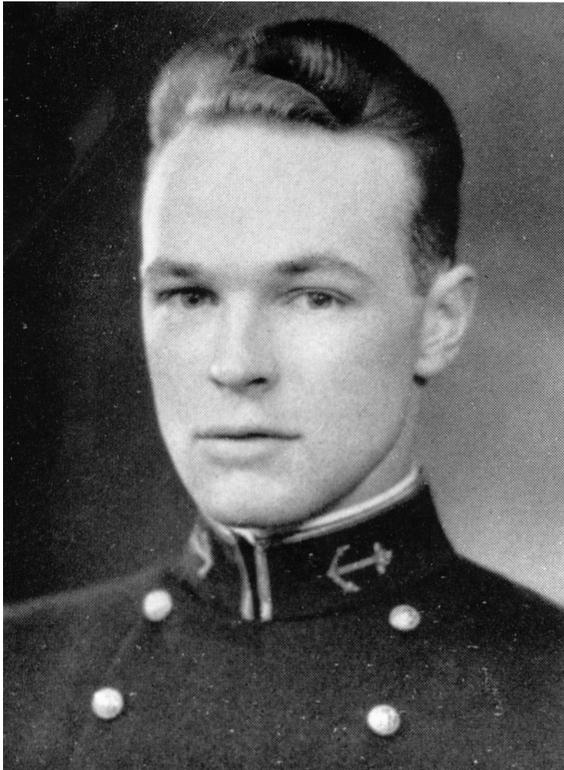


# Frederick L. Ashworth

United States Navy

## An Autobiography



## DEDICATION

The main purpose for writing this, the story of my life in the naval service, is to give that story to my children, Rick, Dave and Steve, that they may learn why, what for and where Dad was during the thirty odd years of their birth, growing up and moving on to take their places in the world. For this reason I wish to dedicate this work to each of them.

However, throughout this lifetime in the service, their Mom was at my side, holding our family together during my many long absences in war, and during long overseas deployments, nurturing, guiding and loving them. She was my able and gracious hostess when it was necessary for us to meet and entertain dignitaries from the Mediterranean to the Orient, speaking French when it was, other than English, the only common language we had. There has been much written about military service wives and the lonely burdens they had to bear. The best that has been written describes her. To a large degree she was responsible for the success that I achieved in the Navy, from Ensign to Vice Admiral. I wish, therefore, also to dedicate this to her memory.

Frederick L. Ashworth  
Vice Admiral U.S. Navy (Ret.)



*L to R: Rick, our Mom, Dave, Steve*



	<i>Distinguished Service Medal</i>	
<i>Army Silver Star</i>	<i>Legion of Merit star for 2nd medal</i>	<i>Distinguished Flying Cross</i>
<i>Bronze Star Medal V for Valor</i>	<i>Defense Department Commendation</i>	<i>Navy Unit Commendation</i>
<i>American Defense Ribbon</i>	<i>American Theater Campaign Medal</i>	<i>Asiatic Pacific Campaign Ribbon</i>
<i>World War II Service Medal</i>	<i>Asiatic Service Ribbon</i>	<i>National Defense Ribbon</i>

### **It Started With A Question**

In the early to mid 1980s a contemporary of Dave's, upon seeing a photo of Dad in uniform, pointed to a ribbon and asked, "What did your Dad do to earn this?" Dave's reluctantly responded, "I really don't know". Some time later Dave relayed this conversation to Dad and the

process began. We really didn't know a whole lot about our father and he set about to rectify the problem. The first attempt was what we are calling his "memoirs".....Dad often referred to this effort as his "bazzoo". He managed to get through the Nagasaki chapter, but it stopped there. About that time the United States Naval Institute, which had been compiling the oral histories of distinguished naval personnel asked Dad to sit for an interview. For reasons that are not important here, the oral history project stalled, but Dad did not give up. He paid for the interview tapes to be transcribed and began the daunting task of editing the transcribed text. We kept waiting and Dad kept working between his many other projects, but progress was slow. Finally, a little more than a year ago and being settled in retirement myself, I asked Dad if I could take on the project of editing and compiling what we are now calling his autobiography. With lightning speed, he agreed. Here is the end result. It was a daunting task indeed with computer crashes, software failures and untold hours of frustration. I has been a monumental task, but truly a labor of love and one of which I am very proud and honored to have been trusted to complete.

As monumental a task as it was for me, it pales when compared to the incredible mental acuity required to recall this history. It also pales when compared to the skill and background knowledge demonstrated by Paul Stillwell in the conduct of the interview. All in all, I think it is a completed project of which we can all be very proud.

*Rick*

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FREDERICK L. ASHWORTH  
United States Navy  
An Autobiography

SIGNIFICANT DATES AND EVENTS

January 24, 1912	Born, Beverly, Massachusetts Fred and Minnie (nee Parker) Ashworth
June 1928	Graduated Beverly High School, Beverly, Massachusetts
September 1928 - June 1929	Attended Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire
August 1929 - June 1933	United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland Graduated 135th in class Commissioned, Ensign, U.S. Navy
June 1933 - June 1935	U.S.S. <i>West Virginia</i> , BB-48, Pacific Fleet Division Officer, Assistant Navigator
June 14, 1935	Married Nathalie Louise Bliss, Peabody, Massachusetts
June 1935 - July 1936	Pensacola Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida Flight Training, Designated Naval Aviator #4249
August 1936 - June 1937	Scouting Squadron Two/Three (VS-2/VS-3), Pacific Fleet Assistant Navigator
June 1937 - July 1939	Utility Squadron One (VJ-1), Pacific Fleet Fleet Air Photographic Officer
July 1939 - June 1942	Naval Postgraduate School, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland Aviation Ordnance Engineering
February 10, 1941	First son born, Frederick Lincoln Ashworth, Jr.
December 7, 1941	Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor, Hawaii Bureau of Ordnance, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.
June 1942 - August 1943	Torpedo Squadron Eleven (VT-11), Pacific Fleet Commanding Officer

### *Significant Dates and Events*

May 6, 1943	Second son born, David Bliss Ashworth
September 1943 - May 1944	Central Pacific Amphibious Force, Pacific Fleet Staff Aviation Officer
June 1944 - November 1944	Naval Proving Ground, Dahlgren, Virginia Senior Naval Aviator
November 1944 - September 1945	Manhattan Atom Bomb Project, Los Alamos, New Mexico Assistant for Head of Engineering, Los Alamos Project ALBERTA, Tinian Island
August 9, 1945	Atom bomb attack on Nagasaki, Japan Weaponeer in crew of B-29 <i>BocksCar</i> for attack on Nagasaki
September 1945 - July 1946	Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Staff, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Special Weapons) Chief of Staff to Technical Deputy Commander, Operation Crossroads
December 1946 - August 1948	Office of Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C. Secretary, Military Liaison Committee to the Atomic Energy Commission and the Atomic Energy Committee of the Research and Development Board
October 17, 1947	Third son born, Stephen Wilson Ashworth
September 1948 - January 1950	Naval Air Station, Moffett Field, Mountain View, California Composite Squadron Five (VC-5) Executive Officer
January 1950 - December 1950	Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, Maryland Composite Squadron Six (VC-6) Commanding Officer
January 1951 - December 1951	U.S.S. <i>Midway</i> , CVB-41, Norfolk, Virginia, Atlantic Fleet Executive Officer
January 1952 - May 1954	Atomic Energy Commission, Washington, D.C. Staff, Division of Military Applications
June 1954 - June 1955	U.S.S. <i>Corson</i> , AVP-37, Alameda, California, Pacific Fleet Commanding Officer

### *Significant Dates and Events*

June 1955 - October 1957	Naval Ordnance Test Station, China Lake, California Commanding Officer
October 1957 - July 1958	U.S.S. <i>Franklin D. Roosevelt</i> , CVA-42, Mayport, Florida, Atlantic Fleet Commanding Officer
August 1958 - September 1958	U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland Commandant of Midshipmen
August 1958	Selected for promotion to rank of Rear Admiral
September 1958 - June 1960	Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Chief, Atomic Energy Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
June 1960 - January 1961	Antisubmarine Carrier Division Eighteen, Atlantic Fleet Commander
February 1961 - May 1963	Bureau of Naval Weapons, Washington, D.C. Assistant Chief, Research and Development
June 1963 - February 1964	Attack Carrier Division One (CARDIV 1), Pacific Fleet Commander
March 1964 - May 1966	U.S. European Command, Paris, France Deputy Chief of Staff
May 1966	Promoted to the rank of Vice Admiral
May 1966 - April 1967	United States Sixth Fleet, Mediterranean Commander
May 1967 - September 1968	U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia Deputy Commander in Chief and Chief of Staff
September 1968	Retired in the rank of Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy
September 1968	Retired to Mercer Island, Washington
August 1972	Moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico

*Significant Dates and Events*

March 2, 1990	Santa Fe, New Mexico, Frederick L. Ashworth and Nathalie L. Ashworth divorce final
May 15, 1990	Prescott, Arizona, Frederick L. Ashworth and Evelyn (Ercie) Bell married
September 1994	Moved to Lincoln, New Mexico
April 1, 1997	Nathalie Louise Ashworth dies of cancer Kennewick, Washington
Spring 2001	Mover (returned) to Santa Fe, New Mexico
December 3, 2005	Frederick Lincoln Ashworth dies Phoenix, Arizona. Buried Santa Fe National Cemetery, Section 5, Grave 331E, Santa Fe, New Mexico
July 18, 2013	Stephen Wilson Ashworth dies of cancer. Lakewood, Colorado
February 21, 2014	Evelyn (Ercie) Ashworth dies Santa Fe, New Mexico

## FOREWORD

After the close of World War II, the United States Naval Institute at Annapolis started a series of oral histories whereby taped interviews were taken with naval officers and enlisted men and civilian officials who were deemed to have had experiences that were important contributions to the war effort and which were of historical interest. These oral histories would be made available to researchers to assist them in their research and writing projects.

Ercie and I were in Annapolis at the Naval Academy in the spring of 1990 when I was invited, together with as many past Commandants of Midshipmen as were able, to review a dress parade of Naval Academy Midshipmen. While there I spent about twenty hours with Mr. Paul Stillwell of the Institute, recording my oral history.

Although the Institute had made a lot of progress in the oral history project, by the time I made my interview it turned out that the Institute was not only short of money to continue publishing these oral histories, but had lost their transcribing secretary to more remunerative work on the outside. So, after about two years, Ercie and I offered to finance the transcription of my interview onto computer discs. That done, it was the intention of the Institute to then edit the work and prepare it for use by researchers.

Another couple of years passed with no progress being made in the editing work. Then, I asked to have the computer discs sent to me and I would take on the job of editing the whole package, all twenty hours of it. This turned out to be a long and tedious job, but it was finally done and the whole package returned to the Institute for their publication. Although I was to be “next”, after Admiral Gravely, the first black Navy admiral, still nothing has been done.

My hope was, when the Institute completed the work, that I would purchase a number of the oral history volumes so that my boys and others in the family who might be interested could learn about my career in the naval service. That is still a good objective, and after considerable urging by Rick, we decided to capitalize on the work that had already been done and turn it into my autobiography, with Rick doing most of the work, as I sent him the material that I had. Then, we could have some commercial concern assemble and print the finished work.

So, this explains the interview format. I should note that, before I made the interview with the Institute, I had drafted something, though not completed, that I called my “Memoirs”. I gave a copy of the “Memoirs” to Mr. Stillwell, and it was from this that he guided me through the interview for the oral history. Therefore, you will see that it started from the beginning of my life in a section called “The Early Years”.

If we are to call this my autobiography then I needed to add some words to cover my life after retiring from the naval service. This you will find at the conclusion of the interview format.

Rick, Ercie and I hope that whoever may read this volume will find it worthwhile.

Frederick L. Ashworth  
Vice Admiral U.S. Navy (Ret.)

April 17, 2000



*Naval historian and author Paul Stillwell and me at the Naval Academy Museum while on break from our interview session . The painting above the display case is the Arthur Beaumont painting of the U.S.S Maryland that Nan and I purchased in 1938 and recently donated to the Academy. We had wanted his painting of the U.S.S. West Virginia, but Admiral Stark beat us to it. That was OK since the Maryland was the sister ship of the West Virginia on which I served from June 1933 to June 1935.*

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE EARLY YEARS

PS: Admiral, just to begin at the beginning, you provided me with some background material on your predecessors, and there is a charming story on the origin of the family over in England. If you could begin with that, please.



**Fred Ashworth**  
1879 - 1966

FLA: My Dad was born on October 10, 1879. At least the date is correct and the exact year doesn't really matter, but it is correct within a year or two. He was born in Bury, England, a small town near Manchester. My brother Wink has visited there and while in the area did a little study into our antecedents. Frankly the study of genealogy has not interested me very much so I can't shed much light on our genealogical background. There was a story that was told in the family when I was a kid that may be worth repeating now only because it has a bit of intrigue, although fictional I suspect, but probably not worth any more than my brother Phil paid to claim a legacy to it. This is the way the story went.

In old England the name Ashworth was supposed to be derived from two words, the family name Ash and the strong fort of the family known as Worth. The family was probably known "Ash of Worth", and as the years went by and into more modern times this was contracted into the surname "Ashworth".

Also it was said that in the early days there was a family title, fortune and an estate that was held "In Chancery". According to the dictionary "In Chancery" means "Pending in a court of chancery, under the supervision of the Lord Chancellor." Possibly it was being held in the court of chancery for failure to pay taxes! The dictionary also states, "In slang, In a hopeless predicament." That may be a more appropriate description of the situation. In any event, in 1930 during the Midshipmen's summer training cruise the training squadron visited Edinburgh, Scotland. Phil was a First Classman and was entitled to more shore leave than was I as a lowly Third Classman. He took advantage of his extended shore leave and traveled to London and on to Blackpool on the south coast of England where my father's brother John lived. During his visit Phil raised the matter of the title. Uncle John agreed that he was aware of this yarn but was skeptical as to its veracity. He offered Phil his entire share of the title, fortune and estate for ten cents American. My brother paid willingly. Needless to say we have

never heard any more about it. I suspect that there is in the background of every family of English heredity a similar story which is probably as illusive as the "Peg Leg Gold Mine" so frequently heard of in the West and never found!

But back to the story. My grandfather on my father's side came to the United States from England, presumably to fight in the Civil War, which, fortunately or unfortunately depending on the point of view, was over when he and his wife, three daughters and two sons arrived. The oldest son, John, whom I have already mentioned, remained in England. My father was seven years old. My grandmother's maiden name was Elizabeth Bentley and it is my understanding that she was in a "workhouse" when my grandfather married her. I assume that "workhouse" is synonymous with orphanage or possibly poorhouse.

I am even less knowledgeable as to the background of my mother. She was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, on April 7, 1881. It is also the family story that her father fought in the Civil War and there is somewhere in the family background on her side a Captain Frank Parker of the Union Army. Her father's name was Frank Parker. This may indeed be true for I remember as a kid rummaging around in the attic of my grandmother's home in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, finding some memorabilia from Civil War days, specifically a medal that would identify the wearer as a member of the Grand Army of the Republic as the Union Army was called. I know nothing of my mother's parents beyond that, except that apparently they all came from the United States, maybe as far back as the Mayflower. There were relatives on her side who farmed in Vermont. I recall one, "Uncle Horace", actually my great uncle. His name was Horace Moxley. He had two sons, also farmers in Vermont, named Guy and Carl. Guy had a son Robert who will figure later in my brother's lives. Uncle Horace lived to be eighty-eight and died on the job out in the fields raking hay. I guess they all were a hardy, lot for both Guy and Carl lived well into their eighties



Minnie E. Ashworth  
(nee Parker)  
1881 - 1970

PS: But the bottom line was that your brother was out ten cents.

FLA: He was out ten cents. As far as I know, there is no estate and no title, and that's probably just as well.

PS: Your father had an intriguing career. Perhaps we could put some of that on the record.

FLA: My father was an interesting man who, I think, typified the successful self-made man. He was never very successful financially, although he was astute enough to manage his meager investments so that he lost little or nothing in the crash of 1929. But he accomplished quite a lot considering his background, especially his educational background. He completed seven years of formal schooling. Why he failed to continue further I do not know. However, sometime later he attended night school and learned to be a draftsman<sup>1</sup>. After that he was employed by the Submarine Signal Company as a draftsman and my guess is that the Company was involved in the trans-Atlantic cable which I think was being installed at about this time. Some time later he went to work for the United Shoe Machinery Corporation located, then as now, in Beverly, Massachusetts. He started out as a draftsman but soon became a "designer", the person who translated the ideas of the inventors into understandable concepts on paper. Of course his experience as a draftsman made this an appropriate step up the technical ladder assuming one had the imagination to do the job. Then designing led to inventing. This involved the creation of new concepts in the development of shoe manufacturing machinery. And in the long run, he had been awarded more than one hundred fifty patents for various concepts and designs used in the shoe making machinery. He was considered to be the world's best designer of thread handling mechanisms. Of course, all of these patents were assigned to the United Shoe Machinery Corporation and there was never any financial benefit to him directly. His specialty was sewing machines. It is a fact that for many years probably 99% of all out-sole stitching done in shoe manufacturing throughout the world was with the use of machines of his original concept and design. He also developed a machine to do the stitching of the moccasin toe. Up until this time all had been done by hand, and I suppose that if you paid \$150 for a pair of moccasin shoes you were probably getting a hand-stitched shoe. But he designed a machine which would actually do the stitching around the toe of the moccasin and revolutionized the manufacture of these shoes. This is a reasonable statement, I believe, because the United Shoe Machinery Corporation had a virtual monopoly on nearly all the shoe manufacturing machinery in use in the world. They didn't sell machines; they were rented out to the shoe manufacturers on a royalty basis — so much for each pair of shoes made on a particular machine. I guess it was a lucrative business for the company for, as they have with most other monopolies, this one was broken up and other manufacturers entered the field.

As time passed his responsibilities in the company shifted from the creation of original designs to one wherein he took over the development of failures of other inventors in the company to straighten out their designs and make successes of them. He was particularly successful at this and needless to say it didn't enhance his popularity with his contemporaries, but did save the company large amounts of money since they were able to recover money put

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that in our small town of Wenham, Massachusetts, there was a "University Club". Although only a graduate of the "College of Hard Knocks" as he put it, he was invited to be a member and participated with other members apparently with mutual benefit. He was a 33rd Degree Mason, but not very active in the Lodge as I recall. The organization into which he put most of his outside-of-work effort and participation was the Rotary Club of Beverly, Massachusetts, a city about five miles from our home in Wenham. He was a Rotarian from about 1926 until his death in 1966, and was elected Club President on at least two occasions.

into concepts that might otherwise have been failures. One would think that this kind of performance would have prompted the management to recognize his worth to the company by appropriate salary adjustments from time to time. To the best of my knowledge he never had an annual salary of more than \$10,000 per year. In those days this was a reasonable amount of money, but my mother, at least, never thought it was commensurate with what he was able to do for the company. In any event, he was employed throughout the Great Depression years, so those disastrous times never impacted on our family. Few families could claim as much. My Dad retired from the United Shoe Machinery Corporation at the age of seventy-two.

My father was in his late eighties when he died. I was then Commander of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean and was unable to be at his funeral and burial.

PS: But he probably had a relatively comfortable standard of living compared with other people in the 1930s.

FLA: Oh, indeed. But we weren't wealthy by any measure. For example, when I was graduated from high school I was sixteen and went to Dartmouth College for one year. I was required by my Dad to keep track of every nickel I spent, which added up to about \$1,000 including tuition and food and everything in those days at Dartmouth College. The family was not overloaded with money. But my Dad was pretty astute in managing his meager investments because he went through the Depression, as far as I know, and didn't lose a cent, which I think was a pretty good accomplishment.



*Three brothers: Dick, Philip, and Bentley*

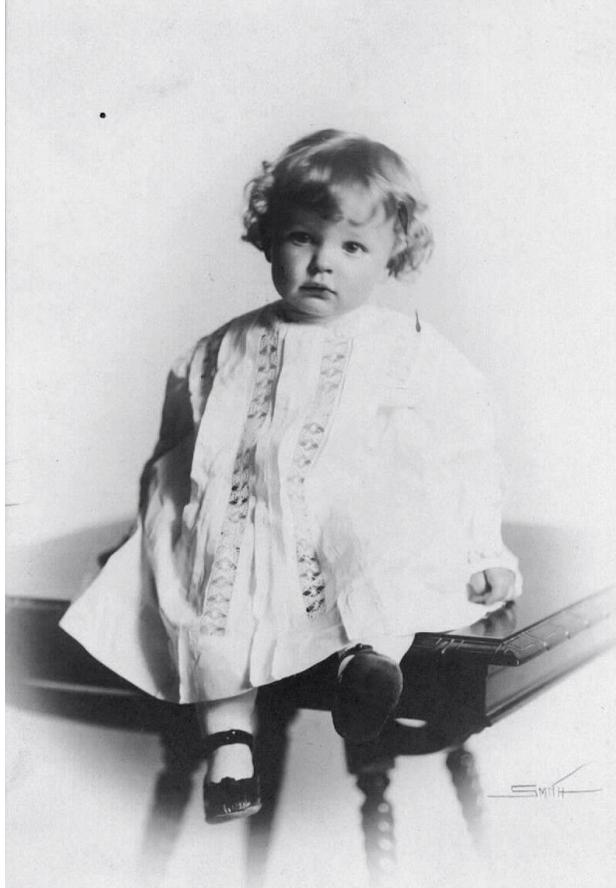
PS: How about your mother?

FLA: My mother was born in Lowell, Massachusetts on April 7, 1881. She had two sisters, my aunts Mabel and Philena. Aunt Philena is now deceased and, as of the last I knew a couple of years ago, Aunt Mabel was still alive at the age of ninety- nine, but totally blind.

Mother was at one time a teacher, having been graduated from the Lowell Normal School. That is what they called college-level schools devoted to the training and education of teachers. I don't know what grades she taught nor how long she worked; certainly not while I was growing up. Mother died in March, 1970, mostly I believe of old age but with certain heart complications that were never explained to any of us.

My parents had four children, all boys. The first I never knew; he died at an age of around two or three.

Then on September 11, 1908, my brother Philip Hamilton was born. Bentley Parker was born



*Top left: At age probably one and a half*

*Top right: Taken at age five or six. The good looking one is Ginger our English Bulldog. I still remember when my Dad brought him home. I think we three boys were in bed in a sort of porch-dormitory place where we slept. House in Beverly, Massachusetts, 15 Larcom Avenue.*

*Left: Age five or six, taken at the same time as the photo at top right.*

May 1, 1910. I came along on January 24, 1912. And as an afterthought, Winthrop Foster was born March 17, 1924.

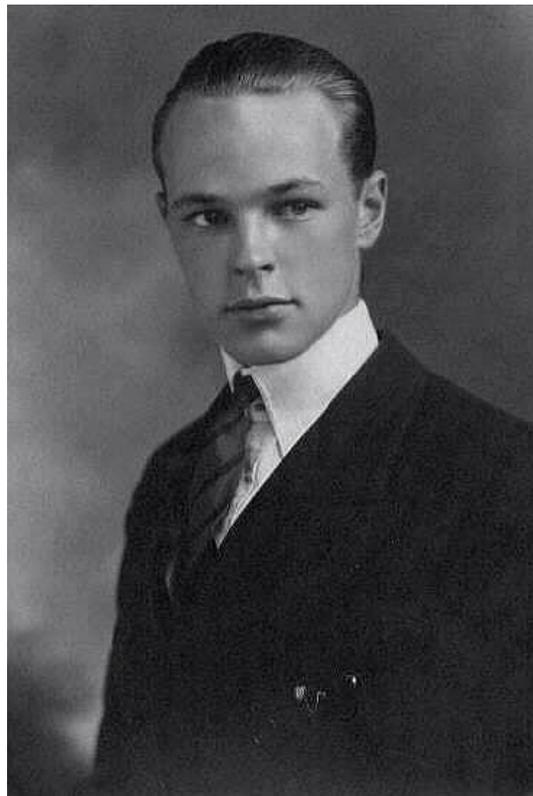
PS: Could you also recreate some of the small-town growing-up experiences that you had?

FLA: We lived in Beverly, Massachusetts, until I was about the age of seven when we moved to Wenham, about five miles away. We lived in a rented farmhouse on a farm of about ten acres, but had no responsibility for the operation of the farm. We did take care of a couple of cows and I raised a few chickens for fresh eggs for the family until a dog got into the hen coop one day while we all were away and killed all my good Plymouth Rock hens.

After two or three years living in the farmhouse, my Dad bought a home in Wenham just a few miles up the main road, in a much more desirable part of the town. Here we grew up together and my mother and father lived there until their deaths. This house was located on a

plot of land of five and a half acres. At my oldest brother's urging, my Dad and we kids planted an apple orchard on most of the land. It was supposed to provide us with some income as the orchard matured and the fruit could be sold. As one might expect, being amateur farmers, I don't recall that the operation was especially lucrative, although the orchard did produce apples. The orchard slowly deteriorated until we found that apple wood made excellent firewood and most of the trees eventually went for that purpose.

Wenham was an interesting little town. It was a typical New England town with the main street lined with large elm trees. The center of town was built around the firehouse that housed a couple of fire engines, and next door to it was the post office. And then further up the street was Trout's grocery store. And of course the typical Congregational Church, a white clapboard church with a steeple, was on the other side of the small settlement. Then there was the Wenham Historical Society, which was an avocation of my mother's during all the time that I lived in the town<sup>2</sup>. Just beyond the post office and firehouse area was the home of the town drunk, one Pop somebody or other, whose name escapes me at the moment. I have always claimed that I am a



*Senior year age 16, Class of 1928, Beverly High School. Shown here with my National Honor Society pin.*

small-town boy and I guess with that background it is understandable. Big cities bug me.

---

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B for the tribute paid to Mother by the Wenham Historical Association and Museum.

I left the area when I graduated from the Beverly High School. I was in the class of 1928 and sixteen years old. I had applied for admission to Lafayette College in Pennsylvania, selected by my mother, and had been admitted. About this time a neighbor in town, a graduate of Dartmouth College, asked me, "Where are you going to college?" When I told him that I had been accepted at Lafayette, he said that he thought that I could do better, and that he could get me entered in Dartmouth. He did and I entered Dartmouth late in August.

PS: Before we get into that, maybe you could cover your boyhood a little more thoroughly. You have said that within your family there was sort of the typical New England reserve, not a lot of warmth.

FLA: Yes. That is sort of interesting, because I have found that sort of reserve has followed me most of my life, and it is only recently that I have lost much of that. I'll get around to answering your question, but you will find that when you ask me what time it is, I'll tell you how to build a watch.

Some time ago I wrote a letter to my oldest son, Rick, and I signed it, "Love, Dad". Shortly after that I was talking to him on the telephone and he said, "I got your letter the other day." And he said, "I am going to save that letter." I asked, "Why?" He answered, "Dad, do you realize that was the first letter you ever signed, 'Love, Dad'?" He was 49 years old at the time. I think that this goes back to the fact that my dad was English. Mother was typical New England whose roots go back a long time. They go back a long way because, as far as I know, there were no immigrants on her side.

You have read stories about families having dinner together, and there's a lot of banter going back and forth, and conversation and this sort of thing, and hugging and "Gosh, Mom, I love you." We never felt that way. I don't know why. I don't know that there was any reason for it. We were all happy with one another. It was just something that you didn't do.

I read recently a thing about President Richard Nixon. It was a review of his book, and whoever was interviewing him said, "Well, I read this chapter on your growing up and your life with your family. I never saw in an entire chapter the word 'love'." And Nixon said, "We never talked about love. We felt that we didn't need it. We knew that we loved one another. We didn't need to talk about it."

This, I have learned in the last few years, is something that I missed in my childhood, and something very important. I guess I also have to say — I don't know whether this should go in the record or not, but for what are very good reasons my wife and I were recently divorced, and on the 15th of May (1990) I married a woman from Santa Fe, whom I have known for about 18 or 19 years. And thinking back to the question that you've asked me about this, I've learned in the last four or five years its importance. And with my new wife, I have to say very frankly, that for the first time in my life, I know what it's like to be loved and to love.

An interesting thing to me is that apparently this philosophy or reserve carried forward to my own family of three boys. My first wife was also a New Englander, and in her family there was a fair amount of animosity. Her dad hated his brother, and her mother didn't like her sister-in-law, and she hated her cousins. My boys grew up in this kind of atmosphere.

PS: Passed down from generation to generation.

FLA: But I'm finding that my boys have learned something about this, as I told you about my oldest boy, Rick, and the letter. He and the youngest, Steve, are married. My son, David, the middle boy, is a bachelor, but he has learned to recognize this as well. He has done a lot of reading on how you get along with people. So all three boys, when outside of their own family life, learned that there is something to this loving relationship between people. And their old man has found it too.

PS: What kind of relationship did you have with your brothers during your growing-up years?

FLA: We were a fairly self-sufficient family from a social point of view. All three of us boys played together and seemed to have no need for other kids even had there been any in the immediate neighborhood. Maybe it is typically English or New Englandish, but we were not a loving family particularly. In those early days we had no requirement for girls. We didn't know any girls. There were no girls in town. There were no sisters in the family. We had no relationships of this kind, and perhaps this contributes something to this question of the love relationship between people. We were totally self-sufficient. We did our own thing together, and no girls ever came into our growing-up times. We were all required to go to dancing school and hated it. However, it was there that I first met Nan. That dancing didn't take any more than a lot of other things in my life didn't take. We simply lived our own life and that was it. We didn't need any other companionship. Not that we are all that closely knit, but I think it relates to this whole thing about a New England reserved attitude, and further, I think that the English have this sort of background, and my Dad was English. That, I think, explains how we lived together.

Summer camp was the order of the times during these summers. I first went to a Y.M.C.A. boy's camp at the age of seven. I remember especially swimming in the "Length of the Lake Swim", a distance of a mile and a quarter. Phil was the bugler for the camp and was given his tuition for the summer for the job. Two or three years later I had the same job. I remember that people around the lake complimented me on my playing of taps each night. I really was pretty good! Later over the years we all became counselors in charge of our tents.

PS: Your radio antenna project deserves description.

FLA: When we were in this little town of Wenham, while we were in the rented farmhouse, my oldest brother Phil was interested in radios and had built a few one and two vacuum tube affairs. In those days it was necessary to string a long wire out for an antenna. Up the street from us was a farmhouse that was to be demolished to build what turned out to be a kind of mansion in our little town; a large stone structure. But in the back yard of the farmhouse was an old-fashioned steel windmill tower that they were anxious to get rid of, and we were anxious to get hold of it for an antenna tower for the radio projects. They said fine, so we took it. My brothers and I dismantled the thing and hauled the pieces about a half mile down the street and erected it in an empty lot next to our farmhouse and fairly close to the home next door.

For the foundation we found some 8- or 10-inch stovepipes about three feet long, filled them with concrete for the feet for the four-sided windmill tower. I have since wondered about this, for my dad was perhaps an uneducated engineer, but he was a pretty practical-minded engineer. How he ever let us get away with that foundation, I'll never know. But to make a long story a little shorter, we rigged the antenna up to the top of the tower and it worked just great. I remember listening to the 1926 Army/Navy football game on a crystal set fed by this antenna. My brother could pull in KDKA in Pittsburgh and as far away as KOA Denver.

Then we had a big storm and the wind blew really strong and sometime during the night the wind blew over the tower, flat to the ground. I guess that probably the tension on the antenna wire pulled it in the direction of the vacant lot instead of it collapsing on top of the house next door. We never re-erected the thing, for shortly after that we moved to a new home up the street about a mile which my dad had purchased.

PS: Did you inherit any of your dad's mechanical ability?

FLA: I'm afraid not. I remember one time I went to a Red Sox baseball game with my dad. He was interested in baseball, but he never had much time for that. But one time he took me to Fenway Park in Boston to see the Boston Red Sox play. In those days you took a narrow-gauge railway from our home to Lynn, and then you took a ferry from Lynn to Boston. It was a side-wheeler. There was a walking beam on top of the ferry, which was connected to the pistons of the steam engine. I noticed my dad staring at the walking beam for quite a long time and then he took a notebook from his pocket and started to make a sketch. I asked him what he was doing and he said, "I've been trying to figure out something in the mechanism of the shoe-making machine that I am designing. It has been giving me trouble for a long time. I have been watching that walking beam, and the thought struck me that this would give me the clue how to solve my problem."

Now to get back to your question, I think that I can show that his mechanical ability did not rub off very much on me and whether I had any real creative ability. Back in 1936, after I got my wings, I was in VS-2, a carrier-based scouting squadron. Shortly after I joined the squadron somebody decided that we ought to try out crosswind landings aboard the carrier. I guess they figured that if we nuggets<sup>3</sup> could get away with it, anybody could. So six of us flew out to the carrier, the U.S.S. *Saratoga*, to conduct the experiment. Remember that this was a straight-deck carrier. They set up the situation where there was a 35- or 40- degree crosswind from the ship's course, so coming in on the final approach it was necessary to crab into the wind about 15 or 20 degrees to keep the approach lined up with the flight deck. Then, at the last moment, it was necessary to kick the rudder in the opposite direction to get the aircraft aligned with the flight deck to land. So here I was, coming down the groove, fighting the 15 degrees off the centerline of the carrier. Sitting there right in front of me and staring me right in the face, if I had any imagination, was the concept of the angled deck. I should have said to myself, "Wouldn't this be great if I could just come on down the groove, not fighting to crab aboard, and

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<sup>3</sup> Nuggets were freshly "minted" Naval Aviators who, it was hoped, would refine, with training and experience, into pure "blue and gold" Naval Aviators.

just land straight ahead fifteen or so degrees off the centerline?" If I didn't make the trap I could just give her the gun and go around again. We had to wait another three years and copy the British angled-deck concept. So, I guess I would have been a famous naval officer if I had been creative enough to have seen the possibilities. So you see, I didn't inherit much of my dad's creativity.

Now my youngest son, Steve, has some of it. After finishing the Paris American High School with somewhat less than flying colors, he enlisted in the Navy and after eight years came out as a Petty Officer Second Class Aviation Machinist's Mate. There were times when the creative juices would flow and he would come up with an idea of how to do things better. He even applied for a patent or two, but I don't think anything came of them. It takes capital and this he lacked. He is now a Honda mechanic, or technician, as they call them now, and apparently a darn good one. I suspect that with a good education he would have some of his grandfather's ability. Other than that, I don't think any of us inherited this from him.

PS: Did you play in sports with your brothers?

FLA: Not particularly. I would say that the answer to that is no. None of my brothers were athletes. I used to run on the cross country team in high school --- not very well I have to say. I went out for track, trying to run the mile and didn't do very well at that. I even went out for the football team at Beverly High. I remember one day. I was president of the Student Council and a meeting of the Student Council conflicted with football practice and I showed up late. The coach said, "Look, take your choice. You can either stay in the Student Council or play football, one or the other." So not being very good at football, I said, "Okay." And that was the end of my high school athletic career.

My middle brother was a pretty good track man. He was very fast in both the 100 and 220 and had very good times. But this didn't develop into anything. Of course all three of us did a lot of swimming in the local lake. Later at Dartmouth I was on the freshman swimming team and swam all four years at the Naval Academy. Again, I didn't break any records, but I was a member of the N Club at Hubbard Hall for two years.

PS: You said in your memoir that if you had shown more promise as a football player, the coach probably wouldn't have given you that ultimatum.

FLA: I suspect this is probably so. That's a good point, I didn't have much of a choice there, really.

PS: Did you feel a sense of comradeship with your brothers perhaps since you weren't getting the warmth from your parents?

FLA: Not particularly. I guess you have to say things were pretty much in neutral. I mean, it's a terrible thing to have to say, but when you look back on it, it was pretty much of a neutral existence. I don't know why. I guess it's just the way we were raised.

PS: Inherited for probably several generations, the combination of New England - English backgrounds.

FLA: That would be my conclusion. I don't know whether a sociologist or a psychologist would agree with this or not. I don't know. But these are just the facts of my life.

PS: How proficient were you as a student?

FLA: Well, I did all right in high school. I ended up in the National Honor Society. A medal given to me by the local Rotary Club for Outstanding Scholarship was the first medal I ever had.

Academically my time at Dartmouth was a near disaster. I was, and still am, a slow reader with poor comprehension, and I had not yet learned how to study effectively. Since I had studied French in high school for a couple of years that was my best subject, but even here I certainly didn't earn any honors. Much of the English course involved reading, among other books the tome *The Forsyte Saga*. I was always behind the class trying to catch up. Apparently I was passing, at least, since no one asked me to leave.

The most satisfying part of my life in Dartmouth involved my position on the freshman swimming team, swimming the 100-, 220- and 440-yard freestyle events. I didn't set any records, but did well enough in meet competition to earn my freshman class numerals. In spite of my austere financial situation this demanded the purchase of a sweater of Dartmouth green on which my class numerals were sewn. There was one more or less amusing thing worth reporting here. We were scheduled for an away swimming meet with the freshman team at Harvard. It was wintertime and the trip was to Boston where we were to stay in the Copley Plaza Hotel, one of the more plush hotels in the city. I didn't have a good winter coat, at least one that would do justice to the Copley Plaza. So a good classmate friend of mine loaned me his big black bearskin full-length overcoat and was I then ever the hot dog!

I was rushed by and pledged to the Alpha Delta Phi fraternity. Many of the varsity swimmers were members of Alpha Delt. This however would have to wait my sophomore year since freshmen were not permitted to join fraternities.

My congressman awarded appointments to the service academies by means of Civil Service competitive exams. I was in Dartmouth in the spring when these exams were going to be given for appointments to the Naval Academy. I decided one day to try for the exams. Remember, my brother Phil was already at the Academy, so I suppose that I had some incentive to try for it. I sent my congressman a telegram asking to take the exams for the Naval Academy. He approved it and sent the exams to the Hanover Postmaster who would monitor the examination. It turned out that by the time the exams arrived the deadline had been passed by one day. The Postmaster told me not to worry, go ahead and take the exams and we will predate them so as to be valid. I ended up as first alternate to two principals. One of the principals had some dental problems and couldn't qualify. In the meantime I was working on a dam under construction in Vermont, and one day in the middle of August, I got a letter telling me to report to Annapolis. As a result of the late date I missed most of Plebe summer, which I have always felt was an important loss in my Academy experience.

PS: So this would have been in 1929.

FLA: Yes, this was 1929. The academic year started in the fall of that year. I selected French for my language study and was assigned to one of the "French" battalions. Most of my academic performance was mediocre. I did however stand 135 in a class of over 400, just about at a third. Probably my performance in the Post Graduate school best illustrates my academic prowess, or the lack thereof. I particularly remember my math classes with Professor Bramble. I have to admit that I was lost after the first two weeks. Calculus was beyond my comprehension. PG school was just about a disaster.

PS: Did you have any teachers as you were growing up who inspired in you a love of learning?

FLA: No, I'm sorry to say. But I guess this is not surprising. My second boy, David, went to Stanford on the Holloway Scholarship Plan. He was floundering as to what he wanted to do later. All my boys were. One day I asked Dave if there weren't some professors at Stanford who he really took a shine to and maybe could get some guidance from. Dave said, "What? Are you kidding? These guys are all so busy doing other things. They don't pay any attention to us students." I can't claim that as an excuse in my case, but to answer your question specifically, the answer is, no. Nobody ever inspired me particularly for anything.

There was one, a Professor LaCausa, taught electrical engineering, an Italian, he may still be around. He accompanied us on one Midshipman's cruise. I remember we spent a lot of time at sea up on the signal bridge at night. He would point out stars and constellations and talk about astronomy. I thought here's a fellow interested in me and one who seems to empathize with me. It didn't lead to anything, but he is one person whom I recall rather vividly. It was an association that I've never forgotten.

PS: Did you enjoy reading for pleasure as you were growing up?

FLA: Well, I think that the answer to that is, no. I remember when at Dartmouth one of the reading assignments was *The Forsyte Saga*, a book about three inches thick, I guess.

PS: John Galsworthy.

FLA: Yes, Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga*. I was never up to date with the class. I don't think that I ever finished the book. As I mentioned before, I had never really learned to read. I had never learned to study. I guess maybe you can goof your way through high school, I don't know. I should have done better at the Naval Academy. I was a little better Second Class year. Second C lass year was my best year, both academically and in sports, on the swimming team. I graduated standing 135 out of 432.

PS: That's certainly respectable.

FLA: Respectable, yes. Interestingly enough, my roommate finished one number behind me. Now if that's a case of collusion, I don't know.

PS: Who was he?

FLA: Kerfoot Alexander Bainbridge Smith. He was a Washingtonian whom I had never known before. I think the most interesting thing about "Kertie" was that he was a very gregarious guy. Everybody loved him. I was still in my reserve mode, so we never were terribly close. But perhaps you remember the turret explosion on the U.S.S. *Marblehead*.

PS: I read about it.

FLA: The light cruiser. He was one of the ship's officers in one of the turrets. Of course they didn't have turrets. I think that they were better described as gun mounts. Whatever he did during the explosion I never knew, and he would never talk. Whatever it was he won the Navy Cross. Kertie died several years ago. He was in the surface Navy and I went into aviation, so we parted. They split our class in half academically. We who were in the top half were commissioned immediately upon graduation. The lower half was kicked out with a year's pay, \$714. Then they screened the class for physical disabilities. Kertie had high blood pressure, and they kicked him out. The lower half academically were called back after one year, and were fitted into their regular slots. The physical disability people were called back about two and a half years later and were designated 1933C. We had no association after that.

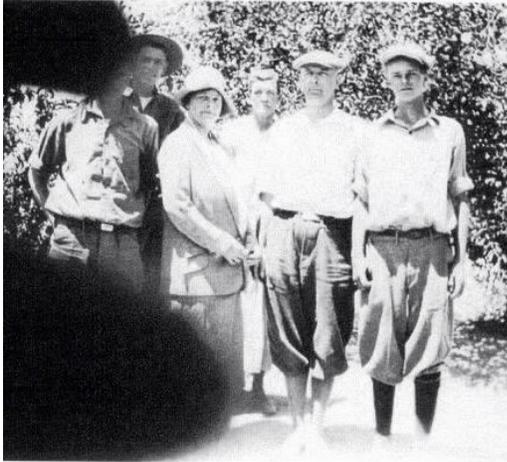
PS: From what you describe, it sounds as if you did not have a clear-cut set of goals in your life as you were coming out of high school.

FLA: Oh, there's no question about that. There I was at Dartmouth and, as I say, about 24 or 48 hours before the exams for appointment to the Naval Academy, I decided, well, why not? No question about it, I didn't have any specific goals. I don't think that is unusual. Setting goals is difficult for most youngsters today, as far as I am concerned. I saw this in my experience raising our boys, as well as other people I have known. It's a rare youngster who really has objectives at that stage of life. I think that kids who are the sons of doctors, frequently you will find that they want to be doctors, and perhaps it's the same way with lawyers. I must say however, that all through my time at the Academy, I had a goal to fly.

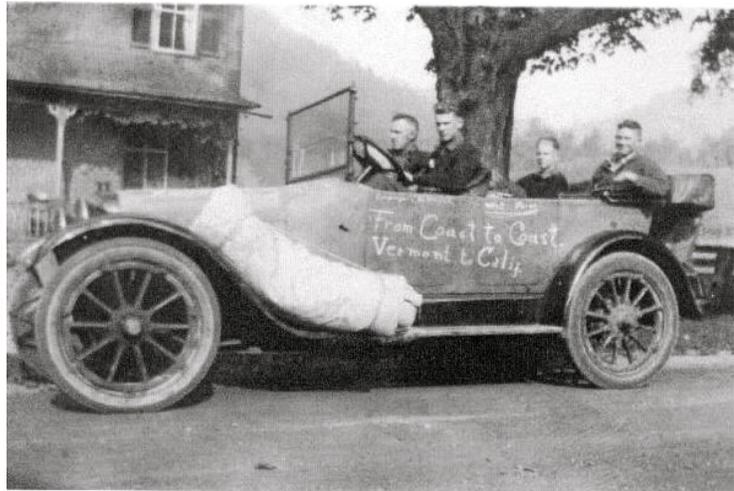
PS: Well, and in the naval profession, too, that seemed to have inspired a lot of Navy juniors to follow in their fathers' footsteps.

FLA: Yes, I think this is probably so. Of course there's none of that in my family — I don't know of any. I don't think we had any naval predecessors, even though my family on my mother's side came from New England.

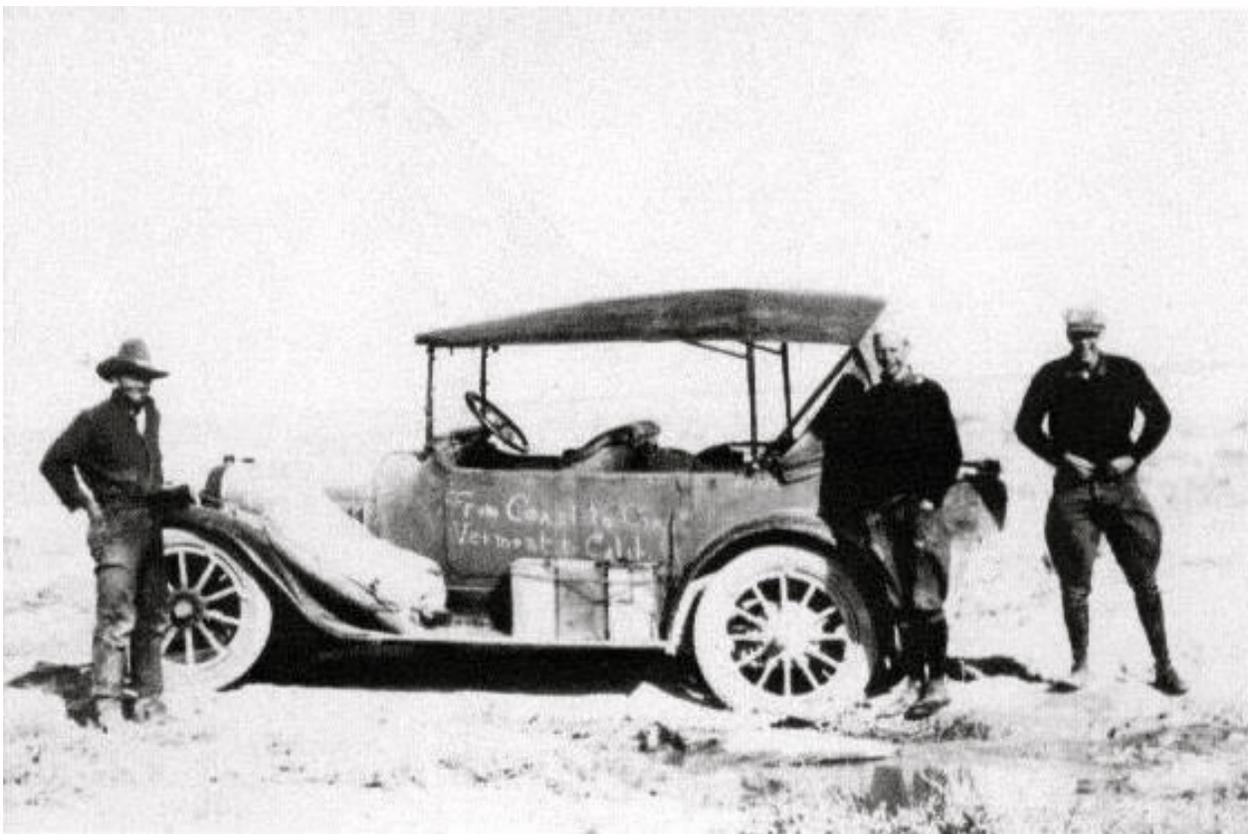
PS: Did your parents offer any counsel in this regard?



*The travelers with Aunt Alice, time to go home.*



*On the side of the car is painted "From Coast to Coast, Vermont to California". Phil is driving with unidentified passenger in the front seat. Behind Phil is Bob Moxley with Bent sitting to his right.*



*Posing in front of the car: Bob Moxley in front with Bent by the rear tire and Phil to his left.*

FLA: No, not that I recall. Although my mother had a major input into my selection of a college after high school, I don't recall that she took any position as to my going to the Naval Academy. Perhaps she was selective in her counsel. For example, take the case of my brothers' trip to California at ages 16 and 14. My dad had an old Chalmers automobile, probably about a 1920 vintage, which he gave to the boys to drive from Massachusetts to California. A cousin, Bob Moxley, from Vermont also age 16 went with them. It must have been a major decision for my father to let them undertake a journey of this sort.

Then later there was the case of my middle brother Bent. Mother thought that it would be great if he would enlist in the Navy with a view of getting into the Naval Academy. I remember to this day her taking him over to Lynn, Massachusetts, near our home, to the recruiting office. She got my brother into the recruiting office and started talking to the recruiter. I could see my brother getting more and more fidgety, and finally he said he didn't want any part of it, and walked out. So that was the end of his naval career in spite of the maternal guidance!

After nearly four years in college, University of Maine and MIT, he went back to California to live. He became the Chief Road Engineer for Inyo County. There is one spectacular road up into the High Sierras south of Tioga Pass that he supervised the construction. So I guess the only direct bit of counsel and guidance was her selection of Lafayette College for me.

PS: Which flopped.



*Bentley in California riding a horse and packing a six gun. Some of the family say that it was this photo that convinced Mother it was time to go west and retrieve the boys.*

FLA: Flopped. So both of her efforts in directing our education fell through.

PS: Another thing that deserves mention is the great family expedition, when you set out by car traveling across the country.

FLA: Oh yes. As I have just mentioned, during the summer of 1925 my two older brothers left home for California for a year. Phil was sixteen, Bent was fourteen. I was twelve and therefore considered too young to make any such trip and absence from home as that. On the Moxley side of my mother's family there lived in Chalfant, California, now an abandoned town since it was totally dried up as a result of the city of Los Angeles

preempting the water of the Owens Valley, an aunt of Bob Moxley's, Aunt Alice. Her chicken ranch was the destination of their trip west. Bob Moxley, also age sixteen, assumed leadership of the expedition. After they arrived safely at their destination Phil lived in Bishop, California, on a small ranch where he was provided his room and board in exchange for doing chores around the ranch. He attended Bishop High School and was graduated in the class of 1926. Bent lived on

the chicken ranch with Aunt Alice, and since there was no school in the vicinity he was on sabbatical leave, so to speak. After school finished in the spring of 1926 Phil worked in a tungsten mine in the High Sierras alleged to be the highest mine in the United States at an altitude of around 12,000 feet. Phil was interested in attending the Naval Academy at this time and competed for and won a first alternate appointment from Representative Phil. D. Swing. However, the principal appointee was accepted at the Academy so Phil would have to wait another year to try again.

At the end of the school year in 1926 my father took a vacation of three months from his work during which time he, my mother and I drove to California to bring Phil and Bent back home. My Dad owned a Franklin sedan at this time; it had an air-cooled engine, a solid oak wood frame and an aluminum body, really a quite advanced automobile for its time. He fitted it out to carry all the camping equipment we would need for the entire trip. We had a tent and double-deck bunks for sleeping, these being made from angle irons and canvas. They could be disassembled and stored under the running boards of the car. A trunk-like container was fitted to the back to carry the tent, blankets and similar necessities for camping out in nearly all conceivable weather. I can't imagine how we handled all the other stuff that we needed including pots and pans, gasoline lantern folding bucket and all. Recall that my father was an inventor — he found a way!

PS: What did you do for cooking?

FLA: We had a gasoline stove, a Coleman-type that you pumped up. My mother did all the cooking. We picked up supplies as we traveled. I remember that there was never a day that went by that my dad didn't shave. He used cold water and hung a mirror on the tent pole.

PS: And a marvelous education at the same time and seeing the country.

FLA: Our route out was by way of the old Lincoln Highway, Route 30. It wasn't too bad; I don't recall that we encountered much mud or bad roads or had any significant tire troubles. Mother insisted that 35 miles per hour would be the maximum speed and that was the way it was. How else can one see the scenery? I remember that we saw Yellowstone, Yosemite, Bryce and Zion Canyons, the Grand Canyon, and Crater Lake in Oregon; just about all that were in existence then and within our general travel track.

The only accident that happened occurred just outside of Pocatello, Idaho while Phil was driving. He came to an unmarked 90-degree turn in the road (there were not many road signs then except for the Barbasol shaving cream rhymes) which he failed to make and, as we slid off the road into the ditch alongside, the right front wheel dished. Being a wooden spoke wheel this was not a surprising result. Franklins were a rare breed of car and replacement parts were few and far between. Somehow, in Pocatello a wheel was located and after a few days' delay we were on our way again.

When we arrived home in the fall Bent and I entered the same grade in Beverly High School. Phil, still wanting to enter the Naval Academy, was enrolled in the Swavely School in Manassas, Virginia, with the goal of winning an appointment to the Naval Academy from our

local Congressman. Swavely was recognized as being one of the best prep schools for entry into the Service Academies. He was successful, for he entered the Naval Academy during the summer of 1927 and was graduated with the class of 1931. Phil served aboard the U.S.S. *West Virginia* for about a year and a half, was ordered to flight training in Pensacola and granted his wings in the summer of 1933. After serving in Scouting Squadron Three attached to the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Lexington* for about three years he was transferred to Patrol Squadron Ten flying PBYs based at the Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego. The squadron was subsequently transferred to the Naval Air Station, Ford Island in Pearl Harbor. The squadron flew their aircraft from San Diego to Pearl Harbor, one of the earliest squadrons to attempt a trip of this duration across the Pacific.

In November, 1938 Phil was practicing night touch-and-go landings in the seaplane area around Ford Island. That particular night he was in the co-pilot's seat while his co-pilot, an Aviation Cadet, was actually making the landings and take-offs. Apparently on one landing and subsequent takeoff the plane ground looped slightly<sup>4</sup> to the left, the left wing struck the boathouse near the seaplane ramp on the island and the PBY rotated violently to the left and crashed into the boathouse. My brother and his co-pilot were killed in the crash. At his request his body was cremated and the ashes scattered at sea. There is mounted, along with many others, on a wall in Dahlgren Hall at the Naval Academy a bronze plaque in his memory.

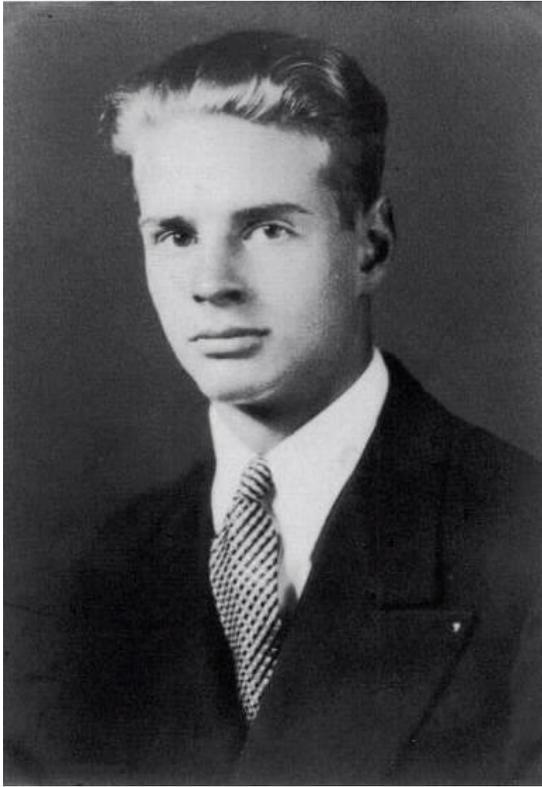
I learned of his death while on a trip from the East Coast ferrying a squadron Sikorsky amphibious transport back to San Diego. We had experienced engine trouble climbing out of Love Field, Dallas, and had landed at Abilene, Texas, to investigate. It appeared that one cylinder had been damaged apparently as a result of carburetor icing on the climb out. (Not logical I admit, but it was all that we could find). We received a new cylinder the next day from our home base in San Diego and my co-pilot, the crew chief and I proceeded to change the cylinder. On the morning of the second day my co-pilot went into town to buy a newspaper. When he returned he asked me if I had a brother who was a Naval Aviator. When I replied in the affirmative he handed me the newspaper with report of the accident in Pearl Harbor.

As a result of this accident, which vividly illustrated the inadequacy of Ford Island as a seaplane base, action was taken to establish the Air Station at Kanehoe Bay on the north side of the island of Oahu for all future seaplane operations in the Hawaiian Islands. It is a sad but true commentary that such an event always seems to be required to break the inertia and force action which already should have been obvious.

Bent and I finished high school together in the class of 1928. There is not much to tell about during this time. I tried out for the track team but never made it, as a regular anyway. I was trying to run the mile but without much success. I tried out for football with similar results. As I said earlier, that effort came to an end when the coach suggested I choose between football and the Student Council. I suppose that if there was any indication that I might have had a

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<sup>4</sup> A ground loop is an uncontrolled deviation from the intended track of the aircraft on landing and occasionally on takeoff. Its cause during takeoff can be the result of inattention to the track of the aircraft caused by crosswinds or asymmetrical pull of the engines in a multi-engine aircraft. I suspect that in Phil's case it probably was asymmetrical pull of the engines. A ground loop during a landing is usually caused by landing into a strong crosswind and if permitted to remain uncontrolled can be disastrous.



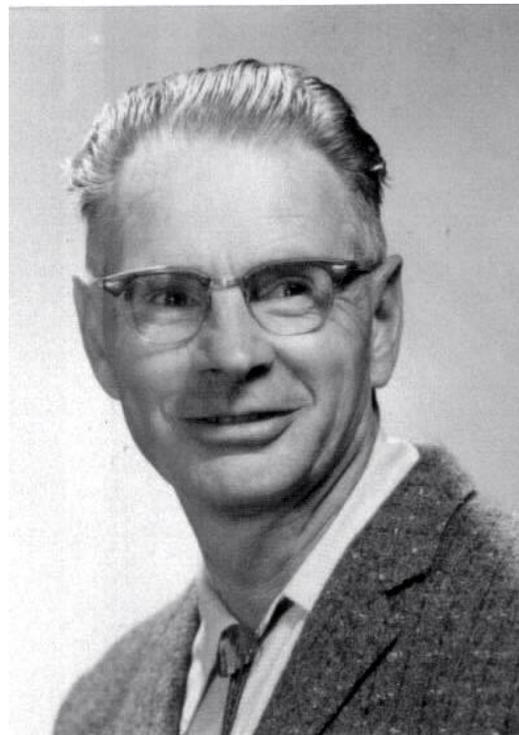
*As a college student, University of Maine*



*1943 - Graduation from Officer Candidate  
School, 33 years old*



1950



1964

chance to make the squad the choice might have been more difficult. Academically I was just about average.

PS: Your summer trip to retrieve your brothers had to be a circular route, if you went as far south as the Grand Canyon and as far north as Pocatello.

FLA: Yes, indeed. We took advantage of the opportunity to cover as much of the West as possible.

PS: What part did religion play in the life of the family?

FLA: I was baptized in the Beverly church --- the immersion type which I remember distinctly. I was probably four or five. We went to church every Sunday. I went to Sunday school. Did it take? I guess so. I don't think that there was any deep religious devotion in the family. My dad sang in the choir. He had a pretty good bass voice. It was a five-mile trip from Wenham. So let's put it this way. I was accustomed to going to chapel all during my naval career. I welcomed the chapel services at the Naval Academy. Again, I can't say that I was particularly devout, but aboard ship, if possible, I always attended chapel services.

PS: It's a ritual to be observed.

FLA: Yes. In the same way in the Navy chapels ashore. Later in life I used to get a little irked because, when you went to civilian churches they were always after you for money, which contrasted to the more or less relaxed atmosphere that you had in the Navy chapels. You went to Navy chapel to worship, and the chaplains, I found, were usually very good. My wife and I enjoyed that very much. I don't think that one should say that you enjoy going to church. We got a lot out of it; let's put it that way. My wife was a Methodist and I transferred to the Methodist church from the Baptist. While there in Santa Fe, I read that the central hierarchy of the Methodist church was financing the training of lobbyists in Congress against the defense budget. This came from a fairly reliable source I believe. I wrote a letter to the Pastor stating that I had heard of this report and had objections from two points of view. One, the separation of church and state. I didn't think that this was a proper function of the church to be lobbying against the defense budget. And second, I took a dim view of my substance that I had contributed to the church being used for this purpose. I asked the Pastor if he had any comment to make about this. He came back with a two-line letter. He said that he regretted my decision to leave the church, very truly yours. That was the end of it. We just stopped going to church. I have always missed it and recently since the past six or nine months when I was courting my new wife I started going to the Presbyterian church where she was going. She is a Southern Baptist --- she's very devout. We continued there. It's great. It's very comforting. I'm glad I started it and it is something which has drawn us closer together. So I am quite happy with it.

I'm not a religious fanatic. I have prayed a few times, I suppose in that hypocritical way when you face a problem or an event in your life that is beyond one's control and you can't solve it, so the last resort is prayer. My wife believes absolutely in God and that God has a certain

control over her life. On the other hand, I believe that my background in religion conforms more to --- well, Einstein was asked once if he believed in God. He said, "Yes, I believe in a God who manifests himself in the harmony of the universe, but not in a God who concerns himself with the trials and tribulations of man". I am simply having a very difficult time bringing myself to believe that there is any divine guidance in my particular life as an individual human being. My wife is absolutely certain that things come to pass in her life because that is what God intends for her. It's not that she asks God for favors. She can pray to God for other people and for guidance and help, that God has a purpose for her. Now these are the kind of things which, I must admit, I have never been quite able to understand. I am having a hard time coming to this. I don't know whether I'll ever change. I know it must be comforting and powerful. I hope that it will come.

PS: What influences, as you were growing up, shaped your values for life?

FLA: That's a good question. I don't know. Well, I guess it depends on how you define values of life.

PS: Well, in the sense of ethics and generosity, kindness.

FLA: Well, yes.

PS: Honesty

FLA: I think that this came mostly from my parents. My mother was a very honest, generous, wonderful person. If there was any affection towards the children it came from her. This is not to say that my dad had no affection for us, as I have explained before, it was just not his way. There is no question in my mind that he loved us and throughout the years was immensely proud of all that we did.

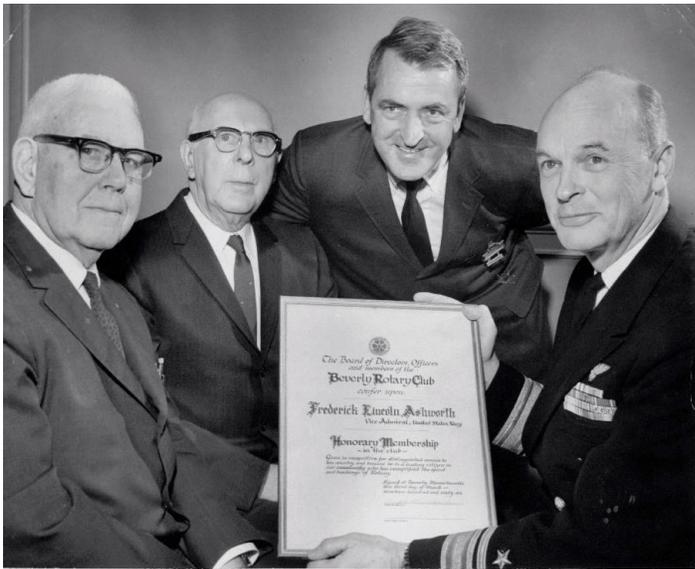
There was absolutely no drinking in the family, no smoking. Nobody ever told us that these are things you don't do. It was simply taken for granted. There was never any foul language. My dad was certainly a very honest individual. He was oriented to public service. He was a Rotarian for as many years as I can remember. He was elected President twice. So let's put it this way, my mother and dad were both good people, and I think that they taught us to be good people.

PS: By example?

FLA: Yes, I think by example more than anything else. There is something else worth mentioning. You recall that I said that I first went to boys' summer camp at the age of seven. Something happened there that made a deep impression me. The camp had a small store that provided the essentials that the campers needed. It also sold penny candy. And pennies were just about all that any of the kids had. After noon meal the store was opened for business. One day I bought some penny candy, probably not more than a dime's worth. When the camp supervisor in charge of the store gave me my candy after I paid for it I noticed that he had given

me too much for the money that I had paid. I counted out what I should have gotten and gave the rest back to him. He thanked me very solemnly. From that day on he never failed to add a couple of pieces more than I had paid for. I wonder if he did that with all the kids just to try them out. However, there was no question in my mind that what I did was exactly what I had been taught to do.

I used to go to Sunday school with great regularity, and I remember one particular individual who taught my class. He was named Sam Cole, and he lived in Salem close by and came regularly to the Beverly First Baptist Church. I am sure that since I remember him with such clarity he had an important influence on my life. I can't give you one, two and three. He



*I am made Honorary Member of the Beverly, Massachusetts, Rotary Club when I was ordered to command the Sixth Fleet. My Dad is second from the left.*

taught more about living than he did about Bible study. I believe that this is more important for Sunday school classes to do as Sam Cole did to use the Bible as a background for human behavior without studying book and verse.

I was fairly close to the Principal of the high school since I was in the Student Council. For most of his life he was in the Rotary Club with my dad. When I made three stars and assigned to command the Sixth Fleet my dad's Club made me an honorary member. I thought that Mr. Pierce, he will always be Mr. Pierce to me, the high school principal was proud that he had a part in my growing up. Of course my dad couldn't be more proud. This was a great

occasion for him. He had lost one son in the naval service and to be able to observe my promotion to one of the top positions of the Navy was very special to him. He died about six months later.

PS: Was your time at Dartmouth essentially a period of marking time?

FLA: I suppose it was a period of marking time. I don't know that this was by design, but because I was simply out of my element. I hadn't grown up enough to absorb what college had to offer. Academically --- the study of French was relatively easy because I had taken a couple of years of it during high school. It was clearly my best study. I can't remember any math, but it must have been included. English was the bugbear because we had so much reading to do, and I was a terrible reader. So I guess that it was a situation in limbo, not by design, but because I just didn't seem to make any progress. I suspect that I would have eventually graduated from Dartmouth. I guess in those days probably anybody who had the money, and could go, would finish.

I think that Dartmouth was a fine school, but, in my opinion, in recent years it has gone to pot since it has become so liberal. It was certainly a liberal arts school when I was there, but not liberal in the way we think of liberal today.

This brings up something interesting and reflects my own thinking about education in general. My son Dave went to Stanford. But before that my wife said that we had kicked him out of the home since after his sophomore year in high school we sent him away to the Loomis School, a very good prep school in New England. He applied for admission to three colleges, the last, and the one he was sure that he couldn't get in to, but the one he really wanted, was Stanford. He was accepted and completed his first year in the ROTC under the Navy contract plan and then transferred to the Holloway scholarship plan. He stayed there for five years in order to qualify for a designated degree. He was awarded a BS degree in mechanical engineering with an aeronautical option.

Dave went into the Navy with a regular commission, got his wings and was flying jets from the carriers. Later he told me that if he had it all to do over again he would forget all the engineering courses and study nothing but the humanities. He said that he didn't care why all the technical equipment in his airplane did what it did. All he wanted to know was how to operate it. He didn't need to worry about electrons. He would have preferred to spend all his time in the humanities --- philosophy, psychology and the kinds of things that Stockdale<sup>5</sup> discovered supported him as a POW.

This is much the same as I have come to believe. I would like to have had more exposure to history and languages and I think I could have done quite well. Of course it is important to remember that in those days the Academy was really a trade school. Everybody took the same studies: ordnance, steam and electrical engineering, gunnery and navigation.

PS: Mechanical drawing?

FLA: Oh yes, mechanical drawing. I suppose that it was intended to teach us how to read blueprints, and I suppose that is important. English was definitely a once over lightly, mostly naval history. We did have to do a term paper, and the department gave us a list of subjects to choose from. I chose art in the 18th century. I don't know anything about art in the 18th century and I figured that whoever reviewed the paper wouldn't either. Maybe I chose that subject because I felt like I was missing something in that area.

PS: Why had you started college so young?

FLA: It came about because I was that young when I finished high school. And why was I so young? --- oh yes, I skipped a grade. When we moved from Beverly to Wenham, they put me in the third grade, one year ahead. I think that this is bad in the long run. Later it was proposed that Dave skip the second grade, and I objected to this. I thought then and still do that kids

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<sup>5</sup> Vice Admiral Jim Stockdale, then a Commander, was a Navy fighter pilot shot down over North Vietnam in 1965. He spent over seven and one half years in a North Vietnamese prison camp. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his conduct as the senior naval officer in the prisoners of war camps in North Vietnam.

should stay with their contemporaries. So I ended up graduating from high school at age 16 and going directly to college.

PS: Being younger would probably inhibit you in social life also.

FLA: Oh, completely. And furthermore, as far as that is concerned I got in so late that the dormitories were all full, and I had to live off campus. In a college community or environment, if you're living off campus you might just as well be up in the North Pole. I hired a room and lived with a kid who also apparently came in late, just two of us in the same room in somebody's home. We used the same bathroom the family did. As a result I really didn't have any particular college social life. I was pledged to a fraternity, largely because most of the varsity swimming team were all from Alpha Delta Phi. Of course I didn't join the fraternity. At Dartmouth freshmen were not permitted to join fraternities. I had a little of that association with the guys on the swimming team. However, they were the varsity and I was on the freshman team.

But I sure do remember the away swim meet where we stayed at the swanky Copley Plaza Hotel. Remember, my borrowed full-length bear coat? I was a hot number — if only I had had a derby hat to wear with it!

PS: Moment of glory.

## CHAPTER TWO

### UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

August 1929 - June 1933

*(Here we divert from the Interview and start the chapter using the text originally written in the Memoirs. It narrates Dad's life at the Naval Academy. Later in the chapter we continue the interview, probing more deeply and into an introspective view of the experience. There will be a little repetition, but very little. Throughout, we use either the Memoirs text or the Naval Institute interview, whichever better presents the story.....Rick)*

As soon as the school year at Dartmouth was finished in early June, I went to work at St. Johnsbury, Vermont, where a dam was being built across the Connecticut River. I was in the reinforcing-steel gang. It was our job to prepare all the reinforcing-steel structures used in the dam prior to pouring the concrete. The work was hard, but for a 17 year old exciting. Our straw boss was a character called Joe Bum. Although to me an old man, I would guess that he might have been 35 or so. He would call me "Dartmouth". I expect that a college kid was a new experience for him. He was particularly pleased with his false teeth. His real teeth had been knocked out by a rebounding piece of reinforcing bar and he would say that false ones were ever so much easier to take care of than real ones.

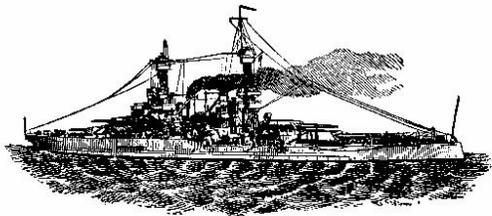
This work went on until late in July or early August, when I received a letter forwarded to me from home from the Navy Department directing me to report to the Naval Academy for physical examinations prior to being enrolled as a Midshipman. I learned from the letter that I had stood third among those who had taken the competitive exams for appointment to the Academy and had thereby earned a First Alternate Appointment to two Principal appointees. One of the two had failed his dental examination and I was to fill his position as a Principal appointee. I have no recollection as to how I made my way to Annapolis; I expect that my parents drove me there by car, hoping to see Phil at the end of his summer cruise.

Except for a few stragglers like myself who arrived at Annapolis late in August, all the rest of my classmates had been participating in "Plebe Summer" since June. This was the time when we had our first indoctrination into marching, firing the rifle, rowing the pulling cutters, learning to sail the small boats and getting generally oriented into the Academy life which was to start with the academic year in early September. Having arrived late in the summer I had missed much of this program as well as the fellowship among classmates that develops when all are thrown into the same new and challenging environment. I was assigned to the Fourth Battalion and became roommate with Kerfoot Alexander Bainbridge Smith from Washington, D.C.. We roomed together for the whole four years and graduated one number apart in class standing; I was number 135 among the total of 432 who were graduated with the class of 1933.

Although at the time I was a little disappointed at not being assigned into the same battalion with my brother, I am sure that in the long run it was best for both of us. He was on the swimming team, so at least during that season we saw all we needed of one another.

N. Nav. 199.

United States of America.



— Navy Department —

By direction of the President  
of the United States you are hereby appointed a  
*Midshipman* in the United States  
Navy from the twelfth day of July  
one thousand nine hundred ~~and twenty-nine~~

Given under my hand and seal of the  
Navy Department at the City of  
Washington, this 30th day of October  
one thousand nine hundred ~~twenty-nine~~

*C. Adams*

Secretary of the Navy.

*Midshipman*

*Frederick Lincoln Ashworth*  
U. S. Navy.

*Sixth Congressional District Massachusetts*

Plebe year, freshman year in college vernacular, was the leveling year.<sup>1</sup> We were all thrown into the same mold as far as discipline and academics were concerned.

All Plebes were required to walk in the center of the corridors in Bancroft Hall, the Midshipman dormitory, and to make all corners at 90 degrees. We were required to eat by the numbers at the dining tables in the Mess Hall. Up vertically to the mouth level, then straight horizontally into the mouth, returning the spoon or fork to the plate in the reverse direction for the next mouthful. At the dining table we sat on the front two inches or so of our chairs with our backs perfectly erect. Mealtime was the question-and-answer period conducted by the First Classmen, seniors. Most of the questions were on naval subjects or on current events, but there were many that were traditional and had to be learned. For example, "What time is it, Mr. Ashworth?" The answer went something like this, "I regret to report that my chronometer is not in accord exactly with the great sidereal interval from which all time is reckoned. However, the time is approximately 1235 hours, Greenwich Mean Time". Failure to answer a question correctly resulted in "come around"; come around to my room after the evening meal for your punishment. Sometimes it resulted in the order to assume the position, whereby one bent over from the waist with hands on the knees to await the belt on the rear end with the broom wielded by the upper classman. Other times it was to wash his white gloves or some such menial task, but always one had better have the correct answer to the question previously asked. Usually a Plebe had one or two upper classmen who claimed him as "my Plebe". I can't help but record that many years later my "First Classman", Lot Ensey, to whom I reported regularly for such punishment and to do these menial chores, reported to me when I had command of a Task Group at sea in the Pacific. My "Second Classman" never made Flag Rank. Perhaps they must have been a little chagrined over the situation, but perhaps they satisfied themselves by concluding that they had trained me well.

Another stunt that was occasionally done was to order the Plebe to "go around the world". In this little exercise, the Plebe was required to go to a different table in the Mess Hall for each meal carrying his "Log Book" with him that recorded his performance at earlier tables in answering First Classmen's questions. One had better have the right answers for questions not answered correctly before. I guess that there must have been 200 or more tables in all in the Mess Hall, incidentally reputed to have been the largest dining room in the world. A Plebe rarely, if ever, made it all the way "around the world". Actually it was a bit dangerous for a First Classman to order a Plebe "around the world" for the farther he traveled from his assigned table, the more conspicuous he became running down the center of the Mess Hall to his next table on the route. Frequently the leadership sitting at the head table would ask, "Where are you going, Mister?" and the cat would be out of the bag and the ordering First Classman would have some explaining to do. I did it once and got about halfway around the Mess Hall before the First Classmen at my assigned table got cold feet and recalled me.

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<sup>1</sup> Civilian college grade designations vs. the Naval Academy:

Freshman:	4th Class or Plebe
Sophomore:	3rd Class or Youngster
Junior:	2nd Class
Senior:	1st Class

There really was not much physical hazing, the most severe usually being the belts with a broom on the rear end. However, in that department some of the upper classmen became a little sadistic and things did at times then become a bit "physical". Of course this was not officially condoned, but I am sure that it was well known and accepted as part of a Plebes growing up, or perhaps leveling down. I suppose one may conclude that this treatment of the Plebes was childish, but it did teach a fair amount of self-reliance and some ability to think on your feet or rather on the edge of your chair. Since we were all getting the same treatment, it accomplished the leveling process considered to be necessary. It brought down the egos of some and raised the egos and self-confidence of others, all more or less to the same level.

The academic program the first year was to a large degree a review of what we all probably had taken in high school. There were some in my class who had attended college for a year or two, as I had, and they might well have repeated subjects taken in college during even the second year at the Academy. One classmate who ended up standing two or three in the class had attended a fine prep school in Baltimore, and he had no new academic subjects during his first two years at the Academy, except of course any professional subjects although there were not many of those in the early academic years. It is worthwhile to point out that this is no longer the situation at the Academy, for it has become a first-class educational institution as have all the service academies. One can validate subjects previously taken so that new or more advanced subjects can be studied. Majors can be selected and the academic courses tailored to support that major. Degrees are now given in many engineering and some liberal arts disciplines. I should point out here that in 1958, shortly after I was selected for Flag Rank, I was assigned to a curriculum review board to study these particular problems. The expansion of the curriculum into the selection of majors and the validation of courses previously studied was a direct result of the recommendations of our board.

I tried out for the freshman or Plebe football team, but having had no prior experience and not much talent this didn't last long. Swimming was my sport and I participated all four years and won my class numerals plebe year, my NA monogram (not quite good enough for a letter) the second year and my N the last two years. I usually swam the 100-, 220- and the 440-yard freestyle events and frequently was a member of the 400-yard relay team. I peaked my second-class year, junior year, and was even mentioned in some of the Academy athletic reviews as having Olympic possibilities. Actually that was far from the mark and I proved it by not performing up to expectations my first-class year. Not to make excuses, but I have always felt that the coach burned me out before the end of the season. Each year I would start the season weighing about 165 pounds and would end up the season weighing no more than 150.

Yes, Plebe year was an experience, not as severe, I presume as "Beast Barracks" at West Point, but one, after it was all over, I would not trade for anything.

Then came Youngster cruise. At the end of the academic year, the training squadron, consisting of the old battleships *Arkansas*, *Utah* and *Wyoming*, assembled in Annapolis Roads ready to take aboard the new First Class and the new Youngsters, Third Classmen. All our belongings, except that which we would take aboard ship for the summer cruise, were packed away in a large "cruise box" and left in the corridors of Bancroft Hall. When we would return for the next academic year magically they would appear outside our newly assigned rooms. And

then we were off to Northern Europe — Scotland, France, Norway and Germany. Pretty heady stuff for an 18-year-old country boy.

At sea, the third classmen performed all the duties normally assigned to the enlisted men. This included holystoning the decks, cleaning the heads, scrubbing up our assigned spaces in the ship, and standing watches such as lookouts, firemen in the fire rooms, machinery tenders in the engine room, and messengers for the Officer of the Deck. In addition, we were required to maintain notebooks in which we sketched out all the steam lines in the engine rooms, boiler rooms and auxiliary spaces.

Port visits were fascinating and a welcome change from the at-sea routine. Some of us took the train from Kiel, Germany, to Berlin, where we had shore leave for three or four days. This was in the early days of Hitler's rise to power, but I don't remember being impressed in that regard with anything that I saw going on in Berlin. There was the "Femina", a nightclub where each table was equipped with a telephone so that one could talk to the attractive young lady on the other side of the room. When I visited Berlin in 1964 the Femina was still there, but then known as "The Racy Club". I didn't renew my acquaintance with the place. Of course we took in the museums and did the usual sightseeing. A few days in Paris also were exciting. While in Edinburgh, I was fortunate enough to travel by train to London. I recall seeing Paul Robeson play "Othello". The three months cruise ended where we started in Annapolis Roads where we disembarked and proceeded on 30 days of welcome and I thought well-deserved leave.

Youngster year was a major change in our Academy life. No harassment by upper classmen and no formalities of behavior that we had been required to endure as Plebes. We had no responsibilities in the Regimental organization. Study and participation in one's chosen sport was the order of the days. Our monthly allowance of spending money was increased from two dollars to four dollars. However since all the services had been assessed with a ten per cent pay cut as part of the Depression belt tightening, these sums were reduced accordingly. Liberty out of the Yard was increased from only Saturday afternoons to include Sunday afternoon as well. We were now permitted to "drag" (have a date) for any of the Academy social functions and for the infrequent Academy "Hops". That first year was a pretty austere life for a rapidly maturing young man, and what followed was as well a far cry from the life of a boy in college on the "outside".

At the end of Youngster year the summer program changed to one called "Aviation Summer". Several patrol-type seaplanes were flown into Annapolis and operated from the Severn River. We did little else but ride around on the so-called training flights, but it was exciting and I think accomplished its purpose of influencing Midshipmen to consider going into naval aviation after graduation. Then we were off on another 30-day leave period.

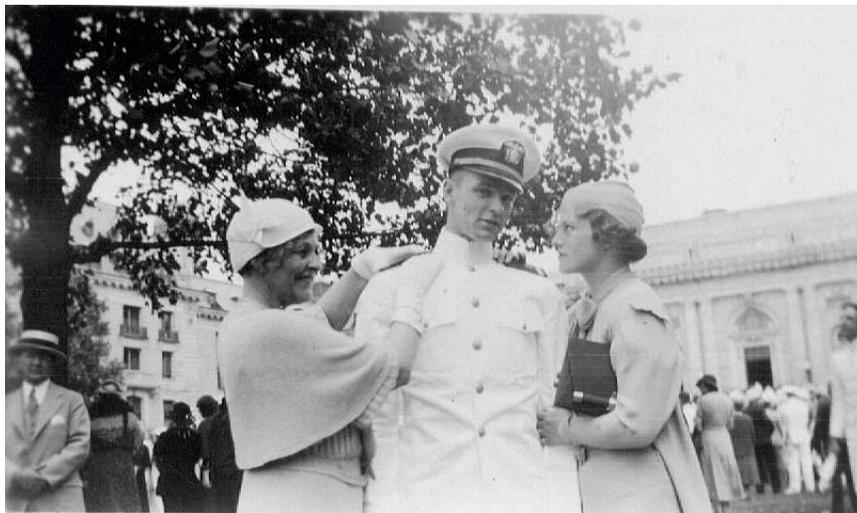
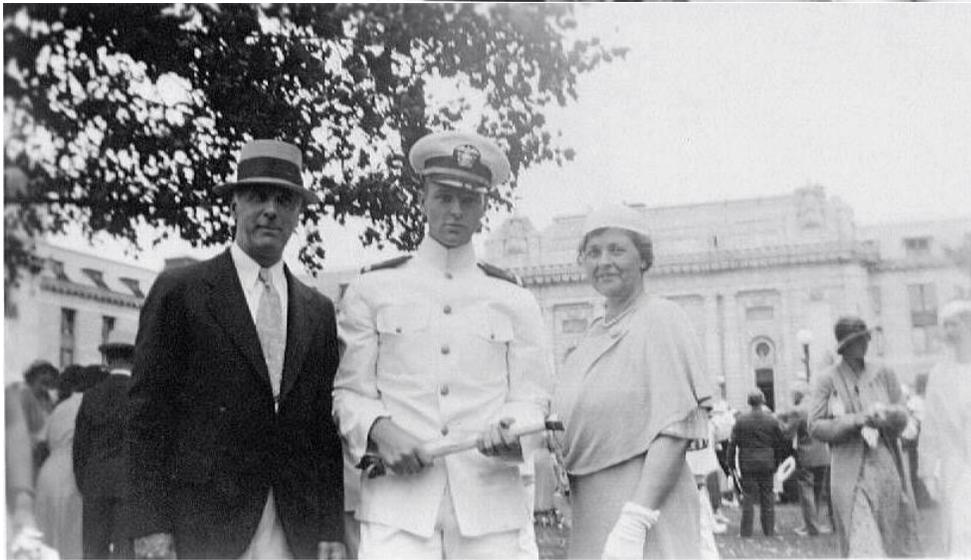
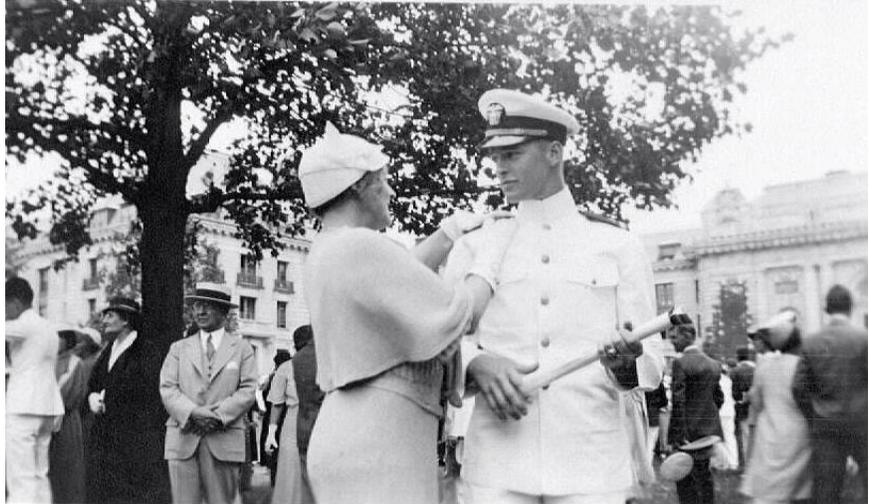
Second Class, our junior year, academic year started late in September and had much of the characteristics of the previous year. More professional subjects were added to the curriculum, but the extra-curricular activities were little changed; a couple more dollars for spending money and Wednesday afternoon free for liberty in town after the end of classes. For me, it was my most successful year academically and my performance on the swimming team was much better. No records broken, but I earned enough points in competition to be awarded my letter. This was the year that we received our class rings and during "June Week", after the Ring Dance, we were permitted to wear them. Probably to most, such a ring may not be

particularly significant, but to a naval officer his Academy ring is his most prized possession. A miniature of the ring is usually his engagement ring for his O.A.O., his "One And Only".

And again, after the end of the academic year came the summer training cruise. This time it was up and down the east coast from Halifax to the north and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to the south. Off the coast of North Carolina we were exposed to a typical Hatteras hurricane. The Flag Officer in command of the training squadron decided that it would be good indoctrination for the Midshipmen to experience the heavy weather at sea from a hurricane. He set a course for the squadron that was intended to just skirt the edge of the storm. As hurricanes are wont to do, it changed direction and we went right through the middle of the storm so that we were exposed to both the "safe" and the "dangerous" semicircles and also to the relative calm of the "eye" of the storm. The ships rolled as much as 40 degrees to each side for about five days as a result of the mountainous seas and the high winds of the storm. It was impossible to keep the galley fires lighted so we subsisted on whatever had been prepared before the storm; cold food and what bread had already been baked. There was some topside damage to the ships and the ships' boats, but there were no personnel casualties. All sailors should experience a major storm at sea. It really instills a healthy respect for "the dangers of the elements" that we plead for protection from in the Sailor's Prayer. Then it was back to Annapolis Roads to disembark and journey home for our 30 days summer leave.

Then came first class year, when our class took charge of the administration of the Regiment. My position in the Midshipman command structure was not very auspicious. I was mustering Petty Officer for the First Platoon, Seventh Company, Fourth Battalion. About the only privilege that it brought me was relief from carrying a rifle during dress parades. Academics continued, as did my participation on the swimming team. Again I earned my letter. Anticipation of graduation and joining the Fleet occupied our minds more than anything else.

These years, 1930, 1931, 1932 and 1933 were the early years of the Great Depression. Of course we were more or less immune to the Depression environment caused by poverty and unemployment, but it did have an important effect on our early years as commissioned officers. Economy was uppermost in the mind of the Administration and we received our share of the programs that were in effect. First, only one half of my class would receive commissions upon graduation; the half was determined by one's final academic standing in the class. Second, all graduating Midshipmen were given rigid physical examinations prior to graduation and any non-qualifying conditions were used to eliminate those unfortunate ones from receiving commissions. My roommate was found to have a slightly elevated blood pressure and was therefore disqualified. Third, none of the newly commissioned Ensigns could go to specialized training fields such as aviation or the submarine service for a period of two years. All must spend two years at sea in the Fleet. Fourth, all commissioned Ensigns were placed on a two years probation period subject to complete realignment of class standing based on academic standing at the Academy, fitness reports received during the two years at sea in the Fleet, and the results of examinations in seamanship, ordnance and gunnery, navigation, steam engineering, military law and naval regulations. I gained 31 numbers in standing as a result of this realignment. Numbers are important because they would determine the order of promotion for nearly one's entire naval career. Fifth, we were not permitted to be married until the expiration of the probation period. And finally, the 10% pay cut was still in effect.



**Graduation Day  
June 1933**

*Top: My mother putting on my Ensign's shoulder boards.*

*Middle: My dad and mother at graduation day taken in front of Bancroft Hall, dormitory for all Midshipmen.*

*Left: My mother putting on my Ensign's shoulder boards with Nan looking on.*

To complete the story of the economy measures, those who were refused commissions because of class standing were invited back one year later and those who returned assumed their lineal position in the class and prior to those who were to be graduated in the class of 1934. Then, two and a half years later those who had been denied commissions due to physical deficiencies were invited to return for re-examination and, if qualified, would be awarded their commissions as Ensigns. Thus my class, as was "All Gaul", was divided into three parts known as 1933A, 1933B and 1933C. Though not related to any of this, it is worthwhile to note in passing that the class of 1933 ended up with more than 10% of its graduates reaching Flag Rank. Although I am not sure of the fact, it is my understanding that we provided more Flag Officers to the Navy than any other class in the history of the Academy up to that time.

Finally, on the first of June 1933 we were graduated. President Roosevelt gave the commencement address to the graduating class. My mother put on one of my shoulder boards signifying that I was an Ensign in the United States Navy, and Nan put on the other. I received orders to report for duty aboard the battleship U.S.S. *West Virginia*.

*Now we resume the Oral History where the interviewer suggests a comparison between life in the civilian college and the Naval Academy*

PS: Well, you went from one extreme to another. You then came to the Naval Academy where everybody was in the same dorm and wore the same clothes.

FLA: Well, yes, precisely. Another thing about being at the Naval Academy then was that I never had any recollection of the Depression. You talk to people about the bread lines; they know about the rationing and all the hardships that went along with it. And so many of their parents lost all their money. I never had any experience of this sort. As I have said, my dad did his own investing. He didn't have much money to invest, but what he did invest, he was able to preserve. From a family point of view, all during this time, when I went back home on leave from the Academy, there was always a very good house. I had no experience from the Depression because at the Naval Academy we weren't exposed to it and didn't know what was going on outside. And, of course to refer to your question as far as our contemporaries were concerned you are absolutely right. Plebe year was designed to bring every one to the same — I am afraid I have to say, perhaps, to the same mediocre level. I am delighted that things have changed in this regard.

PS: Why do you use that word?

FLA: Mediocre?

PS: Yes.

FLA: Well, because I think that it did, Plebe year as I experienced it. The old business of sitting on the edge of your chair at meal times, the square corner eating, you know, where you took your spoon out of your dish, up vertically, then straight into your mouth, and then reversing the

process. Walking in the middle of the corridors in Bancroft Hall, always cutting square corners. The "coming around" deal where you go around to the room of your first classman, and maybe a second classman. Lot Ensey, as I mentioned, was my first classman. I had to wash his gloves and his cap covers and things like that. Theoretically this was designed to bring the fatheaded people down to one level and the rest of us to that common level. This resulted, I believe, in all of us arriving at a mediocre level. It was a leveling process, and why did we have to be brought to a common level?

Many years later, when I had command of an attack carrier division, Carrier Division One, in the Pacific, and in command of a small task group, lo and behold, who should show up to join my little task group and report to me but Rear Admiral Lot Ensey, who had been my first classman.

PS: The tables were turned.

FLA: Yes, the tables were turned a bit.

PS: But I am sure that you weren't a vindictive person.

FLA: Not at all. I didn't send my white gloves and cap covers over to his flagship to be washed. Lot was a fine fellow. He treated me very well. He did for me as my first classman what a first classman was supposed to do. I was never beaten with a broom for some simple-minded infraction.

My second classman, who is long gone, whom I had to "come around" to, was much different. He called me "Willy", "Willy this" and "Willy that". One of my best friends in Santa Fe is named Willy. But in those days, to me, it was degrading. I think that was an unfortunate experience and typical of the system that I am talking about.

PS: Well, the rationale that's used is that it weeds out the people who can't stand up to the stress. Do you think that's a beneficial part of it?

FLA: Yes, there is no question about that. Of course, that is the purpose of Plebe year. I think it also goes for beast barracks at West Point. And I'm sure that is far more severe than anything we experienced at the Academy or do now. There however, the program goes on for only a month or two, and the Plebe gets down to doing what he is supposed to be doing, namely studying his academics. But the Plebe year program is designed to do as we have talked about. I have no argument with that, and certainly I'm not proposing to let down the bars on the Plebes. But I understand that may be the case today. However, I think any move to remove the degrading process is something worth doing.

I don't know whether you want to digress to this, but I think that it relates to this point. Shortly after I was promoted to flag rank (I was kicked out of my job as Commandant of Midshipmen, which I held for only three weeks) I was sent to Washington to get into the atomic energy business, which, I understand, was one of the caveats in regard to my early promotion. Shortly thereafter I was appointed to a curriculum review board to look at the Academy

academic program. There were only two naval officers on the board, Admiral Rivets Rivero and myself. The chairman was Richard Folsom of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Another member was head of the engineering department at Georgia Tech. There were others.

I was given the job to look at the executive department. I looked at quite a lot of records of midshipmen. It turned out that one of them was my nephew, the son of my oldest brother, Phil, who had been killed in an airplane accident. His mother decided that Barry should carry on his father's life in the Navy, and got him admitted to the Naval Academy. According to the record, and from the comments of the executive department officer helping me, he was apparently one of those cases whose attitude was lousy, his discipline was lousy, and I was told that here was an individual who simply wanted to get out of the Academy --- didn't want to be there in the first place. He may have been reacting to the procedures of Plebe year. I may be wrong about that, because I discussed this with him many years later and he said that he wanted to stay there, but the math courses were just hopeless for him, and he figured that he might as well get out before he bilged out. Nevertheless his military aptitude, as reported in the records, didn't reflect that.

One of the things the review board recommended was that much of the Plebe year foolishness be eliminated such as the "come around" thing and the foolish questions that had to be memorized. I think to make the kids learn current events, historical facts about the Navy, and things of that nature is fine.

This curriculum review board was really the start of the new academic program at the Academy. We recommended that courses be validated if taken elsewhere and electives be permitted, that majors be offered. Also the matter of the ratio of naval officer to civilian professors was considered. If I remember correctly we thought that it should be about 50-50. I was very privileged to have been a member, perhaps not academically qualified, but I think that I had some input and probably made some contribution. I hope so.

PS: The purpose is still to produce naval officers, so you got a valid input there.

FLA: Precisely.

PS: Had you in your boyhood, been exposed to the Navy at all? Was this allure, or was it strictly from your brother's example?

FLA: Well, of course, we lived in New England which was certainly oriented to the sea in most of its history. I used to spend a fair amount of time in the Peabody Museum in Salem. This is completely a nautical museum and contains artifacts of all kinds, much of which was brought back from around the world by the clipper ship captains. On display in front of the museum is a huge old-fashioned anchor. The shank, at least ten inches in diameter, had been bent holding a sailing ship in a gale somewhere in the world. There was a small shipyard about ten miles from our home where ships were built for the Mayflower races, I believe. Phil and I, and of course Mother who provided the transportation, went there often and I can remember seeing one of them launched. The bows, and later the bowsprits, of the ships being built hung over the narrow country road that passed by the yard.

We made frequent trips to visit the Portsmouth Navy Yard. I guess to some extent I was just tagging along with my older brother. I think that he was more oriented toward the Naval Academy than I was. When he was in California as a high school senior he tried to get an appointment from there. I hadn't considered the Naval Academy --- hadn't even thought about it. I guess the turning point may have come, as far as I was concerned, when I was a freshman at Dartmouth. The varsity swam against Navy. Perhaps with all those uniforms around I might have been a bit bedazzled, but maybe, were I to admit it, I might have thought of the Academy as an escape from Dartmouth, where I didn't believe things were going too well.

So I can't say that I had any great burning desire all those growing up years to go to the Academy. But I am glad that it worked out that way.

PS: Did aviation catch your fancy, with Lindbergh and so forth?

FLA: Well, yes, I guess. I remember writing in somebody's first-class yearbook, one of those books that people kept, souvenir-type things, something about aspirations. I remember now drawing a little picture of wings and writing "Wings" under it. My brother Phil was in flight training at the time and got his wings about the same time that I was graduated, so I suppose that here again, both going to the Academy and aspiring to wings were to a great degree influenced by my brother. Lindbergh's flight had taken place quite a bit before this, 1927 I believe.

PS: When you were a midshipman, the aviation community in the Navy started making a deliberate effort at recruiting.

FLA: Oh, sure. We had second class summer devoted to aviation indoctrination. It was called aviation summer. The rest of the midshipmen went on the youngster cruise and the first class cruise, and the second class people stayed here for the summer. They had stationed here some old P2Ys, I guess they were, the predecessor to the PBY. They were moored in the Severn river near the Academy grounds.

PS: Open cockpit?

FLA: Yes, open cockpits. They would fly us around. We didn't get to fly or anything. We'd just ride around in those airplanes and come back and make a few landings. However, at least you got a sense of flying. The thrill of flying, and it was probably worthwhile as an indoctrination. I suspect that they recruited a few people into naval aviation. So this would indicate that there was a move afoot to try to recruit people. Of course, any Navy Department policy never filtered down to me as a second class midshipman, I can tell you.

PS: What do you remember about the academic side of being a midshipman?

FLA: Here again, I never really felt that I was going to star. Plebe year was pretty much a review of everything that you had taken before, particularly in math. You took trigonometry, plane and solid geometry, and that was about as far as you went that first year. I had studied all

that in high school and I guess that I had some of it at Dartmouth before I came down here. English was mostly naval history. There were no professional subjects Plebe year. I was mostly just catching up to speed to go on to the Youngster year. It was great to get out of plebe year and you had a little more time to study since there was no more of the plebe-first class foolishness that took a bit of time. I was on the swimming team. Just as soon as the last class was over you'd get your tail over to the swimming pool and get to work there. We finished just in time to get back to evening formation for supper smelling of liniment from the rubdown we'd get after the swimming work out. So the only time we had to study was after evening meal until taps at 10:00 o'clock. After a few thousand yards of swimming, you aren't very alert for studying, and I am sure that this had an important effect on our academic marks. But I wasn't about to give it up. After all it was part of.....you were a cut above if you were on any athletic team.

PS: How well did you do on the swimming team?

FLA: Oh, I remember, going back to Dartmouth, I was really the hot dog because I had won my freshman class numerals. And even though I didn't have the money, nothing would do but I'd buy one of those good, green, wool sweaters and have the numerals sewn on. That was the greatest thing. Here at the Academy I don't remember that we had any recognition for Plebe year sports. Maybe we did get numerals, but I have forgotten. My classmate Ray Thompson did when he broke the Academy record for the 50-yard freestyle. Breaking an Academy record gave you immediately a Navy block N.

PS: He was very much looked up to as a Midshipman, wasn't he?

FLA: Oh, very much so, yes. As I mentioned to you this morning at breakfast, he was probably, in my opinion at least, the person in our class who had the greatest potential as a naval officer, without any question. His performance is interesting from an academic point of view. He had been to Baltimore Polytech for two years I think it was, before coming to the Academy. He told me that he didn't have a single subject the first two years that he hadn't had at Baltimore Poly. I am sure the few professional things we had youngster year he handled equally as well. And I think that this says something about the academic program, that it was so important to get the validation business going.

PS: So you didn't have to repeat something that you already had?

FLA: Oh yes, he had to repeat all this stuff. No wonder these guys stood one, two, and three in the class. Except for me!

PS: And he had a leadership role in the class, too.

FLA: Oh, sure. He had four stripes, a battalion commander and was president of our class. In addition to his swimming, he played lacrosse in the spring which he learned while at Baltimore Poly. He was very good.

But, back to the question of my academic experience. I did better my second class year than any of the previous years. I suppose I just felt more at home and relaxed. We weren't charged with any of the first class responsibilities for running the regiment. But I was never very good. I did graduate at about one third of my class.

PS: One criticism I've heard of the system then in vogue was that it was not very intellectually challenging.

FLA: Precisely. This is exactly right. The procedures in class tend to verify this view. During the 50 minute class period, first the professor would talk briefly on whatever topic came to his mind. Sometimes it was relevant to the day's lesson, sometimes it seemed if it was a monologue on whatever the prof had in mind at the moment. Depending on the prof, this was not all bad; some had fascinating sea stories to tell. Then each of us would go up to the front desk where we would find slips of paper containing a question and then go to the blackboard to write out the answer. These were graded by the prof and the results written down in his little red book. Then when the "tree" came out, which was the week's record, you learned the results of the week's work. The random selection of questions made it necessary to have a pretty good idea of what the day's lesson was all about. It was pretty much a rote sort of thing. I guess anyone who could memorize easily could graduate high in the class, and probably not know very much. I wasn't able to either memorize the stuff or do very well at it.

PS: Well, on the other hand, the advantage I've heard ascribed to that system is that everything that's done in the Navy is in some book somewhere, so you got in the habit of going to the book.

FLA: Yes, this is probably so. But, you know, it is interesting to speculate on what happened to the guys in the various levels of the class. Take Ray Thompson for example. He stood very high in the class, maybe four or five. Well, we know what happened to him. He had all the potential, but didn't produce. Other guys in my class that I knew, take John Bulkeley, for example. John was way down in the class. And another that I remember was Ed Metzger who went into the Supply Corps. Then there was poor old Joe Lacombe, who was killed early in the war. I guess if I were to be asked who were three guys least likely to succeed I would have started off with Lacombe. But Bulkeley and Metzger would be right there with him. But look at them, John Bulkeley ended up with a Congressional Medal of Honor and Metzger made Admiral in the Supply Corps. And I guess John is still the President of InSurv..

PS: He finally gave that up.

FLA: He's given that up? Okay. Ed Metzger was a classic Supply Corps officer. He loved the supply business, and he made Rear Admiral. I don't think that he was ever chief of the bureau. So academically and the way that they performed in the Academy, these are the kinds of guys of which you'd say, "Well, I don't know about them ever getting anywhere."

There is another interesting thing that came up during the time of the curriculum review board. I was told that there had been studies made of both West Point and Naval Academy

graduates over a 30-year period to try to determine what age group at entry to the Academies turned out to be the most successful both academically and professionally. Did you ever hear of this study?

PS: No, I didn't

FLA: I don't know from firsthand knowledge that the study was ever done, but at least I was told that it had been. It turned out that at both West Point and the Naval Academy, the ones who were most successful professionally, as far as rank achieved was concerned, were the 16 and 17 year olds on entry. And the overall average better performers academically were public high school graduates, and not necessarily those who had gone to prep schools or colleges. I am sure that there are exceptions, but I understand that these were the general results. I remember one person in my class, Guy Morrow, a Marine. He had been a Marine sergeant or something when he came to the Academy. I think that he was 20 at the time. He was a Plebe striper as one might expect. But he didn't turn out with his full — I think he reached the rank of colonel. He was a great guy and, as I understand it, a hell of a Marine. He was shortchanged maybe as much as four years of his professional career because he started at the older age. Had he been younger on entry he would have had about four more years in his active career. I don't know whether there is any validity to this theory, but I think you can make a reasonable case for it.

PS: What do you remember about Coach Ortlund in swimming?

FLA: Oh yes, Henry. Henry was a great guy. He was the coach for the 1920 Olympic team, I believe it was. He was a pretty good coach, I guess. I think that from my point of view he burned me out during the season. I used to start the swimming season weighing around 165 pounds, which was my average weight throughout the Academy years. I would end up the season weighing about 150 - 155. He used to work our tails off. I mean, 2,000 yards was the first thing before any of the rest of the workout was started. Ray Thompson was a pretty good swimmer then, and he was selected for the 1932 Olympic team. Rather than going on a cruise in the summer he worked with Bob Kipputh, the Yale swimming coach. Up to this time I could beat him swimming the 220 or the 440. He was best at the 50- and 100-yard sprints. But when he came from the Olympics after working with Kipputh he could take any of us in anything from the 50 to the 440. Henry Ortlund would never let us work with weights. He said that it would cause us to be muscle-bound. All we would do was swim. As far as I was concerned I believe that I never really built up my strength. There was little Willy Hyland, Johnny Hyland's younger brother. He weighed about 130 and was not much more than 5 feet 6 inches tall. He used to beat me regularly in the quarter mile, and I felt that there was something missing there. Either I didn't have it, or I didn't have the guts to really produce in the race or something. I never felt that Henry really developed me physically the way I might have been capable. But he had pretty successful teams, there's no question about that.

PS: It says something that Thompson improved dramatically under another coach.

FLA: Exactly. This is the point that I was trying to make, and I think that everybody recognized it. Of course, as I say, Henry produced some pretty good teams. I remember my brother's second class year --- this would be the winter of 1930. We were swimming Yale here at the Naval Academy. This was after they had split the 50-yard pool in two with a wood partition. The rest of the collegiate swim teams were used to a 25-yard pool.

Kipputh was still the Yale coach. The meet came up to the 400-yard relay. If Navy could win the relay they would win the meet. My brother was lead-off swimmer, I can't remember who the others were, --- maybe Red Green was one of the others, but I do recall that Styx Phillips was the anchor. Thompson wasn't swimming --- we weren't permitted to swim the varsity in those years. My brother was over-anxious as you might expect and made a false start. Then he made a second false start. A third would disqualify the team. So he was pretty much left on the wall for the third start of the race. The net result was that Yale won the race, but only by a touch after Styx Phillips gave it all he had. Maybe a foot.

PS: A foot?

FLA: Not any more than that. But that says something for Henry's teams. At least they were able to compete with Yale, which was then the best collegiate team in the country.

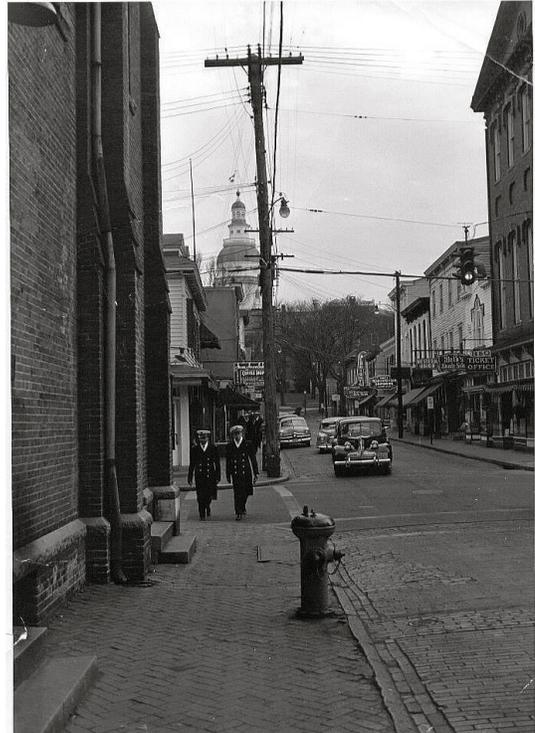
PS: Were you considered to have Olympic potential yourself?

FLA: Oh, there was an athletic newsletter put out during second class summer that talked about the prospects for the swimming team. There was some remark in that about my having Olympic prospects. But I never produced.

PS: What other sorts of extracurricular activities did you get into?

FLA: I can't remember any. Oh, I went out for Plebe football, but it was perfectly obvious that it was a waste of everybody's time. I fooled around for a couple of weeks. I had no experience and I suspect no talent. As far as anything else, I can't remember anything. We didn't have any of the clubs popular now that I can remember.

PS: Well, there was Masqueraders and.....



*Maryland Avenue, Annapolis. Looks to be about 1939 by the look of the cars. This is a little after my time, but the street hasn't changed from what I remember.*

FLA: No, I didn't participate in any of those. That was really not my bag, that kind of stuff. Well, I guess perhaps it was another one of those things where I was never particularly outgoing, never particularly aggressive, I don't think. I didn't even drag<sup>2</sup> much.

PS: You were a Red Mike.

FLA: Yes, I was kind of a Red Mike, I guess.

PS: Did you have encounters with the Bancroft Hall duty officers?

FLA: Not that I can remember particularly. I was pretty straight arrow. I guess this was probably a mistake, because I now read Joe Taussig's writings and apparently one of the things about growing up at the Naval Academy and learning how to be a naval officer was "frenching out" and doing all the other things you weren't supposed to do.

PS: I sometimes wonder if some of these achievements are accomplished in retrospect rather than at the time.

FLA: One wonders about that. No, I can't remember any particular escapades. Oh, I remember one time — I guess it was probably second class summer, we were permitted to ride in automobiles, and I guess we went to Washington, my three regular friends and I. We were late getting back for the evening formation, and for some crazy reason drove the car all the way into the Yard.

PS: Rather brazen.

FLA: The duty officer who nailed us was "The Gallant Fox", Winny Folk. I'm not very proud of this, but when he saw us going by I went and covered my face, like this, but he nailed us and said, "I want to know who it was that covered his face when I saw you people pass". I said, "I did it." I'm not very proud of that. But we made the formation. I don't remember what happened to the car. But that one thing taught me a real lesson when he wanted to know the name of the Midshipman who covered his face when he went by.

PS: Well, wasn't it kind of a badge of honor to be sent to the ship, the *Reina Mercedes*?

FLA: I guess that there were some people who thought that. I never felt that way about it. I never had any class A offenses and never went down there. You had to be a particular kind of a guy --- the ones who "made it." I simply was not in that mold.

Now take my brother, Phil; he was different. He was very aggressive in a controlled and sensible way. He did his thing the way he wanted to do it, not from any routine pattern. He was

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<sup>2</sup> To "drag" is to have dates with the lady of your choice at the moment.

a special kind of aviator, in my opinion. If he had lived I would have expected to see him in the test pilot school and on the flight demonstration team, the Blue Angels. He loved to fly. He would take the SBU-type aircraft that we were flying then and wring it out within its operational limits, I am sure. He loved to do a hammerhead stall. This is where you fly vertically up until the speed is zero and then let the plane fall back down vertically as long as you could hold it and not get into an outside spin.

I did what I was supposed to do. I was not one of the "crazies" that were talked about in the book *Flights of Passage*. I think that I was a pretty good aviator, but the fancy stuff was not for me. I loved to fly too, but to do it "right".

I had a crackerjack squadron during the war. I commanded a torpedo squadron. We'll get into that later. I think the guys liked to fly behind me. I think that I was a pretty good flight leader. But I was not one of the "crazies", I was in the "rest of us" department.

PS: You said in your memoir that you had remarkably little contact with your brother while you were both midshipmen.

FLA: Yes, and properly so, I think. When I first went there he was a second classman. I was a Plebe. I had hoped to be assigned to his battalion. He was in the second. I was in the fourth. It was clear as time passed that this was the best for us both. It could have put him in an awkward position, and I had to stand on my own feet. The same thing happened when we joined the fleet. He was on the *West Virginia*, and when I graduated, I went to the *West Virginia*, purely coincidentally I am sure. I was disappointed that he had been detached before I got there. But it was just as well. He had been ordered to flight training at Pensacola. In retrospect, I'm just as happy; it worked out better that way.

PS: Jimmy Thach said that he got to the Naval Academy as a Plebe just the year his brother graduated, and his brother gave him very succinct advice, "Do what you're told."

FLA: I don't recall that my brother gave me any advice. I don't recall that he ever gave me any advice. I guess he figured, "You're on your own, Bud."

PS: We haven't talked about your summer cruises other than aviation summer.

FLA: We had a very good youngster cruise. Went to Europe.

PS: What ship were you in?

FLA: It was in the U.S.S. *Utah*, I believe. I am not sure about that. Some time ago I read an article about our cruise in *Shipmate* by a classmate of mine and after reading that, I became more certain that it was *Utah*. I have a hard time remembering these kinds of things; it is one of my failings. There are a lot of people who can tell you exactly where they were and what they were doing, it seems, at any time in their life. Those things seem to escape me.



Photo # 80-G-416384 USS Utah (AG-16) off Long Beach, CA, 1935

We had a great cruise to Europe. I have forgotten the exact order of port visits, but they included Oslo, Kiel, Edinburgh and one port on the coast of France, perhaps Honfleur, because I recall going to Barfleur, a few miles away, where I had my first taste of French cuisine.

I slept in a hammock throughout the cruise. The ship had a structure of two or three decks surrounding the stack. I think that originally this was storage space for water breakers, I am not sure. There were stanchions from which I could swing my hammock. It was chilly topside in the North Atlantic, but I

would work around the stack depending on which way the wind was coming, so I was always on the warm side of the stack. I slept there all during the cruise.

PS: Why had the carrying of water casks been dispensed with at that point?

FLA: I don't know. I don't really know whether water casks were ever stowed there. Somehow, and for some reason, I just assumed that was the purpose of the structure. Of course these were training ships, and I suppose that whatever had been stowed there had disappeared over time.

First class cruise was also interesting from one point of view. We did an east coast cruise from Guantanamo to Halifax. Incidentally, there was a total eclipse of the sun while we were in port at Halifax, my first, which I remember very clearly. But the best part took place on the way from Guantanamo headed back to the Naval Academy. There was a hurricane off Cape Hatteras, and Admiral Wilson, the Flag Officer in command of the training squadron, decided that it would be good training for the midships to go through the edge of the storm to show us what a hurricane at sea was like. He apparently had planned to take us through the safe semicircle, but the storm changed course and we steamed through the eye of the storm and into the dangerous semicircle. We rolled as much as 40 degrees on a side, and the seas were mountainous. Of course, the galley fires were out, so the only food that we had was the bread that had been baked before the storm. My future father-in-law had given me a case of raspberry jam to take aboard the ship before we left Annapolis. It helped make the bread go down easier for many of my shipmates. We emerged from the storm undamaged, but we were all a bit wiser about heavy weather at sea.

PS: What do you remember about the living conditions on board the old battleships then?

FLA: On your youngster cruise you were doing the same thing that the sailors did. That was intended so that we would learn firsthand the life of the enlisted men aboard. We cleaned heads,

holystoned the decks, stood messenger watches with the officer of the deck and flunky watches in the engine room. It was typical GI performance.

As in all ships, fresh water was very precious. We were given a bucket of salt water which you could heat under a steam line put by the deck for that purpose. We used it to bathe first and then washed our clothes in what was left. I guess that we must have had fresh water for brushing teeth. I can't remember whether we shaved in salt water, but I suspect so.

First class year, first class cruise, was much better. We were being exposed to the life of a junior officer aboard the ship. We stood Junior Officer of the Deck watches and comparable watches in the engine room. There was quite a bit of professional stuff that kept us busy. We were required to keep notebooks of our work, such as tracing main and auxiliary steam lines in the engine room, the same general requirement in the gunnery departments and when we were lucky enough to get up on the bridge, do a little navigating. All in all, it was learning how the other half lived.

PS: Perhaps that was the most valuable lesson.

FLA: Probably. But the cruises were very worth while.

PS: They really had a breed of professional enlisted men then who made a livelihood in it.

FLA: Oh, sure. These were the days when you have these guys who were first class boatswain's mates who had been in the Navy for 20 years by that time, 16 years at least. There's no question about it, they were real pros. Then, of course, when I went aboard ship for the first time the same thing was true with the officers. I remember my deck division officer aboard the *West Virginia* was a full Lieutenant out of the Academy class of 1920, a two striper after 13 years service. Yes, there were some real pros in those days. It is no wonder those old battleships were shined up to a gnat's eyebrow.

I remember in 1934 when the Pacific Fleet went around to the East Coast we put into New York. We steamed up the Hudson river, all 12 or 13 battleships in close column, probably 700 yards distance, and made a simultaneous "flying moor" off pier 98, I think it was. The anchors were dropped simultaneously on signal, the boat booms all went out together, the boats went over the side, and all flags and pennants were hoisted at the same time. I doubt that we could do that today. Probably today it would be a waste of time to practice this sort of thing. We probably would have been better off at the start of World War II had we had a little less of this and more gunnery practice.

PS: Why, that's a criticism, that the emphasis was misplaced in the '30s.

FLA: Not necessarily. As far as the 1930s are concerned we had experienced almost 20 years of peacetime. It was completely rational to demand that sort of operation in tune with the era of peace. But I do believe that the Navy lost sight of its ultimate mission, namely to fight a war at sea. It has always been my belief that it took the first two years of the war to weed out the people who had spent the first 25 years of their career in this peace time environment. It took

that long to emerge from the peacetime syndrome and realize that we were in an all out fight with the Japanese, probably for our survival.

Consider what happened during the first two years or so of World War II. Take the case of the battle off Guadalcanal, Iron Bottom Bay. It was during the early part of the war that I was traveling by NATS, I think it was called at the time, the Navy's transport service, going back to the states. My seat mate was the Gunnery Officer from the U.S.S. *Astoria*, one of the ships that had been sunk in that battle.

The skipper of the *Astoria* was Captain Greenman. He was a Lieutenant Commander in the Executive Department when I was a midshipman, one of the Battalion Officers, in 1933. So here we were in 1942, nine years later and Greenman was captain of *Astoria*. My seatmate told me how, when the Japanese finally were detected and our ships were being fired on, he asked the Captain, Captain Greenman, for permission to open fire. Permission was denied; the Captain said we might be firing on our own ships. Two more times he asked to open fire and twice was refused. When the Japanese shells were straddling, the Gunnery Officer ordered commence firing without further reference to the Captain. But by that time *Astoria* was getting serious hits and, as we know, quickly sunk. It is my belief that two years later this would never have happened. We would have commenced fire and asked questions later.

It seems to me that this is typical of what we have been talking about — that peacetime frame of mind with 25 years of spit and polish and really not so much learning how to fight a war. This, I guess, is understandable. So I don't feel that I have really been just critical of the fleet operations of the '30s. These things are just the facts of life.

PS: Well, the system didn't encourage initiative or.....

FLA: Precisely. We needed Admiral Sims about that time. I think if Admiral Sims had been displaced one war, it would have been a different situation in 1941. Because he turned the pre-World War I Navy around. I believe that it was between the Spanish-American war and World War I.

PS: Well, when he was urging the gunnery improvements, it was before the war.

FLA: Yes, we should have had someone like him to shake us up a bit.

PS: Well, it could be argued that there was more of that sort of thing in aviation than there was in the surface Navy.

FLA: You mean more innovation?

PS: Yes.

FLA: Oh, yes. I think this is probably so. We had a group of young turks in those days --- Mitscher and some of the others who were anxious to bring aircraft into the Fleet. Unfortunately, they were being held down by the surface guys. The battle line was the name of the game and all

that aircraft were supposed to do was to support the battle line. Ultimately, it turned out to be just the reverse.

PS: I'm sure that those midshipmen cruises were broadening for you personally in the same way that the trip out to the West had been with your parents.

FLA: Oh, sure, yes. I think that this is the purpose of the summer cruises, and for me it was exactly that. This is the way you begin to learn the seagoing trade. I minded my business. I did my job. I did the things that I was supposed to do and was conscientious about it.

PS: And it's a marvelous way to apply what you've learned in the classroom.

FLA: Yes, I think that is the best way of describing it.

PS: Any more to mention from your time as a midshipman?

FLA: I can't think of much of anything that we have not already covered.

## CHAPTER THREE

### INTROSPECTION

PS: Some men have described exactly opposing reactions on the business of being graduated. Some felt a sense of relief, and others were a bit wistful because they enjoyed their time at Annapolis so much.

FLA: Well, my comment on that reflects much that I have already told you about my personality, the sense of reserve that I have. I keep talking to my wife about this. I have talked many times in the last six months to this wonderful woman I have just married, about these things. I say there's something wrong with me, because I just don't seem ever to be able to generate any particular emotion about things that should bring out some emotion. I seem to take things as they come. She says that I'm crazy on that. But take the graduation thing. I seem to approach these things or accomplish them or finish them with, "OK, that's another job done. We'll move on the next one". But I suppose that there are some things, and there are some reactions you are supposed to have, and one might think that graduation from the Naval Academy might be one of them.

Well, in my book the words *supposed to* should be eliminated from the English language. Who the hell has the right to say you're *supposed to* do anything, I want to know? I guess you're *supposed to* either be wistful about it or enthusiastic or something. I keep thinking that there must be something missing in my emotional development. For me it seems always to have been, OK, this is done, let's get on with the next one. It's sort of been that way with everything that I have done, even if it's been particularly exciting.

Take the atom bomb thing, for example. There are only two guys in the world who have had the experience of essentially being in tactical command of the delivery of an atom bomb in wartime, and I am one of them. I suppose you're *supposed to* get very emotional and all the rest about it. "How did it feel?" Well, I don't know. I didn't feel anything particular. I guess it is just like so many other experiences. While they are going on, you don't really feel much of anything except that this is a job that has to be done, and let's get on with it, and the rest of it fades into the background. When you get shot at, for example, you're not scared right then; you are too busy doing what has to be done. But yes, you do get scared after it's all over. Perhaps I had some of these reactions you ask about. I guess it's that I am phlegmatic or pragmatic or maybe just neutral. I don't know, I guess my gears are in neutral more than they are in forward drive.

PS: Everybody is different. For example, I've interviewed some survivors of the *Arizona* attack at Pearl Harbor, and one man got very misty-eyed just at the thought of his lost shipmates. And another was more like you describe yourself. He picked himself up and said, "Where do we go from here?"

FLA: I agree with that. This book thing that I keep saying I am going to write, or I should write. When I talked to my friend Walter Kerr, a journalist, he urged me to get on with it. Tell us what it's like to command the Sixth Fleet. What is the Sixth Fleet, what did you do and how did it

feel? Well, my reaction to this "How did it feel" thing is the Hollywood part. You're *supposed to* have reacted like John Wayne reacts when he attacks a bunch of Japs. It's just not that way with me. Perhaps this goes back to the kind of "in-neutral" childhood I had. There was no great emotional development in our family. And I guess that this carries on throughout your life. As I have told you earlier, I've had more emotional development in the last six months, or perhaps a year, than I have had in my entire life. I don't mean necessarily to brag about this, but a wonderful, human, person has, I think, been able to bring out in me some emotions that I have never experienced in my life before.

All I can say is that I wish I'd known this person 40 years ago. Of course, she was happily married at that time. She had been a widow for six years prior to our marriage. But I think that this, to me, illustrates something very important in my growing up. For the first time in my life I've found something that was not there during my growing up and in my previous marriage. I don't know whether, if I'd had this experience that I am now having (and it's an experience from one individual) during my growing-up years, I might have been quite a different person.

PS: I'm sure you would have.

FLA: Yes, probably. And I think another thing about it, too, is that I was pretty successful in the Navy. You don't get to be number 17 in the pecking order and a Vice Admiral without being reasonably successful. However, I think that had I had a little more of this emotional development, so that I would be a bit more self confident and a little more outgoing, I would have gone further in the Navy because I think professionally I had it to offer. I didn't have it to offer as much from a political point of view and not from a public relations point of view, which I think comes from my family background. I don't know whether this is the sort of thing that you want on this tape, but there it is.

PS: It's fascinating, the business of introspection.

FLA: I remember when I took command of the Sixth Fleet. Secretary Nitze was the principal guest. He gave the main speech. After the ceremony we went down to the flag mess to talk. He asked me what I intended to do with the Sixth Fleet. I know that some people would have told him that he intended to do this, and that, and the other thing. My immediate reaction was to point out to him that I had been in command only two and a half hours. I could have told him there are a few things that I believed, based on my experience as the Deputy Chief of Staff of the European Command, that I thought needed fixing in the Mediterranean, and what I proposed to do about it. But I didn't. I didn't have any particular speech ready. Certainly there wasn't anything artificial that I wanted to say to him.

I found out later that Nitze had a little black book that he carried around where he recorded his impressions of various flag officers that he had talked with. It was from this little black book that he got his potential four-star people. I am very sure that I didn't impress him very much as a potential Sixth Fleet commander.

Yet, on the other hand, about the time I finished my short, one-year tour with the Fleet, I was told by people in NavEur that I was the best Sixth Fleet commander since Admiral Forrest Sherman.

Well, I don't know whether that is true or not, but I think that I did a pretty good job for a couple of reasons. I tried to hit the diplomatic circuit around the Mediterranean. I said to myself that my experience in Paris in the European Command indicated to me that the United States didn't have a very good image in Europe, and I wasn't sure about that image in the Mediterranean. I thought, as commander of the Sixth Fleet I could contribute something, perhaps, to improve the image. Let me illustrate what I mean.

In a conversation with the Chief of Naval Operations of the Greek Navy, he told me that he had issued orders to all his officers never to visit United States ships. There were two reasons for this. One, they got a "how are you going to keep them down on the farm after they've seen Paris?" complex. Our ships were so much more modern and better equipped than any of theirs. The other reason he said was that our officers tended to look down on his officers. They tended to say how great their ships were and about all the wonderful things they could do. Well, he said that he just told his people not to visit American ships. That wasn't the exact thing that I intended to aim at, but it was close.

The first thing I did was to write to all the ambassadors around the Mediterranean and say something to the effect that my impression was that there was a need to create a better impression and reputation of Americans in Europe, and, "If you agree with me, what can I do to help solve this problem in your area?" I suppose that we will talk about this later, so I won't go into details as to what reactions I got from the ambassadors.

So, I had some ideas, but they were not firm enough at the time to talk to Nitze about. I just didn't project myself. I should have. It's much like the way my dad operated while he was doing all those wonderful things for the United Shoe Machinery Corporation. He was totally self-effacing. He didn't go up and demand more pay. He did his job without any great fanfare. So I think that here again my early childhood and growing up begins to show in this regard. There was also another influence that bears on what we are talking about. Throughout my naval career I have always felt that there was not the support that I needed from my wife. Some might say it was not necessary. And I do not make any excuses because of this. She did a good job as the wife of the Sixth Fleet commander and was a good hostess as we entertained around the Med aboard the flagship. She took the trouble to brush up on the French that she had studied in college. She was quite fluent in French, so that entertaining foreigners was much more successful. She had done well as a squadron commander's wife in the early years. But we never really did this together. She did her thing and I did mine, and there was never this kind of.....

PS: Teamwork?

FLA: Yes, teamwork and psychological support. It just was not in her. For example, I remember my third son was finishing high school in the Paris American High School when I received my orders to the Sixth Fleet. She stayed in Paris while he was finishing school, and then took him to London and enlisted him in the Navy, the only thing that he wanted to do. So I went down to Villefranche, the Sixth Fleet flagship homeport, alone.

When I arrived I decided to try to break out of the reticence that I have talked about. I was the boss of the outfit. I planned to be something different than I had been; I thought I should be the social leader of the staff as well. I wanted the staff people, officers and wives, to look to me, not only as military, but also, not as a social lion, as the family head, so to speak. I wanted to be a little more outgoing with the people, a little more sociable with the wives, as supportive as I could. Quite a change for me.

When my wife arrived on the scene, she told me that I had changed. I agreed, telling her that I was trying to do just that. Her reply was, "Well, I don't like it." I am not trying to condemn my wife. I am just trying to illustrate what I have been talking about here; my rearing and its effect on my professional performance.

PS: Well, let me offer a devil's advocate point of view that maybe some of these qualities were quite useful to you, though you didn't realize it.

FLA: I suppose.

PS: Number 17 is not all that shabby.

FLA: That's for sure.

PS: And it could be that your approach, though it may not have appealed to Secretary Nitze, probably appealed to a lot of people who preferred that to the guy who lets words substitute for achievements.

FLA: Okay. I'll tell you another little thing about when I was in Paris and I got my orders to the Sixth Fleet. There were some of us standing around, I suppose to offer me congratulations, when somebody spoke up and said that he sure envied me my new job going down there to command the Sixth Fleet. And immediately someone else spoke up and said, "Well, I don't. I envy his staff." I thought that was probably the best compliment that I had in my entire service in the Navy.

PS: It certainly was.

FLA: And perhaps this attitude, this approach that I had throughout my naval career paid off. As I told you at breakfast this morning, my success in my career, any success that I had in the Navy, was due to the wonderful people I had working for me, and, I think, my capability and willingness and encouragement to let them do their job and backing them up and to say, "Okay, you have it."

There is an example, we'll probably get into this later, but I think that it relates directly to what we are talking about. I had command of the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. I had taken command in Corfu, early in the ship's deployment in the Mediterranean. Admiral Cat Brown was the Sixth Fleet commander, and incidentally, hated the *Roosevelt*. He hated Franklin D. Roosevelt as an individual, and hated anything that had to do with him, including the

Roosevelt dime, I suppose. In any event, for reasons that I will not go into here and which I have only secondhand, the skipper had been removed by Admiral Brown, and I was ordered to take over.

In-port periods were of ten days' duration and after five days the ship was underway to exercise the Air Group for a day and return to port. Further, at every opportunity Admiral Brown would invite local high civilian and military aboard to observe the day's flight operations. And he did so for this operation.

We were in port in Salonika, Greece. The approaches to Salonika were by way of a long channel maybe 30 miles long marked only by buoys, and since the terrain was pretty much a delta, there were few if any radar targets for navigation. On our initial entry into port I directed the CIC crew to navigate us in to an anchorage. I had complete confidence in them, although this was the first time I had an opportunity to let them do their stuff. I am sure that the previous skipper never gave them that opportunity.

On the day we left port for the flight operations at least 50 VIPs came aboard at Admiral Brown's invitation. Flight operations went well and we proceeded to port late in the afternoon. The entrance and the entire area into port was solid fog. So here we are with all the Greek VIPs aboard, and we had two choices, to anchor and wait until the fog cleared, or to proceed into port. I chose the latter and directed the CIC to take us in. Needless to say, the Navigator and I monitored the progress into port and I expect that the same was going on on the flag bridge. About midnight, at the word from the CIC, we dropped anchor and disembarked the VIPs. The next morning we plotted in our anchorage and we were out but 250 yards.

Well, you can't imagine the lift that this gave to those people in the CIC. What I am illustrating is that if you don't give your people a chance to do their jobs, you just don't make it. You don't get the performance that your crew is capable of. And that's the way I have always tried to operate.

PS: What you were doing there was setting a tone that the people can take their cue from.

FLA: Exactly

PS: That they can depend on your backing.

FLA: Precisely.

PS: And just like your Sixth Fleet staff. If you put out the word, "We're not going to be condescending to foreign navies," that word gets around.

FLA: Sure. So if I owe any success that I had in my time in the Navy, it's just purely --- well, I was Deputy Chief of the Bureau of Naval Weapons for Research and Development, and my guys knew this. I said, "Look, you are the guys who really make the decisions. You know more about your job than I do. You make the decisions, and I'll back you up." And this is the way we operated, and I think we had some pretty good results.

PS: Is this a convenient place to break before we get you to the U.S.S. *West Virginia*?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### U.S.S. *WEST VIRGINIA*, BB-48, PACIFIC FLEET DIVISION OFFICER, ASSISTANT NAVIGATOR June 1933 - June 1935

USS WEST VIRGINIA (BB 48)



During the four years at the Academy, I had managed to accumulate several hundred dollars from my annual pay of \$740. I bought a 1933 Ford Roadster, complete with folding canvas top and rumble seat with \$700 of that money. The rest was my small nest egg to get started in the Fleet. Of course, we were required to purchase all our uniforms with the accumulated money, so after that and the purchase of the car, there was not much left. Our monthly pay was \$125 plus a

small subsistence allowance.

I joined up with a classmate, and we drove west in my new Ford Roadster. The only highlight of the trip west was a visit to the World's Fair in Chicago. I reported aboard *West Virginia* about the middle of September in Long Beach, California. My brother Phil had been ordered to *West Virginia* two years before when he was graduated from the Academy, but he had been detached to go to Pensacola, Florida, for flight training a couple of weeks before my arrival on board. Again it was a fortuitous bit of timing; better, I believe, not to be in the shadow of an older brother.

PS: What sort of duties did you get into on board the battleship?

FLA: My duty assignments included Assistant Navigator, Junior Division Officer, both on deck and in the engineering departments, and Assistant Fire Control Officer. It was routine to rotate junior officers into most of the departments of the ship to provide the broadest possible early experience. Under the peacetime environment duty aboard ship while in port was one day out of four. Normally in-port duty comprised standing watches as Junior Officer of the Deck. Liberty and shore leave were granted for the other three days, a welcome change from the confining life at the Naval Academy as a Midshipman.

The duty that I remember most clearly is Assistant Navigator. I was Assistant Navigator for, I guess, at least half the time that I was aboard. It was a first-class job for a youngster, because you're up there where things are going on, up in the front office.

I remember a couple of incidents of interest:

In 1934 the entire U.S. Fleet which had been concentrated in the Pacific, sailed to the East Coast via the Panama Canal. All 107 ships made the transit. After transiting the canal we proceeded to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for training exercises in the Caribbean. Then on to New York City. The highlight of this part of the voyage was sailing up the Hudson River by the Battle Line. I believe there were about 15 battleships. We proceeded up the river as far as pier 96 and upon signal from the Flagship all battleships made a simultaneous "flying moor" while sailing in column at a distance of about 500 yards between ships. Anchors were all let go simultaneously, the National Ensign and the Union Jack and all other special flags and pennants were flown simultaneously, and all boat booms and boats put over the side at the same time by all ships. Quite a sight to be appreciated by a sailor man, and one I doubt could be duplicated in today's Navy. These sorts of exercises are no longer considered to be important and probably are no longer appropriate for the classes of ships and their modes of operation today.

Another event which stands out vividly in my mind occurred while all the battleships were making a sortie from Pearl Harbor. In those days there was a turn of nearly 90 degrees in the channel leading from Pearl Harbor to sea. The channel was narrow as well; it seemed as if one could see the edge of the dredged channel just outboard of each side of the ship. Easy for destroyers, but very tight for a battleship even though then they displaced less than 30,000 tons. By way of comparison, when I had command of the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Franklin D. Roosevelt* she displaced 69,000 tons fully loaded. The particular day of this episode the battleships were proceeding out the channel in column closely spaced about 500 yards or less between ships. *West Virginia* was in the middle of the column, and there were at least five ships in the channel. We came to the turn in the channel, the Executive Officer conning the ship. The Executive Officer was big John Shafroth. I guess you know Jack Shafroth --- a huge man. They had to sew two pistol belts together to go around him to carry his badge of office during General Quarters. As we started into the turn it became obvious to the Navigator, a Lieutenant Commander Greene Dugger, who was in the class of 1914 at the Academy, that we were not turning fast enough and there appeared to be a good chance of grounding on the outside edge of the channel. Contrary to all custom, he preempted control of the ship, ordered "Port engine ahead full", we were making a turn to the left, and "Starboard engine back full", the intent being to get the maximum twist on the ship as it proceeded around the turn. That maneuver accomplished the turn all right, but the next problem was to stop the turn so that the ship would not run aground on the other side of the channel. He was able to regain control of the turn and we continued down the channel as if nothing had happened. Contemplate, if you will, the melee that would have ensued had *West Virginia* grounded and plugged the channel with two or three battleships committed to the channel behind us.

PS: So he had to reverse it and then to go around.

FLA: Yes, he had to reverse the turn to enter the next. I can remember to this day looking over the side of the ship and seeing the side of the dredged channel and the side of the ship just too close for comfort. It is easy to imagine what would have happened had we grounded in the channel with four or five battleships behind us all in the channel.

There are all sorts of ramifications and lessons in this for a young officer to learn. The Navigator taking over with the Captain on the bridge was something that I remembered for a long time. Anyway, I glanced at Commander Shafroth - - - he was blanched white. Captain Stark ---I've never known what his thoughts were on all of this --- took no action. I have wondered whether he thought, the boys got into this; let's see if they can get out of it, or whether he might have been too hung up to take action himself. I have a sneaking suspicion that it was the latter.

That has always been a very impressive experience to me. I had a situation similar to this that almost ended up as a collision at sea.

PS: In the U.S.S. *Corson*?

FLA: Yes, when I had command of the *Corson* a small AVP, seaplane tender. This was a case where the Operations Officer could have taken over and decided not to. And I can understand that, because once he takes over from the Officer of the Deck, he assumes the responsibility.

As for the *West Virginia* situation, I don't think Commander Dugger, the Navigator, gave it a thought. He just saw the situation and recognized that something had to be done and fast. So he took over and did it. I was not privy to any post-operation critiques on the subject!

Life aboard a battleship for junior officers was informal and crowded. Eighteen of us lived in a single bunkroom and we ate in our own Junior Officers' Mess. When one achieved the exalted rank of Lieutenant, Junior Grade he moved to the Wardroom where all the senior officers from the Executive Officer on down were subsisted. If one was lucky he might be moved from the bunkroom into a stateroom to be shared with another Junior Lieutenant. We were not permitted to qualify for top watch standing until that time as well. Promotion in rank was slow in those days too. Three years as Ensign, four years as Lieutenant, Junior Grade and usually seven more as Lieutenant. I remember one deck Division Officer who held the rank of Lieutenant had graduated from the Naval Academy with the class of 1920. Thirteen years later he had progressed to Division Officer! It must be said however, with that much experience the officers of those days were highly professional.

PS: They all have fond memories.

FLA: Yes, all have fond memories. We had one little incident. Four of my classmates, who were kicked out after graduation when the class was cut in the middle, decided that they would buy a boat and sail around the world. Actually, they got as far as somewhere in the Caribbean, and the venture collapsed. But, anyway, they bought a lot of supplies for the voyage, furnished at cost I expect for advertising purposes, and there were several contractors that donated stuff for the trip at reduced cost. Amongst other things were several Colt National Match .45-caliber pistols that they made available to classmates who might want to purchase them at the reduced cost. Well, one of these ended up in the JO mess, and became kind of a bartering item. Whoever had it, if he ran out of cash, would sell it to someone, so the thing moved around the mess, depending upon who needed the cash and who had the pistol. Finally, I bought it and I have it to this day. I carried it on all of my flying out of Guadalcanal. I carried it to Nagasaki in a shoulder

holster that someone made for me. And a short time ago I gave it to Rick, together with a certified document explaining where it came from and that I had carried it on the Nagasaki atom bomb operation. I suspect that, based on what I have heard about other memorabilia that is presumed to have been carried on these operations, it is worth considerable money.

So what else about the days aboard *West Virginia*? Well, I remember one incident that occurred in 1933, the fall I believe, when Prohibition was repealed. We were anchored in San Francisco Bay. I had the Junior Officer of the Deck watch who, you know, stands his watch on the port side and where the enlisted liberty parties leave and return. I'll never forget that night when about midnight the liberty parties began to return from liberty in San Francisco. Unhappily a lot of these kids were brought aboard and piled up like cordwood on the quarterdeck. Those who could walk were sent below to sleep it off. I can understand what happened. All of a sudden liquor flowed freely as it can only in San Francisco.

It's been my impression recently that we have a whole new Navy in this regard. I believe that our white hats may not be doing this sort of thing anymore. I am a member of the Golden Eagles, a group of 200 ex-naval aviators, either pioneers or who have made important contributions to naval aviation. We meet once or twice a year, and during the last meeting in Jacksonville there was arranged a visit to Kings Bay, a major and important base for the missile submarines. On board one of these ships we were given a tour, and at each station along the tour, enlisted men were standing by to discuss their station and answer questions. I must say that I have never seen a more impressive group of sailors. They were sharp. They were smart, and the uniforms were perfect. Sure, this was a show put on for our benefit, but it was my impression that what we were seeing was perfectly normal aboard that ship. At each station on the tour we were given a description there by an officer and a couple of enlisted men of the function performed. I noticed in just about every case when the officer ran out of answers to our questions, the enlisted men stepped up to answer. They were articulate, sharp-looking kids, and I was certainly impressed with them. And I think that this is what we are finding more and more in the Navy today. Of course, I've been out for 20 years, and maybe I am missing something, but this is certainly my impression. Earlier I mentioned the experience in San Francisco, and the same thing happened in New York when the Fleet came around to the East Coast. I don't think that this sort of thing happens as much any more.

PS: There's much less tolerance now for both drugs and alcohol. The attitude back then, as I understand it, was if the man could get up the next morning and do his job, then you forgave whatever else he has done.

FLA: I think that's exactly it. But these were old-time professional sailors who were in it, I suppose, for a lifetime profession. That's what you did in the Navy then.

PS: They couldn't afford a life away from the Navy.

FLA: I think that's probably correct.

PS: They couldn't afford to be married, so their whole life was centered on the ship.

FLA: Precisely. Now let's see, the *West Virginia*, What else?

PS: You told in your memoir a charming story about the preparation for the Iron Man competition.

FLA: Yes. In the peacetime Navy of those early days there were many competitions and competitive exercises between all ships of a particular class. The prize was the "Battle Efficiency Pennant", commonly known as the "Meat Ball" since it was a small triangular pennant of a blue or black color with, if I remember correctly, a red circle superimposed on it. This was awarded to a ship signifying that it was the best-performing ship of its class. Multiples were assigned to the various exercises and competitive activities from which the winner would be determined. These included gunnery, engineering, damage control, all other shipboard evolutions and last, but not by any means least in the competition, the performance of her athletic teams in the many scheduled athletic programs. These included boxing, sailing the ships' cutters, rowing races in the pulling cutters, softball, swimming and several others. The highly prized trophy among the battleships for athletic excellence was the "Iron Man", a bronze casting of a Greek athlete, awarded to the ship that had the best overall record in the many scheduled athletic programs.

PS: Football, basketball?

FLA: Football? I can't remember whether we had football or not. There were baseball, boxing, and the one I remember most was the swimming competition. Since I was on the swimming team at the Naval Academy, and a junior Ensign, I was made the swimming coach.

*West Virginia* was headed for the navy yard for overhaul, and we were ahead in the competition for the Battle Efficiency Pennant. The one thing remaining to be decided before we left for the yard was the swimming competition. Any points made there could really nail down the competition for the "Meat Ball". We had a pretty good bunch of swimmers, but the problem as far as this meet was concerned, was that the ship was scheduled to be at sea for the next week or ten days. I was worried about the team keeping its conditioning.

One Lieutenant Commander DeWitt Carr, the Chief Engineer, was also the athletic officer. He had a fine senior assistant by the name of Pop Old who we all knew ran the engineering department, so Lieutenant Commander Carr didn't have much to do but handle the athletic situation.

I told him of my concern about keeping the swimmers in condition and told him that I had a suggestion. One of the 5-inch gun compartments was empty at the time, maybe we could put up a swimming pool there so the kids could work out while we are at sea. Of course he was surprised and wanted to know what I had in mind. I told him that we should have the sailmaker put together a canvas tank, about eight feet long, three or four feet wide and six feet deep. We could build a wood frame around it to support it and fill the thing with water. Then attach a belt to each side of the tank that could hold the swimmer and let him swim against the belt.

Commander Carr thought that this was a great idea, and since most of the people involved worked for him there was no problem getting the job done.

The kids loved to swim in the tank, and it is probably as good a way as any to build physical condition, for there is nothing harder than trying to swim without moving through the water. When the time came for the meet I had a few "adjustments" to make. I didn't have a very good man in the 220, but I had a very good 440 guy. Of course, all the other ships knew about my 440 man so they moved their best swimmers to the 220. So I very quietly moved my 440 guy to the 220 and the 220 guy up to the 440 where we didn't expect too much competition. The net result of the meet was that we won all first and second places except in the 50-yard dash. There we tied for first. There was a runoff and my man took second. All told we won 71 out of a possible 77 points. This certainly tied up the Iron Man, and with it the battle efficiency competition. So we went back to the ship a bunch of heroes.

PS: What other manifestations of the competition do you remember among the battleships in that era?

FLA: Oh boy, I think the battleships in those days would do anything from cheating to skulduggery to win the athletic competitions, and some of the rowing races were fabulous.

PS: Lots of betting?

FLA: I guess, although I don't know. At least I wasn't involved in any of that. Straight arrow again, remember? But anyway, *West Virginia* had just about everything locked up at that stage, the Battle Efficiency Pennant, the gunnery "E", communications "E", and second, I believe, in engineering. And that brings up a better area to answer your question. All these components of the competition were assigned points that could be won and accumulated. Of particular interest was the engineering competition. Points were mostly assigned for fuel consumption with particular emphasis on consumption in underway steaming. So they devised a system --- I guess all the ships did this. Instead of anchoring, for example, at the end of a day's operations, we would stay underway. We used to do this around San Clemente Island. The engines would be turned over for the first minute of an hour. Then, at the end of the second hour, the engines would be turned over for one minute. So for a two-hour period the engines were turning for only two minutes. So, of course, since points were given for fuel consumption underway and was scored by the number of turns made against the allowance for underway steaming, and with as much steam-consuming equipment as could be turned off as possible, huge scores would be added up. I suppose they all did this, but Pop Old and his boys in *West Virginia* were masters at it.

So I think that this goes back to some of the things that we were talking about earlier as to the realism, or lack thereof, in all these prewar peacetime operations.

PS: The competition became an end in itself.

FLA: Certainly it was end in itself. There's no question about that. And I am sure that there was a lot of skulduggery. I don't know how much cheating there was. Anyway, if there was any way to cut corners, that was to be done.

PS: The most legendary stories, I think, are about Lieutenant Rickover in the U.S.S. *New Mexico*.

FLA: I haven't heard of these, but it doesn't surprise me. I've read a lot about Rickover, but I haven't heard these.

PS: Taking out lightbulbs and not heating the water for showers and what have you.

FLA: That sounds about right. Of course, it is worth considering that competition for promotion in those days was tough, with not too much to go on except the performance of your command. I suspect that captains would go to any length, that didn't show too badly, to look good for the selection boards. And their troops had better perform accordingly.

PS: *West Virginia* was still, at that point, the newest battleship in the fleet. When you add the "E" to that, I imagine she had a great deal of prestige.

FLA: Yes, theoretically I guess that is correct, but let me tell you that the people aboard the old *New York* and *Texas* for example, gave nothing away to *West Virginia*. She did carry a battleship division flag, I have forgotten who was aboard at the time. But that is beside the point.

PS: Admiral Sellers was on board for a while there.

FLA: Not when I was aboard. It was someone whose initials were three Ts.

But there's an interesting thing about these ships. *West Virginia*, *Maryland*, and *Colorado* were all electric-drive ships, and those were vintage, what --- late 1920s?

PS: Early '20s.

FLA: Early '20s. And I understand now that we are going back to electric drive.

PS: Yes.

FLA: Of course, the one thing about electric drive, particularly in the battleship situation, you could get full power back as well as full power ahead. Perhaps in the case of *West Virginia*'s problem in the Pearl Harbor channel, the immediate and full-power response backing is what got us around.

PS: Did you have a chance to handle the ship yourself?

FLA: No. Goodness no. Ensigns weren't allowed to do anything by themselves. We weren't permitted to qualify for top watch until you were a junior lieutenant --- period. I guess you weren't supposed to know enough. I used to stand Junior Officer of the Deck watches, and the same in the engineering department.

PS: Did you get up in the ship's observation planes at all?

FLA: No, never did. I was in the gunnery department, when I was not the Assistant Navigator, in fire control and would run the Mark I range keeper. When we were in New York I was ordered to a one-month school at the Ford Instrument Company that made the range keeper. I was there in New York City for a month. I don't remember much about it, because I didn't have any money and this was in the middle of the Depression. I lived in an apartment somewhere in New York, can't remember where, and took the subway and the elevated train out to Long Island every day. It is interesting that the Mark I range keeper was doing much like the computers are doing today electronically. It was a collection of gears, differentials and integrators. You cranked the inputs in by hand, and out came the range prediction, which was then manually sent out to the guns. Being down in the fire control center was, for me, a privilege.

PS: Supposedly you had the most qualified crew members, the smartest, in the fire control division.

FLA: Yes, apparently. I don't know whether I was included in that group or not. Maybe somebody thought so.

PS: Could you perhaps run through a gunnery problem and how you interacted in that?

FLA: No, I can't. It's so long ago, I've forgotten. I wouldn't even attempt it. Short-range battle practice was kind of simpleminded, because this was largely a turret operation. The pointers and trainers were set more or less manually. It wasn't until you got into the long-range shoots that you worked out of fire control central.

PS: Did you have a plotting room down inside the ship?

FLA: There was a fire control plotting room, and this is where the Mark I range keeper was, and was also the fire control officer's station. There was also the gyro compass, if I remember correctly.

PS: Presumably you got some inputs from the directors and from the visual range finders.

FLA: Well, yes, the visual range finders. We didn't have any directors as such in those days.

PS: I don't know.

FLA: I don't know either; I can't remember. And I guess maybe that's another illustration of my kind of laid-back participation in my jobs.

PS: Do you remember the spit-and-polish aspect that went with the battleship Navy?

FLA: Oh, yes. I'll tell you that quarterdeck was absolutely immaculate all the time. Those teak wooden decks were holystoned every morning, and then they put lye on them to bleach them out. McNamara's lace was on the accommodation ladders. There is no question about it, there was something to be said about the way the ships were kept in those days. And actually, except for a few details, we could have stood a little of that in later days of the Navy.

When I was Exec of the *Midway*, I don't know whether I made myself popular or not, this is one of the things that I worked real hard on --- keeping the ship clean, and keeping the crew looking decent. At the time for liberty parties to go ashore, 4:00 o'clock I believe, I had everybody shift into uniform of the day. None of the dungarees thing. For any men who were on duty in the engineering spaces, dungarees were OK. Everybody else took a shower, cleaned up, and shifted into the uniform of the day. As a matter of fact, I think the crew appreciated it.

Rear Admiral Artie Doyle was the carrier division commander on board when I was Exec. Right outside of the Admiral's cabin was a fairly long passageway, going into the flag mess, probably half the width of the ship. There was also a gallery just outside the passageway. One day the Admiral called me on the phone and said, "Commander, how can you do this to me?" "Will you get up here and take a look at the gallery outside my cabin. "So I went up there and sure enough, it was all right, not the cleanest place in the world, but not good enough. That was really embarrassing because I should be able to do better than that. But he was a wonderful guy. And he said, "How could you do this to me?"

PS: I've heard that he had a wonderful sense of humor.

FLA: Yes, he was great. I think that we learned something in those days in attempting to keep the ships clean and well maintained. I recall when Tommy Booth out of the class of 1931 put the U.S.S. *Ranger* in commission, he was dedicated to the proposition that we were going to keep this ship clean and neat and ready to go. He knew that when a ship gets off on this foot it usually stays that way. And he was a product of the days that we are talking about. OK, you can call it spit and polish, but I think that it's the establishment of standards. The people who grew up that way, when they had an opportunity to take command, this was the standard that they set for their ship. I think that's very significant.

PS: It's the old term "shipshape".

FLA: Sure. Absolutely.

PS: Another thing that went along with that, there was a lot of ritual, almost like you could refer to religious rituals — the bells, the salutes, side boys and precedence lists.

FLA: You bet. And the Officer of the Deck had better know his lesson too. He was responsible for all honors that were presented as people came over the side. And woe unto the Officer of the Deck who missed the boat on some of this stuff. But this is good. I don't think that there is anything wrong with it. This is not some of the busy work that we were talking about earlier. This goes back to the days of John Paul Jones. This ritual is important, and I am afraid that we have lost some of that. It depends on the flag officers and the ship skippers. If they demand it, they will get it. If they don't, they won't.

I would go frequently from ship to ship in the Sixth Fleet, and some places I'd get the treatment and other places I would feel a little bit as if things weren't quite right aboard the ship.

I had a marvelous experience when I had command of an antisubmarine warfare carrier division. I know that we will get into this later, but this story bears on what we have been talking about. We participated in Mid Link III, an exercise with the CENTO<sup>1</sup> navies. This story has to do with the British ships that were there with us, a squadron of eight destroyers. The squadron commander was a Captain in the Royal Navy, Captain Jozef Bartosik. When World War II started, he was in the Polish Navy and had command of a Polish destroyer, and in port somewhere in Africa. He took his ship from Africa to England, turned it over to the British Navy and told them that he wanted to join up with them. Well, he not only joined them, he became a British citizen and proceeded up the ranks until he was made a Rear Admiral, Royal Navy and in charge of fleet operations in Whitehall. But the point of the story is that his flagship and all the ships in his squadron operated with all the protocol and procedures of the Royal Navy, and my experience has been that over the years they have never lost it. To any professional naval officer it's --- well --- OK, I'll be emotional, and say that it is thrilling. It really is.

PS: Do you draw a correlation between that kind of smartness and operational excellence.

FLA: I certainly do. Let me tell you more about my British friend. After the Mid Link exercise was over, it was time for all the participating ships to sortie from Karachi and proceed under their own particular orders. My flagship was the U.S.S. *Essex*, an aircraft carrier, and being too large to enter Karachi Harbor we were anchored outside. We organized a standard sortie wherein the small boys departed first, set up a screen around the harbor entrance to "protect" the sortieing major ships, in this case *Essex*.

I noted the British destroyers exiting the harbor and was surprised to see that they were steaming in a very close column and when clear accelerated to at least 25 knots. The ship, with Captain Bartosik, the erstwhile Polish Captain, in the lead. He headed directly for the bow of *Essex*, passed under the bow, appearing to be too close for comfort, with the remaining ships in close column. As the lead ship passed under the bow it was left rudder and down the side of *Essex* with the rest of the ships following. Then close aboard under the stern, up the starboard side. Then just as the last ship in column had passed under the bow, the lead ship turned close astern of it and headed for sea, followed by the rest. A standard Royal Navy "cutting a dido", and a marvelous display of seamanship. I have often wondered whether our Navy could have

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<sup>1</sup> CENTO, the Central Treaty Organization. It consisted of Great Britain, United States, Pakistan, Turkey, and India. MIDLINK was the code name for a series of joint operations of the CENTO navies.

put on such a performance. But I think that this display of seamanship was a direct result of the stability of the crews of these ships and of the discipline demanded of them by Captain Bartosik.

So if you want to put it crudely, if it looks like a crap house, it probably operates like one. As for firsthand experience aboard ship, I had very little of that. Let's face it I was never aboard many ships, in spite of having command of a couple of ships, two carrier divisions and the Sixth Fleet. And this is why I say that they really took some chances on me when they gave me these commands. But we got away with it.

PS: Did you as an Ensign find yourself in awe of the senior officers, the flag officers, and the Captains?

FLA: Oh sure, They were God, no question about that. Somehow or another I developed a good relationship with Captain Stark. For no reason that I am aware of, he seemed to take a shine to me. He was skipper of *West Virginia* when I went aboard, and about a year later he went up to Cruisers Battle Force for about a year or less and then to CNO. When I was married he gave us a silver sugar and creamer for a wedding present. I wouldn't claim any father-son relationship; he was just one fine gentleman. Mrs. Stark was a fine lady too.

Then we got his relief, a Captain Dillen, an entirely different person who seemed to keep himself aloof, not the kind, warm person like Admiral Stark. I don't recall too much about Captain Dillen since it was only shortly after he came aboard that I was transferred to flight training. I don't know what happened to him, whether he made flag rank, which I doubt, although to get command of *West Virginia* he must have had a good record.

As far as the Admirals are concerned, of course, they were.....

PS: Above God?

FLA: They were next to God.

PS: Did you get sort of disillusioned when you saw Admiral Stark not take any action on that incident in the Pearl Harbor channel?

FLA: Not really. Disillusioned? I must admit ever since, when I was confronted with command situations like this, I've often wondered what went through his mind at the time. You can't help but --- shoot, who doesn't make mistakes? I mean, I think that the Exec goofed it. Shafroth just goofed it up. Thank goodness they had someone who was quick enough to jump in and take charge. Of course, he had his neck out, according to the book. I guess, had we grounded that would have been it for him. It's the same situation that I had in *Corson* when I almost had a collision. So, disillusioned? Not really --- gosh, we are all human. I'm sure we all make mistakes. I know I have.

PS: What do you recall about the ship's Marines?

FLA: Marines? I don't remember much about the Marines aboard ship. Of course, they were all spit and polish as early Marines were. There was an orderly outside the Captain's cabin all the time. I think the Exec had one too. Otherwise I can't come up with anything specific about the Marines. We had a couple of very fine Marine officers in the JO Mess. I didn't know any of the senior Marine officers, nor did I know well any of the senior naval officers except those I worked for, the Navigator, some of the engineering officers and the gunnery officer, whose name I have forgotten now. Ash --- something.

PS: Ashcroft, I think.

FLA: Ashcroft? No. Oh yes, it was Ashbrook.

PS: You mentioned the Panama Canal transit. That was a special exercise, wasn't it, to see how quickly the Fleet could get through?

FLA: I don't know whether it was a special exercise with that in mind. I have no idea. What it amounted to was somebody decided the Pacific Fleet ought to move into the Atlantic. It is reasonable to believe that you are correct. It was not intended to be a long-term move, because the Fleet did training exercises off Guantanamo and then up the East Coast, and returned to the Pacific. There were 107 ships that made the transit of the canal. As a matter of fact, they did this twice. Once was in 1934 while I was aboard *West Virginia* and later in 1937 or 1938.



*Wedding Day, June 14, 1935  
Peabody, Massachusetts, at the Bliss's house*

*Brother Wink to our right, age 11. Maid of Honor, Dot Pierson. To extreme right is first cousin Parker Bartlett, son of my mother's sister Philina. Most left in background, my Best Man, first cousin Harold Day, son of my Dad's brother-in-law, Will Day.*

This time I had my wings and was flying in Utility Squadron One, VJ-1. We were ordered to fly from San Diego to Guantanamo to provide training services, target towing for anti-aircraft firing, and aerial photography of fall of shot for the assessment of gunnery exercises. I was the Fleet Photographic Officer in VJ-1, ran the Fleet photographic laboratory.

PS: What are your recollections of Fleet problems when you were in *West Virginia*.

FLA: I think that my memory is correct that there



were probably only two while I was aboard. Since I joined the ship in the Bremerton Navy Yard during a major overhaul, even the two years was reduced a bit. There were probably two major Fleet exercises during this time and I think that each was in the Honolulu-Alaska-Panama triangle. As far as I was concerned, it was just about ordinary sea operations. Ensigns didn't get very close to the planning or for that matter

close to the execution and evaluation of the operations.

I am sure that the best memory that I have of these Fleet operations occurred when we were completing one with a return of the Fleet to San Francisco. There were two things on my mind at that point. First, I had orders to flight training at Pensacola, and second, I intended to be married whenever I could get back to the East Coast on the way to Pensacola. As is usual around



San Francisco, the area was completely fogged in and stayed that way for four days. There was no radar in those days for navigation, so all that could be done was to steam for the four days in square circles outside the sea buoy and wait. So here I was sweating out a wedding date back in New England. My wife-to-be got the marriage license and purchased her wedding ring which she had to have engraved only "June, 1935".

*A rare photo of our parents together. Taken some years later in Wenham.*

*Left to right: Marion Bliss, Minnie Ashworth, Harry Bliss, Fred Ashworth*

When I was able to get ashore I arranged to fly from San Francisco to

Boston, in those days a 24-hour flight. The aircraft was probably a DC-2, a predecessor to the venerable DC-3. I can't remember how many stops we made going across the country, but finally arrived in Boston where my fiancée met me. This is hardly a discussion of my experiences in Fleet exercises, but I have to say that it was my most vivid memory of them.

PS: How had you met your future wife?

FLA: That goes back I guess to dancing school, that curse that they put upon me. Not that I ever learned to dance. I remember distinctly the teacher saying, "Oh, you'd just better walk. You'll do better that way." So I just walked and I've been doing that ever since. I have to say that this gap in my social education came back to haunt me when I had command of the Sixth Fleet, and I was so embarrassed with my poor dancing that I failed to take advantage of the chance to dance with "Her Serene Highness, Princess Grace of Monaco". Now you know all my innermost secrets!

PS: I suspect that we will talk about that later. So you had a long-distance courtship?

FLA: That's correct, and, as I mentioned earlier, that was one of our problems. I was on the West Coast. She was in college on the East Coast. We really didn't have a close enough relationship to know one another. It was just one of those things that never should have happened. At the moment it seemed like the greatest thing in the world. You know how things are — we were living about five miles apart. She lived in Salem and I lived in Wenham. Further, I had very few dates with anyone else over those two years. It seemed like a good idea at the time. I guess I was in love with her, and I guess that she was in love with me within her capacity to love, with the family background that she had, which I did not know about before we were married. This all came out later. I knew that there was no great love lost in her family anywhere, but didn't realize it at the time. And I guess perhaps if I had known — but that's beside the point. I don't think it bears too much on this.

PS: Did you encounter any resistance from Captain Dillen when you applied for flight training?

FLA: No, not at all, as far as I can recollect. The only resistance that I got from anybody as far as orders are concerned, came when I was in Scouting Squadron Two, my first flight duty. The Bureau of Navigation, it was then, asked for volunteers for the China station. The Exec, Commander Al Malstrom, had just come back from China and the skipper was one Jack Gillon. He later spun in astern the carrier in one of our flight operations in the Pacific. In any event, the Exec passed my request for orders to China up to the Captain with an enthusiastic endorsement. The Captain called me to his office and asked me if I really wanted to submit this request. I told him that the Bureau had asked for volunteers, that I was married and had no kids, and that I thought that if one was ever to go to China this would be the time.

"Well," he said, "if you are not satisfied with your duty here in the squadron, I suppose that this is probably an appropriate move for you." I said, "Thank you very much, Captain." I took back my request and that was the end of that. That was the last of the good days on the China station. The next couple of years would probably have been all right. But then the

Japanese went into China, and it was shortly after that the U.S.S. *Panay* was bombed and things began to be stirred up. So it was probably just as well. It was the only time anyone ever objected to any request for duty. I did learn another lesson from this experience. Explore with your juniors so that you can advise objectively, but don't meddle in people's lives.

PS: I've gathered that some black-shoe senior officers from that era discouraged JOs from going into aviation.

FLA: This is probably true. Firsthand experience? I wouldn't know. Captain Stark forwarded my brother's orders OK. And mine went off *West Virginia* OK.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FLIGHT TRAINING

June 1935 - July 1936

PS: What are your recollections of going into flight training:

FLA: Going into flight training covers the business of being married and spending our honeymoon on the way from New England to Pensacola. I had \$140 in my pocket, and we were driving a new Plymouth convertible that my wife's family had given us for a wedding present, which they could not afford, but did.

We found a house to rent somewhere around Warrington. The thing that I remember most was that although there was a fence around the backyard, invariably the pigs and cows from around the area frequently used our backyard for grazing, requiring me to chase them out.

My wife, new bride as she was, had only a kerosene stove to cook on. Although she had never cooked before, she did a great job of setting up housekeeping and getting started.

Flight training started almost immediately, although I had a short delay because I could not pass the Schneider index test given to everybody to measure their "circulatory efficiency". It took me about a week to satisfy the doctors that I was OK to start training. Must have had something to do with the fact that I had just been married!

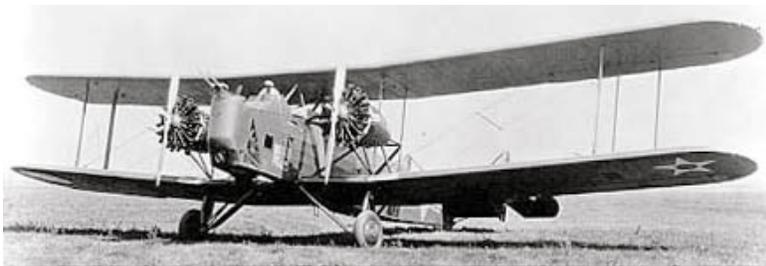
The summer routine was in effect when we arrived. Up at 4:30 to start flying operations at 6:00. The day's work was over at about 1:00, but ground school took up most of the rest of the day. The training program was divided into five phases: Squadron One - Primary Seaplanes; Squadron Two - Primary Landplanes; Squadron Three - Service Landplanes; Squadron Four - Service Seaplanes; and, Squadron Five - Service Fighters. On the average it required about 12 months to complete the program and earn one's wings. Ground school continued for the entire period of the flight training.

Squadron One - Primary Seaplanes was our first introduction to the flight training program and operated from the seaplane ramps bordering the bay. All the aircraft were NYs which, in the old system of designating the maker and the model of Navy aircraft, showed that these were training types (N) made by Consolidated Aircraft (Y). One could hardly get a more elementary flying machine. It was a biplane powered by a seven-cylinder radial engine, the J-5 made by Wright Aeronautical. Only two instruments were provided, namely, a tachometer and an altimeter. One learned to control the speed, particularly the glide speed, by the sound of the "flying wires", those wire-like braces between the wings to give them structural support. Communications between the instructor and the student was by means of a "gosport", essentially a small speaking tube from the instructor in the front seat to the backseat with the tube ending in ear pads in the student's helmet. I was fortunate to have an excellent instructor, a Marine Corps Lieutenant Fox who made it easy to learn, and I breezed through Squadron One with no problems. So on to Squadron Two - Primary Landplanes.

In Squadron Two most of the students flew the NY, but this time with wheels attached instead of the single float used in the seaplane configuration. The wheels were equipped with a couple of coils of elastic "bungee" cord to supply the up-and-down shock absorbing required for



*NY training aircraft in land and sea configurations*



*NK training aircraft*

landing. A tail skid was fitted under the tail of the aircraft and, since we were operating mostly from grass turf fields, the skid took the place of brakes as it dug into the soft turf. I said most of the students flew the NY. True, most of them did, but a few of us were assigned NK airplanes, a trainer much like the NY but, it seemed to us, somewhat inferior and was a much cruder-looking airplane. Assignment was purely random I am sure and had nothing to do with our prospects in the training cycle. It served its purpose as a trainer full as well as the NY. Things went well for me in the early phases of the syllabus and about halfway through we switched to a much more sophisticated trainer, the NS made by Stearman. This plane had a nine-cylinder radial engine and was fairly well equipped with instruments. We learned our advanced primary flying in this plane, fundamental formation flying, stunts and short cross-country flights. It was at this point that I had my first trouble. My instructor was

a Navy Reserve Lieutenant who had been a bush pilot in Alaska for several years. He knew his business all right, but simply had no technique of getting it across to the fledgling pilot. I was not the only student of his who was having trouble, I suppose for the same reason. It went like this. “OK, now I’ll fly a loop and you follow me through with your hands on the stick and feet on the rudder. Now you do it. No, no, not that way, now watch me again”. And he would fly the loop and say, “Now you see how it’s done”. I was just getting nowhere and failed my next check flight. I felt that I would never learn anything from this instructor and decided to take my case to the Chief Flight Instructor and hopefully have a new instructor assigned for me. “Sure”, he said, “who would you like? I think that he had been through this before with students of this particular instructor. That took me aback a bit, but it gave me the opportunity to ask for an instructor with one of the best reputations for teaching in the Squadron, one Lieutenant Lance

Massey, a classmate of my brother's at the Naval Academy. It took him about two flight lessons to straighten me out, and it was smooth flying from there and into Squadron Three. Just as a final note, Lance Massey was shot down and killed in the Battle of Midway.



*SU - Chance Vought*



*O2U - Chance Vought Observation Plane*

"Don't you ever try this." Then he would pull the plane up into a stall and we would go into a spin, and at the last minute, maybe 500 feet from the ground, he would pull it out of the spin and fly normally. Well, you would get impressed with this kind of performance. I don't know that this had any direct effect on the instruction, but you knew that here was someone who knows his business. So then I had no further trouble in Squadron Two.

In Squadron Three we flew O2U and SU landplanes; O for Observation, 2 meaning that it was the second version of the observation plane made by the manufacturer, U for Chance Vought. S stood for Scouting and again was manufactured by Chance Vought. The syllabus included formation flying tactics, longer cross-country flights and, riding in the back seat, working the radio simulating spotting of gunfire and making the reports one would be making when flying an observation plane in the Fleet. We all were required to be able to send and receive Morse code at a rate of 25 words a minute. Things went well for me in Squadron Three except for one time while taxiing downwind in a strong breeze. I failed to keep the tail-mounted elevators in the down position and the wind got under the tail and stood the plane on its nose. Fortunately it didn't go all the way over, but no one was very pleased with the sudden engine

PS: He was the CO of the *Yorktown* torpedo squadron at Midway. What made the difference?

FLA: I can't tell you what the difference was, but it worked.

PS: Didn't he actually explain things?

FLA: Yes, I guess that was the difference. He explained what we were trying to do. Then when we got on the ground we went over the hop and he critiqued my flying. I had some idea of what I was supposed to be doing and what I was doing wrong.

I remember one time on one of the training hops we were up about 2,000 or 3,000 feet. I remember that Massey would do interesting things. One day we were up around 4,000 feet and he said,



*Goat of the Day*

stoppage which required a major overhaul of the engine. This little accident had been done before, for I was required to wear around my neck the "goat" sign until I could pass it on to the next student who had the same misfortune. I guess I wore it for a week or two before passing it along to the next "goat".

PS: I've also heard of the term "Flying Jackass."

FLA: I think that we called it the "goat" badge.

PS: Did you feel that you had a real aptitude for this as you got into it?

FLA: Oh, sure. I loved to fly and I didn't have any inhibitions at all. I guess if I had any limitations, and they were not real limitations, it wasn't until I got into Squadron Five, in acrobatics.

After Squadron Three came Squadron Four - Service Seaplanes. No problem there. Squadron Four took us back down to the seawall area for training in service patrol type aircraft. These were PMs and PDs, P for Patrol and M for Martin and D for Douglas. They were biplanes powered by two nine-cylinder radial engines mounted between the wings and just aft of the double open cockpit, a control position for two pilots. Not only were these planes quite cold to fly in winter, even down in Florida, but also I think that this was the start of my hearing problems. There was one interesting instructor, a little fellow. He flew always in a leather helmet and fleece-lined flying boots, summer or winter. Maybe the big boats grew strange people like that. Later in Utility Squadron One I flew the same type aircraft for as long as eight hours per flight towing targets for anti-aircraft gunnery by the ships and to photograph fall of shot. This probably finished the job on my ears; nerve damage from noise. I don't recall much about Squadron Four since the training was devoted only to learning to fly these large and more complex aircraft.

Then it was on to Squadron Five - Fighters. Squadron Five was the fun squadron. We flew single-seat fighter planes, the F4B, the fourth fighter version manufactured by Boeing. They were biplanes powered by a large nine-cylinder radial engines and cruised normally around 150 knots. The training program was devoted to formation flying, aerial gunnery, cross-country flights and acrobatics. We had no training aircraft carrier at Pensacola at this time, so carrier qualification would have to await our assignment to Fleet squadrons. We did work on field carrier landing practice in order to have some sense of the maneuver when we arrived in our



*F4B - Single-seat fighter plane by Boeing*

assigned squadrons. Acrobatics was the only thing that gave me any trouble. Perfect the first try, but then I guess I got buck fever and didn't do so well. I remember one day when my wife fixed chipped beef on toast for my lunch. That afternoon I had an acrobatic hop. Well, you know what happened, and I had to clean up the chipped beef lunch from the rear cockpit of the NS plane.

I remember my first acrobatic hop in Squadron Five. You were graded by the instructor on the ground watching your maneuvers.

I did everything perfectly, no problem. It is something like my golf. You have a couple of good days, and you think that you have it knocked. Then come the bogeys and the double bogeys. So it was with the acrobatics. Pretty soon I was having trouble, particularly with a roll on the top of a loop. It was fairly obvious that I was not an acrobatic pilot, at least at that stage. I do think that I out grew it later. I don't say that I had any real inhibitions. I did my acrobatics in adequate style, but I wasn't particularly — it didn't give me any great kick.

I completed flight training in the summer of 1936 and was designated Naval Aviator #4,249.

PS: The F4B-5 was a Fleet fighter at that point.

FLA: Yes, it was a Fleet fighter. Well, it was one cut below the new Grumman fighters that were entering the Fleet at that time, but they were not long out of the Fleet. The best was the F4B-5, the small hump-backed plane. They had a speed of about 160 knots, and could perform in all respects like a fighter.

PS: I've gathered that aviation safety was not then the concern that it became later, and this thing that you describe with Massey going so low in a stall illustrates it.

FLA: He was actually in a spin. He spun down from 3,000 or 4,000 feet and took it out in the last couple of hundred feet. But let's put it into perspective. What Massey was doing was not violating safety principles. He was confident of exactly what he was doing, and had probably done this several times before, just for the fun of it. I don't think that today when the Blue Angels take their aircraft to the very limits of the performance envelope, that they are stretching safety rules.

In Squadron Five there were a few cases where pilots got into outside spins, particularly while trying to do the roll on top of the loop. What happens is the plane stalls while on its back at the top and starts to spin with the pilot on the outside of the spin. In those days we didn't know much about outside spins, and in some cases the pilot would bail out and lose the aircraft. After the loss of a couple of aircraft, outside spins went into the syllabus. But I guess what you are saying is probably right. The present emphasis on safety is fairly recent.

PS: When did you get into instrument flying?

FLA: We had some instrument flying in Squadron Three in the service landplanes. You always had a check pilot with you, with the student flying under a hood. It was very elementary instrument flying, to be sure.

I didn't get into real instrument flying until we organized VC-5, the first atom squadron. Chick Hayward was in command, and was an excellent instrument pilot who set high standards for the squadron. Actually, he was responsible for the development of much of the Navy's instrument-flying technique and the instruments that were used. He had been assigned to the Naval Aircraft Factory in Philadelphia working on these instruments. About this time he was given the opportunity to fly with American Airlines for about a year, flying in commercial transports mostly on the East Coast routes. In the squadron he insisted that we learn instrument flying. All pilots were sent to Corpus Christi to take the instrument-flying syllabus there. He anticipated that we would be flying long range over-water navigation flights, and much of that would be on instruments.

I remember I had my squadron check with Chick in the right seat of the P2V-3C. I was to make an instrument approach under the hood into Los Angeles airport. Hayward was watching me, and finally he pointed to the airspeed meter, and I was in the final approach doing 160 knots. Hayward didn't say a thing; he just pointed at the airspeed meter. Well, I got the situation under control and made our landing. He gave me a green card instrument qualification, but I don't think that he was terribly satisfied that I knew what I was doing.

PS: How much formation work did you get at Pensacola?

FLA: We got quite a bit in service landplanes, and some in Squadron Two --- Vee's, echelons, crossovers and things like that. There was also quite a bit in the fighter squadron as well. Now, since there is a carrier stationed at Pensacola solely for the qualification of student pilots before they leave training, students enter the Fleet ready to go aboard the carrier with their squadron.

PS: The U.S.S. *Lexington*. She's still there. Did you get any tactical work at Pensacola?

FLA: No, I wouldn't say so. We had some cross-country flying, making triangle courses around Alabama and northern Florida. We were required to make flights simulating spotting the fall of shot of battleship turret firing. We would ride in the backseat and send the spots by radio Morse code to a ground station.

In service seaplanes it was simply learning to fly them. I can't recall that we did anything resembling tactical flying. I recall when I went to VJ-1 they were flying the same type aircraft, the PDs and PMs. Bob Quackenbush was the operations officer at the time, a Lieutenant.

PS: He was in photography.

FLA: That was later during the war. I was scheduled to fly the day after I had checked in, and I commented to Bob that I had not been checked out yet in the squadron planes. He said, "You are a Naval Aviator, aren't you? Go fly." It was a good thing in those days that flight training took about a year to win your wings, and you had been exposed to all types of Navy aircraft. So I was already familiar with the PDs and PMs and moved right into the squadron operations. Nowadays, the aviators specialize from the start of training and stay in the same community after getting their wings.

PS: And they remain in that throughout their careers.

FLA: Yes. I suppose that in making assignments to squadrons after flight training, they probably use the flight records to try to determine a pilot's best aptitude. I would guess that is why I was not assigned to a fighter squadron. I wasn't particularly anxious to be a fighter pilot and was perfectly happy to go to a dive-bomber squadron.

PS: Did you get some fighter training, though, as part of your Pensacola work in aerial gunnery?

FLA: Yes, some but not much. We did some shooting at sleeves in Squadron Five.

PS: Would you talk about your photographic training, please, while you were going through flight school.

FLA: I discovered that the photographers' school was offered to a limited number of student pilots. There were only two flight students in the course that I took. This was in addition to ground school, so we had to do it on our own time. This was a six-month course and was the same one that was given to enlisted photographers.

PS: Was Quackenbush involved in it then?

FLA: No, I think that was before he became active in Navy photography, early 1936 we are talking about, and it is my recollection that he did not become involved until just before the war.

PS: I just wondered if he had any role in the school.

FLA: No, not then as far as I know. It was run by chief petty officer photographers. I found that when I joined VJ-1 and was made Fleet Air Photographic Officer and ran the laboratory on North Island, many of the enlisted men who were in the course with me showed up out there in the laboratory. As far as the course was concerned, we did all the things that a photo mate did. We learned how to make controlled mosaic aerial maps. We learned about aerial cameras and all about photo developing and printing. We even had the containers of "dark slide developer". You know, sometimes in taking pictures with the Speed Graphic camera we would forget to pull the dark slide, so the picture would be missed. So then we were required to develop the dark slide in the "dark slide developer". It helped to keep from goofing off and missing pictures.

PS: That's sort of the equivalent of that Goat Award.

FLA: Yes, of course.

PS: How sophisticated was aerial reconnaissance photography at that point?

FLA: Actually, it wasn't too bad. We had some pretty good cameras, but laying up the pictures as a mosaic was done by hand. It wasn't until later that automatic equipment for this came into existence. Things were fairly elementary in those days.

There was one interesting experience I had in VJ-1 in regard to reconnaissance photography. We learned that the Army Air Corps at Wright Field was doing some experimenting with night aerial photography. They had developed a "bomb", probably of magnesium or maybe some version of thermite. They weren't flares, but rather they would explode with many millions of candle power. The explosion was essentially instantaneous and provided illumination good enough to use with an open camera lens. It was my idea that we ought to look into this as a possible means of taking pictures over water at night. I went back to Wright Field and got all the information that I could from the Army Air Corps as to their experience up to that time, and at the same time procured a dozen or two of the flash bombs. We decided to see if we could photograph ships on the water.

It was fairly customary to have ships, usually destroyers, at anchor in Coronado Roads, just off the Hotel Del Coronado. We thought that they would make a good target for the experiment, particularly since the area was close to our base on North Island. The fact that the area was very close to the Del Coronado seemed to have escaped us, but would come back to bite later. So one night we geared up for the experiment.

At the time we were flying Sikorsky amphibian aircraft designated JRS-1, having replaced the old PDs and PMs. These were really transports that could carry about 20 passengers. For some reason somebody thought that they would make good camera planes. Actually they were not all that good, for they cruised at around 130 knots. Compared to the slow PDs this made it pretty rough on the photographers handling 20-pound cameras out in the slipstream as they photographed fall of shot.

Further, for this experiment the aircraft lacked any kind of bomb rack to which we might attach the flash bombs; they were about the size of a 100-pound bomb. The problem was to figure out how to release the flash bombs from the plane at the proper time to catch the target in the field of view of the camera. Without bomb racks we concluded that there was only one thing to do. There was, of course, an access door in the side of the airplane. So we decided to secure a lanyard to the door frame with the other end attached to the fuse on the bomb.

Lieutenant DuPuy, the squadron Executive Officer, was the pilot for the night's operation. We planned that he would make his approach to the target at about 5,000 feet, and when he estimated that we would be over the target he would notify me and I would chuck the bomb out the door, and wait.

Well, I remember that we let the first bomb go and it didn't go off. This presented us with a dilemma, for we had no idea where the bomb might have landed, and the effect thereof, if any,

or whether our whole idea for the release from the plane was bad, and if we continued we might be spreading live flash bombs around the area. But we decided to try again.

The second time around, the bomb went off with a hellish flash and with considerable noise, we found out later. I think that we must have fired maybe six of the things that night.

As you might expect, when we got back to North Island apparently the local sheriff's telephone was ringing off the hook from all over the neighboring countryside wanting to know what in the world was going on, or was this the World War starting. These darn things were classified confidential by the Army Air Corps, so we could not make any announcements before we ran the experiment.

PS: Did you get any pictures out of it?

FLA: What we got out of it was a big round circle of light on the surface of the water. If we were lucky and our estimate of when to drop the flash bombs was anywhere near right, the ship would show inside the circle of light. We did actually photograph one or two of the ships at anchor. But we decided that this was not a very practical operation, so we didn't do any more of it.

PS: Did those bright flashes of light disrupt the pilot at all?

FLA: No, not particularly as far as I know. He didn't complain about them. But all in all it was a crazy exercise.

PS: But that's the way things get developed, just trying a lot of things.

FLA: That's right. I think that we gave up night photography after that. I've never heard that anybody else fooled with it.

As far as my photo experience is concerned, from what I learned in the photo school about aerial mapping, my brother and I did put that to some personal use. My brother Phil, was stationed at North Island in VS-2 at this time as I was. He and his wife were desert rats; they loved to go out to the desert east of San Diego to camp on weekends. Somewhere he learned of the story of the "Peg Leg" mine that was supposed to be in the area. I am sure that over the years there have been many "Peg Leg" mines reported, but in this particular case Phil took the trouble to research the story in archives and historical societies in the area. He found that there was indeed recorded stories about a prospector who was supposed to have gone into the desert with his squaw, presumably an Indian woman, parked her while he went off into the desert alone. He would return within 24 hours and always had gold ore. There seemed to be some more or less accurate lore as to where he departed to find the ore that he brought back. Phil concluded that if he were to draw a circle around that point with a radius equal to what one might walk in 12 hours, he would have some idea where the mine might be.

I suggested that we fly an aerial map of the area, and maybe the mine might show up. He agreed with this suggestion and we planned for the job. I had a Leica 35-mm camera with a 50-mm lens. I thought that if we loaded the camera with 36-exposure film we could take as many

pictures as we might need. I could click them off based on the ground speed that we would be flying.

We would be flying an SBU aircraft which was a two-seater biplane with fabric covered wings and fuselage. Phil thought that we could cut a hole in the fuselage in the bottom of the rear seat cockpit, tie back the flaps, and there would be a hole that I could stick the camera through to make the photographs. I had a spirit level that came with the camera which I wired to the back of the camera so that I could keep the camera vertical. We had gun cameras in the squadron that had small watches in them that I could also wire to the back of the camera to use as a timer for making the exposures at the calculated intervals.

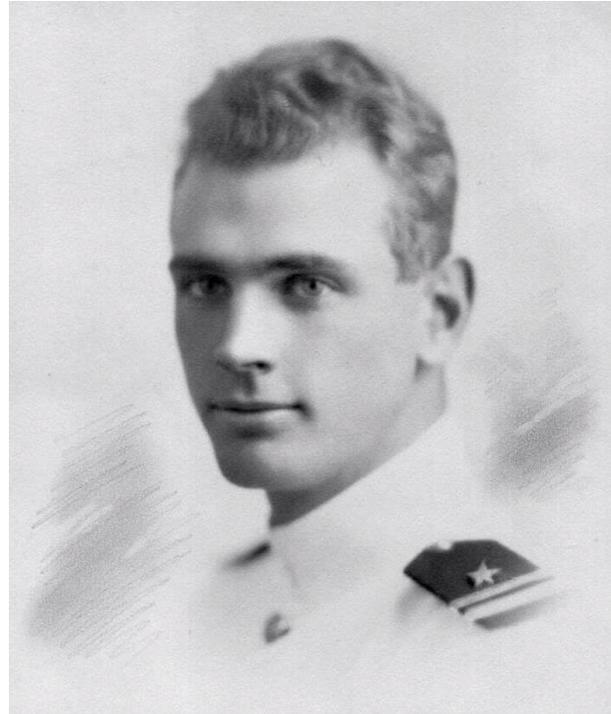
Phil made all the calculations for the intervals between exposures and for the transfer required between strips that would give us the required overlaps. We had to estimate the wind at the planned altitude of 10,000 feet. I guess Phil probably ignored this in the absence of any other information. So with all this, and Phil knowing about where the prospector was presumed to have started his trips into the desert, we were ready.

I curled up on the small deck in the rear seat and took pictures when Phil told me to start and stop. It went off OK and I developed the five rolls of film we used, printed the pictures, enlarging them to three by five, and laid them up on a piece of Masonite to make our map. Amazingly, all pictures overlapped, just barely in some cases, but we had a mosaic aerial map of about 100 square miles of the desert. Based on what knowledge I have no idea, Phil selected an area and asked me to enlarge about ten pictures up to 8x10.

While I was doing this one night about 10:00 o'clock, as the prints emerged in the hypo, lo and behold, right there in the middle of one were clear and obvious "diggings". I rushed over to Phil's house with this find, and he planned an early trip to the desert to try to locate what had appeared in the pictures.

This story is already too long, but to finish it off, Phil did find the exact area in the picture. The diggings turned out to be three sinkhole in the desert, probably caused by water erosion, and what appeared to be tailings were probably a result of the eroded desert surface falling away from the holes. So that was the end of the "Peg Leg" gold mine story. But I did use some of my new-found knowledge about aerial photography.

PS: Well, your brother obviously hadn't learned his lesson from that dime he invested when he was over in England; these fortune adventures.



*Philip Hamilton Ashworth  
1908 - 1938*

FLA: That seems to be the case for sure.

PS: But it made you a pretty good aerial reconnaissance guy in the process.

FLA: In an elementary way, I suppose, yes. It turned out that our calculations were almost correct. We were trying to get at least 10% overlap in strips. We almost did; there were no gaps between strips, but it was close. Phil went back over his calculations for the interval between pictures and found that he had made an arithmetical mistake. He had estimated transfer between strips by using a certain displacement of his turn needle in the "needle ball" instrument in the cockpit. The turns were a little wide so he had used not enough "needle". This was a pretty good demonstration of his flying skills.

I wrote up this story for the Leica magazine, and it was published. I can't remember, but I think that they gave me an order for a choice of some camera equipment, not over \$10.00 or so.

PS: Do you have any estimate of how many square miles you covered on the map?

FLA: About a 100 square miles. So it turned out to be a lot of fun and something different to do. I suspect that you couldn't get away with such an escapade these days.

PS: I sort of doubt it.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SCOUTING SQUADRON TWO/THREE (VS-2/VS-3), PACIFIC FLEET ASSISTANT NAVIGATOR & SQUADRON AVIATOR August 1936 - June 1937

PS: Well, we skipped over your time in the *Saratoga* scouting squadron. Can we get back to that?

FLA: Yes. When I got out of Pensacola, I went to VS-2.

PS: You've got a painting over here, as a matter of fact.

FLA: Oh yes, that's the *Lexington* isn't it?

PS: No, the *Saratoga* had the vertical stripe on her stack structure.



*My brother Phil, ready to go.*

FLA: OK, and the *Lexington* had the horizontal stripe along the top of the structure. My brother was in VS-3 and assigned to *Lexington*. I was in VS-2 and assigned to *Saratoga*. *Lexington* was CV-2 and *Saratoga* was CV-3. So to match the squadron designation with the carriers, VS-3 became VS-2 and VS-2 became VS-3, so my squadron designator was changed from VS-2 to VS-3.

I was right fresh out of flight school and I was assigned as the Assistant Navigator of the squadron, and number 18 in the squadron flight organization. We were flying Vought SBU-1 biplane dive-bombers, fabric covered wings, fuselage and control surfaces. The plane had a two-position propeller, low pitch for takeoff and high pitch for cruising. The dive-bomb sight was purely and simply a telescope mounted in front of the pilot, with crosshairs, and since this was also the sight for the 30-caliber machine gun that was mounted to fire through the propeller, it was bore-sighted for the machine gun. At the start of the dive, you aimed the telescope sight at the target and tried to keep it there. However, as the speed built up in the dive, it became harder and harder to keep the crosshairs on the target, or to maneuver the plane to bring them on. Once you got into the dive, if you weren't on the target, you probably never would be. The best that you could do was to try to aim correctly and then pull out of the dive



*Vought SBU-1 Dive Bomber*



*Vought SBU-1 Dive Bomber*

flying at close to 300 knots. You'd sometimes go as high as six or seven G's doing this. In those days we did not have G-suits, and you would usually at least grey out.

This problem was corrected when the Navy came out with the Douglas SBD, a monoplane aircraft with its split flaps, which were opened for the dive, slowing the plane down so that it could be flown, literally, while in the vertical dive. Therefore, it was possible to maneuver the plane and keep the crosshairs on the target. It was only then that dive-bombing became accurate.

PS: I've heard that the SB2C had a problem also and it was not very forgiving either.

FLA: I wouldn't be surprised; this was a little after my time. I can't believe that they had the same diving problem for they were contemporary with the SBD, and not to be as good as the SBD would hardly have been acceptable. I do remember that the pilots didn't like the landing



*U.S.S. Saratoga, CV-3*

gear retracting arrangement. Apparently it was necessary to hand-crank the landing gear up, and took a lot of muscle to crank the 50 or so turns required.

My squadron operated from the carrier U.S.S. *Saratoga*, so I had to learn carrier landings. As I mentioned before, there were no carrier qualifications during flight training, and the skills had to be learned in the Fleet squadron. I remember the day I first qualified to land aboard *Saratoga*. Some of the regular pilots in the squadron flew us out to the ship in the backseat. I remember six planes went out to qualify. I guess my pilot must have been about the last to land aboard, because just as

Photo # NH 94899 Vought O2U-2 aircraft prepare to land on USS Saratoga, circa 1930



Vought O2U-2 Corsair ready to land aboard U.S.S. Saratoga

soon as he got out of the plane the people on the flight deck gave me big motions to hurry up and get into the front seat. The launch director waved me off and I was airborne. In those days certain equipment was in short supply, and the aircraft that I was flying had a radio transmitter, but no receiver. So here I was flying around the ship with no communication and not knowing what I was supposed to do next. After a couple of turns around the ship I noticed that they were flashing a green light at me. "Gee, I guess I

am supposed to land". So I went into the landing pattern that I had learned in field carrier landing practice, and landed aboard. I have no recollection of that landing pass now and didn't have it then. But it was a good landing, and I was aboard for my first carrier landing.

I taxied up the deck and was met by the ship's Executive Officer, Commander C.P. Mason, who jumped on the wing and hollered at me something to the effect why didn't I acknowledge the radio orders to land aboard. I told him that I didn't have a receiver. He was as upset as he could be, but OK. I made my five additional landings and was qualified.

PS: How helpful was the LSO (Landing Signal Officer) in that process?

FLA: First, in those days, he was indispensable. His guidance to a landing was to be followed, no matter what, and woe to the pilot who decided to come aboard without obeying the signals of the LSO. I think that Lance Massey was an LSO sometime in his early career, and these were the kinds of guys that were the best. I think that the best pilots were made LSOs.

It is remarkable how much you can remember, how natural things become. I remember when I had command of an ASW carrier division. We had TFs aboard the carrier, the Grumman small transport, that was used to carry personnel, cargo and mail to the ship. Most of the time the Division Commander didn't have much to do, so I would fly the TF to get flight time and also for fun. Admirals don't get much actual flying time. A young Lieutenant was the regular COD (carrier on-board delivery) pilot and he used to fly with me in the right seat. I would tell him to hold my hand and not let me get into trouble.

I remember one time that we were heading across the Atlantic on our way to a NATO exercise. Tom Moorer was in command aboard *Shangri-La*, I believe. He was ComCarDiv 6 at the time. I had command of the ASW division in the formation. He asked me to come aboard one day during the passage. So I took the TF to fly aboard his flagship. Well, I was all ready to make my approach to the carrier, when they told me that the meatball was not working and that I would have to come aboard under the direction of the LSO. The meatball was, and is, the modern mechanical landing system now used in all the carriers.

Well, here I was in 1960, and the last time that I had qualified with an LSO was during the war, some 20 years earlier. I made my approach, responded to a "low dip" signal, "you are a little high in the landing groove", one of the more critical signals to respond to, and the only correction that the LSO made during my landing. Essentially, I was responding instinctively in response to my training 20 years before.



*LTV A-7 Corsair II*

PS: Well, they say the same thing about learning to ride a bicycle.

FLA: Sure.

PS: Once you've learned, you know.

FLA: I think that's right. There was a fair amount of amazement on the flight deck when they saw the two stars on the helmet flying the airplane.

But this was great fun. Of course, something like this is about the last time a senior officer gets to fly. Senior

officers in the Air Force probably fly throughout their careers. My son, David, on the other hand, flew A-7s for about eight years in the Navy. Had two tours in Viet Nam. He didn't much like being fired off the carrier in the middle of the night with no ceiling and no horizon, just to climb into the black, fly a normal cycle and land back aboard, just to add to the number of sorties flown. He got a little fed up with that, and got out of the regular Navy. But later he got a flying seat in a Reserve squadron, which he finally commanded in the rank of Captain, Naval Reserve. He then discovered that he had the best of all worlds, flying A-7s without all the tedious stuff that goes with it in the regular Navy. He flew A-7s for 17 years. But I guess all that is not relevant here.

PS: Who was your skipper in that VS squadron?

FLA: If I remember correctly the skipper just before I arrived was Felix Stump, whom everybody knew, I am sure. When I arrived, the skipper was Lieutenant Commander Jack Gillon, who must have relieved Stump. I had a little session with Felix Stump many years later, but that will come up as we progress through this story.

In March of 1937 our squadron was operating from the carrier, probably during some sort of Fleet exercise. Most of the squadron planes had been out on a scouting mission, and upon our return to the carrier, we joined up for the landing aboard. The skipper was leading and was, therefore, the first to land. He broke off from the rest of us, made his crosswind leg and started into his final approach, when he spun in and crashed. Just a splash, a slick and then nothing. The rest of us got aboard OK, but watching that shakes you a bit.

PS: How does the squadron get rebuilt after you lose a skipper?

FLA: Well, rebuilding is hardly the word. The Executive Officer takes over and the rest of us go on from there. I don't recall that we had a relief for the Captain. The Exec was a Lieutenant Al Malstrom who I am sure was fully qualified to take command. It seems a bit callous to talk like this about it, but that's the way it is.

PS: What was the primary type mission you'd fly in that squadron?

FLA: The primary mission was scouting, but dive-bombing was equally important. You looked for the enemy and then you attacked him. The scouting mission sectors were assigned in the direction of the suspected enemy, each sector perhaps ten degrees wide. We cruised at about 120 knots, and the legs of the sectors were usually about 150 miles. One mission then would be about three hours duration.

Navigation was pretty primitive then. We were equipped with a plotting board that fit under the instrument panel and was mounted on slides so that it could be pulled out to be worked on. Wind direction was just about the key variable in solving the navigation problem, and since we scouted at 200- or 300-foot altitude, what wind we saw on the surface of the sea was just about what was affecting us at the cruising altitude. Using the estimated wind speed and direction, the cruising speed of the aircraft, and the course to be flown, a vector could be plotted which would take the wind into account and provide a course to steer. The planes were equipped with a "directional gyro" compass which had to be set from the magnetic compass, and would hold that setting for several minutes before it had to be reset. After some practice, it became quite easy to make a fairly accurate estimate of the wind speed and direction. For example: 10 to 12 knots would leave wind streaks on the water which also gave us the wind direction. Fifteen to 20 knots, more or less would leave whitecaps. Twenty-five or so would leave well defined waves, with spray off their crests.

I think that we talked some about dive-bombing with these aircraft earlier. They were a long way from being effective due to the speeds attained in the vertical dives. The SBD which came out later solved this problem with the split dive flaps.

PS: But this illustrates what you said earlier that the carriers were deemed to be in support of the battle line; that they would go out and scout.

FLA: Yes, to a large degree this is true. However, the early aviators fought this idea, holding that the flexibility provided by the carriers would allow them to operate far and wide, and that the aircraft aboard constituted the main offensive weapon, so to speak. It took a lot of doing, but by the time World War II came along, their ideas became dominant.

PS: Did you quickly get comfortable with operating from the ship?

FLA: Oh, sure. I had no problem with that. As a matter of fact it was great fun. I enjoyed it very much.

PS: Any of your squadron mates that you particularly remember?

FLA: Yes, I remember some. One was Tex Leverett, out of the class of 1932. I remember him mostly because he used to fly only in his shirtsleeves regardless of the weather, winter and summer. The last time I heard of him he was bent over with arthritis. I don't know whether this caused it or not. Then there was Buzz Denbow. He was the Navigator and I worked for him. The Engineering Officer was named Pauley, a Lieutenant mustang type. There's another that I remember, Blackie Regan — well, I'm being a little presumptive here calling him Blackie. He was a Lieutenant at the time and, of course, years senior to me.

PS: Later skipper of the *FDR*?

FLA: I should know that, but I don't; for, if so, he was one of my predecessors in command of *FDR*. He retired in Seattle, and I met him a few times at alumni meetings.

PS: Would you contrast the atmosphere that you encountered in the *Saratoga* with what you had known in the *West Virginia*? Was it less formal?

FLA: Of course, being in the air group, you don't get very much involved in the ship's business. You've got your own problems to work and handle, and it's really quite different. If one were a ship's officer aboard the carrier, then you could make a reasonable comparison. But in the air group you just do your own thing, and you're glad the ship's there and running.

PS: How much did the air group operate as a group?

FLA: I can't remember that we operated at all as a group. Let's see. There was a bombing squadron, VB. Although designated a dive-bombing squadron, their mission was essentially the same as ours. There was a fighter squadron and a torpedo squadron. They flew the older TBD planes. I don't remember that it was called such, but I suppose all together we must have constituted Air Group Three. Actually I am not sure that they were designated air groups at that time.

PS: That may just have been evolving.

FLA: I don't recall that there was a group commander as was the practice later. If I remember correctly, there were just four squadrons assigned to the carrier. Each squadron operation was essentially independent of the others, as I recall it.

PS: We just looked up the roster from that time, and you've identified Alvin Malstrom the Executive Officer under Gillon. What do you remember about Malstrom from the squadron?

FLA: Well, I can't remember anything particular about him. I think that he was somewhat aloof. He did initial happily my request for the China Station, because he had just come back from there. But I think that he was a good Exec. I think that you mentioned that he was a little flighty, but I don't recall anything about that. I thought that he was a good pilot from my naive, neophyte position. All these guys were pretty hot stuff to me in those days.

PS: What do you remember about the role of aviation cadets in the squadron? How capable were they?

FLA: There were not any aviation cadets in our squadron at that time. I was in flight class 80, the last officers' class before the cadets. I think that it was a good program at the time, for I am sure that Washington saw the possibility of war ahead, and that there would be a need for more aviators than could be qualified from the regular officer corps. Many of the cadets became Admirals. One of the best officers I have known in my career was an ex-cadet who later made Admiral, Roy Swanson. As a Captain he was my Chief of Staff on the CarDiv staff. He was good. Later in VJ-1 we had a few cadets, and as far as I recall they were OK.

When war time came along, and when I had VT-11, most of the pilots were young and right out of flight training. Although they were all commissioned, mostly Ensigns, they were all the same cadets, and they were really super.

PS: What you are suggesting is that they weren't looked down upon at all just because they'd come from a different source?

FLA: No. I don't think so at all. And incidentally my brother's copilot when he was killed in the accident was a cadet. As far as I know they got along very nicely.

PS: This was late in 1938, I think you wrote.

FLA: Yes, November 1938. They were doing night flying in VP-10 in Pearl Harbor, which was foolish, really. His squadron was VP-10, an ocean reconnaissance and patrol squadron

PS: Right on Ford Island?

FLA: Yes, they were flying from Ford Island operating in the restricted water area around the island. The squadrons were based on Ford Island and the planes were launched from there. As I got the details of the



*My brother Phil in a VP-10 Squadron PBY*

accident, the cadet, his regular copilot, was actually flying, practicing night landings. My brother was in the right seat. They were doing touch and goes. In addition, they had aboard the new squadron Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander Brady, who was being oriented on the area. I suspect that this was some distraction for my brother and that his attention may have been averted from the job in hand. In any event, on one touch-and-go landing, apparently during the takeoff under full power, the plane ground-looped slightly to the left with no one noticing it and the left wing struck a boathouse on the shore of Ford Island. Of course, that threw them right into the boat house and collapsed the front end of the airplane, which killed the pilot and the copilot. The Executive Officer, who was standing between the two pilots, was in the aircraft for about 12 minutes after the crash, apparently trapped in someplace where there was air, before they got him out. He and all the others aboard were rescued. This illustrates the area restriction in Pearl Harbor for this or any kind of flight operations with patrol planes. It is interesting to note that immediately after that accident the naval air station at Kaneohe was built and all subsequent seaplane operations were done there.

PS: It had to be a great blow, because all along you've described how you sort of looked up to your brother.

FLA: Yes, that's right. When this happened, I was ferrying one of the Sikorsky JRSs from the East Coast to San Diego. We were having trouble with the bottoms of these planes from wrinkling and popping rivets. They were amphibians you recall. I had flown one back east and was returning one to San Diego after the re-work. We had landed in Love Field in Dallas, spent the night, and took off the next morning. The conditions were right, and we took on a load of carburetor ice in the right engine. Since after takeoff we were experiencing some roughness with that engine, we landed in Abilene, Texas, to investigate. For some reason my copilot, a CAP<sup>1</sup> by the name of Harry Holt, later promoted to Commander during the war, thought that there was something the matter with one cylinder. It doesn't make any sense in afterthought, but it made sense then and we ordered a new cylinder to be flown to us from San Diego. When it arrived the plane captain, Holt, and I proceeded to change the cylinder. In the course of this operation Holt went into Abilene and returned with a newspaper. He asked me if I had a brother in the Navy who was a Naval Aviator. When I replied that I did, he handed me the newspaper and I read the account of my brother's crash in Hawaii.

When we finally finished the cylinder change and were ready to leave, Holt asked me if I wanted to fly. I said sure, I wanted to fly. So I guess it goes back to our discussion of my capacity for emotion. Of course you have some emotion over it, but I wasn't anywhere near to the point where I was going back in the passenger area and shed tears over it.

PS: And there was nothing you could do about it.

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<sup>1</sup> Petty Officers had been trained for flying just as the rest of us had and they were known as "aviation pilots". A Chief Petty Officer with wings was called "Chief Aviation Pilot (CAP)". Enlisted pilots below Chief were called "Aviation Pilots (AP)". It is interesting to note that at that time there was a fighter squadron made up entirely of APs and CAPs with a commissioned officer in command.

FLA: No, there was nothing I could do. Life was going to go on. It was a real shame, because he was a fine naval officer and outstanding aviator. He probably would have gone a long way in the Navy. Well, that is if he didn't get killed at Midway. He was right in that group of aviators like Lance Massey and all those contemporaries of his who led the fights at Coral Sea and Midway. Of course, I don't know whether he would have been in carrier aviation, because he was in VP-10 in 1938. But he would have finished with VP probably and gone into the carriers by the time the war started if he hadn't been ordered ashore.

PS: Well, you never know. Like Butch O'Hare had that freak accident.

FLA: Yes, you never know.

PS: What do you remember about the SBU for handling in the air?

FLA: Well, I don't remember too much about it except the characteristic in diving that we have already talked about. They were fine around the carrier. I had no problem with that. They weren't very fast. We cruised at around 120 knots. I think that they had one or two fixed machine guns firing through the propeller. We did fire some at towed sleeves with the fixed guns and some by the gunners who manned the flexible machine gun in the rear seat. Then there was that telescope diving and gun sight which wasn't too effective for either.

As far as gunnery is concerned, you will recall that Britain was already in the war and was getting all the help they could talk us out of, and this included machine gun ammunition. There wasn't much left for either us or the fighters, where it was needed most. If I recall correctly, the fighters were allowed two live-firing exercises per year. Not much training for the job that was about to come.

PS: So the dive-bombing efficiency put a lot of importance on just where you pushed over in beginning the dive?

FLA: Yes, but it was more a matter of whether you were somewhere near to aiming at the target when you pushed over. Remember I spoke about the buildup of speed early in the dive, and how it was just about impossible to maneuver in the dive to correct any error in the aim. We had much the same problem with the TBFs, not that we were anywhere near vertical in the dive, more nearly about 40 or 45 degrees glide. Again, the speed built up rapidly and any aim correction was about impossible. In the case of the TBFs what we ended up doing was much as the Army Air Forces did, namely glide or skip bombing. Gliding, you aimed to put the bomb in the side of the target ship and released at the right time to get a hit. But in any case the SBU was a good plane for its time.

PS: How capable was the maintenance in that area?

FLA: The readiness of the planes was good which reflected, I suppose, their relative simplicity. The fabric-covered surfaces had to be kept up and the engines checked according to schedule.

Since we did have radio receivers and transmitters, I am sure that they gave us some maintenance problems.

PS: What was the life ashore like for a young married man at that point?

FLA: I think that it was very good; however I don't recall too much about it. We lived in Coronado since the VS squadron was based on North Island when ashore. Then when I was transferred to VJ-1 also based on North Island, I had approximately three consecutive years in Coronado. That's good living, and about as close to civilian living as one could get. We rented a fine little house for \$70.00 per month which was a good share of my take-home pay of maybe \$225.00 per month including flight pay, as a junior Lieutenant. We had weekends off, except those days that you had the duty. We never worked on Saturdays. All in all, a relaxed life.

PS: It certainly was relaxed. Did the aviators tend to hang together on shore?

FLA: My wife and I didn't have any particular enclave of regular people. The officers in VS-2 were all much senior to me. Maybe this was my fault. Perhaps it goes back again to the basic thing we have been talking about, that I never was a very gregarious person.

PS: Of course, that's the stereotype for the naval aviator, the outgoing, freewheeling guy.

FLA: Yes, I suppose that is so. That casts me in a different light, I'm afraid. Of course my brother was in Coronado. We had fair contact with him, although my wife and his never got along particularly well together, through no fault of Pat's, my brother's wife. Just a personality conflict. But let's face it, my wife never got along very well with anyone except a select few; I'm sorry to say.

But we had fun together. Once in a while we would drive to Los Angeles for the weekend. We had no children at the time. That was one thing that made life a little easier.

The Beaumont painting that I have given to the Naval Academy museum recently — do you want to cover that here?

PS: Please.

FLA: On one of our trips to Los Angeles we did the "Night Club in the Afternoon" at the Biltmore Hotel, usually on Saturday afternoon. On one of these visits we found ourselves on the floor below the main lobby area, maybe it was called the basement, and there were hanging several of Arthur Beaumont's paintings. Of course, we were familiar with Beaumont and admired his paintings. He was considered at the time I think, to be the "Painter Laureate", so to speak, of the Navy. One of the paintings was of the U.S.S. *Maryland*. Another was of the *New Mexico*, in the harbor, obviously at Hong Kong or Shanghai, because the background was very much Chinese. We didn't like that one because it was just too cluttered, which I think was characteristic of his paintings. Having been aboard *West Virginia*, I asked if there was a Beaumont of her. They told us that there was, but Admiral Stark had that one. I was told that

Beaumont made only one principal painting of a major ship. So there didn't appear to be any chance of getting a *West Virginia*, so, since *Maryland* was a sister ship, we decided that it would be the one we would try to buy. But it was \$150.00. This was in 1938 and \$150.00 was a major part of a month's pay. We weren't quite sure that we could afford it. There was a small park across the street from the hotel, and we went over there and sat down on a bench, and mulled this over for about two hours. Finally, we decided that we would bite the bullet and spend the money to buy it. So we gave them a check for \$150.00. I guess it must have been good; we would always run the checking account down to zero every month just to make ends meet. So we took our prized possession home. Everywhere we moved from then on, we took the Beaumont with us. It was sort of the centerpiece of our home everywhere we went for the next 50 years.

When I was remarried, we were living in an old adobe house in Santa Fe, a very typical home for Santa Fe. My new wife is a connoisseur and an expert on southwestern Spanish artifacts and santos. The Beaumont just didn't fit in very well in that house. So I considered trying to sell it. I wrote to Christie's in New York and sent them a colored picture of the painting and asked if they would give me an appraisal of it. I received a form letter back saying that, whereas it is a decorative piece, it is not the sort of painting that they would be interested in. They suggested that I sell it locally if I wanted to get rid of it. I thought seriously of writing back and asking them that if they ever got in a Beaumont painting at "decorative piece" price to let me know. Also I was interested in its value for insurance purposes. You can insure yourself into the poor farm, so I gave that up. Then there appeared an article in, I think, the *Retired Officer* magazine by someone who had interviewed Arthur Beaumont's son. In the article it was stated that a typical Beaumont, particularly of a major ship, was going for as much as \$50,000. This of course, got my attention, but I still didn't know what to do with it.

David had been in the Navy, and I asked him if he would like to have it. He said he would, but that there was just no place in his house to hang it. He lives in Park City, Utah, a skiing resort. It was then that I decided to give it to the Naval Academy museum. I wrote to the superintendent to see if the Naval Academy would be interested in acquiring it for the museum. He said that they were, so I had it packed and sent it to the museum, and it's now hanging there, and I am delighted. We saw it this morning.

PS: Right.

FLA: That's the story of the Beaumont.

PS: Do you have anything else to say about the scouting squadron you were in?

FLA: No, I don't think so. I think that we have covered that pretty well. I do remember a few times my brother would call me up and say, "Meet me over Hemet." Of course these were the old days when you could do that sort of thing. I'd ask the Operations Officer if I could go. This doesn't make much sense now, but I do have this kind of recollection. We would meet over Hemet, fool around for a while, and go back and land. We did have fun flying together.

PS: Sounds like a very enjoyable life.

FLA: Yes, if you are going to fly, that's the way to go, unless you think about my son, David. He had all the fun of flying in the airlines, and then flying with his reserve squadron, all without the paperwork drudgery of the Fleet squadrons. That is not to say that he didn't work at it. He flew for Delta 18 days a month, and worked in the reserve squadron 12 days a month, which didn't give him much time off. So he really put his back into it. And I think that he was rewarded for all the work because he ended up in command of the squadron, later promoted to Captain in the reserve, and is now in the inactive reserve. He was able to fly A-7s for 17 years, something that not many naval aviators get to do.

PS: Was intelligence any part of what you were doing then? Did you get intelligence on, say, what the Japanese were doing?

FLA: No, not that I recall. Remember this duty in VS-2 was in 1936 and 1937. I suppose that there were some people thinking that there might be a Japanese problem someday, but we weren't aiming for a war with Japan at that time. I don't believe that there were any briefings about the plans for war. There certainly was nothing official having to do with plans for war in any of the squadron work that I was involved with.

PS: In contrast to your classmate Steve Jurika, who was over in Tokyo as an attaché.

FLA: I remember him mostly from Academy days. I thought that he was a strange sort of guy. I've always been surprised at how his life developed, his Ph.D., and I think that after he retired, he became a professor at Stanford.

PS: I think you are right.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### UTILITY SQUADRON ONE (VJ-1), PACIFIC FLEET FLEET AIR PHOTOGRAPHIC OFFICER June 1937 - July 1939

FLA: My short tour of duty in Scouting Squadron Three was a harbinger of things to come throughout my career in the Navy, short tours. I have never been able to decide whether this was because I was continually slated for bigger things or whether this was because they just couldn't find the right place for me. As an added observation, it is interesting to note that I was rarely ever relieved by someone junior to me nor was I ever to relieve someone junior to me. In any event, after serving for 11 months in the carrier scouting squadron I was transferred for duty in Utility Squadron One also based at the Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego. My training in photography while at Pensacola was undoubtedly the controlling factor in this new assignment

PS: Now, what was the role of the utility squadron when you got into that?

FLA: The utility squadrons - there were two, VJ-1 and VJ-2, later designated, I think, as a Utility Wing, were involved in the photographic recording of fall of shot of the gunnery practices of the ships in the Pacific Fleet. The Fleet at the time was located in the San Pedro-Long Beach area. Of course, there were also the smaller ships stationed in San Diego. In addition, our aircraft towed sleeve targets for the anti-aircraft practices as well.



*NAF-PN9-PD aircraft*

Both utility squadrons were flying PD and PM type patrol planes. I suspect that for the record I should explain again the designations PD and PM. "P" stood for

patrol, a short name for ocean reconnaissance. The "D" letter showed that the aircraft was built by Douglas Aircraft, and the "M" for Martin. These planes were of the early 1930s vintage. They were equipped with two radial engines, Wright 1820s, I think. They had an open cockpit for two pilots, and carried a crew of maybe four as nearly as I can recall.

I was assigned to the squadron as the Fleet Air Photographic Officer, with my principal duties being to run the Fleet Air Photo Lab located on North Island Naval Air Station. This entailed the management of the Fleet Air Photographic Laboratory with its 30 or so enlisted Photographer's Mates which was operated under the command of Utility Squadron One. The mission of the squadron was to provide services to the Fleet on the West Coast by towing targets for anti-aircraft gunnery practice and to photograph the fall of shot in all gunnery practices conducted by Fleet ships. Of course, the latter required the major effort of the Fleet Air Photographic Laboratory. It was aboard the U.S.S. *Argonne*, flagship of the Service Force, that

the photographs of the fall of shot were analyzed and the results of the gunnery practices determined.

PS: How was the utility squadron organized? I can visualize how a carrier squadron would be, but how do you set up flight schedules and so forth?

FLA: First, the basic organization was similar to all the squadrons at the time. CO, Exec, an operations group, engineering, a small ordnance group to handle the towing reels, targets, etc., and in the case of VJ-1, the Fleet Air Photographic Laboratory. I don't believe that there was a Navigator. Bob Quackenbush was the Operations Officer of VJ-1 and prepared the flight schedules. I was not directly involved in any of this scheduling, but I suspect that we were provided with the schedule of Fleet gunnery exercises and other operations for which we would provide services. From this, the flying schedules would be prepared to match. Actually, I was busy in my little hole up in the photo lab, so I wouldn't have any firsthand knowledge.

PS: Could you describe what one of those missions was like, please?

FLA: Well, as far as the photographic missions were concerned, they were really just about what you would expect. We would hope to be on station at the time the firing exercise was to start. The planes had a hatch in the very bow which was the photographer's station and from which he photographed the fall of shot. In the patrol plane mode of operation this was the hatch from which the anchoring operations took place. This was a tough job for the photographers, for they had to stand up in the slipstream and handle a camera, probably 18 inches long, about 10 inches in diameter and must have weighed 20 or 30 pounds. We flew these missions at about 85 or 90 knots. Some times it was very cold as well. These flights averaged about four or five hours in duration. Of course, they were not taking pictures the whole time.

One could see easily when the ship fired, and the photographer would point his camera at the target and wait for the splash of the projectiles. The splash would last long enough to give him adequate time to make the exposure which would show the impact relative to the target. Of course, the aerial photos were made obliquely so that each picture would have to be rectified to the vertical in order to measure errors. This was done on the *Argonne* with complicated optical equipment. The errors were measured and plotted for the information of the firing ship and to grade the results of the firing exercise.

PS: It would be very important to mark these plots accurately, so that the ship would be credited with its own firing.

FLA: Yes, of course, and it is worth noting that when a division, say, of battleships, was firing simultaneously, in order to sort out which splashes were whose, the projectiles were fitted with colored dye containers so that the splashes would show from which ship the shot had come. Each had its own color assigned. Of course on this kind of exercise color-recording film was used in the cameras.

Along toward the end of my first year with the squadron we were given new planes to replace the old patrol planes, Sikorsky JRS-1s. They were amphibian transports which could carry about 20 passengers, to give you an idea of their size. As you might expect, being more modern aircraft, their cruising speed was considerably faster than the patrol planes. They too, were fitted with a hatch in the bow from which the photographers operated. Needless to say they hated these planes for, if one might think that the job was tough in the patrol planes, imagine what happened with slipstreams 20 or 30 knots faster.

Whereas these planes made it harder for the photographers, they were quite good for our other mission, towing sleeve targets for anti-aircraft firing exercises. As in the patrol planes, there was installed a power-driven reel which held more than 7,000 feet of wire cable, about 3/16 of an inch in diameter, to which the sleeves could be attached and reeled out astern of the plane, usually to about 7,000 feet. The towing plane would fly at the prescribed altitude and approach the firing ship from the prescribed direction. After the exercise was completed, we would descend to a lower altitude, but high enough so that the sleeve would not drag in the water. The device to which the sleeve was attached had a quick release feature which could be tripped by letting a fairly heavy weight travel down the wire and trip the quick release device and release the sleeve. If we had done our flying right, the sleeve would be dropped in the water somewhere near the firing ship so that it could be recovered for evaluation of the results of the shoot. Then the wire would be reeled in.

Of course we didn't have proximity fuses in those days and the mechanical fuses would have to be cut accurately to detonate the projectile somewhere near the target. It should come as no surprise that it was a rare sleeve that had many holes.

The higher performance JRSs made it practical to fly a formation of as many as six aircraft in formation, each towing a target sleeve against a formation of firing ships. This was supposed to be more realistic than the single ship firing at a single target. I remember clearly one exercise when I was flying the number two plane position to the left of the captain with six planes flying a "V" formation. The first thing that we saw was shells exploding about at our level maybe 300 or 400 yards ahead of us. I remember someone coming up on the radio pointing out to the skipper that the ships were shooting at us. I can't remember whether we broke formation or not. It would have been dangerous anyway with all planes with 7,000 feet of wire behind. In any event the ships corrected the error and the exercise continued.

So that is basically the second mission of the utility squadrons.

PS: Given the importance ascribed to battleships in that era, it sounds like a very useful function.

FLA: It was a useful function all right, but let's face it, in those days they couldn't hit the broadside of a barn door, really. I think you have to admit that anti-aircraft fire didn't amount to anything until the proximity fuse came into the fleet.

PS: And also radar-controlled directors.

FLA: Directors, sure. The proximity fuses were probably as important as anything. If you didn't have the right fusing, even with the radar directors, if you didn't have the right time on the fuses, you're still in trouble. If the proximity fuses came close enough to the targets, they would burst the projectile with a high degree of success. That was their purpose.

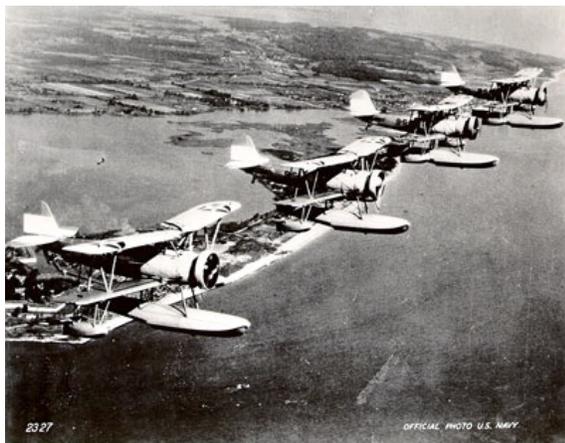


*Vought O2U Observation plane*

PS: Was there a pecking order of types of squadrons back then, a hierarchy?

FLA: Yes, I guess that the answer to that is yes. I would put it this way: the fighter squadrons, the bombing and scouting

squadrons, torpedo, and the last on the totem pole obviously would be the utility squadrons. Who in the world would want to be in a utility squadron when the Fleet carrier squadrons were there? And I felt the same way about it when I was transferred from the carrier scouting squadron to VJ-1. I wondered why they kicked me out of the carrier squadron and sent me down



*O2Us in flight formation*



*O2U water landing*

there. However, it was interesting because I had my own organization, the photographic laboratory. I was a fresh-caught Lieutenant Junior Grade and I had about 30 photographers working for me, as well as I had a pretty good-size budget to manage. The bottom line is, I suppose, that this all came to pass because I had completed the photo course at Pensacola.

The flying was not as exciting as it would be on the carrier, but we did get a lot of hours in on the long photo and towing hops. And further, I think that we may have been more available for the ferry flights back to the East Coast. It's hard to beat independent cross-country flying. The planes that we took back for overhaul were mostly O2Us from the battleships and cruisers. I guess I probably made eight or ten of these ferry flights during the two years in VJ. Another trip that was good training took place when the Fleet moved to Guantanamo in 1937 or 1938. Of course, we flew our planes down there and back.

There is one ferry flight that I feel obliged to report on here. It was normal practice for two planes to fly together and due to the short legs and slow speed of these planes there were many stops en route, usually San Diego to Yuma to Lordsburg to El Paso and so forth. Usually the ferry pilots alternated taking the lead as the flight continued on to the East Coast and the west on return. On this particular flight my companion pilot was my classmate, Tom Moorer.

Navigation facilities both on the ground and in the aircraft were primitive by today's standards. The airway routes were marked by radio range stations that broadcasted a beam, so to speak, down which you would fly to the range station. The beam was created by the merging of an "N" signal on one side and an "A" signal on the other. When a continuous tone was heard you were on the beam. Off the beam you would receive the N or the A depending upon which side you were flying.

Tom and I had reached Lordsburg, New Mexico, where we spent the night, and I remember that on landing we found ourselves in a typical southwest roaring breeze. It was impossible to taxi out of the wind direction, so we let the wind push the plane back toward the operation area where they would be secured for the night. The weather was fine the next morning and we left for El Paso with Tom in the lead. It was a near disaster for me on the takeoff. For some reason, I got myself into a long ground loop, and the further I went around out of the wind direction the worse it got to complete a takeoff. Finally, with the airfield boundary fence staring me in the face, I got the plane in the air and proceeded on course. Incidentally, the airport was a large grass field, no runways.

To complicate my navigation problem, my generator had gone out, and I had only the battery for power to the range receiver. Therefore, I used it only sparingly to check my position. As we proceeded east, I noticed that we seemed to be making a slow turn to the right and slowly heading due south. I tuned in my range receiver and, sure enough, I found that we were in the south sector and heading more and more south. I let this go on for about 15 minutes hoping Tom would recognize what was happening, but we continued heading due south.

Tail chases are always time consuming and it took me another 10 or 15 minutes to catch up with Tom. I gave him the "thumb and finger squeezing the nose" signal to indicate that things were bad, and then patted the top of my helmet to indicate that I was taking the lead. In the classical fashion I led us down low enough to read the name of a station on the railroad line that I had noted we seemed to be following, checked it with the map and found that, indeed, we were deep into Mexico. I reversed course, headed north and landed at El Paso about an hour overdue.

I asked Tom what in the world was going on, to which he replied that he guessed his compass must have been wrong. I have never confronted Tom with this story, but I guess like everyone else the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff make mistakes, too, like all the rest of us.

PS: Anything to add about the utility squadron before we go on to the Postgraduate School?

FLA: In January 1939 the entire West Coast Fleet transited the Panama Canal for training exercises on the East Coast of the United States. The first stop was at the Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where intensive fleet exercises and individual ship training were conducted. This of course required the target towing and photography services of the Utility

Squadrons and Utility Squadron One moved temporarily to Guantanamo and operated our aircraft from the airfield on Leeward Point. Since I was the junior officer of the squadron, it fell to my lot to organize and get into operation an officers' mess. The day we arrived, the Captain said, "I want to have breakfast in our own mess tomorrow morning". We had the two or three Steward's Mates assigned to the squadron with us, but no cooks or any of the accouterments required to establish a mess. After making a few inquiries among the commissary people assigned to the Naval Station, I learned that there was working in the Public Works department a retired Navy Chief Steward, a Filipino. I tracked him down and he agreed to take on the job of running our mess for us. He and I took a station boat up the river to Camaneira, bought our initial stock of food and supplies and the mess served its first meal the morning following our arrival on the station just as the Captain had ordered, with tongue in cheek I suspect, but I learned a good lesson in leadership. Tell a subordinate what you want and let him do it.

In April 1939, the Squadron returned to its home base in San Diego.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY AVIATION ORDNANCE ENGINEERING

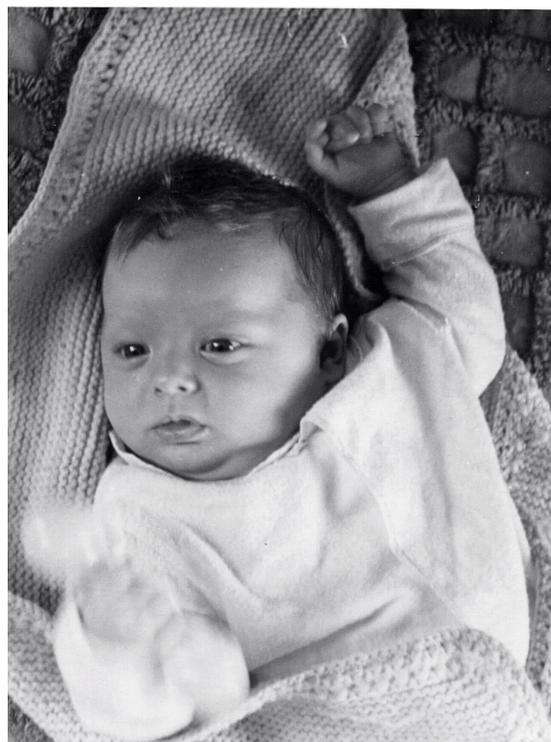
July 1939 - June 1942

PS: This morning, before we turned on the recorder, you told how you got into the P.G. School. That's a story worth repeating.

FLA: I had been told by someone for the past few years that for the good of my career, I should go to the Postgraduate School, particularly with the object of getting into the naval ordnance activity. The "Gun Cockers", that's the way to go! I wasn't particularly interested in going to the school. I didn't feel that I was academically capable of getting out of it what was there to be had, and more importantly, I wanted to stay in the operational flying Navy. So I said to myself, "I'll fool them, I'll make the request and have it on my record. I will ask for the one course I don't think that I can get anyway, namely Aviation Ordnance Engineering, because they take only two aviators per year and I will not ask for an alternate choice". I thought that should let me out because I didn't think that my academic standing at the Academy was such that I could be selected for that particular course. So, as you can imagine, I was ordered to the P.G. School into the Aviation Ordnance course.

*Again we divert back to the text of the Memoirs for this period as it tells the story in a quite different and more cohesive manner than the interview.*

We arrived in Annapolis in July 1939 and found an apartment-like home in a development known as Dream's Landing populated largely by students in the P.G. School. In reviewing this period of my life I find that the most important thing that happened was your birth, Rick, February 10, 1941 at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. We had been trying to have children for nearly the past six years and in spite of much medical study it was in vain. It happened that there had been installed in the dispensary at the Naval Academy a new machine designed to inflate the fallopian tubes. Doctors recommended that Mom have this treatment performed and indeed she was the first one to be treated on the new machine. The attending doctors apparently operated the equipment with the instruction book



in one hand while they figured out how the thing worked. Lo and behold, it worked and you, Rick, were the result.

When the time came to take Mom to the hospital it was the day that we had a major examination. Mom has never forgiven me, I am sure, but I returned to the P.G. School to take the exam. It seemed to me that there was nothing that I could do to hurry things along, and I certainly did not want to do a makeup on the exam. I was having enough trouble academically as it was.

When I checked in at the School, I quickly discovered that there was only one student officer in the entire school who stood lower in his Naval Academy class than I did. Being in the Ordnance group, I found that I was associated with people like Count Ruckner, who stood two in his class; Ray Thompson who stood three or four in my class; Benny Franklin, probably in the first dozen or so in the class, and my contemporary in the Aviation Ordnance course, Dick Kibbe, certainly in the top 20. So here I was among all the brains in the classes of 1932 and 1933. I have to admit that my time in the PG School was — well, academically wasted. I simply didn't have the academic capability to do the job. In spite of the year at Dartmouth and four years at the Naval Academy, I guess I still hadn't learned to think and to reason.

I was fortunate, however, because in prior years anyone who had not measured up in the first year was sent back to sea duty. The year that I entered, it was decided to discontinue that practice, and I was able to be exposed to the program for the full two years. And I was glad of that, but attending the School did shunt me off in a direction that lost me some valuable operational flying time as a Lieutenant, Junior Grade and senior Lieutenant; important times in one's flying career in naval aviation. There was nothing wrong in having an ordnance PG identifying number after your name in the register. Just the opposite, that was considered very prestigious. Most of the senior officers at that time, the successful ones, were these people. After all, effective gunnery performance was the name of the game. Further, as for my case, this was one of the reasons that I was assigned to the Manhattan Project.

*Oral history resumes.....*

PS: What kinds of things did you study?

FLA: The one that I remember the most and which was the most disastrous was math. We started off in differential calculus, went into integral calculus and the various series, permutations and combinations, and probability, all of which were pretty much over my head. We had an excellent professor, Lefty Bramble, but the speed of progress of the class was certainly not geared to my capability and I found myself always trying to catch up. All the other courses were most advanced, and I suppose that about the best that I can say is that I was exposed.

I remember one course that we took: optics. We had a professor who didn't mind deviating from the prescribed syllabus, and I remember so clearly he talked about — this was 1939 — Hahn and Stassman splitting the uranium atom. He described how there was a terrific amount of energy released and, more important, while one neutron was required to split the atom, there were two to four neutrons emitted in the process. I think that he pointed out the significance of this in general terms, but what it all led to eventually was the nuclear piles for the

controlled release of energy for power and the atom bomb. I don't recall that the possibility of a bomb was mentioned. I think that at that time the discovery was so overwhelming no one had yet had time to consider its ultimate effect.

PS: Did it sound like science fiction at the time?

FLA: Well, perhaps. I was not a science fiction fan. It is interesting to note that all the physicists who had any knowledge at all in the field rushed to duplicate the experiment within hours of its announcement, and wondered why they hadn't thought of it themselves. Certainly, I never thought that someday I would be directly involved with the product of this discovery.

That's a diversion from the question of the P.G. School studies. But to go on, we studied hydraulics and courses in interior ballistics — that is, what makes a bullet fly out of the end of the gun. Then exterior ballistics, where the bullet goes and why, after it leaves the gun barrel.

PS: Probably about propellants?

FLA: Some chemistry from the propellant point of view, if we wish to consider gunpowder a propellant, which I suppose it is. We didn't get into any missile study. We are talking about 1939 and 1940, and that was too early for anyone, except probably Wernher von Braun, to be developing missiles. Our area of concern was shipboard gunnery. We got some work in fire control, but, actually, not much about aviation ordnance.

The people who finished high enough in the work of the first two years in all the classes but Aviation Ordnance, went to civilian universities for further postgraduate work leading to a Master's degree. Ray Thompson was one who, I think, went to MIT. There were some who went to other fine universities. They sent my small group to work in Washington, D.C..

PS: There was a group of guys that got into fire control like Corky Ward, Ed Hooper.

FLA: That's right.

PS: And Rivets Rivero.

FLA: They were all one year ahead of me at the school.

PS: And they all did very well.

FLA: Yes, indeed. Rivero told me that the experience at MIT was that the Naval Academy postgraduates were recognized by the professors as well or better qualified for the work there than the MIT students who had completed the MIT undergraduate work. That speaks pretty well, one, for the intelligence and brilliance of the guys who were selected, and two, for the Naval Academy preparation and the time at the Navy P.G. School.

PS: Bramble was there at the school quite a while. What do you recall about him?

FLA: He was a wonderful little guy. I think that he was a very good math professor. I had lots of trouble in his course, but he was very patient with me. I struggled through quizzes and examinations; I am sure that he was discouraged that he didn't seem to get the stuff into me. I was way over my head most of the time, but they can't gear the program to the likes of me.

PS: Another thing I've heard about is the pace itself was very demanding. Did you find that to be so?

FLA: Yes, it was demanding, requiring a lot of study. We had three or four hours of homework most nights. As I mentioned, I felt that it was that demanding as to prompt me to take an examination rather than staying with my wife in the hospital as my son was being born.

PS: Well, from a practical standpoint, that made a lot of sense.

FLA: I suppose that depends which side you are on. So it's the old business. You have to be there for the laying of the keel, but you don't have to be there at the launching.

PS: Well, that's changed now. It's encouraged, if not essential.

FLA: In hindsight, it should be. I was on Guadalcanal when my second son, David, was born. But I was there when my third child, Steve, was born in Washington, D.C..

PS: Did you get discouraged after a while in the P.G. School

FLA: Absolutely. I couldn't believe what I was doing there. But I just plodded along, did the best I could. One may well ask why was I there and what good did it do for me? I certainly don't regret going to the school and it is most worthwhile to have the Ordnance P.G. qualification in the book after one's name. In spite of my problems, I can't help but point out, that among all these savvy contemporaries of mine, I was the first to be promoted to Flag Rank and the only one of my group to be promoted to the rank of Vice Admiral.

*Again we divert to the original text of the Memoirs.*

The time allotted to the Postgraduate experience was normally three years. However, since in my particular case we were given only two years at the school, the third year was finished by an assignment either to one of the Ordnance Laboratories or to the Navy Department Bureau of Ordnance in Washington, D.C., as it was known then. I went to the Bureau of Ordnance and was assigned for duty in the Aviation Ordnance Section of the Production Division. Our main effort was in the production of aircraft gunsights, torpedo directors, bomb suspension racks, machine gun turrets for aircraft, and most important, the production of the Norden Mark XV bombsight. The bombsight work developed into a major effort, for we were at

that time bringing on stream additional production facilities to meet the requirements of the Army Air Corps. Let me illustrate how difficult a job this was.

First, it should be understood that the bombsight was not an electronic device as we might imagine today. Rather, it was a collection of metal gears, integrators and differentials packed into a case about the size of a football. Indeed that is what the device was called, the “football”.

One of the best precision machine shops available to the Navy was located at the Naval Gun Factory in Washington, D.C.. We believed that it would be in this shop that we could iron out the problems that we knew would be involved in getting the bombsight into large production. The Gun Factory was given the complete design disclosure, all the detailed manufacturing drawings together with whatever assistance might be needed from the Norden plant where the bombsight had been produced since its invention by Mr. Karl Norden. In spite of this, it took several months for this highly skilled shop to produce their first successful bombsight. With that experience, the first civilian plant to come on line was the Burroughs plant where high grade precision typewriters and calculators and the like had been under production for many years. Later the Navy built a large ordnance plant in Indianapolis to be operated by the Norden Company as the main source for the production of bombsights. It is worth noting that all of the Army Air Corps bombardment aircraft, including the B-29s used to drop the atom bombs on Japan, were equipped with the Navy-produced Norden Mark XV bombsight. Prior to this time they had nothing comparable to it.

Although archaic in the light of modern computer-designed fire control equipment, it is worth noting that it was at this time that the first fixed machine gunsight, other than the simple telescope mounted on the cowling in front of the pilot, was beginning to be produced and it was our responsibility to bring it into service use. This was the reflecting gunsight, invented and developed by the British, which projected an image of the reticle out in space in front of the aircraft, at least that is the way it appeared to the pilot, which permitted a “heads up” mode for the pilot in aiming his plane and hence his guns against a flying adversary.

The contractor for the manufacture of our version of the British Mark VIII gunsight was the American Cystoscope Makers located in New York City. The president of the company was a Mr. Fred Wappler, a wonderful person to work with. This was the first non-union company that I had come across, and by watching the company work it was a classic example of the effectiveness of such an arrangement and illustrated clearly that the success or failure of a company organized like this reflected completely the policies of the president. A small point, but I remember Mr. Wappler telling us about the various types and pieces of glass that he kept in his office, including a box full of colored glass that he recovered from the cathedral at Aachen that had been blown from one of the rose windows during Allied bombing attacks. He loved glass in all its shapes and colors, and the work of the company reflected it.

One may reasonably ask why was it always that from the British came many of our most significant aircraft equipment developments, including the steam catapult and our latest arresting gear for the carriers, and the angled carrier deck. I have heard it once postulated that since the British were not as rich as we are it was necessary for them to think through a concept before proceeding with its engineering development. On the contrary, we were prone to throw money at the problem and solve it by brute force. There may well be something to this reasoning!

However, though I may be a bit prejudiced. There is at least one exception to this philosophy: the air-to-air guided missile Sidewinder developed at the Naval Ordnance Test Station, China Lake, California.

Another state-of-the-art in aircraft ordnance that was our responsibility was the torpedo director. This was a stainless steel can about nine inches in diameter and four inches high with a sighting bar mounted concentrically on the top which could be rotated around the vertical axis of the can and which had attached to it a slotted blade down the side. Etched on the side of the can were various curves calculated for various target speeds and target angles so that when the slotted blade was set on the appropriate curve the correct lead angle for releasing the torpedo was generated. Pretty primitive for sure, but I guess it didn't make much difference for actually the torpedo planes were not particularly effective during the war. These were manufactured by the Lionel Corporation, the maker of the toy electric trains!

*Again it is useful to revert to the Interview, better to cover several points of discussion that were taking place.*

PS: How do you explain the fact that it took so much effort to get the Mark XV bombsight into production?

FLA: Simply the intricacy and the small size of the instrument and the need for super-accurate machine work is the only way that I can explain it.

PS: The other problem that I've heard is that the device was kept under such tight security wraps that it couldn't be tested, perfected and proved.

FLA: I am not at all sure that's true. The test work was done at the Dahlgren Navy Proving Ground and the sights were supplied to the patrol plane squadrons for operational use. They worked, and as long as the Navy was interested in horizontal bombing, they were in use in these Fleet squadrons. However, it became Navy policy to drop horizontal bombing completely and the Army enthusiastically grabbed the mission and the use of the bombsight.

PS: The other thing that I have heard is that it required the plane to be on a predictable speed and flight path.

FLA: Predictable perhaps in the sense that after the bombing run was started it must continue on that path, with minor adjustments calculated by the bombsight, until the release of the bomb.

The sight was equipped with a small telescope whose motion was generated by the mechanism within the sight itself and controlled by a double knob on the side of the "football". When adjusted correctly by the bombardier, the motion of the telescope would keep the cross wires on the target as the plane progressed to the release point. When the cross wires followed on the target with no further corrections by the bombardier, it was known as "synchronized" and the bomb would be released automatically by a signal from the bombsight. Throughout this time

the bombsight transmitted changes required in the plane's direction by use of an instrument in the pilot's cockpit called the "Pilot's Directional Indicator".

PS: I guess the question should be, how much time did this whole process take? Because the longer it took, the more vulnerable the plane would be.

FLA: I can't dispute that. But take the situation that we found ourselves in during the Nagasaki atom bomb attack. We were flying over what appeared to be a solid under cast. However, at the last possible moment the bombardier saw a hole in the clouds, recognized a point that he could aim at, and it was no more that about 20 seconds that he had to synchronize his telescope on the target and the bomb released.

PS: Was that with a Norden bombsight?

FLA: Yes it was the Norden Mark XV. I am sure that there will be more about this later, but it relates to what we are talking about. Captain Beahan, the bombardier in the crew of *Bockscar*, the B-29 that bombed Nagasaki, was under fantastic pressure. For reasons that we will talk about later, it was imperative that we drop the bomb on the first approach over the target because we had expended a lot more fuel than had been planned. We had just one run to do the job, and it appeared that there would be no way for him to aim his bombsight because of the clouds below us. There were some holes in the clouds. Suddenly through a hole he saw a racetrack which he knew was very close to the target that he was looking for. It provided an excellent aiming point. He synchronized his cross wires on the approaching target and the sight provided the signal for bomb release through an electric impulse to the bomb shackle in the bomb bay. From the time that he saw his aiming point until the bomb was released was about 20 seconds. I think this clearly illustrates what we have been talking about.

PS: Do you remember the security considerations being very tight before the war?

FLA: Oh yes. The "football" was carried in a specially designed case. No one knew very much about it, except of course, the plane people who used it. No one in the field did any overhaul or repairs on the sight itself. This was done as needed in the shops at Dahlgren where the sights were repaired and stored.

PS: Before we leave the story of your duties at the Navy Postgraduate School and subsequently in the Navy Bureau of Ordnance tell me how, if at all, the ammunition problems experienced early in the war impacted on the work that you were doing there in the Bureau.

FLA: These problems were to be handled in other parts of the Bureau since none related to aircraft ordnance as such. Only those that involved torpedoes, both aircraft and submarine, and mines impacted on me personally and then only because I was to become responsible for combat operations in which these armaments would be used. The troubles that we had arose in the interim between wars from classical cases of too closely held security and small private empires

set up within these security boundaries, i.e., ivory towers. The war arrived and we found out that little had been done to modernize in these fields. Torpedo exploders failed to work, even when tested by launching them against stone cliffs on shore lines. They failed to work when hits were made against target ships. There were some cases where torpedoes launched from a submarine reversed direction and struck the launching submarine.

PS: Part of it was a parsimonious approach. They had been unwilling to expend some torpedoes in live tests to see what they would do.

You have talked about feeling some frustration that in prime years you were not in an operational flying seat while you were going to school. Was that heightened when the war started?

FLA: Sure, because I suppose everybody wanted to get into it. I wanted to, but I was stuck in the Bureau in Washington and there was nothing I could do about it. I figured, “Well, I’ll just get on with this job”. But I would soon get my turn.

*Again, since the remaining section of this narrative is more an historical discussion, it is back to the Memoirs.*

Then came December 7th, 1941. I remember the time quite well. We were living in Arlington, Virginia. It was Sunday. Mom was in the kitchen getting lunch, I was in the living room listening to the radio, and you, Rick, were there too in your playpen. You still had the cast on your arm from the fracture you had experienced some weeks before. The radio had announced the attack, but with few details. There were amplifying reports throughout the day, and it became clear that we had suffered a major defeat at Pearl Harbor at the hands of the Japanese aircraft carrier planes.

Monday morning everyone, with no orders from anyone, appeared at work in uniform. Prior to this time we were encouraged to wear civilian clothes, for the hierarchy had not wanted the general public to realize how many military people there were on duty in Washington. Although the tempo picked up, my duties seemed to be just about as they had been in the previous six months. It was interesting to see the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts discontinue most of their purchasing regulations so that most of the red tape was eliminated and procurement of things really moved. It was my opinion that Supplies and Accounts was never the same after that; always a can-do outfit!

In June 1942 I had completed the three years allocated to the Postgraduate work and it was time for me, at last, to go to war. I received orders to duty in the Advanced Carrier Training Group based at North Island Naval Air Station, San Diego.



## CHAPTER NINE

### TO WAR TORPEDO SQUADRON ELEVEN (VT-11), PACIFIC FLEET IN COMMAND

June 1942 - August 1943

FLA: In June 1942 I received orders to the Advanced Carrier Training Group at the Naval Air Station, North Island. This organization had been put in place to train pilots, who soon would go into the Pacific aboard aircraft carriers, with all the experience learned as the war had progressed. I was certainly in this category, for, as you know, I had not had any combat experience.

Shortly after I arrived there, I was surprised to learn that I was to train the new pilots for duty in torpedo squadrons. Well, I didn't know anything about torpedo plane tactics, but I assumed that since I had just completed a postgraduate course in aviation ordnance, I was supposed to know something about torpedoes, at least. Further, I was now a full Lieutenant, and most of the pilots undergoing training were Ensigns directly out of flight training. I suppose it was logical that I be given that job. One might wonder, since this was after the battles of Coral Sea and Midway, that there should be plenty of battle experienced pilots to do this job. But, as you recall, I am sure, the attrition on torpedo pilots had been terrible during Midway, and the few survivors were all on well-deserved leave.

I was well aware that something had gone wrong at Midway, and it behooved me to find out what it was, and why Coral Sea had been such a success. So it seemed to me that the first thing I should do would be to study the battle reports from these engagements to get some idea as to what I should be telling the new pilots that had been assigned to me to "train".

PS: What sorts of information did you have to try draw those lessons?

FLA: There were battle reports from the carriers that described how the air groups had carried out the attacks. The objective was to make coordinated attacks between the dive-bombers and the torpedo planes. At Coral Sea the attacks were just about perfectly coordinated, the object being to try to arrange the tactics such that the dive-bombers would strike first, engage the anti-aircraft fire while the torpedo planes came in at low altitude to launch the torpedoes. Hopefully, our escorting fighters would be engaging the Zeros at altitude so that the striking planes would not have to worry about them. This worked perfectly during the Coral Sea battle largely because we knew where the enemy carriers were and the weather was perfect. Even though the dive-bombers, the SBD Dauntless, attacked from as high as 20,000 feet, and the TBDs, the Douglas torpedo planes.....

PS: Devastator.

FLA: Yes, that is correct, I never could keep the names in mind. The letter and numeral designations made sense until Mr. McNamara changed it to the Air Force system. Yes, Devastator.

PS: Sort of a misnomer.

FLA: I should say so. They were at a terrible disadvantage flying at maybe 125 knots and capable of not much more than 10,000 feet. So here we had the dive-bombers attacking from around 20,000 feet and the torpedo planes attacking at low level in order to launch torpedoes, which had strict limitations on altitude and speed for safe launching. Remarkably, the timing was perfect, a couple of carriers were sunk, and we had no losses among the torpedo planes. So, this was the way to do it.

Then came Midway. Just about everything that was right for Coral Sea was wrong at Midway. First, the commanders had only a vague idea where the Japanese carriers were. They had some general information from the Japanese radio traffic that was being decoded in the headquarters at Pearl Harbor. The scouting reports from the patrol reconnaissance planes were spotty at best and usually too late to be of much help. The weather between our carriers and the enemy objective was most unsuitable for locating targets visually. The net result was that it was almost luck, except for an astute analysis of the situation by one of the flight leaders ..... name?

PS: Lieutenant Commander Wade McClusky.

FLA: Yes, McClusky. He led his group of Douglas SBDs to the target. In the meantime, the torpedo planes, lumbering along at 120 knots or so and flying just above the surface of the sea, were also in the dark as to the location of the targets. But, unfortunately, John Waldron and his squadron of twelve TBDs, Torpedo Eight, was the first to meet the carriers. He attacked with no fighter support which was at altitude looking for the Jap Zeros. It turned out they were down at Waldron's level, and he was attacking the carriers in face of antiaircraft batteries with no one else to shoot at but him. The dive-bombers arrived too late to provide any coverage for the torpedo planes. We know the net result. Torpedo Eight was wiped out except for one pilot, George Gay. The dive-bombers were successful and sank three carriers, I believe.

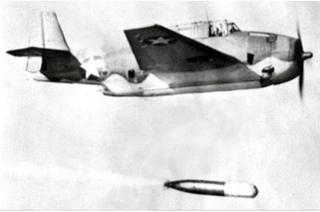
It was obvious to me that there had to be a better way of doing it. As I thought about it, I could come up with nothing better with the equipment then available to the carrier air groups. If only the dive-bombers and the torpedo planes could fly together and approach the target together, then there might be a better chance of making the coordinated attack. But as long as the TBDs were the best we had, this would be impossible.

Then, I was saved, because it was about then that the torpedo plane Grumman TBF Avenger, came along. These planes had the performance to keep up with the SBDs, and the air group could proceed to the attack together. It would then only be necessary that the torpedo plane leader so maneuver as to complete the desired coordination at the target area.

Ensign George Gay was the sole survivor of VT-8. I know all about George Gay, because after I had organized Torpedo Squadron 11, he was assigned to us. This is not intended to



*TBD Devastator*



*TBF Avenger*



*TBF Avenger*

denigrate in any way his performance during the battle. What he did to survive was incredible. However, it turns out that the torpedo he dropped in the battle was the first that he had ever dropped from an aircraft.

PS: I've heard his talk, and he has polished it to a high sheen. He has all the laugh lines rehearsed. "My flight log was sort of sparse. At that point, I had 13 takeoffs and 12 recoveries."

FLA: Well, he was not the world's best pilot, in my opinion, when he came to the squadron, and he was very much of an extrovert. I don't want to take anything away from him. Anybody who can survive what he did during the battle, with his hands and leg shot up, staying in the water for two and a half days before finally getting picked up, watching the battle go on over his head, is really something. When he recovered he was sent out around the country making PR speeches.

PS: And PR was very important at that point, too.

FLA: But back to the Advanced Carrier Training Group (ACTG). Along with the job to train the torpedo pilots, they gave me 12 or 14 young Naval Aviators right out of flight training to make into torpedo pilots. These were kids who had either recently been college graduates, or who wanted to get into the war before finishing college, and all commissioned Ensigns in the Naval Reserve. They were the best group of young men I would ever want to meet. I resolved that these lads would not go to war to drop their first torpedo in a combat situation attacking a Japanese carrier.

I learned that the officer-in-charge of the torpedo school there in San Diego was a very good friend of my brother's, Nick Frank, out of the class of 1929. He was training enlisted torpedoman to overhaul and repair torpedoes, both for the submarines and for aircraft, the Mark XIII torpedo. I went to see him, renewed acquaintance, told him my problem, and that I needed training torpedoes for my kids at ACTG. He said, "Sure, how many do you want?" The net result was that he gave me a continuous supply of practice torpedoes. We worked up procedures for attacks against single ships using destroyers as targets out in the local sea training areas, and coordinated attacks with aircraft attacking from both bows, with each pilot releasing a torpedo in the dummy attack. We would have as many as 12 torpedoes in the water at one time. It is my recollection that we didn't lose a single torpedo. So Nick Frank and I had the best of both worlds. I had torpedoes for my lads to train with and he had torpedoes to overhaul after we fired them. My pilots had dropped in training more than 80 torpedoes.

It was about this time that Replacement Air Group 11 was established, to work up on North Island. I was given command of the torpedo squadron in the group, Torpedo Squadron 11. Our replacement air group was the second of its kind. Air Group 10 was already in the Pacific and endured the hard days on Guadalcanal in the fall of 1942.

When I learned that I would be in command of the torpedo squadron, I went to see the personnel people in the Air Force Pacific Command and asked that the pilots that I had been training be ordered to my squadron. They were, and I had a leg up on getting a squadron organized.

Then I discovered that the Navy was about to disestablish the school for horizontal bombing training, located in the area. There, 12 instructors were going to be reassigned and all were experts with the Norden Mark XV bombsight. Any interest other than mine that naval aviation had in horizontal bombing had disappeared. The current torpedo squadrons were not interested, and the capability was being phased out of the patrol squadrons.

The new TBF aircraft that had been assigned to my squadron was equipped to take the installation of the Mark XV bombsight and its associated Stabilized Bombing Approach Equipment (SBAE). It was my view that horizontal bombing could be a useful capability for my squadron, and further more I knew that the SBAE made an excellent automatic pilot. I asked that the bombardier training petty officers, mostly first class Aviation Ordnancemen, be ordered to my squadron and that we be fully equipped for horizontal bombing.

Additionally I learned that it had been planned to equip the SBD scouting planes with airborne radar, the ASB-1, but those squadrons didn't want it because they didn't believe it would do them any good, and it was too heavy to carry. I asked that the equipment be installed in my planes and we went out to the Pacific later with airborne radar for the first time in any carrier aircraft.

I learned that there had just been developed a radar altimeter that was designed for carrier aircraft installation. I asked for these too and was the first carrier squadron so equipped. I believed that we would be doing night flying when we got into combat, and these would be invaluable. Indeed they were. I owe my life to the thing, which I will mention later.

Soon the air group was ready to move west for further training.

PS: I just want to make one observation. I think it's ironic that the guy who set up this program came from shore duty, that the Navy couldn't find even one person with combat experience to run it.

FLA: You must remember that there were darn few torpedo-experienced pilots left after Midway. This was June or the middle of July, just a few weeks after the battle, and those guys who were left were all on rehabilitation leave. In my squadron I did end up with a Warrant Officer Gunner, Jack Livezey, who had been in VT-6 and a chief AP by the name of Sidney Quick, who had been in one of the torpedo squadrons. And there was Lieutenant Spike Ewold who was in VT-6, I believe, and was a survivor. George Gay came in later after he finished his PR tour of the United States. I was able to get Livezey promoted to Lieutenant and Quick to Lieutenant Junior Grade.

PS: Did you get to even talk to any of the commissioned pilots who came back?

FLA: No, I can't recall that this ever happened, and all I can say in explanation is what I have already stated; there just weren't any around when we were trying to get started. Actually, we were plowing new ground, for the whole situation was changed when the TBFs came in because, for the first time, they could operate with the SBDs.

By this time we were organized into the air group and training as a group. And I can tell you that when we were doing group operations for group attacks, I had my guys tucked right up under the SBDs. At 20,000 feet this was no problem with the new TBF. So you see, in reality what we were doing did not resemble in any way what had been done earlier under the restrictions of the TBD capability. When the group commander gave the order to commence the attack, I would break my squadron out of the formation, split it into two groups to execute an attack from both bows. We would coordinate with the dive-bombers either visually or by listening to the chatter on the radio. And then hopefully — well, I never had a chance to execute this in real war, so I don't know how it worked out.

PS: That was another irony. The strategic situation had changed by the time you got out on station. There weren't many ship-versus-ship actions.

FLA: Yes, that's correct. However, as the war progressed there were engagements when the torpedo planes did attack with torpedoes and with some success. Now, when I finally got my squadron organized, the air group moved west to Hawaii to continue training. We were all loaded aboard the U.S.S. *Chenango*, maybe the U.S.S. *Long Island*, I can't remember which, jeep carriers, and moved to the Hawaiian area. The fighters went to Maui to train and the rest of the group moved into the Naval Air Station, Barbers Point, which was just then finishing construction. I had a pretty good idea that we would be going to Guadalcanal and join the "Cactus Air Force", because there was only one carrier operating in the south Pacific and it had its own air group, the *Enterprise*. She had been out there for a long time, and both the ship and the air group needed some rest and repair time. I didn't see that we would have anywhere else to go but to Guadalcanal from where operations up "the Slot"<sup>1</sup> were beginning. The *Saratoga* was around, but she seemed to be unable to get much more than 100 miles west of Pearl without being attacked by Japanese submarines.

We continued our daytime training there at Barbers Point for a month or so until we learned how to operate together. Then, since I was sure that there would be a lot of night operations out of Henderson Field on Guadalcanal, we turned the squadron into a night-flying squadron and did nothing but night-flight operations for the next month or two. This was worth its weight in gold, for we all were very well qualified for these operations when we arrived on the island. As it turned out we did better than half of our operations up the "Slot" at night.

PS: Sounds like the key guy in your squadron, both before and after it became VT-11, was the guy who planned and scheduled all these maneuvers and training.

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<sup>1</sup> The "slot" was the area north of Guadalcanal to Bougainville Island.

FLA: Of course, we were organized in the regular squadron manner with an Operations Officer who carried out the function that you describe. Later, on Guadalcanal we went one step beyond the routine in doing what you describe. Would you like to cover that now?

PS: Yes, I think that it is interesting and perhaps novel for the times.

FLA: During these early days of the war there was a very successful program for the accession of non-regular naval officers. I can't recall the designation of the program, but it was either the V-7 or the V-12 program. In any event the officers involved in this program were older, probably in their 30s or 40s. They were sent to the Naval Academy for three months' indoctrination and training, then given commissions, mostly I believe, as Lieutenants. They were known early on as the 90-day wonders. And my experience was that they were indeed "wonders". There were four of these officers attached to the Carrier Aircraft Service Unit at the Naval Air Station, North Island. This unit was supporting all the maintenance of the ACTG. Among the four was a particular one named Mike Flynn.

Shortly after VT-11 was organized and had started operations as a squadron, Mike Flynn came to me --- he was probably 10 or 12 years older than me --- "Captain, sir", he said that day, "I want to go to war with you." I told him that I would welcome that, and I would see what I could do. So again I went to AirPac and as a result, they transferred him to my squadron. Shortly thereafter three more of these officers were ordered to the squadron. Mike was most enthusiastic and took hold immediately. When I saw that he was sincere and really wanted to work, I told him that it was my intention to train him in every activity of the squadron. I assigned him to the ordnance gang to learn armament, engineering to learn something about the maintenance problems, out on the operation line to become proficient in fueling and ammunition loading. We put him in the gunner's seat of our planes at every opportunity so that he could become familiar with what the pilots did when they went out on training missions or simulated squadron attacks. Then we made him an understudy of the Operations Officer so that he could learn flight and armament-loading scheduling.

This program with Mike went on all during our working-up period at Barbers Point and later at Nandi in the Fijis as we proceeded west. When we were to go into Guadalcanal, I told Mike that he was now the Operations Officer, and that I expected him to run the ground operations of the squadron. The pilots would have no other duty but to fly. Mike ran the squadron. He was also the best poker player in the squadron. Later, in that forte, he became the nemesis of a group of young Air Corps officers we shared Canton Island with awaiting a suspected Japanese cruiser raid on the island.

I am sure that we will go into this later in more detail, but while we were at Guadalcanal the squadron was ordered to Sydney, Australia for R&R, rest and recreation. Mike went down in one of the planes, an R4D in Navy parlance, a C-47 in Army Air Forces and DC-3 civilian. In climbing out of Tontouta, New Caledonia, the airplane lost an engine, the pilot attempted to return to the field, spun in and all aboard were killed. In addition to Mike Flynn there was aboard a Marine Corps Colonel, Pat Moret, a passenger; Lieutenant Commander Weldon

Hamilton, our Air Group Commander and six squadron crews, six officers and 12 enlisted men. This was a major tragedy for one squadron to suffer.

PS: How do you replace a guy like that?

FLA: You can't. And how do you replace pilots you've lost? Well, I'll tell you how they do. They send out six brand-new Naval Aviators. I suppose that they had been through the ACTG, but they certainly did not have the training of the kids that they replaced. I say kids literally. We were known as the *Babes in the Woods* squadron. Some of the people at Disney worked out a .....

PS: Logo? Patch? Insignia?

FLA: Yes, a logo for us. A patch. This was a cherub with little wings with a helmet and goggles on, and had in his hands a torpedo ready to hurl at some target. This was the *Babes in the Woods* squadron and it was a just-right representation. The Captain didn't have any combat experience nor know much more than the rest of the kids. We did have two or three experienced people, but the rest of them were college kids and an absolutely wonderful bunch of guys. Although it took a bit of doing pulling the group together, when we got done, it was a hell of a squadron.



As for the loss of Mike, we went back into the regular organization mode, and just plain missed him.

As for the pilots lost, as I say, they sent out six replacements and I had to reassign some of the crew members to the new guys. One of these was the group commander's gunner. So you have the pilots. Then they ordered an all-out squadron effort to lay mines at night in the waters south of Bougainville Island. You can't say, "Look, Boss, these six pilots do not have adequate training." "Why don't they?" "They just arrived as replacements and were not trained, and we haven't had them long enough to train them." "This is war. Do it." Two or three didn't come back from one of those operations due to weather and darkness. They weren't trained for night flying. In one of those planes was the group commander's gunner. They just disappeared. There were two weather fronts to fly through. The old hands had no problem, we were trained for it.

I guess that is what commanders are paid for.

PS: Did you wind up taking on a good deal of the load after Flynn was lost?

FLA: I suppose so, but I don't recall that my responsibilities changed. The regular Operations Officer went back to work and we picked it up in the rest of the squadron. But it was a great loss. We had about three more months of operations. Our tour altogether was about six months.

To mention one other thing about the R&R in Australia. Admiral Mitscher was ComAir Solomons at the time. We had been doing more than half of our operations at night, so he told



the group commander that he could send the pilots of the torpedo squadron to Australia for R&R. I told the group commander that the crews were just as tired as the pilots and if they couldn't go, the pilots had agreed that they wouldn't go either. So it was agreed that the enlisted crews would go, too. We were in Australia for ten days in relays as the crews went down in different groups.

PS: How were the living conditions ashore on Guadalcanal?

FLA: When we arrived on Guadalcanal, the war there was over. The last few Japanese were being cleaned out of the hills and jungles. The dirty work was all done, and it was altogether a peaceful operation. Our war was

from there north up the "Slot" as far as Bougainville.

There was a Carrier Aircraft Service Unit (CASU) at Henderson Field that provided servicing for the squadrons based there, assisted by our own assigned enlisted personnel. The CASU operation was pretty well relaxed, and I remember that the CO of the CASU spent most of his time growing a vegetable garden. We got a little benefit from that since his fresh vegetables were served infrequently in the local mess where all the squadron people were fed, and with reasonably good food of the dried eggs and Spam variety.

Shower facilities were outside, and with cold water only, which was hardly a hardship because the weather was usually warm and a cool shower was welcome. The enlisted men were billeted nearby and had their own outdoor shower facilities.

We lived in tents, pyramidal tents, with wooden decks, again, with the officers in their own camp area. The group commander and three squadron commanders lived in one tent. There were three squadron commanders: bombing, scouting, and torpedo. The fighters were based at the fighter strip close by. The others in our tent slept on canvas cots. I had brought along with

me a down sleeping bag and air mattress which I spread on the floor. In the middle of the tent was a table around which there were four folding chairs.

Frequently "Washing Machine Charlie" would come down at night from the north. If he survived the local defenses, he would drop a few bombs in the area and then go home. I think that it was totally a heckling operation for I never heard that there was any significant damage done from any of his bombs. He was called "Washing Machine Charlie" from the drone of his engines as he approached at around fifteen thousand feet. For defense there was a procedure where the Army P-38s had open season against him until he reached a certain vertical angle at which point the fighters would clear the area and the ground-based anti-aircraft guns and searchlights took over. Although the threat was not very serious it behooved all of us to have a fox hole somewhere nearby where we could take shelter if it looked like "Charlie" might be getting close.

If the occupants of any tents were lucky enough, they would be able to assume possession of foxholes that had been dug by earlier occupants of the area. There wasn't one in the vicinity of the tents of the torpedo pilots, so we had to dig one. There were eight or ten of us who took on this project, and for a hole for that many it was no small job. The only thing small about it was the entrance, and it was first come, first served when it came time to take cover in the hole.

We had fun when "Charlie" came to see us because we would gather on top of the foxhole, put on our helmets and watch the show. One night, before the defense was turned over to the anti-aircraft guns and we were watching the show from atop the foxhole, we heard a "whooshing" noise which seemed to be coming closer and closer. That was the signal to take cover and all seven or eight of us arrived at the foxhole entrance at once. Two could make it through the entrance at one time. One guy came running from somewhere close by, hit a clothes line rigged between two tents and in the rebound his helmet struck the guy behind him who was also heading for the fox hole, nearly knocking him out. We waited for the bomb explosion, but nothing happened. The next day we looked around the area and found what was left of a P-38 auxiliary gas tank that the pilot had apparently jettisoned.

"Charlie" gave us another little exercise some weeks later when, about midnight, my squadron was taxiing out toward the operational runway for takeoff for a night operation. I was leading the first division of six planes. The runway lights were all on and the taxi ways all marked with their blue lights. About the time most of us were in the taxi way not far from the runway, a "Red Alert" was sounded announcing the presence of "Charlie" and all the lights in the area were turned off. I called out on the radio to the planes to shut down the engines, get out of the aircraft and get in a revetment that was close by. I noticed that my gunner was still in his turret, so I hollered at him to get out and get in the revetment. He said, "I'm OK, Captain, I can see fine from here!". The "Red Alert" was soon canceled and we proceeded to takeoff for our strike mission.

PS: What was the condition of the runways?

FLA: Oh, The runway was fine. It was noisy when landing or taking off because it was entirely made of pierced plank, Marston Matting. It was all in good shape, and we didn't have any trouble at all from that point of view. Since we arrived there on Easter morning 1943, it must



*This photo was taken by a Life Magazine photographer. I have no idea whether or not it was ever published.....kind of doubt it.*

have been the dry season, for I can't recall that there was ever any mud to worry about.

PS: What kind of tactics did you use for the strikes themselves?

FLA: Just about all of our daytime operations were bombing the airfield and the bivouac areas on Munda Island about 150 miles north of Guadalcanal. We didn't know it at the time, but we were softening up Munda for later amphibious attack. But first,

let me talk about our horizontal-bombing capability which I so carefully put together back in San Diego.

There was an operating airfield on the Jap-held island of Munda. And there was a bivouac area close by where some 6,000 or 7,000 troops were located. The airfield was operational, but I can't recall that any Japanese air from there bothered us any. What we did expect was antiaircraft fire. Our attacks on Munda became sort of "milk run" in nature. We would drop bombs by glide bombing on either or both the airstrip and the bivouac area. Putting the airstrip out of operation was a bit futile for the six or so bombs we would put on it were soon bull-dozed over and the field was back in operation.

I learned that there was a move afoot to step up the attacks on Munda and the neighboring island of Kolombangara to start the preparations for the landings soon to come. I went to see General Schilt, Marine Corps, who was the "Strike Commander" for Admiral Mitscher's operations from Guadalcanal. I told him of our horizontal-bombing capability, and if he would let me, I would guarantee putting 18 2,000-pound bombs on the runway more or less simultaneously. We had been exercising our bombardiers, and I was confident of my proposal. I told the General that normally we approached the island at around 6,000 feet to start our glide-bombing attacks. That would be where the Japanese would be expecting us and that would probably be where all the AA would be set to burst. I would propose to surprise the Japanese by making the bombing approach at 8,000 feet or above. Our planes would fly in a wide "V" formation, nine planes on each wing, and each plane would drop its bomb independently on the runway. The General, reluctantly I thought, agreed to let me do it. A day or two later he called me to Strike Command and told me, "I'm sorry about this, but I know what your boys can do with glide-bombing, but I don't know anything about your horizontal-bombing, so scratch it and do your regular attacks."

So that was the end of my horizontal-bombing performance. It is sad that so often good ideas seem to fall on deaf ears.

PS: Were you typically escorted by fighters on these missions?

FLA: The answer to that is, generally, no. There seemed to be no opposition from fighters on the "milk runs" to Munda. Of course, at that time in the war there was no night fighter capability and there was no fighter escort on any of the night strikes. We made one all-out air group daytime strike against shipping anchored south of Bougainville which was escorted by our fighter squadron and a New Zealand squadron of P-40s. They had pretty severe opposition from Japanese Zeros. Incidentally the P-40 squadron was commanded by a young Squadron Leader from the Royal Air Force, a veteran of the Battle of Britain. This was about the limit of range of our fighters, F4Fs at the time, but they had a pretty good day fighting the Jap Zeros.

This strike was the only air group strike operation that we had. There was intelligence information that there would be two or three cruisers, several destroyers and some smaller ships anchored in the roads on the south end of Bougainville. Probably the Japanese also had information that there might be amphibious landing operations against New Georgia, the collective title of the islands from Guadalcanal north to Bougainville, and these ships constituted some sort of a defense force. Our squadron had mined the area some days before. I think that we should cover that later. It was one of our toughest operations and one in which we lost some planes.

As a result of the strike, one cruiser was sunk, one damaged so badly that it was known to have escaped and was last seen proceeding north, steaming slowly astern. Since the group was at the limit of range of the aircraft, there was no opportunity to pursue and try to sink that one. If I recall correctly, a couple of the destroyers were also sunk, so it was a quite successful operation. I have to confess that my four, five 500-pound bombs released in salvo all missed.

When the group returned to Henderson Field, Admiral Mitscher called the squadron commanders and the air group commander to his office to give him a brief on the operation. When we had each made our reports, Admiral Mitscher said, "Better than Midway! Better than Midway!" I thought that was a bit overblown, but I suppose the presence of those Japanese ships so close to Guadalcanal was a major worry with the amphibious operations soon to start.

PS: Did you have any other contacts with him?

FLA: No.

PS: How about Pappy Boyington?

FLA: No, I don't think that he was anywhere near Guadalcanal at this time. The only other indirect contact I had with the Admiral had to do with a recommendation he signed off on for the award to me of a Navy Cross. I am sure that it was not deserved, but he forwarded it recommending approval. It went up to ComSoPac, Admiral Shafroth, at the time. He downgraded it to a Distinguished Flying Cross, which was all right. I didn't deserve a Navy



*In my flying machine, Guadalcanal*

Cross. All in all, I think that the operations of our squadron were effective enough to warrant the Distinguished Flying Cross. I did hit a merchant ship one night up at Bougainville which was an interesting operation worth talking about.

PS: This was a bomb or torpedo?

FLA: A bomb. We could carry four, 500-pound-general purpose bombs in the bomb bay, and as usual this was a glide-bombing attack.

We had the word, probably from a coastwatcher, that there were merchantmen anchored close ashore on the south coast of Bougainville. So we sent a six-plane group up to strike. I was in the lead.

The south end of the island was a hill or slope going down to the water, probably about 1,500 feet high. The ships, two or three of them, were anchored close in to the shore, maybe not more than 100 yards from the beach. It would be impossible to make any kind of a glide-bombing attack from the sea side, because there was no way to retire after the attack. Land was

too close to make a turn away from, and it sloped up to add to the problem. The only thing to do was to fly inland over the island at about two thousand feet and attack gliding down the slope of the hill. Then it would be OK to retire out to sea.

I told the crewman in the bilge of the plane where the bomb selection was made to line the system up to drop one bomb on the first run. So I charged down the hill, pickled off the bomb, looked back when clear and saw that I had made a hit, for there was a small fire on the ship that I was attacking. It didn't look like I had done much damage, so I decided to go around and make another run. We flew down the side of the hill, I pickled off the bomb, and retired far enough to look around to see what happened that time. Three splashes in the water beyond the target. But why three? I expected to drop one bomb at a time. When I asked the crewman why there were three bombs, he said, "Captain, I distinctly heard you tell me to drop in salvo." I am sure that he had enough of that game.

On the first run there was no anti-aircraft reaction, but on the second every small caliber gun along the shore was alerted and started shooting. I started to jink violently and was pleased to be able to see the tracers going by. If you can see them they won't hit you. For no good reason I glanced at my radio altimeter and it read ZERO. I was about to fly into the water. I yanked back on the stick, zoomed to about 5,000 feet and headed home. I couldn't understand why I was so cold. All I had on was a pair of skivvies and an old flight suit, and I realized that they were wringing wet from sweat.

PS: How could you see at night to aim?

FLA: Well, we never went out at night unless we had at least a half moon. So the visibility was pretty good. We had to have some moon for the mining operations since the navigation for the placement of the mines had to be visual. Our job was to close off the anchorage at that south end of Bougainville. Is now a good time to talk about that?

PS: Sort of a channel?

FLA: Well, not exactly a channel. What we were told to do was to lay mines in such a way that access to the crescent-shaped harbor from the main island to a small island offshore, more or less in the center of the off-shore area, and back to the main island would be closed by the bottom type, influence mines. Mark XII, I think they were. The mine planting was restricted both as to speed when dropped, about 60 knots, and the altitude from which they were dropped, about 100 feet. A deployed parachute, packed in the mine, eased it more or less gently into the sea and to the bottom.

The way that we worked it out required three missions with 18 planes all carrying one mine on each mission. The first night we would plant eighteen mines from the southwest end of the harbor to the small offshore island. The second and third nights we would plant mines from there back to the southeastern end of the crescent-shaped harbor requiring 36 mines for a total of 54 .

The only navigation we could work out required each pilot to locate visually a point on the shore, take departure from there, fly on the selected course for a calculated number of

seconds at the 60-knot required speed, and let the mine go. If done correctly, this would place the mines at the desired interval and fairly accurately in the area required. We also knew full well that the small caliber antiaircraft guns would very quickly be fully alerted and fire at us. I took the longest leg on each operation, one minute and a half, straight and level, at 60 knots and flying at 100 feet. This was to be the longest 90 seconds that I had ever known.

The first night's operation turned out to be relatively easy. The guns were alerted and firing, but not until we were well into the mission. But what we saw that night worried us as to what would happen the second and third time around when undoubtedly they would be waiting for us.

I remembered that there was based somewhere around Henderson Field a squadron of Army B-25s, I think they were. I asked General Schilt if he could arrange to have that squadron precede our operation by bombing along the shoreline to suppress the small-caliber fire we were sure to get while we would be planting the mines. He agreed that this would be a good idea and gave them all the information about our flight plans and the times that we would be carrying out the planting operation the second night.

So two nights later we took off for Bougainville, arrived in the area on schedule, and waited for the Army to commence their bombing along the shoreline. I was there leading six of our planes, waiting. Two other groups of six planes were also in the area waiting.

On Shortland Island, maybe 20 miles south of the main island of Bougainville, we knew there was a highly effective heavy antiaircraft battery under the command of a Japanese who had come to be known as "The Little Professor". As we circled, waiting, I saw out of the corner of my eye Shortland Island light up with gunfire. So I hollered to my guys over the radio, "Scatter". We had a prearranged procedure for that and the formation broke up immediately and cleared the area. Apparently we were out of his range before the stuff arrived at our level. The Army never showed up, so I ordered my planes to commence the operation. We were right, they were alerted and that night the flying was rough.

The next day I reported this to General Schilt who reacted as you might expect and the third night they were there on time, bombed the shoreline, and we got away scot-free.

Apparently the Japanese had swept channels through the mine field for their ships were inside the area when we arrived during the all-out air group attack. And the ones that got away must have used the channels. Torpedo planes aren't bombers, and we didn't do well. I think some of my planes might have made hits, but I can't recall that. Undoubtedly, the SBDs dive-bombing did most of the damage.

PS: How good was your intelligence for planning these missions?

FLA: I suspect that most of the intelligence came from the coastwatchers who were located throughout the islands. As far as planning for the missions, we were pretty familiar with the area from the antishipping missions that we had made up there both day and night. And we had fairly detailed maps of the terrain from which we could select the points of departure.

PS: Of course you were collecting some of your own, such as AA locations.

FLA: We knew about Shortland Island, I can tell you. Leading my division into the area was pretty stupid, but loitering, waiting for the bombing suppression took some time. Compared to what the carrier boys went through, this was child's play, I won't argue that for a second. But it was fun.

PS: How did the TBF handle? I've heard that Grumman made a prototype out of concrete and then made the actual plane heavier.

FLA: I think that describes it pretty well. TBFs were certainly rugged. The first time you get into it, it seems like a colossal plane, but when you got familiar with it, it was very comfortable to fly.

On the raid that we made against the shipping in Bougainville, one of my planes came back with one side of his horizontal tail surface gone right up to the fuselage and with a big hole in his rudder. He was hit during his glide-bombing attack. He pulled out of that and flew back to Henderson Field and landed with no trouble. Furthermore, on the way home he was jumped by a couple of Zeros, and he played games with them in and out of the clouds. At one point one of them flew alongside, apparently out of ammunition, and gave him a signal which apparently meant he wanted him to land. The pilot, Bill Hirsch, gave him the finger gesture, flew home and landed with no trouble at all with more than half of his tail surfaces shot away and a lot of bullet holes, too. So the plane was a pretty sturdy machine.

On that same raid, when I got back home, my plane captain climbed up on the wing to unhook me, and told me, "You got hit, didn't you?" I said, "Oh, did I?" I had a hole in my engine cowling. Closer examination showed that the bullet passed between a couple of rocker boxes and struck one of the major joints in the engine mount where several of the members are welded together. It tore up the joint, was deflected and passed out through the side of the fuselage and through the wing. It looked to have been a 20 millimeter, which fortunately did not explode. And if you were to trace its path until it hit the engine mount, it was headed right for my head. And I didn't even know it.

PS: That's a pretty substantial bullet too.

FLA: It sure is. I guess it was not explosive, however. So I'll buy a Grumman airplane any time. But I really had very little experience in the flying Navy. They were fresh out of carriers when I was out there: *Enterprise* had her own air group, *Yorktown* and *Lexington* had been sunk, and the *Saratoga* seemed to collect Japanese torpedoes and returned to Pearl for repairs.

PS: The *Wasp* and the *Hornet* were both sunk.

FLA: Yes, so the only carrier experience I had was when we checked out on a couple of jeep carriers to keep qualified for carrier landings. So as far as answering your question about the handling characteristics of the TBFs, I thought the carrier performance was fine. However, never having been a super, super-experienced aviator, I didn't have too much to go on to evaluate it.

PS: Admiral, just to pick up where we left off yesterday, we were talking about your time in command of Torpedo Squadron 11, and we sort of jumped from the time on the West Coast directly to Guadalcanal. It would be useful to cover the intermediate steps.

FLA: My squadron, VT-11, was part of Replacement Air Group 11 that formed and trained on North Island Naval Air Station. I think that I mentioned it before, but these two replacement air groups, 10 and 11, were intended to organize, train, and go out to the Pacific as a total replacement of the air group aboard whichever carrier needed to send the resident group, so to speak, back home for rest. I don't think it worked out quite that way because I know that Air Group 10 was on Guadalcanal during those days in the fall of 1942 when no one knew whether Guadalcanal could be held or not. However, it is a fact, I am sure, that air support was needed badly on the island, and Air Group 10 was available. I think that is the way it worked out.

The air group was loaded aboard a jeep carrier, *Chenango*, I think it was, maybe *Long Island*, for Hawaii. The scouts, dive-bombers and the torpedo squadron were stationed at Barbers Point on Oahu, and the fighters went to Maui. Barbers Point was just being finished when we arrived.

My squadron operated out of Barbers Point for about two months, continuing our training as I have mentioned earlier. The only accident that happened was during night flying, when two planes collided while flying in formation. One landed OK on the field. The other was damaged badly enough that it had to be abandoned. The crew parachuted OK, but we lost that plane. In those days, however, it didn't really make much difference because you just drew another one.

On one Friday afternoon in February 1943 I received orders to deploy six aircraft to Canton Island. Intelligence indicated that there might be a Japanese cruiser raid against the island. Recall, that the Japanese radio traffic was being monitored and translated back at Pearl. We were supposed to repel the attack. I planned to lead these planes on this operation.

Sunday morning in my room in the BOQ, I was shaving and all of a sudden I got a knife-like pain in my lower back and couldn't stand up straight. I guess I was at about 60 degrees to the vertical. It had always been my experience that this was a problem for an osteopath. But Sunday morning? I got on the telephone to a doctor in Honolulu that I found in the yellow pages. He was at home, but agreed to go to his office and try to help me. He worked on me for about 45 minutes and I walked out of there without a pain. I would be ready to leave for Canton on Monday morning.

Our departure went off OK and we were joined by a PBY that would provide navigation for us on this long over-water flight. Our route would take us by way of Johnston Island, Palmyra and on to Canton in the Phoenix Island group. The only thing that was hard about the flight, was the parachute seats, and after five, or as many as eight hours, you wanted to get up and stretch. But remember that I told about our SBAE installation to go with the Norden bombsights? As I knew then, this would provide an excellent automatic pilot which all planes used the entire flight.

When we arrived at Canton, we found that there was a squadron of Navy B-24s. PB4Ys I think that we called them, and if my memory is correct, Bill Moffett was the CO. Also there was on the island a squadron of Army Air Forces fighters, P-40s. Our six planes would make a torpedo attack.

PS: If you were going to use torpedoes, was it going to be a coordinated strike with dive-bombers?

FLA: Oh, no. There were no dive-bombers in the area. We would have to try to coordinate with the B-24s. But before we could get the operation planned, the whole thing was called off. It appeared that there would be no cruiser raid. Frankly, we all slept better the night that we learned that. We were directed to carry out antisubmarine patrol flights around the island for a half hour before sunrise and a half hour after sunset daily until we were ordered to proceed further west. We were there on the island for about three weeks.

Apparently there were submarines in the area, because one of my pilots reported that on one of his patrols, he heard on our voice radio frequency an oriental voice 'singing' "Roll out the barrels, we've got the Yanks on the run."

At the officers' club, such as it was, we had a little fraternization with Army fighter pilots, and Mike Flynn worked himself into a sitting poker game. They must have been glad to see us leave because, I am sure, Mike left with a large share of their money.

At about this time we received orders to fly west to Fiji by way of Wallis Island. To show you how things went during wartime, one of my pilots, one of the better ones, got himself into an uncontrolled ground loop and collapsed his landing gear. The heavily loaded plane probably contributed to this. The PBY, a PBY-5A fitted for amphibious operation it was, waited until we all were airborne before he took off. The pilot of the damaged plane climbed out of the TBF with his gear and boarded the PBY for the rest of the flight to Fiji. I suspect that the Army guys there had fun with our abandoned TBF after they got it repaired. Sort of compensation for the damage that Mike Flynn had done to them.

We flew on to Wallis, landed there for fuel and flew on to Nandi in the Fiji Islands, where we joined the rest of the air group.

We were billeted in thatched-roof huts that took maybe a dozen men in each. Again, the squadron commanders and the air group commander, Jack Hulme, class of 1930, who took over when Hamilton was killed, lived comfortably in one hut. We had some company, for the thatch was infested with rats, but they didn't bother us and we didn't bother them.

Air group training continued for approximately a month. There was some free time, for I remember taking three planes and flying to Suva on the other side of the island to spend the week-end. We had the idea to stay in the Grand Pacific Hotel, a typical movie-type tropical hotel with verandas completely around the building and on all four floors.

PS: Was this one of the Pan American facilities?

FLA: I don't know, but it might have been. I can't recall that there was anything around to indicate that it was. What was a fact, however, was that the hotel was full, and there was no chance for a room there. On the verandas we found several baby cribs, the old-fashioned iron-sided kind. Though not very comfortable, it was better than sleeping on the hard deck.

So, after about a month at Nandi, the air group flew direct to Guadalcanal, Henderson Field, arriving on Easter morning 1943.

It is hard to visualize how quickly Colonel Dooley, Marine Corps, and his seven or eight TBF pilots, whom we were to relieve, left the island not more than a half hour after our arrival. And I didn't blame them. They had been there since those hard days of last fall and had lost a majority of their pilots. Those who were there when we arrived were "beat" and ready to go. I have seen General Dooley since then and he remembers that day vividly. I must admit that I watched them go wondering if in six months or so we might be doing the same thing. But we settled down quickly in our tent cities for the life that I have described, and two days later carried out our first strike operation against Munda.

PS: I don't remember if we've discussed it specifically, but did the squadron get carrier qualified anywhere along this process?

FLA: We qualified the air group on two different occasions, both times aboard a jeep carrier. If I remember correctly, first aboard *Chenango*, and later aboard *Long Island*.

PS: A pretty well moot point, as it turned out.

FLA: Sure, it's a moot point, because we were to end up being based ashore. We had hoped that we might relieve the *Enterprise* air group, but I think that they went back with the ship when it returned for repairs.

PS: Were there any PB4Y squadrons there, the Liberators?

FLA: No, there were no Navy PB4Y squadrons there. I don't know where they were being based out there at that time. We did have the squadron of Army B-25s, and the New Zealand fighter squadron that I have mentioned earlier.

PS: Chick Hayward had a squadron out there at some point. I'm not sure just what the timing was.

FLA: I am not aware of that either. It seems to me that if he was actually on Guadalcanal, it possibly would have been later.

PS: Logic would support that the PB4Y was a better plane to use than a torpedo plane for the missions that you carried out.

FLA: Yes, I think that you are probably correct, since we were carrying out bombing operations, anti-shipping raids, and mine laying; all of which should have been naturals for the PB4Ys.

PS: It probably was a matter of expediency in finding a place for your squadron to operate usefully.

FLA: There is probably no doubt that had there been an operating carrier available we would have been aboard. But it is also a fact that the buildup for the amphibious operations up the "Slot", first the capture of Munda, had started and shore based air support out of Henderson Field would be most worthwhile.

PS: I have one more question and probably you've already explained it talking earlier about your emotional makeup. But how does a skipper react personally to losing people? You've got to write the inevitable letters, I would think, to the next of kin and so forth.

FLA: I hope that from our earlier discussion of my emotional makeup, you don't expect an answer that you "just accept it and move on". What happened on that R&R trip was simply devastating. I was in Sydney when I was told about it. That was the plane that I was supposed to go on with my division of pilots and crews. I am not sure what I was looking for, but when I learned about it, I found a cathedral, went in to pray, and I suppose, and mostly just to think. The resident pastor found me there, and we talked for quite a while.

I think that had this taken place in a combat operational situation, the trauma would not have been quite as bad. These things happen and you lose people. But the way this accident happened, it is very hard to rationalize the loss of so many fine people. As for the routine things a skipper has to do, one of the "90-day wonders", and I use that term only to identify where he came from, was the squadron personnel officer, pretty much a clone of Mike Flynn, and he prepared the letters. Of course, I signed them.

It is just possible a harder situation to accept is when I was required to send out six new guys at night, untrained, at least to the level that we were, knowing that there was a good chance that some of them wouldn't be able to hack it. And you knew that if they couldn't hack it, there would be two others who would go who had no control over their destiny. And talk about destiny.

I had scheduled my division of six pilots and 12 crew members to take the third of four flights to Sydney for the R&R just as the first two flights would do. However, my division had gone on a six-hour night operation looking for shipping to attack the night before the second group was to leave. We got back about 2:00 o'clock in the morning and we were tired. All these long night operations are tiring. You aren't good for too much the next day. So I preempted that departure, and my division went to Sydney. The flight two days later was the one that crashed. I guess it was by the grace of God that my neck was saved. But it doesn't make the loss any easier.

PS: I've heard the suggestion that that kind of loss is even harder to accept, because had they been on a combat mission, at least you knew they were contributing directly to the war effort.

FLA: That is exactly the point I have been making. However, a loss of life is a loss of life. And as I said earlier, I guess that's what a commanding officer gets paid for.

It just now came to mind a story about Lieutenant Commander Hamilton, the air group commander. Sometime before the R&R trips to Sydney there appeared on the scene a bunch of so-called medicinal whiskey. Presumably it had been confiscated back home and shipped out to the Pacific. Hamilton ended up with a gallon jug of Old Rocking Chair bourbon whiskey.

It had come to Hamilton's attention, through a letter from his wife, that his Naval Academy class would soon be eligible for promotion to the rank of Commander. Knowing that he might not be able to get a cap with the proper braid, "scrambled eggs", she sent one out to him. Those of us in the tent with Hamilton, and he, agreed that we would not touch the gallon of whiskey until he was officially notified of his promotion, at which time he would put on his new hat and we would drink to him from the gallon jug. In the meantime the jug was put on the table in the middle of our tent and Hamilton's new hat was placed on the jug.

Well, you now know the rest of the story. Ham was never able to put on his new Commander's hat. One night shortly after the accident, we opened the jug of whiskey and made a toast to his memory, toasted the new hat which he never got to wear, and the next day we wrapped it up and had it sent back to his wife.

PS: That is a sad story indeed, but is there anything now that we haven't covered about the days on Guadalcanal?

FLA: Only this, to finish on a brighter note. In August, I guess it was, we were relieved of our tour there on Henderson Field. We were just about as impatient to get going as were Colonel Dooley and his Marines. But we left in far better shape, and pretty proud of what we had accomplished, even though it was out of the mainstream of the Navy's carrier operations.

We were to fly down to Espiritu Santo, turn over our planes to the local command, and fly home by transport for 30 days' leave. The division that I was leading was cruising along at around 5,000 feet when about an hour out, one of the planes reported an engine failure and that he was going to ditch. It is interesting to note that this was the only engine failure that we experienced either in training or in combat operations.

The rest of us circled to see that the landing was successful and the crew would be safe aboard a life raft. The plane landed nicely in the water, two people got out, but not the third. We waited, it seemed like an eternity, the plane sank out of sight, and then there popped up out of the water the third man of the crew. They were all safe in the life raft and all seemed to be in good shape. We flew on to Espiritu Santo.

In a couple of days who should show up but the pilot and crew of the ditched plane? It turned out that they had been picked up by a fishing boat and placed safely ashore. I asked the pilot, Melvin Tegge, who was it that came out last. He said, "That was me. I had \$400.00 in that plane down there in my baggage and I wasn't about to have it go down with the plane. So I retrieved it. That's where I was." We all said good-bye to one another and went our separate ways back to UNCLE SUGAR.

Personally, I hoped that I would finish maybe 30 days' leave and come back out to the war as a carrier air group commander. I believed that I was ready for it. But that was not to be.

When I got to Pearl Harbor, and as skippers were supposed to do, I went by AirPac to check in with operations people to make an informal report of the operations of the squadron. However, there in the passageway of the headquarters, I ran into Admiral Forrest Sherman, who, I think was then the Chief of Staff. He recognized me, asked me to step into his office. He said, "You had better come in and let me tell you how I have done you dirt. You are not going to get an air group, you are going to Admiral Kelly Turner's staff as the Staff Aviation Officer. You can

go back for a couple of weeks' leave, but be back out here by then and go to work". So my dreams of getting back into active flying went down the drain, and I sadly headed for home.

SALEM HOSPITAL  
SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

OLIVER G. PRATT, Director

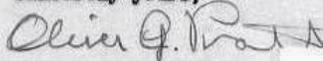
May 19, 1943

Lt. Comdr. F. L. Ashworth  
Carrier Air Group 11  
Torp. Squadron 11  
c/o Fleet Post Office  
San Francisco, California

Dear Lt. Comdr. Ashworth:

We at Salem Hospital knew that you would be interested in having a picture of Mrs. Ashworth and your new son who was born at Salem Hospital on May 6, 1943, at 10:09 A.M., weighing 7 pounds 15 ounces. The picture enclosed was taken a few days before your wife left the hospital to go home. Both mother and baby were fine. We at Salem Hospital wish you the best of luck and hope that you can be back with your family in a short time.

Sincerely yours,



Oliver G. Pratt  
Director

OGP:BLM  
Enc.



COMMANDER AIR  
SOLOMON ISLANDS  
U.S. SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE

F15-1

Serial 743

July 18, 1943.

From: Commander Air, Solomon Islands.  
To: Commander, Air Group Eleven.  
Subject: Commendation of Air Group Eleven.

1. The operations of the past three months have been noteworthy for the aggressive manner in which offensive and defensive missions have been executed.
2. I desire to convey to the pilots and to all personnel, air and ground alike, my most heartfelt "Well Done" for the outstanding performance of duty which has characterized the entire period of its service under my command at Guadalcanal.
3. To the living, I say no unit has excelled you in exacting from the enemy the maximum toll for your honored dead.
4. The group commander is directed to publish this commendation to Air Group Eleven, and to attach a copy thereof to the next report of fitness of each officer, and to attach a copy thereof to the service record of each enlisted man.

M. A. MITSCHER.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS to

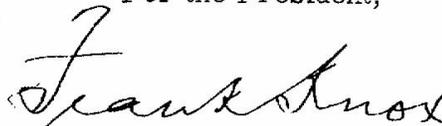
LIEUTENANT COMMANDER FREDERICK L. ASHWORTH  
UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

“For heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as Commanding Officer of a Torpedo Bomber Squadron in combat against enemy Japanese shore installations and shipping in the Solomon Islands Area from April 26 to July 12, 1943. Despite hostile searchlights and heavy anti-aircraft fire, Lieutenant Commander Ashworth skillfully led his squadron on hazardous mine-laying missions in the Kahili-Shortland area with great effectiveness. He also participated in daylight shipping raids in the face of enemy aircraft opposition and, on the night of May 15, in an exceptionally well-planned attack, personally scored a hit on a hostile cargo ship. During this period he led his squadron in seven successful bombing raids against strongly defended enemy positions at Munda, Rekata Bay and Vila. His daring leadership and indomitable fighting spirit were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”

For the President,

  
Secretary of the Navy.

## CHAPTER TEN

### CENTRAL PACIFIC AMPHIBIOUS FORCE, PACIFIC FLEET STAFF AVIATION OFFICER September 1943 - May 1944

PS: Had you heard of Turner by reputation by that time?

FLA: No, I hadn't. I knew that he had run the Guadalcanal invasion from New Zealand and that he had moved the whole amphibious operation up to Pearl Harbor to start the planning for the Central Pacific campaign. His command was to be called the Fifth Amphibious Force. When I arrived on the staff, the planning for Galvanic, the capture of Makin and Tarawa, was already under way.

I wondered why I had been taken for the job, for I was a relatively inexperienced Naval Aviator. Remember those three years I spent at the Postgraduate School when I should have been out in the fleet learning my trade? Admiral Sherman told me when I saw him in Pearl that although Turner wore wings, he was one of the group of surface captains who had been sent to Pensacola for abbreviated flight training and qualified to wear wings. Therefore, he told me, Admiral Turner wanted a real live Naval Aviator on his staff as Aviation Officer. "You're it."

The part of the planning where I was involved had to do with preparing the plans for the air support for the operations which would come from the carriers. This was a new concept in the Pacific amphibious operations, and not much, if any, doctrine had been developed. So I was very much on my own. The old battleship *Pennsylvania* would be Admiral Turner's flagship. I was given a small space in the ship and a few people. I can't remember how many. There were some minor arrangements for working with maps and a communication channel or two by which we could communicate with the carrier aircraft.

I prepared some target maps for both Makin and Tarawa and worked up what I hoped would be a communication plan. We had pretty good intelligence on both islands as regards the defensive installations, and I worked up an ordnance loading plan. We knew about the coconut log bunkers and how difficult it would be to defeat them, and I ordered semi-armor-piercing bombs. I knew that this was probably futile, because it would require direct hits, and they would be few and far between. There were to be antisubmarine patrols around the islands, and it was directed that at the end of each patrol any remaining depth charges be dropped on Tarawa. There is no question that these made a big flash and a lot of noise, but I am sure that they were completely ineffective. After all, the cases were very thin and couldn't do much damage when they exploded. We would get reports from the ground and direct where the depth charge should be dropped.

PS: Doctrine was still not very set, was it?

FLA: That's exactly right. We didn't have much of an idea what we were trying to do.



*Holding forth to the Admirals. Left to right: Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, Commander Fifth Amphibious Force; Admiral Spike Blandy, a Task Group Commander under Turner; and me, Staff Aviation Officer. Photo taken aboard Turner's flagship, the U.S.S. Rocky Mount, probably 1943, late.*



*With other members of Admiral Turner's staff. Taken aboard Turner's flagship U.S.S. Rocky Mount.*

I should mention here that Makin was a much different operation than Tarawa. Admiral Turner was in command of this part of the operation. Rear Admiral Harry Hill had command of the attack on Tarawa. There were only about 900 troops on the island of Makin defending it. As the attack progressed, and before any landings had been made there was just about zero reaction from the defenders on Makin. Major General Holland Smith, Marine Corps, was aboard the flagship and was in command of the Fifth Amphibious Corps, all the ground forces that would be involved in the operation. I remember once early in the operation General Smith came up on Admiral Turner's bridge and pleaded with him to let him take a platoon of Marines and go in and clean up the island. We didn't need to make this invasion. He said that it was obvious that there was no significant defense. Admiral Turner disabused him of this idea and said the operation would go as planned. After the Army 26th Infantry Division got ashore, they found that the island was indeed defended. Major General Ralph Smith, US Army, was in command of this division --- the same General Smith who was later to be relieved of his command at Saipan. It took nearly four days to secure Makin. I noted that General "Howling Mad" Smith was significantly absent on the bridge after that.

There is no need for us to talk about Tarawa except for what I believe is a little-known fact. Admiral Turner had on his staff a Lieutenant Commander from the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, Jerry Heyen, who had been a master mariner and trader operating throughout the Gilberts for many years. He knew the place like the back of his hand. Actually, he had lived in a small house on Makin near the only pier there. When the invasion of Makin was secure, he went ashore and found his home had been occupied by the Japanese, probably by the island commander.

In any event, some days before the day troops were scheduled to attack the island, Heyen predicted to Admiral Turner the standing tide that later caused so much trouble getting the Marines ashore. A standing tide is one that occurs rarely, but during one tidal cycle the ebb tide remains for one cycle. It was happening when the Marines tried to get over the reef. It must have posed a dilemma for the Admiral, but since all the planning and execution had progressed so far, he decided that he couldn't delay the landing. It may also have been that Turner did not believe him, but I have nothing to substantiate that.

PS: Well, just as a footnote, though, maybe we could point out that on the other side of the globe, at Normandy a number of months later, Eisenhower delayed because of the meteorological conditions.

FLA: That would make you think that maybe it could have been delayed. Maybe, as I have speculated, Admiral Turner did not believe it. I've never read anything that Admiral Turner wrote. I don't know whether Turner wrote anything. I asked him once several years after the war whether he would ever write his memoirs, and he said, "No, I'm going to critique other people's memoirs." So I don't know how he reached his decision, but we went through with the invasion with the tragic results we've all known about.

PS: The amtracs got hung up on the beach.

FLA: They got hung up on the reef and the Marines had to wade ashore from there under terrible enemy fire.

Just as had been done in the early days of the invasion of Guadalcanal, each night Admiral Turner would have all the amphibious ships get underway and leave the immediate area of the landing beach. He was concerned about being attacked while at anchor off the landing beaches. This went on for three or four nights until the islands had been secured. This turned out to be a prudent thing to do because on one of these nights Admiral Turner's ships were attacked by a group of Japanese Bettys, probably as many as 12. I was on the flag bridge that night and witnessed one of the most incredible examples of concentration by the Admiral that I have ever seen.

PS: And for the record, what were Bettys?

FLA: This was the code word for the Japanese twin-engine landplanes that were used for reconnaissance and also for shipping attacks with torpedoes.

It was about 9:00 o'clock in the evening and completely dark. Admiral Turner was on the open flag bridge when Combat Information Center (CIC) warned of the presence of the Bettys. They continued to call up to him over a voice squawk box bearings and distances of the attacking aircraft. The Admiral maneuvered the formation of transports by emergency turn signals given by voice radio. He did this by keeping track of the situation in his head with no plotting assistance.

PS: No radar repeater?

FLA: No radar repeater available. We figured out later that the average turn made was about 60 degrees, and this went on for 128 minutes. As far as I know, and there was no evidence to the contrary, the Japanese were totally confused and never got into position to attack with torpedoes. It was a marvelous demonstration of the mental concentration that the Admiral exercised, keeping in mind what his own ships were doing, where the raids were coming from, and what was the best maneuver to avoid attack. I might also point out that it was no mean job for the ships in the formation to execute the emergency turn signals with no collisions or even close calls, as far as I know.

PS: One famous torpedo did strike home. That was the one that got the *Liscome Bay*.

FLA: Yes, but that came from a submarine. It was not related to the situation that I just described.

PS: That was in the early morning.

FLA: That's right. It was early morning. I don't know why I was on the open flag bridge at the time, but I remember seeing a huge explosion on the horizon, and shortly we got the word that

*Liscome Bay* (a “jeep” aircraft carrier) had been torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. It was not more than two hours or so later that a destroyer came alongside *Pennsylvania* and delivered aboard Captain John Crommelin <sup>1</sup>who was the Chief of Staff for the Admiral aboard *Liscome Bay*, Admiral Mullinnix. It turned out that the Captain was taking a shower in his cabin, I guess one deck below the flight deck when the thing struck. Instinctively he made his way up to the flight deck, jumped over the side, and was picked up by one of the escorting destroyers, needless to say, totally in the buff. Admiral Mullinnix went down with the ship, and I am certain there was a large loss of life, for those jeep carriers went down pretty fast with a torpedo in her side. As far as I know that was the only loss in the Galvanic operation.

Well, the Marines finally got ashore on Betio Island, and the island was secured after a few days, as was Makin, and the task force packed up and went back to Pearl Harbor.

PS: How much contact did you have with the fast carrier task force, which was really just getting into operation about that time?

FLA: Very little. Only to provide to them this rudimentary air-support plan, and we had some communication with the carriers and their planes making attacks on the islands. Charts of the islands had been prepared and furnished to the carriers with a grid overlay by which we could designate targets. I am sure that we must have had communication with the shore, but I don't recall that this was indeed so.

It is my opinion that the carrier air groups thought that air support was beneath them, you might say. I think that they preferred the air group attacks on the island targets. However, I am sure that after the Tarawa experience we all recognized that there was a place for carrier air support for amphibious operations.

Certainly Admiral Turner learned this because he had ordered to his staff Admiral Slats Sallada to take over the whole air-support operations. At the same time Captain Dick Whitehead was ordered to Admiral Hill's staff to do the same thing for his task group. Then, recognizing that the old battleship made a very poor flagship, the auxiliary *Rocky Mount* was modified as learned from Galvanic and made Turner's flagship. Much larger facilities were provided for the air support function with multiple communication channels, plotting facilities and many more men assigned than I had. It was placed on a realistic footing.

PS: What was the command arrangement before? Did the fast carrier task force commander report directly to Turner, or was that kind of a separate auxiliary operation?

FLA: I can't answer that specifically, but I think that the answer is no. If I remember correctly, Admiral Spruance was in command of Task Force 58, and the carriers reported to him. I would

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<sup>1</sup> Captain John Crommelin was the eldest of four brothers who served in the Navy over a period of many years, all graduates of the Naval Academy, and from the deep south. All except one, Henry, were Naval Aviators. John was deeply involved after the war in the so-called “Revolt of the Admirals” in their battle to save carrier aviation from being totally eliminated in favor of the strategic Air Force. He sacrificed his career by making what were determined to be inappropriate public statements of his views for the support of the Navy position. He was never selected for promotion to Admiral.

say, don't let any carrier boys of the time hear you call it an "auxiliary operation". They were just now feeling their oats, and recognizing that they were the Navy's new striking force. However, in later operations after Admiral Mitscher and Admiral McCain made their preliminary carrier attack sweeps, they became a major part of the amphibious operation providing support for the troops ashore.

PS: But prior to this, when you were making the early landings, the command arrangement would weaken your ability to bring in what was needed.

FLA: I think that a better answer is that we simply did not know what we were trying to do in those early operations. I can't recall that we even rehearsed the air support prior to the operations as was done for the landing troops. We must have, but I can't be sure.

What is more important here was the question of the command arrangements within the Amphibious Force. At this time Admiral Turner assumed command of the entire operation, not only the seaborne phase, but also when the troops were ashore. I believe that this was the arrangement at Guadalcanal. It quickly turned out that this just wouldn't work, so it was decided that Turner would keep command until the troops landed, at which time General Smith, Marine Corps, would take over ashore.

I think that I have mentioned it before, but I would give anything now had I kept a daily journal about my jobs during the war. Of course, this was against the rules, and I never did. Or perhaps I was just too lazy.

PS: You were pretty busy at the time.

FLA: Well, not all that busy. I suppose that at the time I thought, "So what? Who'd be interested." However, it turned out that I did a lot of interesting things which a lot of people would now be interested in, and I never recorded this stuff.

So we went back to Pearl to plan for Flintlock, the invasion of Kwajalein/Roi Namur.

PS: How would you describe Turner as a planner?

FLA: As I mentioned before about his performance on the bridge the night of the Betty attacks, Turner was a master of detail. I'm not sure that's too much of a compliment, but I am sure that the others of us who were on his staff would agree with me. He ran his staff with an iron hand. He had a Chief of Staff, a Captain Theiss, whose sole job seemed to be to run the replenishment of the ships while at sea and in port. This was not a small job, but not one that you would expect to be the Chief of Staff's only job. His Flag Lieutenant was Jack Lewis in whom he obviously had complete confidence. The power on the staff was the Operations Officer Captain Stan Leith, and it was he who ran the show, and in my opinion, with great skill and with a heavy hand.

As might be expected, the planning for an amphibious operation was large, complex and detailed. I remember that the finished plan could be a stack of paper ten or more inches high. Every page, and I mean every page, was submitted to the Admiral for his OK and was not considered to be what he wanted until he put his big "T" on the corner of each page. Clearly the

planning leader was the Operations Officer with inputs from Jack Taylor, the Gunnery Officer, who planned the gunfire support, and other principals on the staff. The detail with which the troop unloading into the landing craft, the marshaling of the boats at the line of departure for the landing beach, and the departure in waves to the beach was almost incredibly complex and detailed. I think that Admiral Turner used his review technique, with the big "T" of approval, so that he would be sure to have in his mind the details of the plan. Should a landing wave be late from the line of departure, or early, he recognized it immediately, and he let the staff know about it.

PS: Now, this is not the kind of a setup that you can use for most people. It was specifically for his capabilities.

FLA: Yes, I suppose that is right. But it was his way and I would say that generally speaking it worked. However, as we all know now, I believe, ultimately he succumbed and the pressure finally got to him. I believe it is correct to say that he took no time off from the Guadalcanal operation through Okinawa, and he retreated to the bottle. The staff understood and supported him throughout. I was not on the staff at this time, but I am sure that, particularly during the Okinawa invasion, the Operations Officer ran the show.

PS: And the actual operations of Flintlock were the invasions of Kwajalein and Roi-Namur.

FLA: That is correct. Admiral Turner's task force took Kwajalein with Army troops while Admiral Hill took Roi-Namur with the Marines. These locations are both on what is known as the Kwajalein Atoll; Roi-Namur to the north consisting of two small islands connected by a causeway, and the main island of the atoll to the south, Kwajalein. Since I was aboard Turner's flagship, I am more familiar with what went on down there. The Marines, it turned out, had the harder fight, for I think it is correct to say, that these islands were more heavily defended.

The lesson of Tarawa had been well learned, for beach preparation became a major part of the invasion. In the case of Kwajalein, three battleships armed with 14-inch main battery guns, *New Mexico*, *Idaho* and *Mississippi*, were ordered to steam back and forth off the landing beach at about 1,500 yards away and bombard the beach area. For 24 hours the shelling was continuous.

On one occasion Admiral Turner received a message from Admiral Giffen, I think it was, the battleship commander, asking permission to move his ships out to 6,000 yards. He had received some medium-caliber fire from the beach. Admiral Turner answered to the effect, "since when was a 14-inch gun battleship afraid of a 6-inch gun? Request denied, maintain position". This beach preparation was so complete that the Army landing force moved ashore with no opposition until about 1,500 yards inland.

Also, the fast carriers did their thing, having some days prior to the landing given the atoll the "Mitscher haircut", a severe bombing of the island area. All that was left were the trunks of the palm trees, looking like a "flattop" haircut. The carriers also attacked shipping in the lagoon with devastating effect. Most of the Japanese ships caught were sunk or heavily damaged. One small patrol vessel survived and was boarded and a treasure recovered, a

complete set of Japanese nautical charts of their operating areas in the Western Pacific, and particularly, an up-to-date chart of the Kwajalein lagoon. With this in hand, copies were quickly made aboard the flagship and distributed to all ships in the operation which permitted them to move safely into the lagoon.

The Marines did their usual job up at Roi-Namur, fighting 24 hours a day, securing the place in two or three days. The Army, in their typical fashion, fought from morning to night, bedded down and continued to fight in the morning. It took a couple of days longer to take Kwajalein than Roi-Namur. We had some Army people on the staff who were critical of the Marines. "This is crazy", they said, "they would surely have heavier casualties." I think that it calculated out later that the Marines had no more casualties than did the Army. So the atoll of Kwajalein was finally captured.

PS: How would you characterize the working atmosphere and relationships on this staff where you have very tight control on the top and a Chief of Staff who didn't contribute much. Did that inhibit people down at a lower level?

FLA: I don't think so because there was a very strong Operations Officer who ran it, and he ran it with an iron hand. And he and Turner were very close. It is my personal opinion that Admiral Turner purposely chose a weak Chief of Staff because he wanted personally to keep control. A strong Chief of Staff would have placed himself squarely between the rest of the staff and the Admiral, which I don't think Turner wanted. I believe that under more normal circumstances this type of operation doesn't do very well, for there could be an attitude in the lower staff something like, well, if he wants to keep control of it, let him do the details, too, sort of attitude. It appeared to me that if you have a strong Operations Officer who is managing the thing, he is the one who is delegating the work and seeing to it that it is done. So it pretty much insulates this kind of an attitude from the Admiral. However, as I have already pointed out, the Admiral got very much into the final output of the staff by his detailed and complete review and approval of the work done by the staff. It is one way of doing things, for sure. But I think that what you are inferring is that it is not a very efficient way to do things, and it came to pass as time caught up with the Admiral. In spite of his huge capacity for work, he finally broke under the strain.

Not necessarily relating to the discussion we have been having, but I should say that after turning the responsibilities for close air support over to Admiral Sallada, there was very little for me to do on the staff. I now was expected to function as the Staff Aviation Officer. I am afraid that even if Turner wanted a real live aviator on his staff, he didn't get a very experienced one.

One day I was informed that Admiral Nimitz was to come to Kwajalein for an inspection only four or so days after the islands were secured and the lagoon was safe for the sea plane that was bringing him out. He usually traveled in a seaplane, maybe a PBM Mariner. I was to provide facilities to handle the sea plane.

I had never operated in seaplanes and assumed that they carried anchors. When the plane landed, I had the signal bridge send a blinker message telling the pilot to anchor astern of the flagship. I had looked at the chart and found no reason that I could see why this would not be good holding ground. Well, my blinker message was answered immediately, "Have no anchor. Get a line over the stern."

At this time there was a breeze of at least 20 knots blowing and the chop in the lagoon was two or three feet high. Admiral Nimitz's plane was taxiing around waiting for some place to tie up. Admiral Turner had left the ship just as soon as the plane landed and was cruising around in his barge, a converted LCVP (amphibious landing craft), taking water with every wave. All this time I am busy looking for the ship's Boatswain to get the line over the stern. As you know, nothing unexpected moves very fast, so it was several minutes, maybe at least 20 minutes before the plane was secured safely astern. Admiral Turner went alongside, took the Admiral off and returned to the ship.

I don't know why I was on the quarterdeck when they came aboard, but I was, probably ready to "assume the position"<sup>2</sup>. Admiral Nimitz, of course came up the accommodation ladder first and was dry and his uniform in good shape. Then Admiral Turner came aboard! After his half hour or so in the choppy seas and riding a boat not made for this kind of heavy weather, I was shocked to see the state of his uniform. Soaked from head to foot. He took one look at me and said, as only Terrible Turner can, "What the hell have you been doing?", and led Admiral Nimitz to his quarters.

As an interesting sidelight to this story, two or three years after the war, maybe in 1948, I was stationed at Moffett Field assigned to a Fleet aircraft squadron. I knew that Admiral Turner was retired and living in Monterey, so I wrote him a letter and asked if my wife and I could come down to see him. I got a nice letter back saying, "Please do, we'd love to see you." My wife and I went down and spent a very enjoyable day with him and Mrs. Turner. It is worth telling that Mrs. Turner asked me not to encourage him to have drinks. Apparently he was still having trouble from his wartime problem.

During the course of the visit, I told him of the seaplane story, and asked if he remembered it. He said, "No I don't remember that at all." I said to myself, "Boy, the old man has really mellowed, or he is trying to protect my sense of ego."

The only other sequel to the amphibious days that may be worth mentioning is that when I was detached from the staff, Admiral Turner recommended me for a Legion of Merit. The higher command turned it down and I was awarded a Bronze Star. Later I learned from a classmate of mine, Bill Mott, who had something to do with reviewing awards at CinCPac, I suppose, that Admiral Turner was so mad that one of his recommendations had been turned down that he refused to submit another recommendation for awards until he had the rank and the authority to make awards himself. And then he went back and picked up a lot of people that he would have, in the normal course of events, recommended for decorations.

PS: Didn't you say in your memoir that there was still another sequel? He wrote a letter admitting that maybe he did remember the Nimitz plane incident after all?

FLA: Well, yes, I did get a letter or two from him and he mentioned something like that.

PS: He said that he was concerned that Nimitz's plane would turn over as it had done in San Francisco Bay.

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<sup>2</sup> An old Naval Academy term meaning "bend over to receive your punishment with the broom".

FLA: Yes, that's right. Now that you have refreshed my memory, that is exactly what he told me, that he was concerned about that accident and he did not want another like it out there.

So that pretty well covers the Kwajalein operation as far as I was concerned. However, before we returned to Pearl, Admiral Hill took Eniwetok with the reserve division of Marines who had been ready during the Kwajalein invasion, but not used.

PS: At what point in this sequence did Admiral Sallada relieve you?

FLA: Right after Tarawa.

PS: I see.

FLA: We went back to Pearl Harbor. That's when we got the new flagship, and Admiral Sallada was right there ready to go to work. He had a staff of 14 or 15 people and had organized things aboard the flagship to handle the close-support operations for the next move across the Pacific.

PS: What difference did that make in results?

FLA: I am sure that there was better coordination in all parts of the air-support operations. Proper and useful target maps could be provided the carrier pilots. Communications with the shore parties was to be established to permit for "call fires" and direct radio communications with flight leaders became possible.

Of course, I was no longer involved with the air-support operations and became the dog on the staff. After I got rid of my responsibilities in air support, I spent most of my time on the flag bridge. In my function as "the dog", when messages were given to the Admiral to release, he would say, "Give it to the dog, and if he barks, I'll let it go." So it was my job to translate any signals and to tell the Admiral what the message was meant to say. If I was right, then he'd let it go. I didn't have any objection to that, at least I was up where the action was.

PS: Well, you had another explanation in your memoir that supposedly if you could understand it, anybody could.

FLA: Yes, I assumed that was what the intent was, that if I could understand it anybody could.

So, after Kwajalein the whole task force returned to Pearl and started planning for the invasion of Saipan. It was about this time that I received orders for transfer to shore duty at the Naval Proving Ground, Dahlgren, Virginia.

PS: Do you have any other observations on General Holland Smith?

FLA: No, not of a definitive nature. I am sure that somewhere in these oral histories you have much more detail on this. However, I do know that in these early operations there were real problems in command relations, and I think that this was sufficient to be obvious to everyone on

the staff. Here you had two strong individuals, and each, I think, had legitimate ideas on what his command responsibilities were. At first Turner believed that he was in charge of the total operation and that General Smith, in command of the troops in the Fifth Amphibious Corps, should be prepared to take orders from him. General Smith had quite the opposite opinion, that when his troops were successfully landed, they belonged to him. To anyone who knew Turner in the early days of the war in Washington, and in the early days of the operations in the Pacific, this would be exactly what you would expect him to want.

This problem came out loud and clear early in the Makin operation when Smith asked to lead a platoon of Marines ashore to take the island, obviously only lightly defended. Turner refused with the same forced politeness and what seemed to be a forced respectful attitude that had existed during the whole operation. As I mentioned earlier, after that small altercation, and the subsequent difficult time the Army had in securing the island, I never saw General Smith on the flag bridge again.

In the final analysis, I think, it turned out that Smith was correct, since his stand on the matter was adopted later.

That is about all that I can comment on this, unless you have some other questions on the amphibious part of this.

PS: I just would be interested in an overall reaction. You've missed out on an air group command. Did you find this a productive tour?

FLA: Yes, I found it a productive tour, I guess, for having a little education in amphibious operations. This was to be an important part of the campaign in the Pacific, not that I got to exercise any of my experience in those operations. It was a real experience to be on Admiral Turner's staff. We all should get exposed to staff duty.

PS: Probably that was the kind of thing that was helpful to you 20 years later when you were Sixth Fleet Commander, knowing what amphibs were supposed to do.

FLA: Yes, I suppose so. I did have a sense of what the problems were. Of course, as far as the Sixth Fleet is concerned, those plans were all in existence. I don't recall ever reviewing them; I suppose I should have.

It was good duty and to a certain extent this is where the war was. It would have been fun flying, I'm sure, but at least I didn't get shot down anyway, which a lot of my friends did.

Then, too, I had in my hands a great set of orders to shore duty in Dahlgren with quarters on the golf course, and I would be all set to spend the rest of the war in the peace and quiet of Northern Virginia. Do you want to go on from there on that.

PS: Well, you mentioned a few other things in your memoir. You talked about your relationship with the skipper down there.

FLA: Okay, I'll go on into that now if you wish.

So, sure enough, I came ashore from Turner's staff, went up to New England, picked up my wife and two children and drove from New England to the Proving Ground, Dahlgren. I was called the Senior Aviator. It was sometime in July that we moved into our quarters, and yes, there it was, right on the edge of the golf course.

The Commanding Officer was Captain David I. Hedrick, an old-time gunnery-trained Captain. He took a dim view of reserve officers, and had a lot of them on the station. One was Commander Norris Bradbury, who later became the Technical Director of the Los Alamos Laboratory. Also, I think, my good friend Professor Bramble was there working in ballistics, who held the rank of Commander. Captain Hedrick was a hard guy to shave, and I never felt that I got along very well with him. I am sure that aviators ranked right next to reserve officers in his hierarchy of undesirables. It must have rankled him when his daughter married one sometime later. He was an old-line Captain, no question about it. You had the feeling that he still couldn't understand why aircraft carriers were out there being used.

I don't recall that I had much of a job. We were doing some work with the Norden bombsight. I remember using it to make some bomb drops. All in all, I couldn't see that we were making much contribution to the war effort. But it was pretty good duty and comfortable and looked to be pretty safe for a while.

Then one Friday afternoon, early in November I got a telephone call from Captain Hedrick. He told me that he had a call from Washington, and that I was to get in an airplane and leave immediately for Anacostia. There I would be met, and that was all he knew about it. "Don't worry about your uniform, they seem to think that it is urgent." Later I thought that his lack of knowledge was strange, for I know that he had lost several officers under the same mysterious circumstances. One was Norris Bradbury.

So I went home to get my uniform jacket and told my wife that I had to go to Washington and might not be back that night. Her first comment was, "Shall I start packing?" I said, "Well, I don't know yet."