to Alan McIlhenny and me.

With our track records, the physical was a formality. They did not demand 20/20 uncorrected vision and were glad to overlook osteomyelitis, although I recall the dentist, on seeing Dr. GaNun's gold inlays in my mouth, did observe that he was sure I would be worth more to the Government dead than alive!

So we raised our right hands and overnight became officers and gentlemen. I was rather terrified, in the ensuing days, to walk around Miami Beach because, rounding any corner, one could come upon a gaggle of enlisted men or officer candidates who would snap to rigid attention. I was at first quite capable of returning the salute with the wrong hand or say "dismiss" instead of "as you were." I even wore my silver wings in the wrong place until some fatherly Sergeant tactfully set me right. With his seniority, Jimmy Hix was given a Major's commission and was shipped out to Long Beach to fly the pacific route. I never saw him again, although he tried to have me ordered out there too, so we could continue our partnership. He was a fine man, and we exchanged letters a few times after the war.

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For a time our lives and work continued as before, except for our uniforms. I continued to ferry planes across the South Atlantic, and soon had my first real scare of the war. I was flying with a former PAAF captain named Larry Crawford, and we had been given a very odd little airplane called the A-30, or Martin Baltimore, to deliver to Accra via Ascension Island. This plane, besides having a rotatable tail wheel which made it very prone to "ground loop" in the crosswind, also had an enormous 1000-gallon auxiliary tank strapped under the fuselage to permit the long over water crossing. Like the A-20, this was a twin-engine bomber. I was again in the navigator's nose compartment, Crawford at the pilot's controls behind me, and as I recall, an enlisted radio operator whose name was Don Boyer in the rear. I was separated from Crawford by an armor plate, and this time we had no intercom. Our only communication was by sending notes on the point of a pencil via a crack at the side of the armored barrier. Well, we took off from Natal on a bright moonlight night, heading out for Ascension. About 200 miles

out I saw a pencil note wiggling at my shoulder. Crawford was asking me to check my airspeed indicator so he could check his with it. I had noticed that we seemed to be mushing through the air in a nose upright position. Crawford then sent me another note saying that he had the aircraft trimmed full forward but was only barely able to keep the nose in a flyable attitude. Something was wrong, and if it got any worse we could go into a stall and end up in the sea. He asked about our position, and should we go on or try to get back to Natal. I urged him to turn around if we could do it without spinning and head back for Brazil. Eventually we did so. There we were, more than 200 miles out at sea. If things got worse we could either spin in, possibly land at sea, in which case the nose compartment would be crushed, or bail out to a slower death in the water. I recall I was so terrified that I forced myself to take repeated sights of the moon – which was now dead ahead over the Brazilian coast – to get a speed line and an ETA, but also to keep my mind busy. In due course the airplane slowly returned to a more flyable attitude, and when we reached Natal again seemed normal. Larry Crawford landed and reported in, both mystified and discountenanced because he feared people might think he had simply lost his nerve and turned back, but the next day the mystery was solved. It seems that at the factory, by inadvertence or otherwise, the big 1000-gallon tank had been put on without the usual three baffle plates, which were designed to keep the gasoline from sloshing back and forth. As a result, when the tank was full we could take off normally, but as we burned off gas the remainder sloshed back to the rear of the tank and began to affect the plane's flight angle. Then, after passing the critical point, the situation corrected itself as the tank came closer to empty. Baffle plates were installed, and we flew to Ascension the next night, without incident. A year later, on the North Atlantic, and also out in India, I experienced greater actual danger, but I would never be so terrified again as I was that lonely night over the South Atlantic.

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As 1942 came to its end, so did our life in Miami. Alan and I received orders to report to the newly formed 20th Ferrying Group at Berry Field, Nashville, Tennessee. I drove my 1939 Mercury convertible up through Florida, spending the first night in

Jacksonville. Somehow I located a stewardess named Daphne Smith whom I had met on a Delta flight and she showed me around. Next morning I pushed on north, unwittingly leaving my gasoline ration book in a Jacksonville gas station. I discovered the error in Macon, Georgia, and didn't know what to do. Someone pointed out the local draft board before which I appeared in my Air Forces First Lieutenant's uniform, wings and all, and there was I was treated to a demonstration of the Old South's response toward white officers in uniform. They couldn't do enough for me, handed me a sheaf of gas ration coupons thick enough to get me to Nashville several times over, and just asked me to mail back any I didn't need (which I did). I then pushed on to Atlanta.

My car had no heater in it, so I remember Atlanta for two things. First that it was so cold that when I got out of the car my knee's seemed locked in the bent position, and second that to get warm I immediately went into a movie theatre where they were showing "Casablanca" with Bogart and Bergman.

Nashville in the winter was cold, gray, smelling of coal-burning furnaces. Alan McIlhenny and I found rooms at the Memorial Apartments Hotel. We were soon assigned to our respective squadrons and out on ferrying flights again, over either the South or North Atlantic. One day I came in from such a flight just as Alan was heading out. He confided that he had met a young woman who lived down the hall and suggested I look her up. So I did. She was married, had a husband away in the service somewhere and had become so lonely in some small Tennessee country town that she had moved temporarily to Nashville. I called on her one night with the clear assumption on both sides that I would not hurry off. I remember sitting on the edge of her bed when I came in, while she was awaiting me in an armchair across the room, with a Bible in her hand. I don't know if she was trying to get Satan behind her, but evidently she did not really want to. After that evening I guessed I had finally joined the club and discovered life. Nothing seemed all that changed.

Between overseas flight we were often assigned ground duty chores. One time I was ordered to build a skeet field for the Officer's Recreation Program at Berry Field. I

accordingly got the plans, drew some sketches, drew tools and equipment and picked up ten enlisted men. I knew nothing about military command in those days, but learned at least one lesson on the very first day. I decided that as an officer in a democratic army that I should show by the way of example, so I predictably ended up doing most of the work while my enlisted flock mostly leaned on their shovels. After the noon break a few of them didn't even show up again. What I learned then and later was what I should have done, namely lined them up, asked "Who is the senior man here?" When someone emerged, then said "OK, you're in charge of these men. Here's what I want done. You report to me." There are many kinds of military leadership, but one of them is keeping your distance and exercising your authority indirectly!

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There were some extraordinary people in the 20th Ferrying Group. My squadron commander was an "old" man from Abilene, Texas named Lewis E Derryberry. Our Base Commander was Lieut.-Col. Theron B. Herndon of Louisiana, a political appointee it was said. One day Herndon came out with some regulations designed to enhance military bearing or something, and among them ordered all squadron commanders to start carrying swagger sticks, effective immediately. This order didn't go down well with Derryberry, a West Texas American, but orders were orders. So the next day Derryberry shows up with a new five-foot axe handle under his arm and walked around the base with it. The order was quietly rescinded!

But among the long list of characters and personalities on our base, which included even people like Bert Parks of later TV fame, surely the most impressive were Adrian S. Fisher and Edwin McElwain. Fisher was himself a Tennessean, a graduate of Princeton, Summa Cum Laude in Mathematics, member of the football team, Harvard Law Review and former law clerk to Justice Brandeis of the Supreme Court. McElwain came from Springfield, Mass, and had been a law clerk for Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes. They both had become navigators in the Army Air Forces in order to escape from Washington and get more personally in the war. While still living in pre-war Washington they had rented a mansion in Arlington named Hockley, I believe, where

collected some of the brightest and best young minds of their day. Among them were Frank Pace, later Secretary of the Army, Ed Pritchard of Tennessee who much later ran afoul of the law, Alger Hiss at one point and, I believe Lloyd Symington as well. In any case Fisher and McElwain decided to recreate that lifestyle in wartime Nashville, albeit with lesser talents. McIlhenny and I joined in, along with Malcolm D. Perkins of Boston, Bill Beck of Niagara Falls, Denis Maguire and Gordon Schmitt, and we rented a great white-column mansion in Belle Meade, surrounded by the elite of Nashville society. Nearby lived Dr. Owen Bryan and his two charming daughters, Martha and Jane, I remember.

I struck up a particular friendship with McElwain. He was stocky, not too tall, entirely bald and had genial blue eyes. Like me, he was more of an introvert than the others, worrying about life and values, whether character was more important than brains, attitudes more important than facts or the other way around, never quite deciding. Mac Perkins was a New Englander of the Leverett Saltonstall model. Besides a keen intellect he also had, as I recall, a row of small marks on his chest that he told me were diminutive extra nipples, some sort of evolutionary throwback. Such things always threw me into an identity crisis. I had never heard of evolution until I got to college. I assumed people were people and animals were animals, as a matter of obvious sense. Now I had to wonder what people were, what was I, where did it all start, in a spiral of confusion and insecurity. I never found any answers. The Russians have a proverb, that a man can read and study and think all his life, but he will still die a fool. I always thought that the most favorable aspect of dying was that it would represent the only hope of ever finding answers to the only questions seriously worth asking, ending a lifetime of frustration one way or the other.

Conversation at our Nashville dinner table was often far over my head as when Fisher would discuss how to compute the surface area of a Mobius Strip, or he, Perkins and McElwain zeroed in on the finer points of the law. Before too long Fisher and McElwain were unearched by the high circles which they, like T.E. Lawrence, had sought to escape. McElwain became forthwith Assistant to John McCloy in the War

Department, leading to the observation that "Stimson is really McCloy, and McCloy is really McElwain!" Fisher lingered long enough to compute the Loran lines for the Pacific Ocean before going on to a lifetime of senior assignments in Government and Academia. Both are now dead. McElwain returned after the war to Convington & Burling in Washington, married and had several children, and died quite young. Fisher passed away more recently. In any case, during that summer of 1943 Fisher, McElwain, and Perkins created in that Belle Meade mansion a climate of intellectual brilliance and uncompromising high-mindedness that was stimulating to observe. I think they would have scorned pursuing either money or power as ends in themselves, seeking excellence for its own sake. Today's bright minds often seem to have less disinterested motives, which Fisher and McElwain would have regarded in their time as demeaning and unworthy.

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Flying out of Nashville over the North Atlantic I had my second big scare of the war. Our pilot was the highly competent William F. Beck of Niagara Falls. We were taking a Martin B-26 Marauder from Nashville to the RAF base of St. Mawgan in Cornwall and then down to Casablanca. On the leg in question we took off from Bluie West One on the west coast of Greenland, an airfield nestled at the base of an ice field some 50 miles up a winding fjord from the open sea. The only approach to the field was this fjord with its 2000-foot high rock walls. On this day in question, we flew down to the sea, then turned south to the southern tip of Greenland, then east toward our destination, Keflavik in Iceland. We were on instruments most of the way after leaving the BW-1 area, and when we finally arrived over Keflavik the weather was hopelessly socked in so that we were told to return to Greenland. This meant that we could have to get back to BW-1 before dark as there was no other way to fly up the approach fjord except in daylight.

Our original takeoff had been delayed, and we knew we had no time to waste and nowhere else to go. We had to make our best speed, but if we crowded on too much

power we would run out of gas. So Bill Beck had to lean out the fuel mixture to conserve gas, thus risking the other danger of engine overheating. Also, we had been on instruments all the way over and had no way to estimate drift. To be on the safe side I urged Bill to steer 30 degrees to the right, to make sure we would not fly past the southern tip of Greenland without seeing it, which could mean certain disaster. After a time we indeed sighted Greenland – still off to our right! That hunch had meant a 40-plus year lease on life! Then we raced up the West Coast of Greenland as the afternoon light faded. There were five of us in that crew and we all knew that our luck might have run out. For me it was much less terrifying than that earlier time in the South Atlantic. For one thing we were all in it together, not alone, and the icy North Atlantic would make much shorter shrift of us if we crash-landed in the sea. Eventually we came to the mouth of the fjord and turned right. The rock walls, as I recall, were perhaps a half-mile apart, but narrowing as we flew further inland. Night was falling fast now. All lights in the plane were extinguished and all eyes peering out. As the moments raced by it finally seemed that the only difference between the clear winding passage and the rock cliffs was the difference between the colors midnight blue and black. And then we rounded the last turn and could see the runway lights dead ahead. I remember we filed out of the plane in stunned silence, as absolute darkness fell.

That same flight was full of incidents. After succeeding in getting through to Keflavik, our next landfall was to the northern tip of Scotland. The B-26 was for those days a fast and very maneuverable bomber. It was also said to be the major killer of pilots in the Army Air Forces, other than enemy action. Pilots did their transition in the B-26's at MacDill Field in Florida, keeping its cemetery well stocked. One of its problems was its Curtis Electric propellers, in which electricity from the batteries powered the feathering mechanism of the prop blades (as compared with the more reliable hydraulic mechanism of the Hamilton Standard models). If the batteries were low, or for other reasons, a propeller could suddenly go into flat pitch, biting no air, which could be fatal on takeoff. Even at altitude, the propeller could "run away", accelerating up to a high-pitched whine and possibly tearing the engine from its mount. To prevent this, one of the main duties of the copilot was to immediately hit a toggle

switch on the dashboard which would freeze the propeller at its present rpm, thus stopping its runaway acceleration. Our co-pilot on this trip was a smiling lad named Jim Drummond. Well, as we were routinely approaching Scotland and minding our own business the right engine suddenly started to sound like a siren revving up to scream. Fortunately Drummond was minding his, hitting the toggle switch like a striking snake. We then went into RAF Stornoway on one engine. We stayed there several days awaiting repairs, and I still remember the Nissen hats, the tiny coal stoves and the smell of peat smoke. I failed to realize in time that some of that peat was curing the finest tweed cloth in the world – from the Isles of Harris and Lewis – so alas didn't buy up some of those treasures for the future!

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Meanwhile back at Nashville life had its amusing incidents. There was a navigator named Burt Sprankle. The pilot he flew with wanted to get in his required monthly flying time while awaiting the next overseas delivery and decided to take up an AT-6 trainer. He was forbidden to take along passengers but, just the same, told Sprankle to be out at the end of the runway with his parachute and he would smuggle him into the back cockpit, which was done. They took off, and on reaching altitude the pilot decided to flip the plane over on its back. In doing so he made a slight error – his seat belt wasn't securely fastened, so he promptly fell out of the plane, leaving Burt Sprankle upside down and no pilot aboard. We navigators often flew airplanes from the co-pilot's seat and generally picked up the pilot's routines. So Sprankle put the plane back on its belly, called Nashville tower and said he was coming in for a landing, but there was no qualified pilot aboard. He then came around and went in for a perfect landing and started coolly to taxi in among the parked aircraft when an officer rushed out from Operations and asked him to please leave the plane right where it was, while he was still ahead! Sprankle was rewarded by being sent to pilot training, while the pilot, who had parachuted safely, was disciplined.

There was another, more tragic case. It involved a tall, handsome pilot from Presqu' Isle, Maine, who was among other things a somewhat manic practical joker. For example, on one flight when we were deadheading back as passengers in a stripped DC-3, he tried to give a "hot foot" to another pilot who was fast asleep, his legs projecting across a duffel bag. Matches were repeatedly inserted into the crevice between the soles and uppers of his shoes and then set alight. But nothing happened. The heat somehow did not get through to his feet. Finally our hero, nothing daunted, simply piled up some newspapers under the victim's ankles and touched that off – with predictable results. Of course the plane filled with smoke, harmlessly but to the consternation of the aircraft crew, while the sleeper was suddenly very awake and very annoyed. Well, finally the Maine pilot went too far. He was to ferry a B-25 bomber across the North Atlantic and so telephoned his wife, in advance to assemble the entire family in front of their house to watch him pass over. At the appointed time the pilot came over and decided to show off a bit by buzzing the assembled family tree at low altitude. He overdid it and was unable to pull out. The plane simply plowed into the ground and wiped off the face of the earth both his own and his wife's assembled families, the house, barn, livestock, and of course, his own crew. Weeks later a letter was posted on our squadron bulletin board. It was from the father of the radio operator, saying that he always knew his son might die in the war but never expected it to happen in so meaningless way.

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1943 comes back to me now as a haze of aircraft deliveries interspersed with not a few evenings in hotel bars or nightclubs in places like Nashville, Memphis, New York or overseas. I still have a photo at my farm of Bill Beck, Jim Drummond and me at the 21 Club in New York the night before we took off from Mitchell Field, Long Island, bound for Casablanca via Greenland, Ireland and England. I think we stayed, for a few hours in the early morning, at 455 E. 57th Street in our apartment, getting over hangovers, and my father being concerned about our flying airplanes in such a state. My log book shows Bill Beck and crew delivering an A20-B from Memphis to Abadan in January – February, an A20-C from Nashville to Abadan in March; a B25-C from Savannah across

the South Atlantic from Savannah to Deversoir Field, near Cairo, leading two other B-24s all the way, in April-May; some flights inside the U.S. in June and July; the B-26 trip noted above from Savannah to Casablanca in August – September; another A20-G from Nashville to Deversoir in October, leading a flight of four other A20s. Then Beck and I were separated, and I was assigned to Henry D. (Red) Austin from Stevenson, Alabama. He was a tall, lankly, extraverted redhead with freckles and a pronounced Southern drawl. I got the impression that the Austin boys largely ran, or perhaps terrorized Stevenson. We led a flight of C46 transport aircraft from Nashville to Chabua in Assam, India, the push-off point for the “Hump” into Kunming. The record shows we tarried three days in Agra. Besides the Taj Mahal I remember how I came to buy the Gurkha Kukri (knife) that is still on my table as I write. I had got a rather good-looking one at a bazaar and was walking down the street with it. I saw an American sergeant coming the other way with a CBI (China-Burma-India) patch on his shoulder so I asked him if he thought I had a good one. Before he could answer an Indian squatting by the side of the road came over and asked to look at mine. He pulled his own out from under a pillow and said that he could test mine the proper way, but mine would be ruined if it wasn’t any good. I agreed, so he took the two knives, blades facing each other, and chopped them together. His kukri suffered a small nick while cutting mine in almost in half. I told him he had made a sale and gave him the \$5 he asked. The kukri still shows the small nick after more than 40 years, and is otherwise good as new.

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Still in Agra I remember going into a bookstore to buy a copy of Kipling’s “Kim” and being told very coldly by the storekeeper that they carried no books by Kipling. That night I attended a movie. We whites (and officers) were seated on sofas in the balcony, while the masses were down below. Halfway through the performance the lights went on and we sauntered over to the theatre bar for drinks and cigars before returning to our sofas for the rest of the show. It was all very civilized and colonial, with seething independence agitation going on all around. After delivering our planes in Chabua we deadheaded back down the Brahmaputra Valley from Chabua to places like Tezpur and

Sookerating in a DC-3. It was at night and after a while the co-pilot came back to say we had just feathered one engine and might also lose the other one. There had been a number of such crashes and sabotage was not ruled out. He suggested we put on parachutes. There ensued a little study in human nature. The chutes were mostly in a pile at the rear of the plane. Red Austin was sauntering back to get his when someone, in a panic, jostled him out of the way. Red just drawled "In a hurry, aren't you, son?" Red was about 22 himself. Just across from me was an Army General, sitting on his chute in his bucket seat. He was working on a paper in his lap and smoking a cigarette in a long holder. When the emergency was announced he never looked up or stopped working. Just reaching back to pull the parachute harness over each shoulder at a time in a casual and unperturbed way. Next to him was a pretty Army nurse. In no time all sorts of eager volunteers were clustered around for the privilege of strapping her into her chute!

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At the beginning of 1944 our odyssey in Nashville ended with the breakup of the 20th Ferrying Group. Our options were to go to Great Falls, Montana, for the North Pacific route via Alaska, or Long Beach, California, for the South Pacific, or the 2nd Ferrying Group at Newcastle Army Air Base outside of Wilmington, Delaware. I opted for the latter and the North Atlantic route. It turned out we wouldn't be delivering bombers as before. Instead the Army was setting up its own transatlantic airline, known as "Crescent", to operate in Douglas DC-4s, known in the Army as C-54s, from Newcastle via Labrador and the Azores to Casablanca. Then to Tripoli, Cairo, Abadan, Karachi, Chabua and back, with later alternate routes to Paris and between England and Morocco.

I recall reporting for duty from Nashville, still driving my 1939 Mercury. We who had been civilian pilots and navigators and had received direct commissions in the Army Air Forces were something of a group apart. We had received no military training or indoctrination, on the one hand, and on the other regarded ourselves as uniquely experienced and qualified aviators, to the point of some arrogance. I recall reporting in to

the adjutant at Newcastle, just sauntering in and placing my orders on his desk and telling him here I was. He sort of hit the roof and asked me if I didn't know how to come to attention, salute in the military manner and formally report in. I probably replied that perhaps I didn't, but I damn well knew how to navigate airplanes, which didn't get me off to a brilliant start, but I had some revenge on this score, as we shall see later on. We did not have overwhelming appreciation for "gravel grippers", as we called them in those days.

To get started, Crescent assembled about ten complete air crews, put them all on one airplane and headed out overseas across the Atlantic. The concept was to drop off a crew at each stop until the entire route was staffed. Crews would then take out the next plane that came in, whenever it came in, and then get off again at the next stop. In this way the planes never stopped, while the crews slowly worked their way to the end of the line and back again to Newcastle. I was assigned to Capt. Lucius L. Moseley from Beloit, Wisconsin, a tall, slim, blond pilot of skill and judgement, with Howard W. (Spanky) Simcox as the co-pilot. The enlisted crew included veteran Master Sergeant Erwin H. Kotche (engineer) and Tech Sergeant Lorenzo Diggs. We left Newcastle on February 6, 1944 and stopped briefly at La Guardia Field in New York. My mother and father came out and visited with us before we took off for Presqu' Isle, Maine. I remember that stop because I ran into Bill Day of York Harbor and Philadelphia who was, as I recall, a Lieutenant Colonel in some engineering or management role in the Air Force. It was at Presqu' Isle that the flight crews were assembled for the first transatlantic flight of Crescent, the Army Air Force's new deluxe airline. I remember among the pilots on board for that first run were Barry Goldwater, about whom more later and Clarence Pell, Nelson Pell's older brother. The first flight was commanded by Capt. Loris Moomaw, a former crack pilot of American Airlines, if I remember correctly, and I was asked to serve as his navigator for the first crossing and inaugural flight of the air transport command's new airline. The destination was Lagens in the Azores and the flight time was almost 12 hours. It was a daytime flight, on February 7, 1944, and I was navigating under the gaze of most of the assembled brass of Crescent, and it was not an easy job. It was overcast, ruling out sun shots, and we were on instruments most of the

way. Finally I saw an island off to the right which turned out to be Flores, and from there set the course for Lagens Field on Terceira Island. We arrived as dark was coming on, tired and keyed up after the long flight. As we went in to land a red flare suddenly went up. Some wanted to ignore it but Moomaw refused and went around for another approach. Then we finally saw a stalled vehicle in the runway, which could have cut Crescent off at the knees but for his prudence.

We offloaded and spent the night in tents, except for the crews who continued on. I do recall, one night, Barry Goldwater coming in and asking if he could spend the night with us as his own tent was inconvenient, perhaps because someone there was snoring too loudly, or something. I thought him energetic, extraverted, and disciplined, with obvious leadership qualities.

We leapfrogged across Africa, reaching Cairo on February 23. I had heard that Langdon Lea, my St Paul's School third form Latin teacher, had enlisted in the USAAF, spurning direct commissions in the navy. He looked like Gregory Peck, was a former All-American end on the Princeton football team, with a rather gentle and shy personality. He never married, and someone who knew him well said it was because all women immediately threw themselves at his feet so that he never found a special one. In any case, I remember, at age 15, being in his Latin class with an inflamed inlay in one tooth, which was driving me mad with pain. We all had Latin names from Caesar's Gallic Wars, and I was Lucius Aurunculus Cotta, a worthy centurion of the day, and it was my turn to recite. Lea noticed I was in difficulty, found out why and was very kind and solicitous. Eventually a dentist relieved the pressure, but I always retained a special feeling for Lang Lea. Anyway, I had heard he was working in the tower at the Cairo Airport, so in due course I went around there in my First Lieutenant's uniform and knocked at the door of the control room. A veteran Sergeant opened it and saluted. I said I had heard that Sgt. Lea was working there, and I would like to see him. I was ushered into the center of the room and Lea was sent for. When he appeared my greeting was predictably something like "Gosh, Mr. Lea, Sir, great to see you!" There was some consternation in the room at this turn of events. In leaving I murmured to the old

sergeant, "he was my Latin professor at school and an All-American football player", which none of them knew.

We leapfrogged on to the end of the line at Chabua and turned around on March 2nd for the long trip home. It was then I made my first, and almost last, navigational goof of the war by laying off a course with my Weems protractor which was 45 degrees off course, heading right for the Himalayas instead of down the Brahmaputra Valley. In due course I observed a great cloudbank dead ahead and double-checked our compass heading... I ran forward and tapped Moseley on the shoulder, saying in a low but very determined voice, "90 degree left, right now!" Moseley reacted instantly, putting the four engine C-54 on its wing like a fighter plane just as we were approaching the cloud which, as you may have guessed, was largely filled with rocks. We were back in Newcastle on March 16. I had redeemed myself on March 11 when we were high over the Atlas Mountains on the leg from Tripoli back to Casablanca. Just to be on the safe side I had asked Moseley to climb extra high so I could get a clear fix on some stars, not relying on the radio compass for our letdown to Casablanca. It was a happy hunch, because we became caught in a sandstorm, rendering the radio compass useless, but I was able to put him over the Casablanca airport on an exact course and time so that he could find it and slide in under the weather.

We went out again on April 1, and it was perhaps in this two-week interlude in Newcastle that I next met Barry Goldwater. He had been a fighter pilot instructor out in New Mexico before coming in to the 2nd Ferrying Group, and he liked to keep his hand in. Anyway, we met one day as he was coming out of Squadron Operations, his parachute in hand. He said he was going to take up an AT-6 trainer to practice aerobatics, and would I like to come along. Would I! I grabbed a chute and climbed in the back cockpit of the plane, firmly strapping myself in. We climbed to altitude and to a spot far from the traffic lanes where we were at the tops of beautiful cumulus clouds in bright sunshine. Goldwater first surveyed the area and then started the glorious game of cloud chasing. We would fly around the fleecy tops at what seemed like terrific speed. Then we would do loops, finishing with a Split-S down to lower altitudes and a return to

the field. It was a great experience. In those days we all carried what were known as "short-snorter" bills, namely paper currency of all the foreign lands we had visited, glued together end-to-end, on which we would ask our friends to put their autographs. I still have mine and among the many signatures is that of Barry Goldwater.

On April 1, 1944 we were off again, this time to carry two B-29 engines to a place called Kharagpur, near Calcutta, in India. This time, after delivery to that hottest of all places, we worked our way back to Casablanca, back out to Kharagpur, then back to Casablanca, the Azores, Newfoundland and home. We logged 184 flying hours by the time we reached Newcastle on May 30. Ninety-two hours a month might not seem excessive at first, but they were made more so by the fact that we always had to take the next incoming Crescent airplane out, whether it arrived in five hours or five days, around the clock. Moseley was a good 6 feet 2 inches tall, but I recall he was down to 132 lbs by the time we reached Tripoli on May 19 on our way home. We got in late in the afternoon from Cairo and were so hungry and tired that we immediately hunted down an Italian restaurant in downtown Tripoli. I very distinctly remember we all ordered one bottle each of red Italian wine to go with the spaghetti and whatever. The whole crew was there, officers and enlisted alike. On empty stomachs and exhausted as we all were, the effect of that wine was dramatic. I clearly remember, after dinner, weaving down toward the harbor through the dimly lit streets and running into a British enlisted man, Roy Milner of the 1st Dorsets. He was also drunk, but not too drunk to sign my "short-snorter" bill and marvel at the fraternization between officers and "other ranks" that seemed to prevail in the US Army Air Forces. I then staggered on to Del Mahari hotel on the waterfront, pulled myself together and asked the reception if they had a room. They didn't, but no doubt trained to courtesy by the Germans who had long occupied the hotel before us, or just mindful of the advantages of now befriending the Americans, they invited me to stretch out on a sofa in the lobby. I told them I must be awakened, if possible, at 4 am to go out to the airport for our next flight. In what seemed like a few minutes I was shaken awake by a smiling minion of the hotel who stuck under my appalled gaze a plate with one sunny-side up fried egg on it, underdone and watery. Hung over as I was, that was one of the nadirs of World War II for me!



*Luc Moseley – facing
Howard A. Simcox – back
Tripoli, 1944*



*Ogden-Williams – Tripoli Harbor, 1944
Sunken ship in background*



Tripoli, May 1944

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I did not go out again until July 4, and it is time to give the reader a glimpse of life at the Newcastle Army Air Base. I mentioned earlier the subject of getting revenge on the gravel-grippers. Well, a few days after our return and still exhausted, our crew was walking up the left side of a road on base and failed to notice a gravel-gripping Major going the other way on the right side. I was lagging behind, saw him and saluted, but he ignored me and proceeded to dress down Moseley and Simcox, both Captains, for failing to salute him. Even nastier, he filed a complaint against them. Sensing blood I immediately reported to the adjutant, this time with full military courtesy, told him of the incident and stated that if the Major did not withdraw his complaint immediately, I wished to file a formal complaint against him failing to return my salute! That ended the

litigation and gave me the rare feeling of having done a good deed while satisfying my own nastier impulses at the same time.

At Newcastle, in the evenings, the preoccupation of hundreds of young men in their 20s, was, yes you guessed it, hundreds of young women in their 20s. Most of these lived in nearby Wilmington, but there were a few on the Base itself. Prominent among these were some Army nurses. They had barracks of their own, with a common room at the front of the building and a long corridor behind it with the individual nurses' rooms on each side. Male guests were permitted in the front room, but the corridor and its living quarters were strictly off-limits. One night another fellow and I went over to see if we could meet a couple of nurses and ask them out. Alas the front room was totally empty, although we could hear voices far down the forbidden corridor. What do to? My colleague had an inventive mind. We returned to his quarters where he had a flat bottle of bourbon, to which he tied a long ball of string. Returning to the nurses' quarters my friend promptly bowled the bottle of bourbon, like a man going for a strike at the bowling alley, down the long, bare corridor until it fetched up at the end. Then he retrieved the bottle with the string, twitching it like a fishing lure as it passed each open door. Heads started popping out of the side rooms and soon, like Pied Pipers of Hamelin, we had a gaggle of merry nurses in the visitor's room to choose from.

Ingenuity took other forms. I used to spend a lot of spare time at the Link Trainer building. Sitting in a simulated cockpit I would practice flying radio range problems as if coming in for a landing at a strange airport. These useful radio navigation exercises were made more fun because the operators were rather fetching Army WACS, acting as airport tower operators, who gave us landing instructions through our earphones. One of them, Daisy Deering, looked much like Doris Day. There were rules about fraternization between officers and enlisted personnel, so my approach had to be delicate. One day, at the end of an exercise I called in on my microphone, "Tower this is pilot. Request name of your tower operator."

"Daisy Deering"