

BLS BIO (pg 1)

Bill Louis Stratton was born in Wichita, Kansas January 30, 1923 at the St Francis hospital to Mr & Mrs William Boston (name change later)..Mr William Boston was of the Boston Family of Guymon, Oklahoma..His Mother was one-half Cherokee(?)Indian, making William Boston one-quarter Cherokee(?)Indian and me one-eighth Cherokee(?)Indian..My Mother Marjorie Stratton was from the Stratton Ranching Family of Dalhart/Dumas Texas in the "Texas Panhandle" area..My Father William Boston and my Mother Marjorie met and married while attending High School and/or College at Goodwell, Oklahoma nearby Guymon, Oklahoma..They both moved to Wichita, Kansas to find and secure better jobs in the Wichita area during which time I was born..My Grandfather Richard D Stratton and my Grandmother Laura Stephens Stratton, sold their ranch and moved to Wichita, Kansas to be near their Daughter Marjorie and me their grandson, bringing their Son, my Mother's Brother Richard D Stratton, Jr. with them..This was during the "Depression" when money was "tight" and jobs hard to "come-by"! So, my Mother and Father seperated and my Father moved back to Guymon, Oklahoma to join his Brother Charles there in Guymon in a furniture business after which time, I never saw my Father again..I did not and do not remember what my Father looked like but I did learn after his death, that he had become a combat veteran of World War Two (WWII) ..I lived with my Mother in an apartment near the St Francis hospital and St Mary's Cathedral where I was baptized and made my first communion and attended the Central Catholic school next door while my Mother, Marge, worked "downtown" at an automobile dealership..My Grandfather and Grandmother settled down on Sycamore street on the Southwestern part of Wichita, Kansas and my Grandfather started building homes with the "ranch money"..My Mother and I moved into one of the homes he had built at the intersection of Sycamore and McCormick streets, still in the S.W. part of Wichita..Richard D Stratton, jr (my Uncle Dick) attended the Central Catholic High School in the same area that I attended Central Catholic Grade School..The grade school was "headed-up" with "ruler-ruling" Nuns, and the High School (where Uncle Dick attended) was run by Catholic "Brothers"..Uncle Dick met, fell in love and married Marie Hartman from the Hartman Family living in a small town West of Wichita..Grandfather Stratton built them a home in the Sycamore/McCormick area where they moved in with a new-born little baby girl they named Phyllis..Grandfather Stratton started building more homes in the Sycamore/McCormick area for young couples, financing them and their homes he had built for them (at Grandmother Stratton'' (Laura/Lollie) insistance..When the depression really bore down, the banks closed, everybody was out of jobs and couldn't pay their house payments, so Grandfather and Grandmother Stratton lost all their hard earned ranch-money and were broke..I "came down" with Scarlet Fever while at that address and damned near died..That is about all I remember about Wichita, Kansas other than I had to walk to school each day, about a one and one-half miles and lots of times hung on the outside of the street car in the back to "ride without having to pay" as I had no money..I was given five cents, a nickel, for lunch each day.....

I always had a decision to make each day..What was I going to buy for lunch that day with my nickel; an apple, a peanut pattie, sweet roll or small nickel hamburger, mostly made of potatoes..Conditions and money worsened in the Wichita area during the great depression, and my grandparents lost all their ranch money as Grandfather Stratton, built homes for young couples like my Uncle Dick..They salvaged what they could from their "depressed house building and selling business" and they, with me in "tow", headed back to the Texas Panhandle in an old Model "A" Ford car towing a four wheeled trailer with all our "worldly goods"..We settled down in the small "Oklahoma Panhandle" town of Sturgis, Oklahoma in 1931..We "moved-in" with some great folks that my grandparents had "befriended and helped to get started", the Schnaufers..Mr "Win" Schnaufer owned and operated several grain elevators there in the Sturgis area..I went to school (third grade) in a typical ranching area "one-room-one-teacher" school building and rode to school and back each day with the "one-room-teacher", Mrs Meredith..Great lady! While we were in the Sturgis area, the "Great Drought and terrible dust storms" of the early and middle 1930s started, wiping out nearly all the grain farmers and ranchers and giving me a bad case of ashma..Many of the farmers and ranchers lost members of their families to the drought and terrible "dust storm conditions" the drought created..The Schnaufers lost their youngest child, a daughter to the "dust conditions"..Several of my school mates lost their lives to the "dust" and the local doctor told my grandparents, "If you don't get "Billie" out of here, he will surely die!"..Before "we left Sturgis", several things I remember..Grandfather Dick and Grandmother Laura started a little grocery store in one of Mr Schnaufer's grain elevator offices, and the folks named it "Stratton's Good Luck" grocery store..My Grandparents had a bad habit of giving everybody credit and of course, very few ever paid their bill, so the "Good Luck" grocery store went "belly-up" after about a year's operation..I can remember my Grandfather paying and/or trading a farmer five cents for a dozen fresh eggs and selling them for ten cents..One day, Granddad Stratton and I were on our way to Liberal Kansas to a grocery wholesale supply (cash) house in the ole Model "A" when it went "belly-up" on us and we had to go on into Wichita, Kansas where my Mother "got" my Grandfather a 1931 Buick Car..We went back to Liberal in the Buick, hooked up the trailer, went back to Sturgis empty handed and closed up the "Good Luck" grocery store..We loaded everything back into the ole four wheeled trailer, hooked it to the Buick and drove down to McLean, Texas in 1932 I think where we moved into my Uncle Frank and Aunt Alice Wilson's home about 3 miles southwest of McLean, Texas on "Skillet Creek"..My Uncle Frank was an "educator" and dispised ranching..Uncle Frank was highly educated with a degree from Southern Methodist University (SMU) and he had obtained a position as "Superintendent of Schools" at Gruver, Texas and proceeded to move his family; Aunt Alice, Cousin Georgia and Cousin Mary Alice to Gruver..We moved into their ranch house there on Skillet Creek as they left for Gruver, Texas..

We proceeded to "run" the ranch and farm in trade for living there on Skillet Creek..There were four (4) Wilson Brothers that had inherited a four (4) section ranch from their Mother and Father..The oldest son was Taylor Wilson, then came Uncle Frank Wilson, then Wilbur "Uncle Bunk" Wilson and the youngest was Robert Wilson..

Most of the "Uncle Frank Wilson" one section (640 acres) ranch we lived on was grass land with maybe eighty (80) acres of farm area that the weeds and grass had "taken over"..Grandfather "Dad" Stratton didn't care much for farming either..So, he went to Big Springs, Texas and bought 1,000 one year old ewes (young female sheep) that were scheduled to be bought and slaughtered by the government to keep down the sheep population and to raise prices on "mutton" during the "depression"..Dad Stratton, as I recall, paid \$1.00 per each ewe..We then drove to Mountain Home Texas where we bought a couple of dozen rams (male sheep), brought them back to the Wilson Ranch and went to work raising a herd of sheep..As Skillet Creek ran right through the middle of all four Wilson Brother Ranches, it had created a big, big field of wonderful "red top" hay, about a total of four hundred acres of hay field..All four Wilson brothers harvested hay twice a year by cutting and baling and selling the "baled hay"..I started out with the "hay baling family" as running the "sulky-rake" raking up the freshly mowed hay into "wind-rows" so the "buck-rake" could rake up the wind rows and deliver it to the hay baling machine to be made into "bales of hay"..I was paid fifty cents a day working about fifteen days from sun-up to dark..I enrolled into the McLean Elementary School into the sixth grade..There were no school buses and the school was about three miles from the ranch..The first year, I walked to and from school but ran a "trap-line" from which I trapped coyotes, badgers, opossum, skunks, etc., which I pulled from traps on my way home from school; skinned and placed on a "stretcher-board" to dry out when I reached home..I trapped, skinned and sold enough animals the first year, that I bought an old horse for \$10.00..I rode my horse to school the second year, but with no saddle as I could not afford one..But I kept on trapping and skinning and selling enough animal hides the second year to buy a saddle for fifteen dollars..Dad Stratton always kidded me about "putting a fifteen dollar saddle on a ten dollar horse"! So, I was riding a ten dollar horse with a fifteen dollar saddle the third year to school and back..The school was north of the ranch and McLean was about fifty miles East of Amarillo, Texas on the now famous U.S.Highway 66 (designated IH-40)..Remember the saying, that "there was nothing between Amarillo and the North Pole but a barbed-wire fence and it had blown down!" In the winter time, it was mighty cold..I can remember several times riding to school on my ten dollar horse and fifteen dollar saddle in the Winter time against a very, very cold North wind and/or snow, that when I got to school, they had to lift me out of the saddle and off the horse and place me in front of the classroom "pot bellied" stove to thaw me out!

Still Catholics, we attended the nearest Catholic Church (with a visiting Priest each Sunday from Wellington but no alter boys) which was located in Shamrock, Texas, a small town about twenty (20) miles East of McLean on "Ole Hwy #66"..There was a Catholic Church in Groom, Texas, about thirty five miles west of us that had a permanent Priest..My folks made arrangements to have me stay at the Priest's home for a week to become an alter boy, which I did by learning enough Latin so I could be an alter boy for the visiting priest at Shamrock each Sunday..When I was a youngster, I had a lot of trouble with my teeth..There was no dentist in McLean nor Shamrock, so we had to drive to Pampa, Texas, thirty miles north of McLean to a dentist..Pampa was a little larger town than McLean and we always enjoyed going to Pampa, especially after visiting the dentist..The country road from McLean to Pampa was in terrible shape..My Uncle "Bunk" Wilson, lived in the next section north of us there on Skillet Creek, ran for County Commissioner, won the election, became County Commissioner and rebuilt the country road from McLean to Pampa and "topped it with asphalt"..Amarillo, Texas was about seventy-five (75) miles west of us..Grandfather Dick Stratton loved to visit Amarillo Stock Shows..So, during Stock Show Season there in Amarillo, Grandfather and Grandmother Stratton and I would load-up and go to Amarillo to the Stock Show for several days, staying with various friends of theirs in Amarillo..They knew quite a few folks there in Amarillo, as Grandfather Stratton had been a County Commissioner there before I was born...

We had a small lake within Skillet Creek that always had some ducks on it during the winter..I bought a used single barrel, single shot twelve gauge shotgun and learned to shoot it..One morning before daylight, while "crawling-up" on the ducks on the lake, a big ole mallard drake jumped up in front of me..I drew the ole 12 gauge up, shot at the flying drake, but didn't have a good grip on the gun with one hand and broke my nose..Got my nose fixed, and entered my high school freshman year at McLean and started playing football..Got my nose broken again while playing football..Got it fixed and was told to stay to hell away from football, so I started to playing tennis, where my partner, while playing doubles, accidentally hit me in the nose with his tennis racket and broke it a third time..My nose was so messed up that they, my folks and the doctor, sent me to Wichita, Kansas to have it fixed again..I stayed with my mother Marge there in Wichita while recuperating, and the doctor told she and I that I had better not ever get my nose broken again as it would be almost impossible to "repair it again!"..Fortunately, I never broke my nose again! I did pretty good in school at McLean during grade school and my freshman year there in McLean..We were doing pretty good financially there in McLean with the sheep, a little farming and the selling baled hay..So, I started driving to school and back with a special license that was issued to me to just drive to school and back..

I was fourteen (14) years of age..To this day, I have never had a driver's license test, but always got my license renewed..

Uncle Frank and Aunt Alice Wilson retired from his "school teaching" and wanted to retire back on their ranch there..So, Grandfather Stratton traveled to the San Antonio Area with a bunch of people in a small "real estate agent's bus" to look over some irrigated farms in the Medina Valley Irrigated Farms area, about twenty (20) miles southwest of San Antonio..

The little irrigated farm that my Grandfather selected and bought for us, was in the very Northeastern part of the Medina Valley Irrigated Farm area..On the old Laredo Highway 87, now IH-35S, about twenty (20) miles southwest of San Antonio, and eighteen (18) miles from Kelly Field, Texas..It was a ten (10) acre irrigated farm with a very small house on it, about ten (10) miles Northeast of a little village named Atascosa, Texas..The only activity in Atascosa, was a Post Office and a small clay pottery..No school, no bank, etc..On down the highway, ten (10) miles southwest of Atascosa, was another small town, Lytle, Texas..That is where I started to school as a Sophomore being picked up by a Lytle Independent School District school bus each morning..I was the first pupil/passenger picked up in the morning and the last pupil/passenger "off" in the afternoon..My Grandfather and I added onto the little house to make it two bedrooms..We raised tomatoes, string beans, carrots, chickens, etc. with irrigation and either sold the crops and chickens to truckers and/or took them into the "farmers open market" in San Antonio, across from Santa Rosa Hospital..We would leave the house, with our "veggies/chickens", about 4:00am and arrive at the "market" about 5:00am, and if we were lucky and found a place to park at the market and sold our veggies about 6:00 am and back home about 7:00am in time for me to catch the school bus and go to school..If it was too late to catch the bus, Grandfather would drop me off at school..Upon being so close to Kelly and Duncan Fields; highway 87 divided them and Kelly was on the north side of the highway and Duncan was on the south side of the highway, I saw a lot of US Army Air Corps aircraft overhead everyday; low-winged and two winged fighters, attack and observation and two engined bombers and became very interested in them..So, interested, that once in awhile, while I was waiting for the school bus out on highway 87 in the morning, I would "stick my thumb up" trying to get a ride into Kelly and Duncan..If I got a ride before the school bus came, I would hitch-hike into the Kelly/Duncan Field area..Ask the driver to stop at the West edge of the fields, let me out to make a decision whether to go walk north to Kelly Field or south to Duncan..Depending on what airplanes I could see parked on the flight line that were the most interesting to me that morning would make up my mind..But generally, I always wound up walking along the flight line on the West side of Kelly Field..Upon reaching the flight line on the West Side of Kelly, I would then turn to the right and walk Eastward on the flight

line..There were four (4) Flight School Squadrons on the flight line at Kelly at that time..With the 64<sup>th</sup> School Squadron (64<sup>th</sup> SS) dedicated to training Aviation Cadets as future "bomber pilots" with Keystone B-5s, Boeing B-9s and Martin B-10s on the far west end of the flight line..Then came the 63<sup>rd</sup> School Squadron (63<sup>rd</sup> SS) with Curtiss A-12s and Northrup A-17s dedicated to training cadets for future "Attack Pilots"..Next, was the 62<sup>nd</sup> School Squadron (62<sup>nd</sup> SS) with O-39s, O-43s, O-47s, dedicated to training Cadets to be "Observation Pilots"..And last, on the far East end of the Kelly Flight Line, was the 61<sup>st</sup> School Squadron (61<sup>st</sup> SS), with Boeing P-12s and Boeing P-26s, dedicated to training Cadets to be future "Pursuit/Fighter Pilots"..I was most interested in the "Attack Aircraft", the Curtiss A-12s and Northrup A-17s and A-17s (with retractable landing gear) that were hangered at Hanger 16, hanger 17 and hanger 18 of the 63<sup>rd</sup> School Squadron (63 SS), so much so, that I became acquainted with some of the 63rdSS flight line personal..One was a Tech Sargeant (T/Sgt) McGibney who was the Hanger Chief of Hanger #17 of the 63<sup>rd</sup> School Squadron with a flight line and hanger full of Curtiss A-12 and Northrup A-17 attack aircraft..He would even take me back to the 63<sup>rd</sup> "mess hall" and feed me lunch..Later, when I hitch-hiked into Kelly Field to volunteer into the US Army Air Corp in early 1940, I wound up as a Private in the 63<sup>rd</sup> School Squadron under T/Sgt McGibney's command, after "boot training"..More about that later..

I went to Lytle High School during my second year of high school..Joined the band, bought a \$10.00 trombone, learned to play the trombone and played and marched in the "Battle of Flowers" Parade in San Antonio during "Fiesta Week" in April of 1937..That was in 1937/38..During the summer of 1938, the school district "lines" were rearranged and I wound up in the Somerset Independent School District..I enrolled as a Junior at Somerset in 1938, me and my trombone and finished my high school at Somerset graduating as a senior in the early part of 1940 at 17 years of age as the total "school years" for grade and high school was eleven (11) years at that time in the State of Texas..They were later boosted to twelve (12) years as they are today..I was as far away from Somerset as I had been from Lytle and again, I was the first one on the Somerset School Bus in the morning and the last off in the evenings..

As the family remained Catholics, when I was going to Lytle to school, we attended the nearest Catholic Church which was located in Castroville, about six or eight miles west of Lytle..One reason for attending the church in Castroville at the time, was because all of the Castroville High School students were attending high school in Lytle with me because Castroville had no high school..The mass was in Latin, but the Gospel was in German due to Castroville being almost all "German"..But they were great folks and I learned to get along with all of them as most of them were in the Lytle Band as I was..When the School District "Lines" were changed and I wound up attending Somerset High School, we, the family and I, started attending the Catholic Church in Somerset, but the Gospel was in English....

Speaking of Somerset High School, this change of schools took place in 1937..The country was just starting to "dig itself out of the deep depression" it found itself in around the beginning of the 1930s due to the election of a man that probably saved the USA from complete collapse; Franklin D Roosevelt, who was elected President of the United States in 1932 and was sworn in as President in 1933..He started to "dig us out" of the terrible depression he fell heir to upon his being sworn in as President of the USA..Some of the programs he designed and put into service was the Civilian Conservation Committee (CCC) the National Recovery Act (NRA) and the Social Security (FICA) Program, an act he put together hoping to prevent any other depression in the near and/or far future..President Roosevelt first asked the insurance companies to come up with such a "depression preventer", but they turned him down saying, "it was an impossible task, that they didn't want any part of it..Of course, today, they are trying every way in the world to "take it over"..But after the insurance companies refused to help President Roosevelt set up the "future depression preventer", Social Security, he took it upon himself to "design it and provide it" for the population of the country..And what a "life-saver" it has been, in more ways than one..I got involved in the Social Security (FICA) program at a young age while at Somerset High School..Our family being in such a terrible financial condition, I applied for work "before-during-after and on weekends" at Somerset High School..My application was accepted and I was "hired" under the National Recovery Act (NRA) and was put to work doing various jobs and was paid \$8.00 per month, I think it was, but the important thing about all this was, at the time I was employed under the NRA, I was given a Social Security number in 1937 and "social security deductions" were taken from my NRA monthly payments at that time and the nations first social security checks were distributed to the "sixty-five (65) years of age or older retirees" that year of 1937..After "paying into social security for over sixty-seven (67) years, I receive social security payments each month, thanks to the efforts of one of the greatest, if not the greatest President the United States has ever had, President Franklin D Roosevelt..

Upon applying for the Social Security (FICA) Program, I was advised to have my name changed legally from William Louis Boston to Bill Louis Stratton, which I did at the Bexar County Courthouse by a Federal Judge..I do not remember his name at this time..

When I was not gathering "veggies" at home and not working and/or attending school, week ends and summers, I worked for neighbors, hoeing peanuts, etc. and/or harvesting crops at 50 cents per day as I looked "overhead" at the Army airplanes..In addition to the above jobs as a youngster, I was fencing in a neighbor's acreage, again at 50 cents a day..One Saturday, while working on the neighbor's sheep proof fence, I leaned down to pick up a cedar post from a

nearby pile of posts and as I picked up the post, there was a rattlesnake beneath it and it bit me on my left leg that I had kneeled down on..It scared the hell out of me and I did the worse thing you could do after being bitten by a rattlesnake and that was to run all the way home, about a half mile..As I opened the front gate to the front door, I passed out..But my folks heard me and came out and picked me up and took me inside and laid me out on my bed and called the nearest Doctor, a Doctor at Lytle about 20 miles

away..Well, the ole "tobacco-chewing" Doctor, I can't remember his name right now, maybe later) had gone fishing at Medina Lake that morning and was not to return till Monday evening..So, all the great neighbors collected at our home with their "epsom salts" and made little bags (like ole roll-your-own tobacco bags) and they took turns dropping "hot-drops" of water from syringes onto the small bags full of the epsom salts that were laying upon the snake bite, after cutting a small cut between the holes where the rattlesnake's teeth entered my leg..That went on day and night, Saturday, Sunday, Monday until the ole "tobacco-chewing" Doctor showed up Tuesday Morning..He lifted the tobacco-bag moistened with dripping hot water, off the snake bite, took one look at it, spit into a coffee can spitoon that my Mother had placed nearby and said, "You have done a good job here with your epsom-salt-hot-water treatment and there is nothing more I can do..Your Son will be

fine, good day"..A week or two after that, I graduated from Somerset High School, and I was hoeing peanuts, looking overhead at the airplanes, wishing I was flying one, when I said to myself, "Self, you are never going to be flying any of those airplanes if you stay "down here" hoeing peanuts for fifty cents a day"..So, I laid the hoe down, walked over to the San Antonio-Laredo highway, held up my thumb again and hitch-hiked into Kelly Field and volunteered into the US Army Air Corps by holding up my right hand and saying yes, I am eighteen (18) years of age (I was seventeen but looked eighteen) and said, "I do"....



After saying "I do" in early 1940 at Kelly Field, Texas Recruiting Building, I was put in a "government-issue (GI)" pick-up and taken to the extreme western edge of Kelly Field to the Kelly Field "Boot Camp", (now Lackland AFB)..Issued a couple of pair of GI underwear, socks, overalls, shoes, soap, tooth brush and tooth paste, shaving kit, foot locker and assigned to a "boot-camp tent" with three other "boots"..The very first thing that happened, was we were given four shoots, two in each arm..Several of the fellow passed out and I got sorta "woozie"..We started "marching and calisthenics" immediately..After four or five days of that, one afternoon, after calisthenics and taking a shower, I came back to my bunk to find a towel tied to the foot of the bunk..I asked the "boot camp Corporal" what the towel was for and he said, "you are so lucky, you are going on Kitchen Patrol (KP) for a week starting tomorrow morning at 4:00am"..That scared hell out of me, so I took off to Hanger #17 and told T/Sgt McGibney about the "KP thing" and he laughed, put me in his car and drove me down to the "boot camp" area, helped me "clear-out" with my foot locker and clothes..He drove me back to the 63<sup>rd</sup> School Squadron Area, got me assigned to a "63<sup>rd</sup> barracks", bunk, ect. by the 63<sup>rd</sup> First/Sgt...I went to work for him the next day, and never heard another word from the "boot camp" area! The next day while I was sweeping out the hanger, he came got me and took me out behind the hanger and showed me a brand new Vultee Basic Trainer (BT) thirteen, BT-13..He said to me, Bill, this is your airplane to take care of, you are it's "crew chief"..Boy, I was the proudest recruit on Kelly Field, even though it did not have an engine!

At about this time, early 1940s, Kelly Field, Texas was making changes in training tactics..Before this time, all of the Aviation Cadets started their flight training at Randolph Field, Texas in Primary Training aircraft and Basic Training aircraft, North American Seversky BT-8s, North American BT-9s and Vultee Bt-13s..When they "graduated" from their training there at Randolph, and "ended their flight training and graduated as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lts. at Kelly Field..Being trained as "Pursuit Pilots" with the 61<sup>st</sup> School Squadron or "Observation Pilots" with the 62<sup>nd</sup> School Squadron or "Attack Pilots" with the 63<sup>rd</sup> School Squadron or "Bomber Pilots" with the 64<sup>th</sup> School Squadron, whatever they and the training officials decided they wanted to be after graduation; pursuit, observation, attack or bomber pilots, as in the early 1940s, Randolph and Kelly were the only training fields in the US Army Air Corps..The changes in the US Army Air Corps and US Army Air Force training system was changed to a five (5) "Training Center System"..(1).."Classification Center" at the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center (USACC) (now Medina Base Ammunition Storage); (2) Preflight, (now Lackland AFB)..(3) Primary Flight Training with Stearman PT-17s and Fairchild PT-19s that I soloed in at Cuero, Texas..(4) Basic Training with

Seversky BT-8s, North American BT-9s and Vultee BT-13s and Vultee BT-15s (all plywood) at Randolph Field and Waco Field, and other newly established Basic Training Fields..Many in Texas, California and Florida along with Primary Flight Schools. If and when everybody got through with "all of the above", and they finished their flight training in Advanced Flight Training Schools, they were commissioned second Lts. After advanced training in North American BC-1A, Basic Combat Aircraft, almost immediately replaced with the North American Advanced Trainer, the AT-6, the Beechcraft twin-engine AT-7, the Cessna Twin-engined AT-8, the Curtiss Twin-engined AT-9, the Twin-engined Beechcraft (all plywood) AT-10, the twin-engined Beechcraft AT-11 and at some Advanced Flight Training Schools, the new twin-engined North American B-25 bomber trainer (TB-25), the aircraft that Gen Doolittle used to bomb Tokyo..

At Kelly Field, Texas, in the US Army Air Corps, in 1940 and early 1941, I wound up as crew chief on several AT-6s, #59 and #100..In the latter part of 1940, they made the movie "I Wanted Wings" at Randolph Field and Kelly Field with William Morris, Brian Dunlevy, Bill Holden, Ray Milland and others..I did what I used to do a year or two "back", but in reverse, I use to walk down the west side of Kelly Field to the "Laredo Highway", Hwy 87 south) and hitchhike home nearly every week-end..

There was a large lake, used in the Medina Valley Irrigation System, about twenty (20) miles west of Kelly Field (about ten miles west of our home) that I used to ride out to with T/Sgt McGibney quite often during duck hunting season and we use to go duck hunting there, as owners and their families of the "Medina Valley Irrigated Farm System" were the only people allowed on the lake..T/Sgt McGibney loved to duck hunt, so needless to say, after being a member of T/Sgt McGibney's Hanger #17 crew, I made corporal after only being "in" about six (6) months..T/Sgt McGibney, when he wanted to go duck hunting on the lake, would come by my "barracks" about 4:00am, wake me up, feed me a cup of coffee while I dressed to "go duck hunting with him"..One morning, he woke me up about 4:00am with his flash light shining in my eyes, and I said to him, "Go away! Its too early"! He didn't answer..He just showed his flashlight over his shoulder, and there stood our Commanding Officer of the 63rd School Squadron, Captain Bishop, in his "duck hunting clothes"..Boy, I really "popped too"! Saluted, got dressed and we three went duck hunting on the lake..Fortunately, we were able to shoot a big bunch of ducks that morning, along with several other "mornings that we

went duck hunting together"! So, needless to say, again, I made "buck sargeant" pretty quick after that!

Being a crew chief on several BT-8s, BT-9s and BC-1As and AT-6s, that made me "eligible" to make flights in them when they were flown solo by officers for "check rides, inspection rides, etc."..So, I made my first flight there at Kelly Field, in the early 1940s in a BT-8, BT-9s and later in several BC-1As and AT-6s, and "fell in love with flying"..I applied for flight training, but was told "I was too young"! So, I applied, passed the test and was accepted for Aircraft and Aircraft Mechanic School (A & M)..I was told to be patient until there was an opening at Chanute Field, Illinois..So, I waited..

During these years, the "disturbance" in Europe from Hitler and others, turned into a War..World War Two (WWII)..That is also the reason for establishing and constructing so many more flight training fields all over the U.S..They also, started Navigation Schools (San Angelo, etc), Bombardier schools (Big Springs, etc.) and Aerial Gunnery Schools (Harlingen, Laredo and Matagorda Island, and others)..To "clean-up" Matagorda Island for a bombing and gunnery practice range, they took the last ten (10) enlisted personnel of each four (4) school squadrons, forty (40) people there at Kelly Field, including me, put us on "temporary duty" and sent us to Matagorda Island to get it ready for a "bombing and gunnery practice range"..Randolph Field and Kelly Field Officers' Clubs had leased an old two story building that had belonged to the Coast Guard and a grass covered airstrip that the officers used to fly down from Randolph and Kelly, to fish and hunt ducks, from the people (the Hawes Family) that owned that part of Matagorda Island..The forty (40) of us lived in the old two story house and kept the runway "cleared" of buffalos and deer the were all over the island..We traveled to and from Matagorda Island in US aircraft, Martin B-10s and Douglas B-18s and our "supplies (food, clothing, etc.)" came by the same aircraft..We were assigned four G.I. trucks; two dodge pickups and two dodge command cars that were brought to us by the Coast Guard that had a "station" on the north end of the island..Just across the bay from them, was the small village of Port O'Conner, where we spent most of our week-ends after we had ridden across the bay, courtsey of the Coast Guard..We spent a lot of time with the Coast Guard People, playing poker, fishing, riding with them in their great Coast Guard Boats..Great folks there at Port O'Conner with a real great café where spent most of our time..I fell in love with one of the Hawes Girls, but she didn't know it..I was too timid to tell her..Just as well I guess..She turned out to be a nice Nun!

Charles Catheral there near the French Quarters..After Church, I wondered out to the main street, Canal Street and an ole street car came by "headed" for Tulane University and I "crawled aboard"..When we got to Tulane University, I helped the street car operator turn the street car "around" by hand and it was headed back toward down town New Orleans..But I got-off and started walking between some classrooms at Tulane University when an ole "Professor" came up the outside stairs of one of the classrooms from it's basement and called to me and said, "Soldier, have you heard the news?"..I said, "No Sir"..He lead me back down the stairs to his basement classroom office and had me sit down in front of an ole "Atwater-Kent" radio..All stations on the radio were broadcasting the "Japanese attacking Pearl Harbor!"

I stayed with the ole professor and had lunch with him at the University Cafeteria, bid him good bye and walked back out to the street car area and caught the next street car back down town..I no more got off the street car when an M.P. met me and told me to head to the nearest bus station and head back to Keesler..Well, I left him thinking to myself, "self, it will probably be a long, long time before you ever get back to New Orleans!"..So, I headed for the French Quarters, but had a Naval Shore Patrol (S.P.) stop me and said. "Soldier, your leave is cancelled! Get back to your military base!" I asked him which way to the bus station..I got about half way to the bus station and again "detoured" toward the French Quarters..But, again, got stopped by another S.P..He escorted me to the bus station in his Navy S.P. car and saw to it that I got on the bus headed for Biloxi, Mississippi and Keesler Fiedl..When I got to the main entrance to Keeler, it was "blocked" by sand bags, artillery pieces and G.I.s with rifles! They searched everybody, including me, that got off the bus and then took us by "G.I. bus" to our barracks..Our Commanding Officer had all his "barracks chiefs" meet with him in his C.O. office and told us to see that everybody in our individual barracks packed all their "civilian" clothes to be shipped back to their families..

I day or two later, we started our Aircraft Mechanic (AM) classes that were to last for eight months..I enjoyed the classes and studied hard and started out making straight "A's"..Out on the parking lot of the class rooms for our "hands-on" classes, there was an old Brewster "Buffalo", a Curtiss P-37, fore runner of the P-40 with it's single cockpit about six (6) inches ahead of the leading edge of the vertical stabilizer that they had grounded because it threw the cockpit to far away from the center of gravity and the pilots almost "passed-out" on steep turns..A Douglas two-engined DC-5 that all the airlines had turned down, a Bellanca YO-50, a Bell YFM-1B a two engined fighter with it's engines turned

"fibbed" about my age when I volunteered into the USAAC at Kelly Field, this meant that I had also "fibbed" about my age when I went into flight training..I tried every way in the world to put off "where was I born for they to get a copy of my birth certificate", but they threatened to "put me away" if I didn't..So, I told them, "Sedgwich County, Wichita, Kansas"..Everybody went on up to Waco to start Basic, but "they" kept me there at Cuero, gassing up aircraft, checking tires, cleaning windshields, etc. until the copy of my birth certificate arrived..And when it did several weeks later, they called me up "on the red carpet" in front of the Commanding Officer and 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt and really raised hell with me for fibbing about my age! They "kicked me out of flight training, but didn't know what to do with me, so kept me there at Cuero, "gassing, checking and cleaning"..A week later, I was called back upon the "red carpet" as asked to "sign-up" for Navigator Training at Big Springs, Texas..I asked, "What rank will I graduate with?" They said, "Second Lt."..I said, "You mean you will let me go to Navigator's School and be commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt., but not let me finish Flight Training and be commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.?" They got madder than hell and said, "What difference does that make?" And I said, "One hellva lot of difference and turned them down and went back out on the flight line, "gassing, checking and cleaning"..Another week went by and they called back upon the carpet again and asked me to "sign-up" for Bombadier Training at San Angelo..Again I asked them, "What rank would I graduate with", and they replied, "2<sup>nd</sup> Lt..We went all through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt., flight training "bit" again and they got mad again as I turned them down..They said, "Clear out of here and be on the 9:00pm train" out of town this evening..I asked them, "where was I headed?" They said. "None of your business..You will be on "sealed orders" so I cleared out and got on the train at 9:00pm..I was mad as hell and very tired, but glad to get to hell out of Cuero, so I curled up in my seat and went sound asleep..When I woke up the next morning, I was on the train in San Antonio, Texas..Over the loud-speaker came, "Sgt Stratton, report to the depot master"..I did, and he opened a brown envelope and annouced to me, "Sgt Stratton, you are headed for Laredo, Texas to the Laredo Army Air Field (LAAF), an aerial gunnery school"..

the ole B-17 had four (4) Wright single row R-1820 engines..I flew three flights as ass't flight engineer on B-17s, mostly over the Chippadero Gunnery Range at low altitude, (200 feet), medium altitude, (10,000 ft and high altitude (28,000) with heated flight suits, oxygen, etc..Worked out alright..Was then assigned to an ole B-17 as it's flight engineer..

Me and my ole B-17 were assigned to the Research & Development (R&D) of the upcoming "Central Fire Control System (CFC)" whereby two "seasoned gunners" were placed "back-to-back" in the tail section of the B-17, right behind the bomb bays..They each had a radar screen in front of them with a "single trigger"..The gunner and his "screen" that faced the right side of the bomber, fired all of the "right-side" 50 cal. Machine guns plus nose gun and top turret gun..The "gunner and screen" facing the "left-side" of the bomber, fired all the guns on the left-side of the bomber plus the "belly-turret and tail guns"..Crude at first, but worked out great, especially on the B-29s over Toyko, several years later..

I flew the ole B-17s, with their C-F-C for about six (6) months and was told that they were to be replaced by the Consolidated B-24s with their four (4) Pratt & Whitney twin-row R-1830-92 engines, but I would have to spend eight (8) weeks in Symrna, Tenn (about 30 miles southeast of Nashville) at B-24 Flight Crew check out school there..Flew to Symrna Air Force Base (SAAB) in an ole B-17 (last time in B-17s) and was temporarily assigned to a school squadron there where we attended B-24 ground school there, with the pilots and co-pilots and flight engineers..We attended B-24 four engine flight engineer's ground school in the mornings and flew B-24s as student four engine flight engineers in the afternoon, about five or six hour flights..That went on for about eight (8) weeks..We would catch rides into Nashville as often as we could and when we were off duty, as Nashville was a very interesting ole town with the "Grand Ole Opre" and it's "country western singing stars"..I meet a very, very pretty young lady at one of the "Grand Ole Opre Sessions"..Her name was Nellie Glee Radford and she worked at the Consolidated-Vultee Plant there at the Nashville Civilian Airport, believe it not, building B-24s, "Rosie The Riveter"..We dated a lot, went up to visit her hometown and folks at Burksville, Kentucky..Her folks and I got along just fine..They were a real nice family..

I graduated from the B-24 Four Engine Flight Engineer School, was issued "Silver Flight Engineer" Wings and returned to Laredo Army Air Field (LAAF) in a B-24..While I was at Smyrna, they replaced all the Boeing B-17s at LAAB with Brand New B-24s from Nashville..We installed the "Central-Fire-Control (CFC)" in them and started R & D on the CFC on the B-24s over the Chippadero Gunnery Range, flying at all altitudes..Also, while at Smyrna, at LAAF, they flew in P-63s with steel armor-plated fuselage and wing panels and two inch thick "bullet-proof" glass windshields and cockpit glass..The P-63s would actually "attack" our B-24s by flying right towards and/or at us..We would fire directly at them with specially equipped 30 caliber machine guns loaded with "hollow-nose plastic bullets"..Each "hollow-plastic-bullet" had a drop of colored paint in it, blue, red, yellow, green, etc..When and if the student gunners were lucky enough to hit the "Armor-Plated-P-63s", it would leave a color smudge where it hit..Each color smudge was assigned to a separate gunnery student..When the "Armor-Plated-P-63" landed, they would score each "color smudge" and give the score to each student gunner with "his-color-smudge"..Worked great and we didn't lose a single P-63..They had one double cockpit armor plated P-63 for people to take rides in it while they were being "shot-at", but I never got up enough nerve to take a ride in one..In the meantime, I was still engineering a B-24 with the central-fire-control (CFC) installed..

I kept in contact with "my Nellie Glee" by letter and she with me..My B-24 and I were assigned to make a trip back to the B-24 factory at Nashville..While back at Nashville, Nellie Glee and I fell in love and promised each other to get married..I returned back to LAAB, and several months later, Nellie Glee resigned from the B-24 factory there at Nashville and caught a train to Laredo, where we were married in the Chapel there at LAAB by a Catholic Chaplain..

We rented a nice room with bath, etc. (rear entrance) from a family that had a nice home on the main East-West Highway in and out of Laredo, about half-way from downtown Laredo and the South Entrance to Laredo Army Air Field (LAAF)..I had bought a 1937 Ford Convertible from a student gunner "headed" over-seas..I completely rebuilt the convertible, with overhauled engine (V-8 60hp), new chrome, new paint job and new convertible black canvas roof..Great, great car and Nellie Glee (Nell) and I drove to work in it each day with the top down and got a lot of whistles from other cars..Nell got a great job in the "fabric repair building" there at LAAF..She had a most wonderful Lady for a "boss", and the Lady-Boss thought Nell was wonderful, and of course, the Lady-Boss was right! About six (6) months after we got married, we took a fifteen-day-furlough from our jobs there at LAAF and together in the Ford Convertible, drove back to her home in Burksville, Kentucky to visit with her folks..Wonderful, wonderful people..They thought I had "hung-the-moon"! We would spend about every-other-weekend with my folks in Atascosa..They really, really loved Nell, especially Grandfather Stratton..He was getting pretty old and feeble and she took good care of him..

We returned back to LAAF to our jobs, when a month or two later, we were driving down town when over the radio came the news that President Roosevelt had died of a heart attack somewhere in his "southern retreat" in Georgia, April 12, 1945..Vice-President Harry Truman from Independence, Missouri was "sworn-in" as President immediately...A month later the war in Europe was over (V-E Day) and that they (the Germans) were going to sign an unconditional peace May 8, 1945..About this time, we had six or eight Boeing B-29s assigned to us for the "Advanced Central-Fire-Control" system that was now installed on all B-29s..I "crewed several B-29s" on the CFC research..It was in the summer-time at Laredo and temperatures out on the ramp, sometimes reached as high as 140 degrees..Also, the four big Wright Engines in the B-29s were built to take 130 octane gas, but there was a Defense Department order that the only aircraft to use 130 octane gas were only aircraft in actual combat, due to fuel shortage, especially high octane fuel..Therefore, the highest octane fuel we could use in the B-29 engines at LAAF, was 91 octane and with 91 octane fuel the engines ran awfully hot..You could not take-off in the B-29s with the engine cooling cowl flaps open, because they "disturbed" the wind passing back of the controls surfaces (tail-feathers)..So, due to prevailing southeast (SE) winds off of the Gulf, we took off to the SE with cowl flaps closed, engines at the highest revolutions-per-minute (RPM) due to the 91 octane fuel..When we "lifted-off" at the very end of the long runways, eight to ten thousand feet long, we would climb to around fifty to one hundred feet altitude, level off, turn



to the left to fly down the Rio Grande river (and not across into Mexico), open the cowl-flaps, trying to cool the engines down before they "exploded" and flew down the Rio Grande river at fifty to one hundred feet trying to cool down the engines..We would sometimes fly as far down towards the Valley as Moore, McAllen or Harlingen before we could get the engines cooled down and start gaining a little altitude..Over a period of the first several months, we lost several B-29s and their crews to engine failure..So, I said to my self, "Self, if there is an airplane in this here US Army Air Force (USAAF) that is liable to kill you and leave Nell a widow, it will probably be one of these B-29s"..So, due to my many points I had built up over these almost six (6) years in service, I was allowed to resign from the R & D of the CFC..We had gotten in some of the new Consolidated B-32s (updated version of the ole B-24s with larger engine, with the two outboard engines equipped with "reversible-pitch-propellers"..I was asked if I wanted to be Flight Engineer on one of them..I took one ride and said no, as they had to operate them on the 90 octane gas and the engines had the same "heat problems" as the B-29s..So, I said, "thanks but no thanks"..I was immediately placed on a shipping list for Okinawa (without Nell, of course)..But again, I had built up enough "points" that I was taken off the "Okinawa List" and was given an honorable discharge the 30<sup>th</sup> day of November 1945 after almost six (6) years in the US Army Air Corps (USAAC) and US Army Air Force (USAAF)..I was honorably discharged still a "Buck" Sergeant (Sgt)..I had made Buck Sgt the first year & half of my service in the UA Army Air Corps and was a "Buck" Sgt. when I was accepted for Flight Training and went through Classification, Pre-Flight and Primary as an "Aviation Student" (side-by-side with Aviation Cadets) in my "Buck" Sgt uniform and stripes and was "washed-out" of Flight Training as a Buck Sgt..But as everybody in the US Army Air Corps and the US Army Air Force and US Air Force knows, when you are "washed-out" of flight training, regardless of the reason, lying about your age, louzy flying, etc., you are "doomed" for any rank advancement the rest of your military career..Even if you are made a Liaison Pilot after washing out..The US Army Air Force would accept "washed-out" students for Liaison Pilot Training, but "looked-down" upon them and very seldom advanced them in rank, maybe from Sgt to Staff Sgt or Tech Sgt, but very, very seldom into the "commissioned ranks"..That is one of the reasons I did not stay in the military!

All the time I was stationed in LAAF, they put notices up on our squadron bulletin board for those that wanted to "sign-on" for combat duty..I was almost the first to sign the bulletin on each occasion, (until I had married sweet Nell), but when I

asked why I wasn't chosen for the combat duty, I was always told that those of us on Research and Development (R & D) of the Central-Fire-Control (CFC), would never be released from our duties with the R & D of the CFC! But I kept on signing the "combat lists" each time they showed up on the bulletin board..After I was discharged from the US Army Air Force in Laredo, Nellie and I kept the room we had rented from the Laredo Family for awhile and Nell kept her job at the "Fabric Repair Building" at the insistance of her great "lady boss"..I tried to get a job in Laredo, but with all the people like me being discharged and the war over, there were no decent jobs to be had..While visiting with my folks in Atascosa, I went on into San Antonio looking for a job and at the same time applied for eligibility for education on the newly established Veterans Adminstration "G.I. Bill of Rights" and was accepted..With all my Aircraft and Aircraft Engine and Flight Training, I still wanted to stick to some type of "aviation work and/or profession"..I applied for training at Spartan School of Aviation at Tulsa, Oklahoma on the "G.I. Bill" and was accepted..Nell quit her job at Laredo, and we spent the 1945 Christmas and 1946 New Year's with my folks at Atascosa and right after New Years "headed" for Tulsa, Oklahoma..There wasn't a single home nor room to be rented in Tulsa, so we started looking for a place outside of Tulsa and wound up renting a room and bath at a home in Jenks, Oklahoma..About 20 miles due south of Tulsa and Spartan..Enrolled into the Aircraft and Aircraft Engine (A&E) course at Spartan..Bless her heart, Nell got a job as a sorta "soda-jerk-pharmacist" at the one-and-only drug store in Jenks..Her boss was a great ole feller that learned to trust Nell with "everything" while he "roamed around" hunting and fishing all time..Nell and I enjoyed our time in Jenks, she with her "drug store and me at Spartan"..I enjoyed the A & E course..It was to be one (1) year in length..Made good grades..Made extra money working on the new tri-cycled-geared-post-war Spartan "Executive", but never got to fly it..Several airlines came to Spartan looking for people with an A & E and a Commercial Pilot's License to go to work with them as a four-engine-flight-engineer, and me with my USAAF Four-Engine-Flight-Engineer License, they kept wanting to hire me but not pay much money because I didn't have a Commercial Pilot's License..So, I went to Capt. Balfour, the "head" of Spartan and applied to take the Commercial Pilot's License Flight Training along with my A & E course..He says, "I don't think you can take both courses at once"..I said, "lets try it"..We did and I won..I was taking Commercial Flight Training in the morning and A & E course in the afternoon and evening..I Got my Commercial and a started taking the Commercial Flight Instructor's (CFI), Certificate and I got that..With all the ground courses I had to take to get the commercial and the CFI, I took the Ground Instructor's

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Certificate (GIC) Test, passed it and took tests for the following Ratings on my GIC; Civil Air Regulations, Aircraft, Aircraft Engines, Meteorology, Navigation (including celestial navigation)..While I was taking my Commercial and CFI course, I was "exposed to some "Link-Trainer" instruction..I learned to get pretty good at Link Training "Flying", so I took the "written and practical" on Link Trainer and was awarded the

"Link-Trainer-Instructor's Certificate" along with a "First Class Radio Operator's Certificate", all of this while I was still taking the A & E course..In the middle of all this, Nell and I flew back to Burksville, Kentucky to visit her folks in a 1946 Piper J-3 Cub that I had formed a "club" with other students and we bought it brand new at Tulsa in the ole Piper J-3 "Cub" colors of Yellow with Black stripe..

In 1946, multi-millionaire Howard Hughes bought the old Trans World Airlines (TWA) and his intention was to make it the "World's Largest Finest Airlines" with all of the newest, biggest, finest equipment that was available..He contracted the Lockheed People to build a big bunch of Lockheed "Constellations" (Connies), equipped with the new Wright R-3350-35 engines developing 2,200 horsepower (hp) each..They were to take a three-man crew; Pilot, Co-Pilot and Four Engine Flight Engineer..He sent people to interview A & E students at Spartan there in Tulsa with Commercial and/or CFI Certificates..I was one of only six to be interviewed..They wanted to send us to the Wright 3350-35 school at Wilmington, Delaware, then to TWA Check-out school in Kansas City, Missouri..Then we would be assigned to a crew as Flight Engineer with a future advancement to Co-Pilot and eventually up to Pilot (Captain) on the "Connies"..They gave us a choice of three locations: One, London, England for a minimum of three (3) years at \$750.00 to start, per month..Two, Paris, France for a two (2) year term at \$850.00..Third, Cairo, Egypt..I said maybe to Paris for two years..They would move you and your family over there (and back at end of term), free..For tax purposes, they would pay you half of your salary in the U.S. and half in Paris, for a better "tax-break"..I went off to my vacation trip to Atascosa thinking I would go ahead and "sign-on" with TWA when I returned from Atascosa..

We took a week off and flew down to Atascosa, Texas to visit with my folks..At that visit to Atascosa, an "ole face showed up", my Uncle Dick Stratton..In the late 1930s, Uncle Dick and his wife Marie "split-up", got a divorce..Marie was "awarded" their daughter, Phyllis and they went to live with Marie's folks, the Hartmans in Hays, Kansas west of Wichita..Uncle Dick "hitch-hicked" to California and "disappeared" working for a lumber-cutting company out there in the forests..But when World War Two (WWII) started and so did the draft..He "signed-up" for the draft out there in

California, and was one of the first called in there in California..He did his "boot-camp" at an ole Army Base there at the South end of the San Francisco near the Golden Gate Bridge, "Presidio", I think it was called..He was "placed" into the Army Transportation Corps and shipped to Alaska to help finish the "Alaskan Super Highway"..Then onto an Army Transportation Ship that ran out to the end of the Aleutian Islands with supplies to the military in the Aleutians, and wounded military back to hospitals on mainland Alaska..He made Sergeant there..Finished his Army "Career" there in Alaska, kinda like I did in Laredo..He was discharged at the very end of 1945 at Fort Sam Houston and came back to Atascosa to live with his folks, my Grandfather and Grandmother Stratton..He had "settled-down" out of his uniform at Atascosa and started hitting the bars, cafes, golf courses with old Army Buddies that had bought small acreages in and around Atascosa..When he mentioned what I was doing at Spartan, his Buddies asked him to ask me to start a Flight Training School where they could learn to fly, but mostly to get "compensation" that students received while attending Schools/Courses on the G.I.Bill like I was while I was attending Spartan..Not much, \$90.00 to \$120.00 dollars a month, I think it was..So, Uncle Dick and his Buddies started to look around for a possible sight to build an airport for the "G.I. Flight School"..They were looking in the Lytle-Natalia-Devine Area (all in the Medina Valley Irrigated Farms Area) for a likely sight..

Bless his heart, Grandfather Stratton had some kind of "stroke", and spent most of his "waking hours" in bed and could not talk..After, the first day of Nell and my vacation with my folks in Atascosa, Uncle Dick came forward with idea for he and I to build an airfield in the Medina Valley Irrigation Area to train Vets to fly on the G.I. Bill of Rights..He had already chosen several "sights" that he and I went to look at..We "chose" one fifty (50) acre square "level" tract that was about four (4) miles due West of Natalia that we could build two 2,200 foot runways diagonally across the tract, one runway would be to the Southeast 120 degrees into the prevailing winds off of the Gulf..It had "clear approaches" to the "landing end" of each runway, and the fellow would sign a contract to rent it to us at \$50.00 per month for five (5) years..I asked the owner if he would take \$100.00 to hold open the contract for one hundred (100) days, and he said yes, and I wrote him a check for \$100.00 and took the "rental contract" back to Tulsa with us..

Nell and I finished our visit with the folks, and with Grandfather Stratton in his sad physical condition, we flew back to Tulsa talking about the "Grandfather Stratton and the Airport"..We, Nell and I came to the agreement that we thought the Airport deal was the best for she and I..I signed

and told him to sign it and notarize it..I told the TWA people to take me off their "maybe list" and they did..Then I went to work to finish up all my courses there at Spartan..Took my final and practical test on my Aircraft and Aircraft Engine (A & E), was issued my A & E Certificate just before Christmas of 1946..Nell quit her job at the drug store, I checked out of Spartan, bought out my partners in the J-3 club and we flew home to Atascosa..It was a little "crowded" at the folks home there in Atascosa with sick Grandfather and Grandmother Stratton, Uncle Dick and I and Nell in the same little home..So, we sold it and bought a bigger home in "downtown" Natalia..We moved the folks into their new home and they really enjoyed it..One reason was that it was just a couple of blocks to the new Catholic Church and a drug store with a real nice druggist that they liked, along with a nearby Doctor to look in on Grandfather Stratton, that made "house-calls"! ..Uncle Dick and I bought an ole broken down road grader and a pair of mules and proceeded to work on the "Airport" day and night, building the two runways, and a couple of hangers and an office for Nell the keep books and answer the phone and for me to teach night ground school classes..We named the airport the "Medina Valley Airport" and nicknamed the Flight School, the "Medina Valley Flyers"..Everybody thought that was great! I got a letter from the War Assets Administration (W.A.A.) to buy surplus Army Liaison Aircraft for Trainers..Bought a Taylorcraft L-2 (DCO-65), Aeronca L-3 (Defender), two Piper L-4s (J-3s) and later on, A Stinson Voyager (civilian equivalent of Army L-5) for heavy horsepower..This is the first time I ever heard of "Liaison Aircraft" (L-Birds) or ever got near an L-Bird..I then started to wonder what part they played in winning WWII! More about the L-Birds later..We got the airport completed and got it Civil Aeronautics Administration (C.A.A.) and Federal Aviation Administration (F.A.A.) approved and then got it approved for "Flight Training on the G.I. Bill of Rights" for Veterans..We started "Flight Training" in March 1947..A typical day for me was to start early in the morning, giving dual instruction to the forty or fifty Flight Students that had "signed-on" with us, mostly, Vets on the G.I. Bill..Giving dual instruction till the evening and then I had three choices depending on the weather and availability of flying students: Night flying (with kerosene highway pots for runway lights), teaching ground school or maintaining the airplanes..Kept me "off the bar stools", that's for sure..Nell maintained the office, the log books, billing for the flight training, paying bills, etc..Uncle Dick was busy keeping the runways mowed and maintained, and moving the aircraft in and out of the hangers..We were very, very busy! We no more than got the flight school going, when the "G.I. Farmers" (flight students and non-flight students) came to me and said the "grasshoppers, bugs, etc." were eating up their crops and

"grasshoppers, bugs, etc." were eating up their crops and  
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unless something could be done about them, they would be out of business and lose their farms..I ask them, "what the hell could I do about their problem, and they all answered, Get a duster airplane and help us out"! So, I did..I had never crop-dusted before, nor had ever seen one flying, but I learned..So, my "day" changed a little..Uncle Dick would wake me up in the morning about 4:00am and we would go out to the airfield, roll out the duster, I would get in the duster and "follow" Uncle Dick out to the fields that I was to dust that morning..Would dust till the winds came up, about 10:00am plus or minus; stop crop dusting, take a shower, eat breakfast, fly students until the winds calmed down in the afternoons, 4:00pm, plus or minus and start dusting again till dusk, quit dusting, take a shower, eat supper, either teach night flying, teach ground school and/or maintain the airplanes..

About this time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (AAA) made a deal with the surrounding farmers and ranchers, that if they could prove a 75% kill on mesquite trees and bush on their farms and ranches, the AAA would pay for the "chemical and aerial and/or hand spraying of the chemical"..So, I obtained a larger duster, an old 1928 Spartan C-3 bi-plane with a 300 hp Lycoming R-680 radial engine with a 600 pound stainless-steel tank installed in front where the front seat use to be, with a "duster ventura and pump" under the fuselage center section to disperse the dust with; a ventura and pump that I could easily and quickly remove and to be replaced with a P-47 125 gallon "tear-drop" belly tank with a "quick-disconnect hook-up" in case I needed to get rid of it in an emergency; this between the lower wing attachments to the fuselage, with spray "booms" attached under each wing to disperse the "liquid 2345T( Agent Orange ?) spray from the P-47 "long-range fuel tank"..I did a lot of "free-spray" work with local chemical companies trying to perfect a liquid spray that would kill the mesquite..Sprayed at least 20,000 acres, plus or minus, of farms and/or ranches with the chemical "2345T" and others, but never could get the "75% kill"...I did learn that the "best kill" was to pour lots of kerosene on the base of the mesquite tree by hand! Well, the ole Spartan C-3 (ex-Navy primary flight trainer), proved to be a great "sprayer-duster" for the "sprayer-duster season", but "stood useless" outside the sprayer-duster seasons, so to keep it busy, I got it approved for "Aerial Sign Towing"..Approved to "haul thirty six (36) letters" with another "quick-disconnect system" so I did not have to land with the sign attached..I could fly over the airstrip at a hundred feet or so, and disconnect the "sign" and then come back around and land..Worked great..Made lots of money with it..I remember my first "sign" was with General Oldsmobile Company advertising the first Oldsmobile "88"!

After being associated with "airplanes, flying, airstrip, etc." for a couple of years, Uncle Dick decided he would learn to fly to take some of the load off of me..So, I hired an ole World War Two (WWII) flight instructor, that had instructed WASPs at Sweetwater, Texas..His name was Ivan Jones, and he bought the old Medina Valley Land Company Headquarters building and motel rooms that were used for prospective Medina Valley Land buyers, located in nearby Natalia, Texas, where my folks, Uncle Dick, Nell and I lived..Ivan rebuilt all the "Medina Valley Land Company" buildings and made a great motel out of it and it stayed full all time..These were the same buildings, motel rooms, that my Grandfather Stratton stayed in when he came down from the Wilson Ranch there, there at McLean, Texas and bought a farm to move us all away from the terrible dust storms there in the Texas and Oklahoma "Panhandles"..

It got awfully "crowded" there in the "Stratton Household" there in Natalia, so Nell and I bought a farm with a nice little cottage on it right next to the airstrip, and we moved in and it was great!..Both of us could walk back and forth from and to the airstrip and to and from meals..It was great for Nell..She had her own home! She felt so much at home in our nice little cottage by the airstrip, that she decided to learn to fly also..So, other than maybe an hour here and there, to see how they were progressing with their flight training, Ivan Jones taught both Nell and Uncle Dick to fly..He "soloed" both about two months apart..

One of Uncle Dick's jobs was to keep the two airstrips, the taxi strips and tie-down areas mowed and clear of any and all bush, etc..Once in awhile, I had to "get-on" Uncle Dick to keep the airstrips mowed wider as he had a habit of not mowing them wide enough, especially for the students that had just soloed..Well, the day he soloed, Ivan and I got a little concerned, because he made two "attempts" to land, but "pulled-up" and went around to try landing again..Ivan and I ask each other the ole question, "are we going to have to shoot him down"? Uncle Dick landed out of his third approach..Made a good landing; taxied up to the hanger line and shut the engine off; chocked the airplane, did not say a word to anyone, but jumped onto the tractor with the mower attached and proceeded out to "widen the airstrips"..We never had to get on him again about keeping the runways widened!

Almost all of the above happened in 1947 and 1948, including the dusting and spraying..

In 1948, due to the lack of rain and a "leak" in Medina Lake, the lake started going dry..The San Antonio Bass Fishing Association (SABFA), trying to keep the fish alive in the "smaller-by-the-day" lake, asked if I would "dust" the lake with nitrogen to try to keep the fish alive until it rained and/or until they got the "leak" fixed..So, I did at no cost to the SABFA..About two (2) months later, they, the SABFA people came back and asked if I dust the lake with rotenon (?) to kill the fish but not poison them..I said yes, and they advertised in the San Antonio Light and Express-News newspapers that I was going to "kill" the fish the following Saturday Morning, but not poison them, that people could gather around the edge of the small lake of water and after I finished "dusting", they could wade in and gather the fish as they came to the top..Well, when I made my first trip to "dust" the lake, there must have been 100,000 people waiting with every kind of a container imaginable; empty bath tubs, wash tubs, wicker baskets, buckets of all sizes, etc. to gather the fish after I finished "dusting" them with rotenone (?).....

Medina Lake went completely dry several weeks later and remained dry for about a year..They tried to fix the "leaks" but the "bottom" was too porous and impossible to "seal"....You could actually walk "across the dry lake bed" in any direction..

Almost all the Medina Lake Irrigation Farmers, especially the farms owned and financed by the Veterans on the G.I. Bill of Rights, went broke due to the lack of irrigation water and lost their farms; declared bankruptcy and moved off the farms and quit flying with me under the G.I. Bill of Rights Flight Training Plan..There went all my "flying, dusting" business..



The year 1948, the month July, the day, Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup>, turned out to be the worse year, month and day of my life, as my beautiful precious Bride of four (4) years, Nellie Glee, was injured in a terrible airplane accident that morning and died in my arms at the Santa Rosa Hospital, that afternoon, Sunday, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1948..It was a terrible accident and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) "ruled" that it was not anybody's fault, but happened..I had rather not go into details at this time as to her death..I took Nellie Glee back to Kentucky to her Radford family and she is buried in the Radford Family Cemetery at Burksville, Kentucky..I have been back several times over these past years, to "visit" with my sweet dear Nellie Glee..We never did tell Grandfather Stratton about Nelli Glee's death, but you could tell he was wondering what happened to her and his quite but sad death several months later, solved the problem about "not having to tell Grandfather Stratton about Nellie Glee's death"!

Needless to say, the rest of the year 1948 is a very dark, depressive period of my life..Due to Nellie Glee's death, and the Medina Dam going dry and everybody in and around Natalia with their "G.I. Bill Financed Irrigated Farms", all went "belly-up" and moved away leaving the "Medina Valley Flyers" with only a dozen or so students, and the "Medina Valley Crop Dusting" business with "no dusting and/or spraying" business..So, Uncle Dick and I closed up the Medina Valley Flyers Airfield and moved into San Antonio..The San Antonio Veterans Administration asked me to finished training all the Negro Flight Students training on the G.I.Bill, at Lakefield and close it..I did that for the Veteran's Administration..But I gotta tell you, there were some very, very fine Negro Students there..Two finished up as Commerical Flight Instructors, one of which I hired as a Flight Instructor for students at Bexar County Airport and several with Commercial Licenses and a dozen or so with Private Licenses..I kept in touch with a bunch of them, and they were doing good at various airfields with the Flight Licenses and Ratings that they acquired at Lakefield with me..I did the same at Bexar County Airport and was associated with the U.S. Army Air National Guard Units there, flying their Aeronca L-16s..Great bunch of fellows, including an old High School Buddy of mine, Stanley Avant who graduated from Somerset High School with me and went to Spartan School of Aeronautics with and was the C.O. of maintanance of all the Army Air National Guard aircraft stationed there at Bexar County Airport, due south of the City of San Antonio on Chavaneau street..I also did some crop dusting/spraying from Bexar County airfield, mostly on all the surrounding "Belgium

Bexar County airfield, mostly on all the surrounding "Belgium  
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Farms"; Van De Walles, Persyns, etc..

Bert Wilcut of San Antonio School of Aviation in hanger #10 at Stinson Field, "hired Uncle Dick and I" away from Bexar County Aircraft to come over to Stinson Field and run his flight school, the largest flight training school in the San Antonio area..We had about fifteen (15) flight training aircraft, including about five (5) "war surplus" Taylorcraft L-2s, a Cub or two, several Stinson L-5s, a Beechcraft Bonanza for "the heavy horsepower flight training" and a surplus Cessna twin-engine UC-78 for "twin-engine" flight training.. I had about five (5) full time flight instructors and three (3) part-time..At one time, we had about six hundred (600) flight students of which over half were taking flight training under the "G.I.Bill of Rights"..We had such a good reputation there that the Veterans Administration came to us to start an "Aircraft and Aircraft Engine" (A & E) School there at Hanger #10 at Stinson Field, years before Hallmark ever showed up, which we did, Hardy Cannon and I..I taught aircraft engines and Hardy taught Aircraft..It was also offered to WWII Vets on the Veterans Administration the "G.I.Bill of Rights"..We had about fifty (50) students and Kelly Field, Randolph Field, Brooks Field, Stinson Field, San Antonio International Airport, and surrounding cities' airfields, "looked to us for their future A & E Mechanics"..I sure made ole Bert Wilcut a very wealthy man..

I met and married my second sweet precious bride, Doris Helen Steele a year or so after my first sweet wife, Nellie Glee, passed away..A graduate of the Arts and Industrial College (A&I) College at Kingsville, Texas in "Home Economics", she was teaching school in Crystal City, Texas..I met and dated her at Crystal City..After we married, we lived in her cute little rented bungalow there in Crystal City..It was one of about fifty (50) bungalows there in one place just north of Crystal City that had housed American-Japanese Families during their "internment" during World War Two (WW2)..Most unique arrangement..Several of the families remained in Crystal City after the end of WW2..I got acquainted with one family..Nice people..When her "school-year" was over, we moved from Crystal City to San Antonio and while I was running Bert Wilcut's "San Antonio School of Aviation", we lived in the "Stinson Homes" right off the end of the runway there at Stinson, that was used for G.I. Family Quarters during WWII there at Stinson that were stationed there are Stinson during the war maintaining military flight trainers flying out of Stinson Field during WW2....They had been nick-named "Splinter Village"..Our first child was born July 7, 1950 and we named him Lee Richard Stratton..Lee after his Grandfather

Howard Lee Steele, Doris' father and my Grandfather, **Richard**

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D. Stratton, (Rick)....People always ask me why we didn't name Rick after me, Bill L Stratton, II..I always tell them that I did not want Rick to have to Live **up** to my name or **down** to it..No problem..Then the Korean War came along and I decided to get out of the "flight training mess" and go to flying Curtiss C-46s on contract to the Defense Department flying "high priority passengers and freight" for the War Department..We were all civilians and the C-46s all belonged to Civilian Commercial Airlines..I flew for an Airline based in Miami called, "Resort Airlines"..They based about ten (10) of their twenty (20) C-46s in San Antonio with about forty (40) crew members to fly the C-46s, all civilians (mostly all retired Air Force Pilots)..Resort Airlines created the "San Antonio Base (SAT)" as there were so many military bases here, more than any other city in the U.S..The War Department was "experimenting with civilian airlines with civilian aircraft and civilian crews" for future use in case of another "world-wide-war", (WW3), if one came along..

As all my C-46 "take-offs and landings and ground school" occurred at the San Antonio International Airport (SAT), way over on the North side of San Antonio, I found a nice home on the "north side near SAT", bought it and moved my family over to it on 1710 Hollywood Street..We loved our home on "Hollywood", so much so, that I built an "HO Model Train Set with tracks along the walls, waist high" that (with cute tunnels) went into about every room in the house, including Rick's bedroom..He really had fun with it..We got along so well, that we soon had an addition to our family August 26, 1951, a baby girl that we named Cherie Gay..She and Rick got along great and we had a real great family! We made several trips to the Gulf Coast with our kiddos, to Port Lavaca, Port O'Conner, Rockport and other great places of the many great beaches of the Gulf Coast..Resort Airlines were "trading their ole Curtiss C-46s" for Douglas DC-4s and when they found out that I had an FAA Ground Instructor's Certificate with the "Aircraft and Aircraft and CAA ratings, and over 1,000 hours as "four-engine-flight-engine on B-17s, B-24s and B-29s, they hired me to head-up the DC-4 ground school here in San Antonio at SAT..I insisted that I get to fly ten or fifteen hours a month to keep my ATR certificate current..So, they gave me "my choice" of flights scheduled out of SAT to keep my ATR current..It all worked out great, until the Korean War ended in July 1953, and the War Department ended their "civilian airline and civilian pilots to fly their high priority personal and freight experiment"..Resort Airlines closed their SAT office, laid off their last forty (40) pilots

their SAT office, laid off their last forty (40) pilots  
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(including me) and moved everything back to Miami, leaving me "high and dry" here in San Antonio..About a month later, they sent me a wire stating that they would hire me back in Miami, but I had to get moved on my own..I turned them down! That was the last I ever heard from Resort Airlines..I understand they "folded up" about a year later..One thing about flying with Resort Airlines those three (3) years, I landed and/or took off from every military; Air Force, Army, Navy, Coast Guard Base in the United States and the Caribbean Area..And many, many US and Carb Civilian Airbases; including Washington D.C., all the New York, Boston, Florida bases..San Diego, LAX, San Francisco, Seattle, many in Canada..Lots and lots of "site-seeing" while flying for the Resort Airlines during the Korean War, including flying their "two-week" flying vacations in the Caribbean..That is where their name, "Resort Airlines" came from..A typical "Resort Vacation Flight" was to have Saturday breakfast with this week's flight of 52 passengers at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Dining Room, introducing ourselves, etc., and with limosine transports, take them to Laguardia Airport where we placed them and their baggage on the ole C-46s (with red-carpet-interiors)and we took off for Miami, Florida where we landed and de-planed them for a two day-two night party in Miami..From Miami to the Bahamas for two days-two nights, to Haiti for one day-one night, to Martinique for two days-two nights, to St Thomas for one day-one night, to San Juan Porto Rico for two days-two nights to Barbados for two day-two nights, to St Lucia for one day and one night to Port-a-Spain in Trinidad, to Aruba one day, one night, to Curacas, to Mexico City to Havana Cuba (before Castro), back to Miami, to New York..What a trip..And lots of times, without any Stewardess', just "us guys"..One time, we took off from New York with two C-46s full of nobody but all women that worked for the "Readers Digest" company..Again, no stewardess, just us guys for two weeks..They did that twice to get all the "readers digest women" on the Resort Vacations..I begged off the second bunch..

Another contact that our Resort Airline people bid and got, was transporting C-46s full of colored men living on the British held Islands in the Carib..The purpose was to transport them to Madison, Wisconsin to the "Green-Giant" canned-vegetable people because so many of their people had joined the Military to go to Korea, they were not, the Green Giant people, were not able to pick enough veggies, etc. to can and send to Korea to fulfill their "military food contracts"..So, they made a deal with the British, to fly a certain percentage of native men (they and their families were almost starving to death), from each of their islands in the Carib up to the Green Giant factories in Wisconsin..We landed and picked up British Island Men Natives from each

Guianas in South America..Another great, great experience getting to see more foreign lands and ports than most anybody else in the world..The deal was to fly them to Wisconsin, where the Green Giant People (GGP) would put them up for six (6) months, pay them more money than the starving Natives every saw..They paid the men a fourth of their salary there in Wisconsin and sent the remaining three fourths back to their native Carib Island to each island's finance minister and he got the remaining money to the families..When we picked up the natives, all they had was the clothes on their backs and a shoe box full of shaving stuff, tooth brush and paste and a change of underwear..No socks..But the natives were always very, very polite, clean and pretty well educated..Six (6) months later, when we flew them back to their island and families, they would have three or four suitcases, full of clothes, etc., one or two radios and T.V.s, so much baggage that we had to have one "baggage C-46" for each two "passenger C-46s"..Great, great experiences..

In between all these most interesting trips, I took six (6) weeks off and we had our third and last kiddo, a girl that we named Leslie Ann, born the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 1953...So, now we have three (3) youngsters; Lee Richard (Rick) Stratton, Cherie Gay (Cher) Stratton and Leslie Ann (Les) Stratton..All great kiddos and we are mighty proud of them..

Need to "go back" a couple of years, back to 1949 when I was running San Antonio School of Aviation for Bert Wilcut at Hanger #10 at Stinson Field...Late one evening, a 1946 Yellow and Orange Aeronca Champion landed and taxied up to our parking area, cut its engine and two (2) men got out casually clothed in blue overalls..They were from Belleville, Kansas, a little town almost on the Kansas-Nebraska line..A fellow by the name of Leonard Transue and his Father, Mr. Transue..They had flown down to see if Leonard might go to work with us as a flight instructor..They had a little field at their village in Kansas, but had to shut it down, due to not enough business..I interviewed Leonard, had him fill out an application as a flight instructor, etc., and hired him..He said he had a family of five other than his Father and Mother..But they were ready to move out of old Kansas down to San Antonio..So, I took them nearby to "Stinson Splinter Village", and they rented two apartments, stayed in the apartments that night with sleeping bags and flew back to Kansas the next day..Gathered up their "belongings and families" and drove back to San Antonio, moved into their apartments there at "splinter village", and Leonard started to work with me as a full time flight instructor and was one fine instructor..Everybody liked him, including E.J. Burke, jr, home builder that was taking flying

lessons with me there at Bert's..E.J. (Jimmie) Burke, jr.. liked Leonard so much that he hired Leonard away from me after Leonard had worked for me for about six (6) months, and put him to work flying he and his Dad E.J.Burke, Sr. on business trips in their new Beech Bonanza..Jimmie was elected as President of the U.S. Home Builders Association, and that really put Leonard to work flying, mostly just E.J. Burke, jr...When Leonard wasn't flying, he was selling Burke Homes on the G.I. Bill..Well, after Resort Airlines left San Antonio and moved back to Miami "without me", I was looking for a job..I had kept in touch with Leonard all the time I was with Resort..So, he invited me to have lunch with him ..I accepted and when I told him I was out of a job, he hired me on the spot to fly a new Cessna 195 that they had bought for E.J.Burke,Sr..And when I was not flying, I would sell Burke Homes..A real great deal..Although, I didn't know anything about home construction and sales, Leonard taught me quick and well and I was doing great..I spent about half of my time flying E.J.Burke, sr. in his Cessna 195..He had bought a horse ranch in Southeastern Oklahoma with Audie Murphy, World War Two's most decorated soldier, now a movie star and a "horse racer"..I got to fly Audie Murphy several times and he enjoyed it so much, he bought his own Twin Engine Commander, and was killed in the Commander several years later trying to make an instrument landing in the Commander on a field on the East Coast, in North Carolina, I think....

I continued flying E.J. Burke, sr in the new Cessna 195 and maintaining it with my "A & E"..When Burke,Sr. found out that I had once flown dusters and sprayers, he asked if I would spray the "Oklahoma Horse Ranch" with "brush killer" and I said yes, and I sprayed the ranch with a J-3 sprayer that I leased from a fellow in Uvalde..Burke, Sr was very proud of his "Oklahoma Horse Ranch" and we were always flying somebody up there to enjoy it with him..Mostly politicians..

E.J.Burke, Sr. and I got along great! So much so, that he insisted that I sell my home on Hollywood Street and he would sell me a brand new three or four bedroom "Burke Home" of my choice, there in Highland Hills at "Burke's Cost to build the home"..I chose a real nice three bedroom home on the corner of Killarney and Pickwell streets for about \$9,500.00 ..I think it had about 2,000 square feet of floor space..Upon a pretty good hill overlooking the southside of San Antonio, Brooks AFB, etc..I moved my family into the home and I worked for Burke out of the nice home..It was very convenient to the Burke Sales Office and Stinson Field where I kept the Cessna 195 and maintained it for three (3) years, 1954, 1955 and 1956...

I learned that the San Antonio branch of the Phillips Oil Company were looking for a Co-pilot/Mechanic on their new Lockheed "Lodstar"..I applied and was immediately hired at twice the wage that Burke was paying..The Lodstar was stationed at H.B.Zachry's hanger on the west end of San Antonio International Airport (SAT)..I made many trips in the Lodestar with Mr.& Mrs H. H. Phillips on board, mostly to their "Native Penn Home" in Butler, PA..Right in the middle of Butler PA Country Club Golf course..I acted as Mr Phillips "Caddie" many times and he wanted me to learn to play golf to fill in on "foursomes" now and then..He wanted it so much, that I had several lessons with the "later golf champion", Arnold Palmer from PA..Over a period of years, I played all the famous golf courses all over the country; Pebble Beach and Palm Springs, California, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, New York, Cheyenne Springs at Colorado Springs, etc..

I got very interested in the fantastic "oil business"..So, much so, that I started taking courses at San Antonio College, taking Geology courses, business courses, business title courses, economics of all sorts..How Mr Phillips found out about my "taking the night courses", I do not know how, but he asked me one day, "How I was doing taking the oil business related night courses at the College"..I answered, "Great and showed him some of my grades"..He said, I am going to retire as CEO of Phillips Drilling Company, I should like for you to resign as "Chief Pilot" from Phillips Drilling (he had made me chief pilot), and come with me and you and I will start my personal oil business, "away from Phillips Drilling"..He offered me twice the salary I had been receiving and a "blank check" to go buy a good, fast single engine airplane for us to use..I was to be his personal pilot and land man..I bought a single engine Beech Bonanza with a 245 hp Continental Engine in it, N8897A..

He ask me to take him home one afternoon, to his home there on Devine Road as his personal chauffer had taken Ms. Phillips up to their little ranch in Hayes, County about twenty miles west of San Marcos..The ranch also had a landing strip on it, and I often flew Ms Phillips and her Mother up there quite often..Mr. Phillips did not care for the ranch and very seldom went to the ranch..When Ms Phillips and her Mother found out that I had been raised on a ranch and was very familiar with livestock, medicines, castration, de-horning, etc., she begged Mr Phillips to "release me" and let me move up on the ranch and run it for them..Thank goodness he refused her request over and over again..The only transportation I had to take him home with that afternoon, was

the ole pick-up that I used to go to work and back, leaving the new Plymouth for Doris Helen and the kiddos to use..As I was taking Mr. Phillips home in the ole pick-up, he said, "tomorrow, I am going to call up Ole Man Smith at Smith Chevrolet and tell him you are coming down to pick out a new Chevrolet at my expense, so you will have something "decent" to take me home in"..The next day, I went down to Smith Chevrolet and picked out a brand new 1956 two-door sedan..The next day, Mr Phillips asked me to take him and one of his Geologists home in my brand new company car..I did, but Mr Phillips complained of the "only two doors" and told me to go back and get a four door sedan..Next, on the way to his home that afternoon, (it was in the summertime), he got pretty hot and asked me to turn on the air-conditioner..I told him, the car did not have an air-conditioner..Again, with a little anger in his voice, he said, "take this damned car back and have "Ole Man Smith" give you a four-door, air conditioned sedan"..So, I did..I took Mr Phillips home quite often, or we would leave early and I would take him to the San Antonio Country Club, (he was a long-time member) and we would eat lunch, play a round of golf and then I would take him home in my new "four-door, air conditioned Chevrolet Sedan"..We got along fine..Most of the trips in the new Bonanza was with Mr & Ms Phillips on board, was to their Butler, PA home in the middle of the Butler, PA Country Club Golf Course..The other times, I was on my own checking out and/or buying and/or curing titles on Gas & Oil Leases that I had made from geology charts that he placed at my disposal with the areas/acreages to be checked "hi-lited"..I spend an awful lot of time at "court houses and abstract companies" and of course land owners all over the United States..For an example, I "leased fifteen (15) sections of land south of Fort Stockton, Texas" nearby a 29,000 foot oil well that the Texaco Company was drilling"..I personally "cleared the titles to the sections and wrote a check for, I think, about ten (10) million dollars for the fifteen (15) section tract..This was between 1957 and 1960..

My kiddos were up in age a bit by now and I would often take them swimming in New Braunfels, San Marcos and later down to the Gulf Coast..They really got to like the Gulf Coast, but we always had to find a cheap motel for all of us to stay in, and none of us liked that too well..So, I started "drawing-up" a "fold-out-trailer-camper"..Way before Coleman, Apex or others came up with one..I did most of the welding and building myself, in the evenings and week ends at my home there in Highland Hills..One day as I was taking Mr Phillips home in my new "company car", he asked me how I was getting along with my "fold-out-camper-trailer"..I told him that I was almost finished..He said, "tomorrow,



find a good trailer hitch company and get them to fix your company car with trailer hitch, lights, brakes, etc. to tow your camper-trailer safely and comfortably, then come see me in my office" ..

I did as he asked, finished up the fold-out-camper-trailer with an ice box, butane stove, storage drawers, bins, etc. five sleeping bags, got it licensed..I met with Mr Phillips in his office (my office was next door to his) and he said, "I want you to load up your family and take a two (2) months vacation trip with them at my expense to Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Montana, Arizona and New Mexico and spend about half your time at looking for available Gas & Oil Leases on the East Side of the "Divide" working out of Denver, Colorado and on the West side of the "Divide" working out of Salt Lake City, Utah..He gave me names of Abstract Companies to work with and geology maps with areas "hi-lited"..This was in the Spring of 1958..Rick was eight, Cherie was seven and Leslie Ann was five..

So, I hooked onto the camper-trailer, loaded the family into the car and we took off..Stopped at a trailer park in Dumas, Texas the first night out, and Rocky Mountain National Park, (9,000 ft. elevation) the second night..Stayed in that park for a couple of days and came back down to Denver and stayed there a couple of weeks working and sight-seeing with the family..I worked on "East of the Divide" gas and oil lease possibilities..Checked out possible leases in Colorado, Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Montana..Ended up in Yellowstone Park for about a week, down to Grand Teton Mountains, Jackson Hole Park and over to Salt Lake City..Stayed in Salt Lake City for about a week, then trips to Utah, Nevada, down to Las Vegas, to Arizona, New Mexico, Santa Fe, Taos, Albuquerque, Amarillo, Texas back to San Antonio..We were "out a day or two less than two (2) months..Boy, the family and I will never forget that "vacation" ..

I did a lot of interesting flying for H H Phillips with most interesting passengers..One was the President of Shamrock Oil Co..One was Mr Charlie Schreiner of Kerrville, whom the University at Kerrville is named after..I flew he and his Wife, Kitty West Schreiner, up to Colorado Springs to spend a week-end with H H Phillips and his wife at their cottage there in Colorado Springs, across from the Colorado Springs Resort Hotel and thirty-six (36) hole golf course..The Phillips and Kitty West would spend the day playing golf, and as Charlie Schreiner and I didn't care for golf, we rented a Jeep and headed for the "Mountains"..Just the two of us with the Jeep, for a couple of days..We got along just fine..He wanted me to quit Phillips and go to work for him..I flew some more of H H Phillips' friends, the Seeligsons and to a resort in Cuidad Valles, Mexico, several times..Really

got acquainted there and learned to like it! During the time I was working for Phillips Oil and Mr H.H. Phillips personally, Uncle Dick had "wondered around" and I got him a job with a septic tank cleaning company..He was doing pretty good with it, but would take off on a three or four day weekend and disappear and get drunk..I worried about him, but wasn't too much I could do for him..As you remember, his Father, my Grandfather Richard D Stratton had passed away about five or six years before, and his Mother and my Grandmother, Laura "Lollie" Stratton in 1957..This same year, Uncle Dick stopped by my home there on Killarney with his septic tank pump truck to visit with me and the family..When he got ready to leave, I followed him out to his truck and he turned to me and said, "I want to get into the portable chemical toilet business"..I replied, "what in the hell is a chemical toilet"..He said they have some in Houston..I said, "O.K., we will go to Houston and look them over"..We spent about four days in Houston with the "Porta-Can" company there..The owner turned out to be a real great guy and showed us "everything", his books, etc. customer lists, maps, trucks, chemical, toilets, everything..It was interesting, and Uncle took a great deal of interest in the toilets and asked the Porta-Can fellow a hundred questions..We left Houston for San Antonio and talked about the portable chemical toilet business all the way back to San Antonio..I asked Uncle Dick what he wanted me to do? He answered, "finance me in the portable chemical toilet business"..I said. "O.K., but you will have to move in with me at Killarney, so I can keep an eye on you; stop drinking and if you don't stop drinking, I will take-over! Keep you presnt job cleaning septic tanks until we get you "on your feet with the toilets", O.K.? He answered yes..He cleared out of his louzy motel room and moved in with me and the family at Killarney..We built a little shop out behind the garage and started building plywood portable chemical toilets, at nights and week-ends, in the "walled-up" shop so the neighbors could not watch..

I was downtown on "Phillips business" one day and I went into the Southwestern Bell Telephone to ask them about ads in the "yellow pages", costs etc..They said if I didn't chose an ad right then and there that I would not get into the 1957 "yellow-pages" as they had "closed the yellow pages for 1957" the day before..So, not having a lot of time to think about a name, I chose ABC SERVICE COMPANY (thinking if I wanted to change the name later, I could), with my home address and telephone on Killarney as the "ABC Service Co. address and telephone number"..We kept the ABC Service Co. name for about thirty (30) years..My sweet patient Doris Helen answered the "ABC Service Co telephone calls" and took the orders for ABC

Cans! We did that for about two (2) years..Building cans in the covered shop at nights and week-ends, delivering cans early in the morning, on my way to work and Uncle Dick cleaning the toilets at night after cleaning septic tanks all day long and on week-ends..But he definitely stopped drinking and never took another drink the rest of his life..He was 47 then and lived to be 92..He even stopped smoking!

Several years later after we had built and placed about one hundred (100) chemical toilets on jobs, "ABC" had definitely "out-grown" our "Killarney address"..So, we rented space and moved over to N.E. Military Drive with "Tradewinds Aviation", owned by "AB" Ormond, an ole friend of mine..We hired an ole timer, civil service retired bookkeeper by the name of Mr. Rhodes to maintain our office there on Military Drive (directly across from the International Airport), answer the phone, take orders and keep books for ABC..He did a fine job and stayed with us for about twenty (20) years..Uncle Dick was working all day pumping septic tanks and all cleaning ABC toilets..So, I had him give his "septic tank people" two (2) weeks notice..They wanted to quit the "septic tank cleaning" business anyway and sold us their pump truck and their septic tank business..Septic tank cleaning trucks can easily be used to clean chemical toilets with..

Four or five years after we started the ABC Can business, we had about six hundred (600) toilets out on jobs..Way too much for Uncle Dick to handle, so we built another "cleaning truck" out of a surplus mail delivery truck and hired another "pump man"..Don't remember his name..

Uncle Dick and the other "cleaning person", were always having to "unload" the chemical toilets on the jobs, from tools, hoses, nails, etc. before they could into the toilets (cans) to clean them, especially when cleaning after working hours and on week-ends, taking up a lot of their time, "unloading, cleaning and reloading" the chemical toilets..So, I went to several contractors and/or their "supers" and asked them "what we could do about the problem? One Super suggested that we build a 4ft wide and eight foot long building with a chemical toilet in one end and storage in the other..So, we did..We called them "combination units (combos)" and charged five dollars (\$5.00) extra per month, over and above the can cleaning cost, for the combo..It worked out great! Even expanded the combos to 4ft wide by 10 and 12 and 16 ft long..That put us into the Portable Building Business, designing and building portable storage and/or office building, some on trailer frames..Got up as high as 14ft wide and 40 to 50 feet long..

I was spending too much time designing portable buildings and "Boy Scout Work" with Ab Ormond..He and I had Sons that were about the same age and of "Scout Age" about now, 1962..And about the same time, St Mathews Methodist Church (Ab's Church) ask he and I to start a Boy Scout Troop #63 to be "sponsered" by St Mathews..We did for about five (5) years, we "Boy Scouted"..Went to Indian Creek Summer Scout Camp up near Comfort each year..Joined Pat Pogue and his Scout Troop, sponsered by Pius 10<sup>th</sup> Catholic Church on Harry Wurzbach, Pat Pogue's Church, to go to the Gulf Coast with our Scout Troops and swim and "canoe"..The Scouts in the two troops wanted canoes, so I went to Indian Creek and borrowed one of their sixteen foot (16 ft) canoes, brought it back to SAT and we built a fiber glass mold from the aluminum Indian Creek canoe, and started "laying up" fiber glass canoes..We kept about three for each troop and gave away about six to other troops..Ab's Son, Richard and my Son Rick, went on to earn "Eagle Scout" rank and badges with a real nice "presentation ceremony at St Mathews"..About this time, the SAT Scout Headquarters ask us to start the first Boy Scout "Air Explorer Post" here in SAT..We did and met at the Tradewinds Hanger at the SAT Airport every Thursday night, among the airplanes hangered there with Tradewinds Aviation, and Ab I taught the fifteen (15) or twenty (20) Air Explorers all about airplanes; their maintainence, etc..Between Ab and I, we had five or six buddies with personal aircraft and/or their business aircraft..They would come out with their airplanes one Saturday a month and we would fly our "Air Explorers" about 30 minutes each Saturday, those that wanted to fly..If, an "Explorer" looked like he really wanted to learn to fly, I would buy him a "log book" and "sign-off" his duel time with me as I was and still am, a C.A.A. Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) and a Certified Instrument Flight Instructor (CFII), Single, multi-engine, land and sea..We had a couple solo and go from there..One Scout wound up being a Airline Pilot..But all this was great fun, but took up a lot of my time..

I had hired a bunch of men full time to build chemical toilets and portable buildings for me, therefore, I wasn't able to do Phillips "justice" so, I gave them a month notice and resigned..And went to work for ABC full time with Uncle Dick and Mr Rhodes there in the office on Military Drive at our "Tradewinds Aviation" office..I had gone a block south of our office there and rented some "construction space" from the fellow that now owns all the "Wash Tubs", Al Vizza..That space had an nice old home on it, so, I completely rebuilt and air conditioned it with my construction crew, and moved my family into it, with a special room and outside entry door

for Uncle Dick..He was still "NO drink NO smoke"..Working his butt off cleaning toilets and septic tanks..I went off with him a bunch of times to help him clean septic tanks for people like Southwest Research, etc., and I learned to clean chemical toilets (cans) and did, many, many times..

When I resigned as pilot/land man for Mr H H Phillips, I "took" a pretty drastic salary "decrease" when I went to work full time for A.B.C..So, to enhance my ABC salary a little bit, I let it be know across the street at the San Antonio International Airport (SAT), that I was available for short distance, short time, mostly on week-ends, "fill-in and charter pilot trips" at \$50.00 per hour..That helped an awful lot, but the trouble was, everybody I flew for and/or with, wanted to hire me as their "personal pilot"! One of the most interesting "part-time-pilot" job I had was with a Walter Clark on a restored/redesigned Douglas A-26 with CB-16 engines with reversable pitch/water-injection, pressured cockpit and cabin, that I flew with Walter for the Brown Paper Company..Flew from Memphis to Nashville, Tenn one day at 32,000 ft in eleven (11) minutes..Great airplane..

Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) found out I was "available" and I got a call from his office to fly the Lockheed Lodstar N601T (Air Force Two when on Government business), that he had replaced his Continental 240 with that had crashed up near the ranch and killed the crew..I reluctantly agreed, but only until he found a permanent crew..I flew with him for two years, but I got "so involved" in flying him and maintaining the Lodstar (talked him into moving "N601T" from the ranch down to H.B.Zachry's hanger at SAT) that I "resigned" about four (4) months before Pres. Kennedy was assassinated..I must admit that I met some very interesting and important people during the two (2) years that I flew ole "N601T"..Pres Kennedy and Ms Kennedy, many Senators, including Hubert Humphries.., German Chancellor Conrad Adnour, the "Camel Driver", General Douglas MacArthur, six months before he passed away, Cardinal Spellman, but had to quit because ABC was getting "so big" and needed every minute I could spend with it..

Wanna here a sickening joke?..After LBJ became President and Hubert Humphries (H.H.) his Vice President (VP), the joke was that LBJ invited H.H. to spend a long week-end with him at the LBJ ranch between Johnson City and Fredericksburg, Texas..LBJ had shown H.H. all the cattle, the deer, etc. on the ranch, had taken H.H. to the Capitol in Austin and all around there in Austin, to Luckenbach and back to the ranch when LBJ ask H.H. if there was anything else he might like to do before returning the Washington D.C.? H.H. replied, "Yes, lets go to Dallas and have a parade"!..I told you it was

"sickning"! In December of 1962, I flew the LBJ family to the Army-Navy football game in Phila, PA., and from there to New York to the play "Camelot" starring Richard Burton and Julie Andrews and Robert Goulet..After the play, was escorted to the back of the stage to visit and have a glass of wine with Burton, Andrews and Goulet..After that, it was near Christmas of 1962, LBJ and Lady Bird, gave me an engraved Bulova wrist watch for Christmas, engraved to say, "To BLS from VP LBJ", some cuff links, lighter, etc. with LBJ engraved on them...I have it in a display case here in the living room at Ledgestone..I have very little to "show"; photos, autographs, etc. to show that I flew the Johnsons as they personally asked that we, the Lodestar N601T crew, would not take photos, ask for autographs, etc., and like a damned fool, I obeyed their request!

I personally started visiting Construction Sights, Construction Companies, and Construction Sight Superintendents (Supers) to keep in touch with "everybody", and boy, did it PAY OFF! I had an ABC advertising gimmick that really worked..I learned to "do cermics", bought molds and "ceramic oven" and taught the kiddos how to do "molds and ovens" and we made ABC ashtrays with little ABC Cans on them and personalized them with the Construction Companie's name, and/or the "super's name" and I went out every Friday and gave them to the Construction Companies and the supers"..I paid the kiddos, 50 cents for every ceramic ashtray they built, and opened up their own bank account to only be used for their college education..The account grew to \$5,000 or \$6,000 dollars..Worked great, and ABC got nearly all the "can business in San Antonio"!

I got a call from the famous Hollywood Film Director, John Ford, that was directing the movie that John Wayne was in at Brackettville, Texas, "The Alamo", for me to come out and talk to him about furnishing cans on the "Alamo Movie Set"..I, did and we made a deal to put fifty (50) toilets out there, but in the "deal", I had to have a service truck and service man on the "set" twenty four (24) hours, seven (7) days a week..24/7..So, I got out the ole Camper-Trailer I had previously built, build another service truck, hired an ole "taxi-cab driver" friend of Uncle Dicks and we moved them all out to Brackettville, on the "Alamo Set" about ten (10) miles north of Brackettville..It worked out great..I and/or Uncle Dick took the "Alamo Set Service Man's" check out every other week-end and gave it to him and stayed with him a day or so..In doing so, we got to meet and shake hands with John (Duke) Wayne and all the other supporting actors, even the one that played "Santa Anna"..Can't remember his name..The "can cleaning" trucks had a 1,000 or 2,000 gallon round tank installed on their

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interior steel plates..That put "clean water" in the top half and "can crap" in the bottom half, as soon as you had "vacuumed out and cleaned the can of it's crap, you had to refill the empty crap container in the can, (usually a 55 gallon barrel) with ten gallons of fresh water and chemical..Nobody on the "Alamo Set" knew about the "division" between "top fresh water" and the "bottom crap" compartments..So, between "movie shots", we used to go onto the "set" and clean some toilets (usually behind tents on the sets and behind the Alamo) and in the middle of actors "between takes", stop and get a can of fresh water from the "fresh water spout", drink it and offer some to the actors..They would "turn-up" there nose and say, "what the hell is wrong with you offering us crap to drink..Get the hell away from here"..I don't think they, the actors, including John Wayne, ever knew the "difference"..

About this time, the "Recreation Director of Lackland AFB" here in San Antonio, asked me to submit drawings of "G.I. R & R (rest & recreation) buildings" to be placed up on the shores of Lake LJB at their "Camp Warhawk R & R Camp" there; all to be furnished with "everything"; kitchens, baths, air conditioning, furniture, accoustical ceilings, western cedar (never paint) outsides and carpeted insides..I submitted several samples and they chose one and gave me a contract to build twenty (20) of them and deliver them to their "R & R Camp" up on the lake..Which we did..They were 14ft wide and 48ft long..I designed and built a special three (3) axle, six (6) wheeled tilting trailer for Uncle Dick to take the buildings up to the Lackland R & R Camp..I guess they are still there..The Commanding Officer of the Air Force Training Command, Lt. Gen. Ryan..Learned about it and had all his Recreation Officers from all the Training Command Bases, about thirty (30), meet with us up at the Lackland R & R Camp to discuss their contracting ABC "Happy Houses" for their R & R Camps all around the country..We did, and I got four "signed" contracts on the spot..Sixty (60) for Sheppard Air Force Base R & R Camp up on the Red River..Twenty (20) for an Air Base at Valdosta Georgia, a bunch for the Air Base in the Florida Panhandle, Tyndall Field and fifteen (15) for the Air Base at Del Rio, Laughlin Air Force Base..

Well, we built (on site) with local contractors, which I supervised, all sixty for Sheppard Air Force Base (doubled two for the C.O..Called it the "L" Happy House") and all the buildings for the Air Base at Valdosta Georgia, with local crews, materials, etc. under my supervision..We were getting ready to build the R & R buildings for Tyndall Air Force Base

ready to build the R & R buildings for Tyndall Air Force Base

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in Florida when along came the Viet Nam War..Now, all these R & R camps and buildings were not built with "tax money"..They were built with "monies" that the "Recreation Departments" of each Air Base had made from the Base "bowling alleys", "skeet ranges", "skating rinks", etc..That is why I like the R & R buildings deal..Plus, not once did I ever have to bid "against" any other contractor..But, as I said above, along came the Vietnam War and all "Recreation Department Monies" were used to come up with a bunch of temporary "R & R Camps and Buildings" there in Vietnam..So, there went my "R & R Building Monies"..During the early 1960s while we had our ABC Office there at Tradewinds Aviation on North Military Drive across from the SAT airport) with Ab Ormond and the construction yard and family home on Parkridge..

We sorta outgrew N.E. Military Drive and Ab Ormonds and didn't have too much space there to display our large portable buildings that we started calling "Happy Houses"..I had started designing "Happy Houses" in "L & T" shapes with two Happy Houses; in "U" & "H" shapes with three "Happy Houses", "O" Models with four (4) "Happy Houses" in a "square configuration" and had built and sold several units in and around San Antonio..Got San Antonio Building Permits for them, built several as homes for various people, offices..One was a "Beauty Salon" that we placed in "downtown La Verna".Designed and built a "Happy House Duplex" in "H" configuration with three large Happy Homes" "hooked together" for J.B.Chandler with Dean & Company and moved it onto 1802 Summerwood in the "Kentwood Development"..It is still there and J.B.Chandler and his sweet wife are living there and have for ten or fifteen years..

About this time, they widen N.E.Military Drive there in front of us to a six (6) lane street/highway and renamed it N.E.Loop 410..In doing so, they had taken so much land away from a "Shamrock Service Station" on the Northwest corner of Broadway and Loop 410, that Shamrock put it up for sale (about 3/4<sup>th</sup> of an acre) and I bought it and moved the ABC Portable Building Office, the "Happy House" Displays (about six) and me over to the old "Shamrock Lot" that I had bought..

The lot and home next door to the West of our construction site and home on Parkridge come "up for sale" and I bought it..We fixed it up, air conditioned it and Uncle Dick moved into it and Grandmother Stratton came up from Natalia and stayed with Uncle Dick for several days and decided she would like to move in with Uncle Dick,,So, we began to do a lot of "interior work" on the place for Grandmother "Lollie"; the kitchen, her bedroom, back porch, etc..About a month later, this was in 1963..



and asked he was needed that Saturday afternoon, and I replied, "Why no..What was he up to?..He said he and Aunt Helen were getting married that afternoon..I didn't even know he was dating a girl..But they got married and moved into the home..1964, Al Vizza asked that we vacate his place there on Parkridge that we had been renting from him..I went to "Harmony Hills" and bought a corner home on Granada street and moved the family in and for the first time in years, "without Uncle Dick",,I bought another piece of property on the Southeast Corner of Parkridge and Jones Maltsberger, across from the "Anchor Bar", 727 Parkridge, that "Tates & Babe" Mueller owned and operated and also their home behind "Anchor Bar"..I moved ABC Service Company and it's Office and Construction Yard to the new location on Parkridge..We did great! I had sorta gotten Uncle Dick to "retire" after he got married..He bought a new 1963 Ford Sedan, started playing a lot of golf..He would come into the office about eight or nine o'clock each morning, say hello to me and Mr Rhodes, go back to a lady we had hired as a bookkeeper and Uncle Dick would ask her how much money ABC had in bank? She would tell him, and he would leave and go play golf all day long with some ole Cronies that he got acquainted with..

Aunt Helen talked him into buying a lot at 1119 East Bitters Road and they preceeded to build a real nice home on it..They were about finished with it, when he came to me one day and asked who I had my Granada home financed with..I asked him why and he replied, "I lack about \$10,000 dollars to finish up our home there on Bitters and I need to get \$10,000 financing to finish it up, so we can move in"..I said, "Uncle Dick, do not go to all that trouble financing..Let me write you an ABC "Bonus Check" for \$10,000 or \$12,000 and you go ahead and finish it off"..So, he did and moved in..

About a year after he moved in, Aunt Helen started giving us some problems, telling us how to run ABC, so I offered to "buy Uncle Dick's half" of ABC Service Company..He agreed by letting me trade my half interest in all the properties I had acquired for he and I (50%-50%)..The old Parkridge Property, the new Parkridge Property, the N.E.Loop 410 property and some Lake Property..ABC was valued at about one million dollars (\$1,000,000) at that time, so after I had "deeded over" my half of all the properties, I had to make a note to Uncle Dick for about \$150,000 I think it was..I also had to start renting the property there on Parkridge from him as he was now "sole-owner" of all the properties and I was "sole-owner" of ABC..

During this time, Grandmother "Lollie", due to age, became troubled with what is now called "Alzheimer"..Bless her heart, my Mother Marge was unable to take care of "Lollie", so we had to put "Lollie" in a "rehab center" here in San Antonio..Marge decided to sell the Natalia Property and to move into town, behind Oblate Seminary, to be near her Mother, "Lollie" and Uncle Dick and my family..I tried to get her to "move-in-with-us", but she refused! We all visited with "Lollie" quite often until she became very ill and passed away with our family nearby and was buried in the "Stratton Plot" in the Catholic Cemetary there in Devine, Texas..

Ten (10) acres of land became available on Jones Maltberger Road in the 17,000 block that faced the new FM Road 1604 to the north and Jones Maltsberger to the south, the entrance..So, I bought it, built a nice " H shaped Happy House" home with four bedrooms, two baths, kitchen, big living room and center section of the "H" was "sewing room, study room, game room, etc." Great home and moved my family out there from Granada..Sold Granada..Tried to get my Mother Marge to come live with us by building her separate "living quarters" on the property, but she said no..

This was in the latter 1960s and in 1968, San Antonio come up with the "Hemisphere" area in downtown San Antonio..We had a lot of "Cans and Portable Buildings" on the "Hemisphere Construction"..There was an ABC Chemical Toilet on the "Hemisphere Tower" from the time it "left the surface" until it reached the top, one year later and 650 feet in height..We serviced the can every other day..They would lower it down every other day, by "pulley" for ABC to clean it..The first "Hemisphere Ticket Office" when it opened up in the early part of 1968, was an ABC Portable Building until they got the "delayed construction ticket office" finished about two (2) months later..

Ford Motor Company had a display and it opened with their brand-new "expanded version" of their van, the Ford E-350..A lot wider and longer than any other..I got really interested in the Van thinking I could replace the old "fold-out-camper-trailer" I had built many years before and had about 150,000 miles on it, with this E-350 "Econoline Van"..I took a tape measure down there with me one day, well several times, and measured it all out for a kitchen with freezer, micro-wave and stainless steel sink, bunks, little chemical toilet, over-head water tank, clothes closets, etc..I got it all "to fit in" and asked the Ford People there in the Hemisphere if I could buy the van (it had no interior at all, just a driver's seat) after the Ford Display and Hemisphere

started putting it all "togather" like I had "drawn it"..It took me about a year, but I finished it and named it, "Der Outen Haus"..One of the first trips we made, Doris Helen, the kiddos, my Mother Marge and I made with it, trailing the old "fold-out-camper-trailer", was to Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Utah, Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, Amarillo and home..We had a great time and enjoyed every mile and every stop..In Las Vegas, we "hooked-up" in an R.V. park right out the back door of one of the famous gambling halls there..Spent a night and day in "Death Valley" and at the "ranch" at the North end of Death Valley..It was great! Doris and I took Cherie Gay to Sarasota, Florida and enrolled her into a famous art school there..Went back to Sarasota picked her up a year later after she had graduated..Rick had graduated from High School and "Scouting" (didn't want to go to college..Neither of the three wanted college), and he went to a U.S. Forestry School out at Redding, California..He graduated from there and was assigned as a "helper/assistant" at a large U.S. Forest in the extreme Northwestern part of California..He would "help/assist" there until October..During October, they would "close" the park due to extreme cold weather, lots of snow and ice and everybody would go home till they reopened the Park in April or May of the following year, when all the snow and/or ice had melted..Rick used to come back to San Antonio in October of each year and work with me and ABC till the Park in California reopened in April or May..Rick did that for three or four years and the last time he came home, he stayed home and did not return to California the following May..I noticed that he had not "returned" so I ask him, "Why, and he replied that he had enough of "forestry" and wanted to stay and work for me and ABC..I was sure happy to see him make that decision..He has been with me and/or ABC every since..

While we were living at 17000 Jones Maltsberger Road, all three kiddos had graduated from McArthur High School in the Northeast Independent School District (NEISD) on Bitters Road with good grades, but for some reason, none of them were interested in attending college..Doris Helen nor I "leaned on them to go to college much"..I guess we should have..As everybody knows, all three (3) kiddos; Lee Richard (Rick), Cherie Gay (Cher) and Leslie Ann (Les) are the sweetest kids on earth..None of the three "drink", smoke, "do drugs", are not on any "police blotter" they I know of, are very respectfull, do not curse, etc., never been married, but "independent as pigs on ice"!

When the children had all graduated from MacArthur High School, and had kinda all "gone their on way", Doris Helen and I had an amiable divorce using the same Lawyer..I left her all the property at Jones Maltsberger and the Station Wagon, all paid for with no outstanding bills and a note for \$150.000..We "went our own ways"..She, at Jones Maltsberger and I bought a house at 16518 Ledgestone, on the Southeast Corner of Highway 281 North (San Pedro Ave) and FM #1604..She got very "involved in "art shows", ceramics, etc., and was very, very good at it, with the kiddos' help..

I bought a great used "Kerrville Bus Company" GMC #4106 Bus and proceeded to spend a lot of my "single days" rebuilding the 4106 into the "world's most luxurious motor home" away from home..Took a couple of years, but it was great..Lived in it some during my "single years"..Completely "overhauled" the Ford E-350 "camper" and gave it Boysville after using it to take many of the kiddos from "Boysville" down to the Boysville Ranch" near La Pryor many times...This was during the time that J.B.Chandler was President of Boysville..Before he was President of Boysville, in the middle 1960s, he was President of the San Antonio Executive Association (SAEA)..He invited me to be his guest many times and SAEA luncheons, an invitation I accepted many times and he finally talked me into joining the SAEA, nominated me for membership under the "Portable Building Category"..My nomination was accepted and I became a member of the SAEA..Several years later, I was nominated as Vice-President of the SAEA and was elected..And for about five (5) years, I headed-up "furnishing the stage" for the annual SAEA "Game-Dinners" we held at La Villita the first Monday in December, kinda a Xmas Thing"..One year, I had two ABC "outhouses" one on each side of the stage, with "Santa Clauses sitting in them, with their pants down"..Got a "big hand" for that performance..When J.B. Chandler got elected President of Boysville, I helped him an awful lot..I designed their "Baby's Quarters" that they had built, and as I said above, when I bought the Bus, I donated the Ford E-350 camper to Boysville.. They may still have it..

Married Nancy Sue Tucker in 1974 and we lived at the Ledgestone house and I started acquiring all the property on bought sides of 16518 Ledgestone, and finally wound up with all the property within the peninsula that we lived on surrounded by a creek, about five (5) acres in all..During all this time I "fenced it all in" and I built a tennis court and swimming pool and had five (5) complete "R.V.Hook-ups" for "bus buddies and friends from all over the country that came by and "hooked-up" with me; played tennis and swam..Built a large "shelter" for the "bus"..Made lots of trips with it with many friends and had lots of great parties in it..I had built a bar, a kitchen, and bath with tub and shower, and a king-size bunk in the back and a "pull-out" double bed in the front..Had lots of "closet space" and "overhead cabinets" All the beds made up into lounges for day time entertainment and travel..I could seat about ten or twelve people very comfortably..Even installed a dish washer and a clothes washer/dryer, camouflaged of course! We went to many airshows, all over the U.S. and Canada..Got pretty interested in restoring ole airplanes, mostly ole WWII Liaison Aircraft (L-Birds)..

While I was married to Nancy Sue, my sweet, dear Mother Marjory died in 1976 and was buried out at the cemetery in Devine with her Mother and Father..Miss her an awful lot as we never got to spend a lot of time together, as I lived with Grandmother Lollie and Grandfather Dick most of my life..Now my Mother, Father, Grandmother and Grandfather were "gone"..Just me, Uncle Dick and the kiddos..My Mother sent a lot of time with Nancy and I, as she enjoyed our company, here at Ledgestone..She loved to come out and swim with us and take trips with us..But we could never get her to come "move in with us".".She stayed at her apartment there behind the Oblate Seminary..

About this time, I met a grand ole retired insurance CEO, Mr. Ramsey that lived in Hollywood Park..He loved to fish and we went fishing down on the coast a lot and he taught me to "wade fish"..Turned out to be the only "way to fish", especially in hot weather where you can wade out till the water is up around your chest or neck..Great way to stay cool and fish..Caught an awful lot of fish that way; speckled trout and red fish and have been "wade fishing" ever since..I have even wade fished in fresh water lakes for bass..Good way to caught large bass..

Nancy Sue, never did really like living "out here in the country", so, one day she just "picked-up, packed-up" and moved back in town..I had built a place in back of us here for her folks; way away from the house, and we bought them a great big furnished mobile home, and I had It moved into a beautiful area loaded with oak trees and scrubs and "hooked-it-up" for them..Built a garage for the car we gave them, and they moved-in and really did enjoy it "out here", but not Nancy..She moved back into town and left me and her folks "out here"..So, I started our "second amiable divorce" using the same lawyer..So, I wound up at Ledgestone by myself, and my kiddos stayed with me a lot..Nancy's folks were too embarrassed to stay out at Ledgestone with me, so they moved back into San Antonio..Nancy Sue never did care for the bus and/or trips with it, but her folks sure did..They hated to "leave me and the bus"..

There were a group of business men started a "dinner-theater" out here on Hwy 1604, just "around the corner" from me and I used to go there quite a bit..I learned to like it and I dated several girls and took them to the dinner-theater, but do not even remember their names..Got more and more interested in ole airplanes, air shows, etc..

I learned of an ole Taylorcraft L-2, N48847, that I used to teach fellows on the G.I.Bill (Vets) to fly at San Antonio School of Aviation, that was stored in an old hanger at Lake Field and was for sale, so I bought it but didn't have any place to store it..About the same time, I learned my old friend Hardy Cannon, that worked at San Antonio School of Aviation with me in the latter 1940s, had retired as a Prinicipal for the Harlendale School District and moved out on a farm he bought at the Southwest Corner of Applewhite Road and FM 1604..So, I went out to visit with Hardy..We had lunch and visited and I told him about the L-2 and ask if he might be interested in restoring it with me there at his farm..He said, "Yes, if you will build me a shop to work on it there at his farm"..I agreed to do that and he could work out the cost of the shop buy helping me to restore the ole L-2..He said, "O.K., I will work on it for \$10.00 per hour toward paying off the shop you build for me"..I said, "O.K., but I am going to give you credit for \$15.00 per hour instead of "your \$10.00 per hour"..We agreed on the deal..So, I got started building him the shop..

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..Got it completed in a couple of weeks, and moved the L-2 into the shop and we started restoring it..Also, about this time, in the latter 1970s, a fellow representing a land development company, came by and offered me a lot of money for the old "Anchor Bar & Home" property that I had bought from Tates and Babe Mueller..I accepted his offer, and in the contract of sale, he gave me six (6) months to find a new location for ABC Service Co and to move off of the 727 Parkridge ABC Location..

Also, about this time, the San Antonio Sewerage Department put a stop to "anybody" dumping sewerage into anywhere in the city except at the sewerage dumping stations out the south side of San Antonio..One hellva long ways from anywhere in San Antonio but the south side..So, I headed toward the southside to look for a new location for A.B.C. Service Company..I found a good location at 10380 South Zarzamora Street with a two story brick building and ten (10) acres and only about one half mile from the "legimate sewerage dumping locations"..And only about three miles from Hardy Cannon's place..So, I started moving ABC to the new "Zarzamora Location"..Built a big construction building and continued building portable buildings and "happy houses"..Over a period of five or six years, I had hired, first Rick, second, Cherie and third Leslie, to start working with me at ABC..When we all moved to Zarzamora, I sorta started letting the kiddos start "running" ABC while Hardy and I restored ole airplanes..

About this time, Jim Engleman and I flew his AT-6 out to Phoenix, AZ and helped them have an airshow out there to start the Arizona Wing of the Confederate Air Force (CAF)..Had a great time, hotter than hell (July) but no problems..

Helped Shirley Girard get her "Mud Flap Aviation" started at Manor, Texas..

I met a real great good looking gal at the "dinner-theater" one night, Georgia Ann Mueller; Tates and Babes daughter..We dated a lot..She even drove me to Conroe, Texas in her Ford "Thunderbird" one week-end where I bought an L-4 to be restored along with the L-2..We loaded the L-4 "tailfeathers" in the trunk of her car and brought them home..I sent Rick and the long portable building trailer and truck up to Conroe to pick up the rest of the L-4 and bring it to San Antonio, to Hardy's Farm..Georgia Ann kinda got interested in ole airplanes with me and attended several airshows with me in the ole bus!

Hardy and I got the ole L-2 restored and I said, "Hardy, lets take it over to Stinson Field and "put-it-together" and I will test hop it over there"..He said, "No, he said we can build a 1,800 foot strip here on the farm from the Northwest Corner to the Southeast Corner (into the prevailing Southeast wind) here on the farm, and you can test hop it from here"..I said, "O.K."..I bought an old 1947 Ford Tractor, restored it "back like new" with a "blade" and started on the landing strip..Built a large 6 feet in diameter and ten feet long steel "roller", filled it with water and "rolled down the strip"..Tested the L-2 and it flew great..I built a "multible T hanger" to hanger four aircraft and put the L-2 under and started teaching Rick to fly..He and I flew the L-2 down to Harlingen to the Confederate Air Force (CAF) Airshow down there..We lead off the "airshow" that year with Gen Joe Engles (first shuttle pilot) and his Son, Captain Jon Engles in an L-4 that they had restored..It was a great "start" and Rick and I got acquainted with the Engles and had lunch with them..We had started an "Alamo Wing" of the CAF Here in San Antonio and used to meet out here at our home on LedgeStone..

I learned of a Stinson L-1, N704E (one of only five remaining in the world) in Alaska and bought it..While it was being "ferried" down from Alaska to Cannon Field, I started a Liaison Group and named it the "Alamo Liaison Group (ALG)", got it "tax-approved" 501 © (3), "tax-exempted"..Signed up about forty (40) members at \$1,000 each, from in and around San Antonio and we "were on our way"..I seeded the Cannon Field runway with Bermuda grass seed and it came up and needed mowing, so, I bought a "mower attachment" for the ole Ford and started mowing the runway..



I found a pretty good 1942 Aeronca L-3 "basket-case" for sale, bought it and "trucked" it to Cannon Field and Hardy and I restored it "back to flying in it's WWII colors"..The ALG and I started flying the L-2, L-3, L-4 and L-1 quite a bit and I got concerned about the 1,800 ft runway being a little short for the ole L-Birds and their old engines in case of an engine failure on take-off..A little twenty (20) acre farm, with a nice house on it, came up for sale on the southeast end of Hardy Cannon's property..I bought the twenty (20) acres, and on the west end of it, extended the 1,800 runway with another 1,000 feet, making the overall length of the Cannon Field Runway 2,800 feet..I felt a lot better about the additional length..I surveyed that off of the 20 acre tract I had bought, about 2 acres, and sold the remaining eighteen acres..Sure enough, we had an old magneto go out on a 32 hp Aeronca engine on take-off in an ole C-3 that I bought and we restored, and the extended length saved the ole C-3 from running off the end of the runway and probably destroying it..The additional length saved the ole C-3..

We started inviting old Liaison Squadrons/Units/Sections to hold their annual reunions there at Cannon Field, and we had quite a few accept our invitaion..The First Air Commando Group (1ACG), the 5<sup>th</sup> Liaison Squadron (5LS), the Fort Sill, Oklahoma "Class-Before-One" and others..We would always fly the old L-Birds in our ALG L-Birds and let them take-over the controls for a while, if they wanted to..I found an old Stinson L-5, N6438C, for sale and bought it and ferried it to Cannon Field and Hardy and I restored it "back to flying in it's WWII combat colors"..And the same for an Interstate L-6, an Interstate L-8 and an RAF version of the Piper L-4, named "Flitfire"..So, now the ALG had an Stinson L-1, a Taylorcraft L-2, Aeronca L-3, Piper L-4, Stinson L-5, Interstate L-6, Intersate L-8 and the RAF "Flitfire" to fly..I owned all of them and they got to be such a "logistics headache", inspections, insurance, hanger, etc., that I finally donated half of the to the ALG and sold them the other half..So, now in the 1980s and 1990s, the ALG had all "my L-Birds"..

Georgia Ann and I were on our way up to Missouri to look at an ole L-Bird for sale, an L-2 I think..We passed through Texarkana, Texas on our way and went on into the "Crater of Diamonds" park in the Southwestern part of Arkansas, parked the bus there overnight and the next day, went "diamond hunting" on foot..After "diamond hunting" all day, late that evening I found a beautiful, natural half carat white diamond that the "diamond people" there at the "Crater of Diamonds" park, declared a true white half carat diamond..When we got back to San Antonio, we had it mounted, exactly like I found it, and Georgia Ann wears it everyday..How about that?

Cannon Field and the ALG got pretty "famous" over the next ten or twenty years and people started contacting me about buying and selling L-Birds..So much so, that I found another L-1, N1377B, in Nome, Alaska, shipped it to Cannon Field, Kermit Weeks of Florida wanted it more than I did, so, I sold it to him..Found two more Taylorcraft L-2s, restored them and sold them..Two more Aeronca L-3s, restored and sold them..One more Piper L-4, restored one into Don Carrell's "Peety Dink" and we already had the RAF version of the L-4, "Flitfire"..One more Stinson L-5, sold it to the CAF unit in Pampa, Texas..two more Interstate L-6s..Restored them and sold them..

Also, during all the "L-Bird purchasing and restoring", a retired Major from Beeville, Texas approached me to buy his Staggerwing Beechcraft "Basket-Case" stored in a hanger in Virginia..He wanted \$35,000 for it (run-out Pratt & Whitney R-985, 450 HP engine included)..I got him down to \$25,000 and bought it..Rick and Pat Pogue took the "portable building trailer and truck" to Virginia and picked it up and brought it home..After they got home with the "staggerwing", we learned the Major had lied about the wings as they had been condemned by the FAA and would have to be rebuilt, all four of them, with new spars, etc..I got so damned mad at the Major, I made him come get it and give me back the \$25,000..He did, but I really let my pride get in the way, because even with having to rebuild the four wings, at approximately \$2,000 each, I would have been better off to have kept it and restored it, as several years ago, I learned by letter from it's "restoring owner", that he had sold it for \$150,000..How about that? I would have liked to have restored it back to it's UC-43 Army Air Force WWII configuration and flown it..Wouldn't that have been great? But that is what happens when you let your pride "get-in-the-way"!

Also, during all this "L-Bird Restoring Period", I came up with two (2) 1928 single-place Aeronca C-2s and four (4) two-place 1930-32 Aeronca C-3s..Had a lot of fun restoring, and flying them..Also, a 1928 Heath Parasol..I had fun with it by restoring it back to a "miniture 1930 Douglas O-38 observation plane, like we had at the 62<sup>nd</sup> School Squadron at Kelly Field, Texas..I had the "saxophone" exhaust pipes on it, blue fuselage, yellow wings and tail feathers, red-white and blue rudder and the old US Army Air Corps pre-world war two "meatball" insignia..Had a lot of fun flying it..We took it to a lot of airshows and even had it complete in the 1982 "Battle of Flowers" night parade here in San Antonio..Great fun! Georgia Ann's Mother, Babe, told us one evening, "Your honeymoon is over, now get married", so we did, June 29<sup>th</sup>