

1968 - 1972

The Navy

- See Appendix I for a detailed chronologic history of the Navy years -

On September 11, 1968, in Butte, Montana, I sat in a Boeing 727 waiting to begin the first airline trip of my life. With me were Jerry Gross and Johnny Henry. The three of us, along with three other fellows who would be flying to San Diego, had just been inducted into active service in the US Navy. On my lap were three fat manila envelopes with a mimeographed sheet taped to the top. These had been handed to me as we left the Federal Building with vague instructions that these were our travel orders, that I was in charge, and that I was responsible to see that we all made it to Great Lakes Naval Station north of Chicago. In 1968 the Navy figured a little college counted almost as much as a degree.

As I recall, the flight landed at Missoula and Great Falls where we changed planes and headed south to Denver. That portion of the trip was uneventful, although I remember commenting to my fellow travelers that it was ironic that we were getting closer to home before leaving. Johnny was from Missoula, Jerry was from Billings and I was from Havre. Our trip became interesting, however, when we arrived at Stapleton airport in Denver. The flight must have been a little late, or perhaps our connection was just too tight. In any event after a mad dash through the airport we arrived at the United Airlines concourse only to learn that our flight had already departed. As novice travelers we were quite concerned, but the airline people didn't seem to feel that it was a significant problem. Once we accepted the fact that there really wasn't anything we could do to change the situation we quickly adopted the attitude that we were, after all, in the Navy and it wasn't going to make a lot of difference exactly when we arrived for our first day of boot camp. An hour or so later we departed on a Boeing 707 or Douglas DC8 for the flight to Chicago.

Upon arriving at Chicago O'Hare I followed the only instruction I had diligently memorized and found the military liaison counter. It was staffed by a bored acting petty officer (of course I didn't know what he was at the time) who took our orders and told us to wait for the next bus to the Naval Station which should be along shortly.

Naturally "shortly" turned into about two and a half hours and by the time we departed for Great Lakes Naval Station it was nearing midnight and pitch black so none of us had a clue where we were heading. It reminded me of the spy stories where the hero is blindfolded and taken to a secret base to be held captive. The analogy seemed even more appropriate as events unfolded.

The bus finally slowed and stopped at a gate with chain link fence and a guardhouse. We spilled off the bus in the dark and were herded into a rough formation. We were then "marched" through the gate toward several two-story brick buildings that looked like they'd been around since the Civil War. It later turned out that this was Camp Barry which dated back to WWI and was used for initial processing of new arrivals. We were each given a blanket and pillow and told

to get some sleep which was no problem after the day we'd been through. Unfortunately about 4 hours later, at 5:00 AM, we were roused out and taken to breakfast. After breakfast we milled around the barracks building for a short while with quite a few other guys. Apparently there were several buildings full of arrivals and once we were all together we were informed that we would be Company 548 and moved into another old brick barracks building.

The next several days were something of a blur. We got haircuts, had uniforms issued, learned the words to "Anchors Aweigh" and moved to a "newer", wooden, barracks, which dated back only to WWII. It was here that we met J.D. Snodgrass, our company commander. After introducing himself he had us each fill out a questionnaire. It seemed like his greatest interest regarding the questionnaire was the section about what prominent persons we were related to or otherwise knew. Among other things forms were used to determine which recruits would be assigned as recruit petty officers. Carmen Lozipone was assigned the position of recruit company commander based apparently on a load of bull that he put out. After about 4 days, during which he proved totally incompetent, he was replaced by a black kid who was less well educated but was a natural leader.

I was appointed company clerk, apparently based on nothing more than the legibility of my printing, thanks to the drafting courses in high school and college. I was proud of my position, little knowing that I would be saddled with considerable paperwork and it exempted me from almost nothing.

Finally we were marched through a tunnel under the highway into the modern barracks on the newest part of the base and started our actual basic training. The first order of business was to prepare our personal belongings for inspection. Each recruit had three sets of clothes which were supposed to be accounted for as follows: While one set was being worn, the second would be drying on the company clothesline and the third would be stored in the recruit's locker.



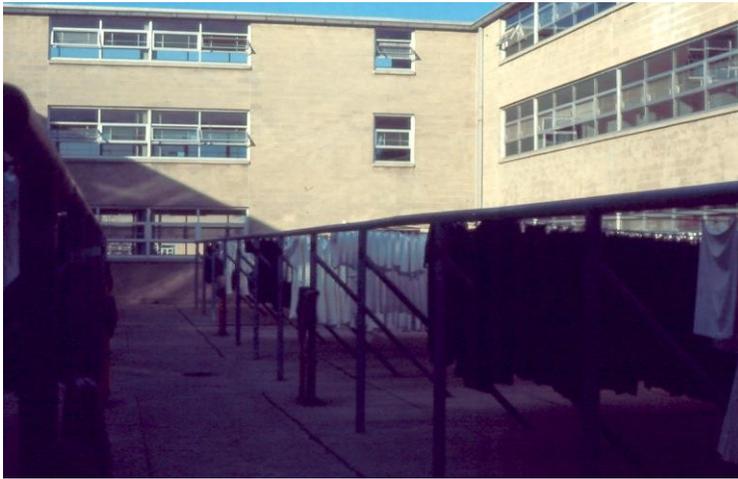
Items drying on the clothesline had to be fastened with pieces of line each tied with a perfect square knot in an exactly prescribed fashion. Each item stored in the lockers was to be folded exactly "according to the book" and stored in the correct space.



Washing clothes with bucket and brush in Navy boot camp

Since there was no way that 68 or so individual recruits could possibly be expected to tie every knot exactly right, and fold each piece of clothing exactly right and stow it exactly right another system was used. After stenciling each piece of clothing with our names and serial numbers we washed everything. Washing was done on a stone counter with scrub brushes and buckets. One set of clothing was then taken to the clothes line

and hung up as diligently as possible while another set was folded precisely as required and placed



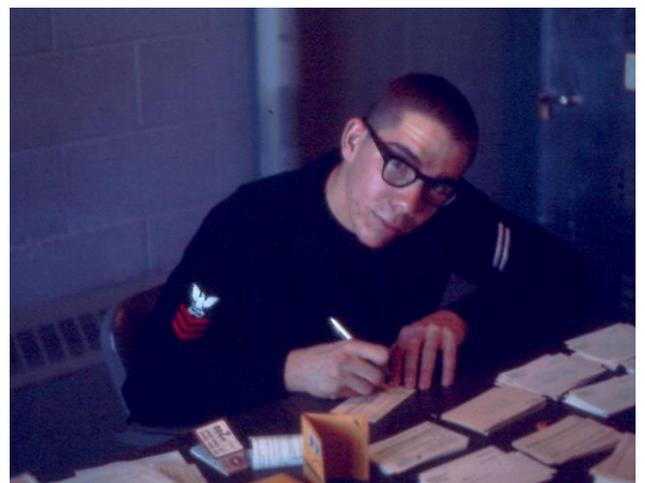
in the lockers precisely as required. A small group of individuals who had done a particularly good job of placing their clothes on the lines and tying knots then proceeded to review and correct the placement of each piece of clothing on the clothesline. At the same time another group who had displayed a talent for folding their clothing then inspected each locker and corrected the folding and/or placement of each item. None of these items of clothing were then

touched for the remainder of basic training and each day before inspection buckets of water would be thrown on the "drying" clothing.

In addition to the clothing in the lockers each recruit had his "ditty bag" hanging from the end of his bunk. The ditty bag contained one set of underwear, or skivvies, and while they were required to be folded in accordance with procedures it was not subject to the same scrutiny as other clothing. Every night each of us would shower, put on clean skivvies and then wash our dungarees and dirty skivvies which would then dry overnight. We would then dress in the dungarees and stow the clean skivvies in the ditty bag. Thus we progressed through 8 weeks of basic training.

As company clerk my main task was to ensure that everyone from the company was present at each training or drill session. Whenever a recruit was to be absent he was required to provide me with a signed chit authorizing the absence. Using the company roster and any chits I had I had to prepare a document to be turned in at each training session accounting for everyone in the company.

Another major undertaking, during which I began to understand military thinking, was to prepare savings bond requests for each recruit. While no recruit was required to purchase bonds a card had to be turned in for each recruit even if it was negative. One of the most interesting, or frustrating, episodes occurred when I prepared the form for a recruit by the name of JC Wilson. I figured his first initial was "J" and middle initial was "C". This form was rejected stating that the recruit's first name had to be written out. After a discussion with JC, I completed the form again and submitted it with a note stating that the recruit's first name was in fact "JC".



Filling out Savings Bond cards as Company Clerk

The form was again rejected stating that the recruit's middle name was required. Since JC did not have a middle name I was at a loss, but again completed another form and submitted it with a

note stating that the recruit's first name was "JC" and that he did not have a middle name. Again it was rejected, this time with a note stating that the acronym "NMN" was required for anyone with No Middle Name and that I should complete another form... correctly!

As Company Clerk I was also had to learn to forge the signature of our company commander. Since each report and form submitted had to be signed by the Company Commander I was instructed to learn to sign his name. He provided me with a sample and I spent several days practicing until I could nearly duplicate it. In fact it was at this time, after writing James D. Snodgrass uncountable times, that I acquired my present way of writing the "J" in *Jim*

We had some comings and goings from within the company. One or two individuals could not cope with the situation and left. Whether they went AWOL or were discharged somehow was never really made clear. Additionally if an individual got sick and missed enough training, or was not progressing satisfactorily, he was dropped back to another company to pick up what he'd missed. We gained a few people in this fashion also.

After the first four weeks, which seemed like a lifetime (and still does), we had a break of one week for what was called "service week". Recruits from companies in "service week" provided labor for the camp, such as working in the kitchen, laundry, etc. Service week presented me with the only real benefit of being company clerk. In that capacity I was assigned to stay in the barracks and had minimal work to do, which proved fortunate. Just prior to this break I had caught a cold and it had settled in my ears. My Eustachian tubes became plugged and I could hardly hear. Finally, I was forced to go to sick call. I was deathly afraid that they would find something significantly wrong, place me in sick bay and I would be "set back". It turned out I had nothing to fear. After a long wait I described my symptoms to a corpsman who passed me on to a doctor. The doctor didn't even look me over, just wrote out a prescription and sent me to the pharmacy where I was given a small brown envelope. The envelope contained what appeared to be 12 Dristan tablets. The instruction were to take one every 4 hours for a week and come back if the problem didn't clear up. If you do the math that just doesn't work out but my ears started to clear up, and I wasn't going to take another chance with getting "set back", so I cut back to 2 pills a day and the problem cleared up.

After "service week" we were on the downhill run, we all knew by this time that we could make it and were pretty sure we would make it. We were granted privileges to use the PX canteen, make telephone calls, and the last weekend before graduation we were granted liberty with half the company going into Chicago on Saturday and the other half on Sunday. Although we sometimes doubted that it would happen, we finally all dressed in our dress blues, passed in review, received our orders and headed for home for two weeks of leave.

When I arrived in Great Falls I ran into Bernie McCauley who was a gate agent for Northwest Airlines. We talked a bit and he asked when I was going back to Chicago. It was going to be a red eye in two weeks and he said he'd be working that night so I should be sure to find him and he'd make sure I got a seat in first class.

Leave was fine, it was nice to be free and to spend time with Patty, even if I still had a really bad haircut.

I hooked up with Bernie when I got to the airport in Great Falls a couple of weeks later and he told me to hang back and he'd talk to the stewardess. After everyone else had boarded he went up the air stairs, talked with the stew and then told me I was all set. When I got to the top of the stairs the really beautiful stewardess said "Hi" and then in total surprise she said, "I know you"! When I finally dragged my eyes from her face, I noticed her name badge said "Miss O'Brien" and I realized that she was from Havre and had worked at the Dairy Queen the summer Dave and I managed to visit every day (she hadn't looked that good in those days). Well, I never made it to first class - in fact I ended up sitting in the very back of the plane with her for the entire flight eating peanuts and visiting whenever she was free.

The Monday before Thanksgiving I was back at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. My orders were to attend Basic Electricity and Electronics (BE&E) C School, followed by Radarman A School but since there was no class ready to start at BE&E I was placed in a work party. We were quartered in old WWII barracks that were about ready to be replaced. Students waiting for Navy school classes to start are always placed in "work" parties and I was assigned to a group of 5 or 6 guys who were providing maintenance in one of the school buildings. I believe I worked there for 7 or 8 days and aside from sweeping and mopping floors the only constructive thing I can recall doing was when 4 of us replaced a broken window.

Basic Electricity school was very interesting. It was a required course for anyone going into any electrical, electronic or nuclear related fields. As a consequence some very sharp people were present in the classes. In my class there were several college graduates, some with degrees in electronics related fields and one with an Electrical Engineering degree. I found most of the information familiar and the math quite simple. As the class progressed I was in the running at the top of the class with the college degree guys.



Barracks at Great Lakes while attending BE&E school

As Christmas approached the big question was who would be allowed leave for the holidays. Initially we were told that only those people who had not had leave for at least 3 months would be allowed to take leave at Christmas. As I had been home just prior to Thanksgiving I expected to spend my first Christmas in the Navy in my old barracks at Great Lakes. Then, about two weeks before Christmas, someone changed their mind and anyone who had been on station since before Thanksgiving would be allowed to take leave.

Since it was too late to get airline reservations I turned to the railroads. This required riding to Milwaukee on the Chicago Northwestern commuter, then Milwaukee Road to Minneapolis and finally Empire Builder to Havre. The Milwaukee to Minneapolis leg was like something out of a 40's movie with standing room only and a group of us in the men's lavatory playing cards on top of a stack of carry-on luggage.

While on leave I offered to help out at the Coke Plant and my offer was accepted. Since Christmas and New Years were on Wednesday the Monday/Tuesday overnight trip to Malta had to be accomplished in one day on Monday. In order to accomplish this the plan was that I would take a truck and start in Chinook working east, while dad worked Malta and then started immediately back meeting me in Harlem.

On the Sunday morning, between Christmas and New Year's Day, dad woke me to move my car so he could go to church. The LeMans was parked in the driveway, pulled up close to the garage door and plugged in. When I tried to start the car it was so cold the solenoid would not even engage... it was 56 below zero. Thinking that our only option at this point was to get the car into a warm place (the coke plant) I called David Craig to see if he could drive down, pick us up so we could get a truck and tow the car. Dave was still sleeping when I called so we called Phil Cassel, who went out and got a truck. When pulling the car back out of the driveway it was so cold the wheels didn't even turn. They didn't start turning until the car had been dragged about a half block.

Dad had no more than returned from that excursion than Dave called. He had a similar problem. Their VW bug was in the garage and started fine, but their Dodge station wagon was only partway inside and would not start even though it had been plugged in. I took my folk's car, got a truck and towed the Craig's car to the plant. Since we had to kill some time while the cars were thawing, we went to Havre Central and played basketball for a couple of hours (during which time I let my folk's car run continuously). We then retrieved our cars and returned to our respective homes to prepare for a double date that evening.

We took our girls to a movie that night at the Orpheum Theater. The movie was "Gone With The Wind" but I feel like I missed half of it because during the intermission I glanced out the front door of the theater and realized that the temperature was again minus 50 something. I spent the rest of the movie worrying about what we'd have to do if my car didn't start! It turned over pretty slow but it started

The next morning I was out with the Coke truck and it was still around 50 below. Things went surprisingly well, and I don't remember the cold as being a particular problem. However as I approached Harlem in the early afternoon the truck began to run very rough. In fact when I got into town my first priority was to find my dad's truck to decide what to do. The truck would barely idle and we were quite concerned about what action to take. There was no diesel mechanic in town and there was no garage in town big enough to get the truck inside. We ended up putting into a service station garage as far as it would go and a mechanic looked it over as we rushed through our remaining deliveries.



The mechanic was unable to determine the problem so it was decided that my dad would tow me and I'd keep the truck running as best I could. We pulled both trucks to the middle of the street and I crawled under to attach a chain. We never did figure out the problem with the truck but after he'd pulled me about 5 miles the engine began to run smoothly and we were able to remove the chain and continue home normally. Later I learned that the Harlem newspaper had snapped a picture of me with a caption stating that in tough times even competitors help each other. When I got back to the Great Lakes and the Navy all the guys who'd had to stay over the holidays could talk of nothing but how cold it had been. They didn't have a clue!

I looked forward to getting back to Great Lakes and resuming BE&E school. Since the course was not that difficult the challenge became a friendly rivalry as to who would be at the top of the class. I believe I ended up 3rd in the class standings with the top five students separated by less than 1 percentage point.

The first sign of our advanced status as we started "A" school was that we were moved from the old WWII vintage wooden barracks with open berthing to the Radarman School barracks, a three story brick building with 4 man rooms.



I was again placed on a working party while waiting for my class in Radarman School, this time in the Radarman School. Again mostly we just swept or mopped floors and killed time in the boiler room. I spent a couple of days cleaning the Radarman School barracks and then was assigned to help the chief who was in charge of Communication and Tactical Publications (COMTAC). These publications were all classified Confidential or Secret and what he taught me in those 8 or 10 days would prove very helpful when I was later assigned to the USS Ouellet.

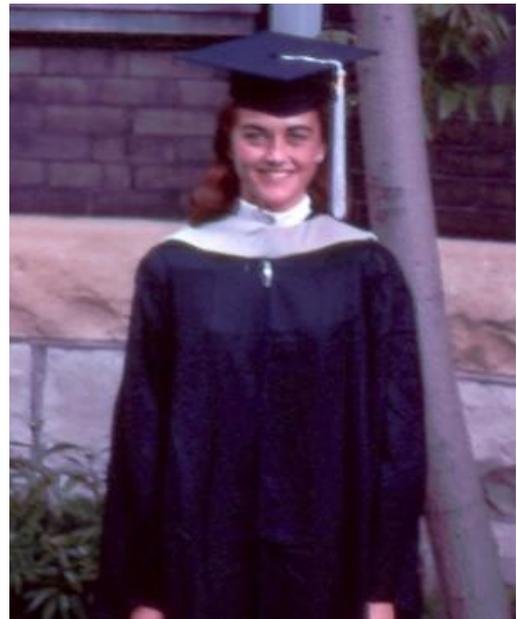
Radarman School was a challenge compared with all the training I had received up to that time. The course was 16 weeks long with the first 6 weeks devoted to learning the electronic theory and practical operation of a radar set. This portion of the course was often the downfall students, and it was a shame because besides providing the in-depth knowledge to understand the capabilities and limitations of radar it was never of any use in the real world.

After the competition in BE&E school I was determined to do as well as I possibly could and studied intensely those first 6 weeks. As a result, by the time we got into the operational aspects of the Radarman rate my grade point was such that I was pretty sure I would finish near the top of the class. This was important because while anyone who flunked out was supposedly assigned to river gunboats in Vietnam, whoever finished top of the class was offered shore duty at a location of his choice.

On the weekends we'd make occasional trips to Chicago or Milwaukee. On one occasion I went to South Bend and visited Dave Craig at Notre Dame. Another trip was to Chicago to attend the wedding of a high school classmate, John McLain. John didn't know I was in the area until a few weeks before the wedding, but was really happy to see me. Judy's family made me feel like part of the wedding party for the day and I ended up at their home the evening after the wedding. When it was time to head back to Great Lakes her brothers took me to the transit station (The EL) and told me to get off at the "second red stop" which was underground in downtown Chicago. I did as instructed but when I reached the street I had absolutely no idea where I was... until I walked around a corner and realized I was in the Loop downtown and only a few blocks from the train station where I needed to catch a train back to base.

As the last week of school neared I was called into the Commandant's office and informed that I would have the highest grade in the class and officially informed that I would have a choice of orders to shore duty. I knew that many of my classmates had already been informed of their orders so I asked where my present orders would take me. I was told that I presently had orders to a WWII vintage destroyer size supply ship that was presently somewhere around Vietnam and that I probably would not enjoy that duty. I then asked what locations I could choose from if I were to take the offered shore duty. I was told that I could go to Brunswick, Georgia or "somewhere" on the West Coast, probably San Diego or Point Magu (northwest of Los Angeles). Since one of my classmates, Gil Bateman from Macon, GA, had warned me that Brunswick would not be a good choice I opted for "somewhere" on the West Coast.

The last trip before graduation was to Milwaukee. I'd learned that Sister Joan, who'd taught at St Jude's and Havre Central, was in Milwaukee working on a graduate degree and about to graduate. I found the address, which was a non-descript house and certainly didn't look like any kind of convent, on a residential street and went up knocked on the door. A woman in a house dress and apron answered and when I asked for "Sister Joan" she seemed confused and then said, "You must mean Joan McPherson" which sounded right. She said Joan was out and I should come back. When I went back I was told that she had gone for a walk and I should come in and wait. It was apparent that several women lived in the house and then a guy came in and asked if I'd like a beer. I followed him through the kitchen, out the back door and into another house that was a few yards behind the first house. We went into the kitchen and he opened a fridge. I expected him to hand me a beer but instead it was a chilled mug that he then filled from a draft spigot on the side of the fridge - they had a keg in there! We went back to the front house where he turned on the TV and told me he and the gal who'd



answered the door were leaving and I should wait for Joan to return. I watched Wide World of Sports until I heard a voice from the kitchen say "Is that Jim Anez I see in those Navy whites"? I always thought she was good looking and when I turned around to see "Sister" Joan in a normal sun dress she WAS a babe. She ran in and hugged me and I have to say I was more than a little confused. We visited for a couple of hours and I learned that she and the other women living in

the house were in the process of leaving the convent. In the back house were a group of guys who were leaving the priesthood.

As the final days of school slipped away one of our primary preoccupations was making arrangements for transportation to O'Hare airport. Normal transportation was by bus but we wanted to make the earliest possible flight so most sought more flexible and speedier transportation. Some sailors stationed at Great Lakes, in an attempt to make additional spending money, would run gypsy cabs, but we had been advised to avoid this because of liability problems and the poor reliability of most of their vehicles. The premier choice was to rent a limousine and this was the method a group of us arranged.

On the morning of our graduation we carried everything we owned in our sea bags and placed them in the trunk of our limo prior to entering the school for the ceremony. My bag was one of the first in the trunk. We received our diploma and orders, I was recognized as having the highest class grade and it was announced that I would be assigned to a shore duty location. When I got my orders I immediately noted they were for the originally assigned shipboard duty. As soon as we were dismissed I called this to the attention of the staff. Phone calls were made and I was informed that my orders could be found at the personnel office about 8 blocks away. My limo mates were anxious to be on their way to the airport, but agreed to wait while I rushed to the administration building. My heart sank as I went into the personnel office to find a queue of sailors with similar problems and after learning that it would take at least 2 hours to straighten out my problem the other guys decided they couldn't wait. Since my sea bag was buried under 6 other bags it was agreed that they would take my bag to O'Hare and watch it until I got there. The plan was that if I didn't show up before the last of them had to fly out they'd check the bag in with Northwest Airlines.

After what seemed like a lifetime, but in retrospect was a pretty fast job, I finally had my orders to something called FAWTC/FCPC in San Diego and had to get to the airport as soon as possible. I was tempted by a guy with a '62 Chevy, but decided that I'd already missed my scheduled flight so it didn't make much difference and I might as well wait for a bus. That was one of my few good choices that day. As we pulled onto the freeway a few miles south of Great Lakes the Chevy was pulled over to the side of the road with several sailors staring stupidly under the hood.

Upon reaching the airport I was unable to locate any of my friends or my sea bag. I assumed they had checked it with Northwest and attempted to confirm this, but the flight I had missed had already left and if the sea bag had been checked it was probably already on the way to Great Falls without me. I wouldn't know until I got to Great Falls.

I was not overly surprised when I learned that my bag was not in Great Falls waiting for me, and filed the missing bag report half-heartedly not believing for a minute that the bag was lost in the system. I was right, but I was also lucky. Three days later I received a phone call from a Northwest agent in O'Hare. My bag had been found abandoned in the middle of the waiting area at O'Hare and turned in to lost and found. The Northwest agent had discovered it when checking for my lost bag. It was delivered the next day to my door thanks to Northwest and Frontier Airlines.

After my two weeks of leave I was on my way to San Diego. I don't remember the connections I had to make (through Denver or Salt Lake City, but I'll never forget that as the plane began to taxi the flight attendant welcomed us on board the flight to San Diego with a stop in Ontario. I'd never heard of Ontario, California so there was a moment of panic as I wondered if we were going to Canada. I'm sure glad they said "San Diego, with a stop in Ontario"!

I don't remember exactly what happened in San Diego, except that no one seemed to know where this FAAWTC/FCPC place was and when I finally got "delivered" there I found out that I had to go to the ASW School because there were no barracks at FAAWTC. The ASW School was only about a half-mile from the airport!

I didn't stay in the barracks at the ASW School very long because they wanted the space for students and were willing to let us move off base if we chose. Another seaman, Rolland Jopling, and I moved into an apartment that was being vacated by a guy whose year at FAAWTC was ending. The apartment was in Ocean Beach about 2 blocks from the beach itself. Three co-workers and friends, Pete Lacy, Pat Wastella and Tom Dehart lived about a block away. Pete and Pat worked with us in the operations area and Tom was working in an admin office. Tom had a car and the 5 of us hung out most of the time.

I remember that summer and fall as one of the most pleasant times of my life. We spent most of our weekends on the beach drinking beer, listening to music and watching girls. I can't ever remember being so relaxed and at peace as I felt those days. Our responsibilities were well defined, when off work we had little to worry about we had just enough money to get by on.

When I went home for Christmas Patty told me that she was seeing a guy from college and that it had been going on for quite some time, but that she wanted to tell me in person instead of in a letter. It didn't make me feel any better and Christmas wasn't much fun that year. To make me feel worse she told me that she'd been ready to quit college and move if I'd asked her to get married. I had thought about it, but didn't seem like it was a fair thing to do when I would be going to sea, etc. so in the end we probably just weren't ready. Looking back I realize that we'd known each other for nearly a year and a half and most of the time I'd been away, so I should have anticipated what would happen.



1963 Chevy Super Sport (with dented fender)

By early of 1970 I bought a 1963 Chevy SS from Pete, Pat and Tom's landlord for \$500. It would have been a neat car, but the right quarter panel and left fender had both been crunched pretty badly. The tires were so bad that I was scared to death driving it the 5 miles to get new tires put on.

There was a tiny beer bar, with one pool table, attached to a small Laundromat about a block away

where we used to spend some time. One night just before payday during early 1970 Rollie and I decided that we'd go over to have a beer. We checked our finances and found that we each had a dollar, which at 30 cents apiece was enough for 3 draft beers. I bought us a round, then he bought us a round and we were on our third, and last, beer when the girl tending bar made some comment about the weather. I said that it was a lot nicer than where I was from in Montana. A guy a couple of stools down asked where I was from in Montana and it turned out he worked for General Electric and had spent a couple of years in Havre working on the Air Force Radar station. Well, we spent the rest of the evening talking and he kept us in beer!

Duty at FAAWTC was pretty good. We (junior enlisted) sat at keyboards, wore radio headsets, and played the role of pilots for Air Intercept Controller (AIC) trainees. Our keyboard input generated video on the trainee radar scope and we verbally acknowledged their commands and reported information displayed on our keyboards. Trainees were all officers or enlisted, E6 and above, and we only saw them when a new class was walked through during orientation. We never received any formal training on AIC, but it was apparent that we were working with guys in different stages of training based on their skill level. In the early stages of training everything was very choreographed, but as time went on we'd get into more "real life" scenarios. FAAWTC also provided training for large-scale exercises and at times several ships would send their Combat Information Center personnel over and we'd run fleet size exercises.

We also provided training for amphibious assault control exercises that were extremely boring because everything moved so slowly. These were a real challenge however because the operators had to use some very old keyboards that were a real challenge to operate.

Towards the end of my year there we started training Air Controllers for Carrier Control Approaches. This was a real challenge because the controller had to be extremely precise in his approach commands in order for the computer to record a "capture" and as the input operator we couldn't make a single mistake or it would ruin the approach.

When I first got to FAAWTC we had "duty" days, in addition to our regular workday, about twice a week. There were civilian receptionists during the day, but at night and on the weekends the "duty" section manned the front desk. Usually this would be a First Class petty officer or Chief with a seaman or 3rd class petty officer at the desk and a 2nd or 3rd class petty officer driver. There was a bunkroom where we'd sleep during the night. I can't remember if someone was always awake, I think there was. At some point in time I was asked to get a government driver's license and after that I was assigned as the driver, and in that capacity I didn't have to actually sit up, but just be available to make runs when necessary. This usually meant driving arriving officers from the airport to wherever they were staying at North Island or other Navy installations in the San Diego area. I thought it was funny that of all the guys they'd pick a kid from a small town in Montana to be a driver in a city like San Diego.

I think the most memorable event while I was at FAAWTC was the day of the first moon landing. I was on duty that afternoon and we had a TV set up and were glued to it. One of the responsibilities of the watch section was to lower the flag at sunset. This was something of a ceremony as we'd lower the flag as taps were played on a loud speaker then fold it and "march"

back inside. Wouldn't you know it, but sunset on July 20, 1969 was exactly the moment when Neil Armstrong stepped from the LEM onto the surface of the moon!

On board Navy ships each division provides a few seamen to assist the cooks for 1 to 3 months. These individuals are the newest guys and, in a way, having to work as a "mess cook" is a rite of passage new guys aboard ship. There was no galley at FAWTC, but there was a coffee mess next to the officer's lounge across the hall from the Commanding Officer's office. Every new seaman had to spend a month there making coffee. There were 3 large (80-cup) coffee makers and it was pretty simple. We had to go in a little extra early each morning so coffee would be ready by 0800 and keep the officers' lounge tidy. I was told that I might have to serve coffee to guests of the Captain, but the closest I ever came to that was to deliver coffee in the silver service a couple of times. Most of the time I was able to just sit on my stool and read magazines or newspapers from the officer's lounge or work on correspondence courses. Occasionally Captain's Mast was held in the lounge and I was able to sit by the door and eavesdrop.

Towards the end of my month in the coffee mess FAWTC/FCPC hosted a large conference. There must have been 60 to 80 officers (Commanders and above) under the direction of an Admiral. They split into 4 work groups and each work group worked through a portion of a Naval Tactical publication line by line and made recommendations for changes. I don't recall what the title was, but I know it was classified secret.

I expected the only impact of the conference for me would be that we'd be going through more coffee than usual, but during the afternoon of the first day a Captain was getting coffee and asked me if I could find something for him, which I did. The next morning he stopped in and asked if I could find a typewriter. I knew there was an unused desk in the office where Tom DeHart worked so I asked for, and was given, the use of the typewriter. Later in the day the Captain asked me to find some other office supplies, which I was able to do.

When I came into make coffee on the third day there was someone else there and I was told that I was to report to the Captain who'd been making all the requests. It turned out that he was the Admiral's chief of staff and I officially became his gofer, running errands and shuffling papers and whatever from one work group to another.

At some point that week he gave me a fairly large stack of papers and told me to find a copier and make a specified number of copies. I had to hunt around for a while to find a copier I could use and ended up in a copier room in a part of the facility I'd never seen before, where I proceeded to start making copies. I was pretty careful with everything I had because, as I said it was classified, but a Marine officer (Major, I think) came in while I was doing this and really freaked out about the fact that I was copying secret material. He turned real timid when I finally got through to him that I was doing this at the direction of the Admiral's chief of staff.

Sometime later I received an official letters of appreciation from both the Commanding Officer of FAWTC and from the Admiral. And I never did go back to making coffee!

On a regular workday morning during the spring of 1970 the chief came into to operations area and asked who would like to volunteer as a driver to take an officer to Long Beach. I, along with

several others, volunteered and I was selected. I'd never been to Long Beach before, but figured it was a good chance to get away for the day and I figured that whoever I was taking would know where we were going. It turned out that I was to drive a Commander up to give an Anti-Air Warfare presentation on board a destroyer that was leaving for Westpac the next day. And it turned out that he didn't know how to get to the Naval Station either so we ended up stopping at a gas station in Long Beach to ask directions!

When we got to the Naval Station we found the ship and the officer told me to wait in the car until he found out what the plan was. A short while later a seaman (who I later learned would have been the messenger of the watch) came to the car and told me I was to come aboard and have lunch. I had *never* been aboard a Navy ship before so I followed him up the brow and copied him as he saluted the ensign and the Officer of the Deck. I was then directed to follow "that sailor" to the mess decks for lunch. Lunch turned out to be steak and after I finished I just followed some other guys who dropped their plates at the scullery and then followed them topside. I was on the wrong side of the ship but I was smart enough to figure all I needed to do was follow the railing till I hit the quarterdeck and then stood around waiting. A short while later a Commander walked up and asked if I was reporting aboard and I told him no, I was the driver for the Commander who was making the presentation in the wardroom. He asked if I'd like to see their CIC and I said, "Sure, that'd be cool" so he said he'd arrange it. He then proceeded to depart the ship and I realized I had been casually chatting with the ship's commanding officer! Anyway, the OOD called the duty Radarman to the quarterdeck and told him the Captain wanted him to show me around. The guy was, to say the least, not too happy to have his nap interrupted, but he wasn't too rude.

As the end of my year at FAAWTC approached I was asked what I'd like to do next. As a rule we were sent to a school after our year was up and I was told that they were pretty good at honoring duty requests ("dream sheets" we called them). I asked for Electronic Warfare Operator's school and my first choice of duty was the Chicago, a cruiser that some friends of mine had been assigned to. I think my second choice was "New Construction" simply because I didn't want to get sent to an old WWII vintage ship like my original orders from "A" school.



Jim, Colleen and Navy friends in Tijuana

I received orders to attend Electronic Warfare "C" school at Treasure Island, San Francisco after 2 weeks leave. I don't know if I knew at that point that I would be going to the Ouellet following the school or if those orders came while I was at TI.

My cousin, Colleen, and I had been discussing the idea of her coming to San Diego of a visit that spring. The timing wasn't too good however as I was due to leave the week after she arrived, so

she only spent a week in San Diego. We saw all the sights, including Tijuana, and had a great week. Then she and I drove to Havre where she caught the train back to Minneapolis.

We decided to leave about midnight so we could get through a lot of the desert country a night and I drove. We arrived in Las Vegas early in the morning, stopped for breakfast and played a few slots, then hit the road with Colleen driving while I slept. At some point as we approached the Utah border I woke up and noticed the engine overheat light was on. In semi-panic I asked her how long the light had been on and she said it's been on for a while and was it important. In full panic I grabbed a map and realized that there wasn't any kind of town within 50 miles. Just at that moment we saw a sign that said "artesian well" 500 feet. We stopped and sat for a long time, or so it seemed, while we waited for the car to cool down. We then scrounged for whatever we could find to carry water that we poured over the radiator in an attempt to cool things down and finally we were able to open the radiator cap and add water. Unfortunately the heads had cracked and we had to stop constantly to add water the rest of the trip.

We got to Salt Lake City that evening and checked into a motel. When I asked for two rooms I know the guy thought I was just doing it for appearance and that Colleen and I were really going to be staying together. I tried to tell him that she was my cousin, but he just said, "OK, whatever" and gave me the rooms. We spent the next day sightseeing and left the second morning driving up past Jackson Hole and through Yellowstone. As we drove through Yellowstone Colleen kept telling me to make sure I let her know if I saw any bears. When I finally did see some bears she was dozing and her contacts were stuck to her eyelids so the bears were gone before she could "see."

We spent that night in Bozeman with Gordon and Janet Whirry and then the next morning headed for Havre, by way of Butte. We drove through Butte and stopped to see the open pit mining operation. On the way down the hill from the pit, through downtown Butte, my brakes failed. I was able to catch the lights using the transmission and emergency brake and coasted into a service station rubbing the tires against the island to stop the car.



The rest of the trip to Havre was uneventful I guess. At least nothing else stands out after all of the above. Colleen spent a few days in Havre and then took the train back to Minneapolis.

I knew I was going to go to a ship when I left San Francisco so I asked Bill Pray, in Malta, to sell

the Chevy for me. He later sent me a check for \$450 and I felt pretty good that I almost got all my money back out of the car. The "small world" part of this story takes place a year and half later when I went home for Christmas leave at the end of 1971. Coming home I'd flown from Hawaii into Great Falls but the return flight was so much more expensive it turned out that I could take the train to Minneapolis, and then fly to Hawaii from there much cheaper. The train stopped in Glasgow and one of the boarding passengers, a lady, took the seat across the aisle

from me. We eventually struck up a conversation and it turned out she was from Malta and worked as the bookkeeper at the Chevy Garage. I asked if she knew my dad who drove the Coke truck (the Chevy Garage was one of the route stops). She confirmed that she did know him and then asked if I was in the Navy. After I confirmed that she, in a rather ominous way, asked if I'd had Bill Pray sell a car for me. When I said I had, she then said, "Well we bought that car and I have some questions to ask you"! Defensively I quickly told her that I'd told Bill the heads were cracked and to make sure any buyer knew that. She said that wasn't the problem - her husband was a mechanic at the garage and had done the necessary repairs - but they'd bought the car for their daughter to take to college in Bozeman. When it got cold that she learned that the heater didn't work and had nearly frozen to death. Relieved, I told her I had no idea about that - the car had come from southern California, I'd never used the heater and there was a good chance it had never been used.

When I got to the Naval Training Center at Treasure Island in San Francisco I found Pat Wastella was there also and that we were in the same class and assigned to the same room (along with two electronic technician "A" school students). The school was OK and we learned a lot in a short time. It was interesting because we were all 3rd class petty officers and so were treated pretty well. Pat and I made it a point of going into San Francisco every weekend and sampling the various cultural specialties. I remember especially going to a Greek restaurant and allowing Pat to talk me into trying tripe. Another time we ate in an honest-to-God Italian family restaurant where the great-grandmother kept telling us (in Italian) to eat up. I think our favorite hangout there was a place called The Red Garter where they played sing-along music, the tables were jammed so close together that you had to get to know the people next to you and everybody drank beer. I remember meeting Russian, British and Australian sailors while there.

After finishing EW school in September I had orders to report to the USS Ouellet which was under construction in New Orleans. I didn't feel there was enough travel time to stop in Montana so I flew to Minneapolis, spent a couple of days with the Dennings and then flew on to New Orleans. I knew it would be hot in New Orleans so I wore tropical whites when leaving Minneapolis. It was cold and snowing heavily when I left Minneapolis, but when I stepped off the plane in New Orleans my uniform just went limp from the heat and humidity.

The base where we were quartered in New Orleans had been a supply depot during WWII and we had "office space" in a loft of a warehouse right on the Mississippi River.



Warehouse on shore of Mississippi River where we worked in New Orleans

Our barracks were about four or five blocks from the warehouse and everyday about 3:30, just when we got off work, it would rain buckets.

More often than not we would get soaking wet walking back each afternoon. The barracks were also WWII vintage "H" style frame buildings just like I'd stayed in during



Barracks where we lived in New Orleans

BE&E school, but they had been extensively remodeled and were quite comfortable. When I first got there I was put in a 4 man room with 2 other guys who were from another ship and we had little or no use for each other. A short time later I was moved into a smaller single man room, and as more crew members arrived, there was additional juggling of personnel to kind of put people who worked together into the same rooms. I'll never forget when the Chief who was responsible for room assignments came to me and apologized that I was going to have to stay in the single man room. I felt so bad; I could hardly stop grinning!

This is where I met Bob Perling, Jim McCoskey, Deke Nueman and Benny Roybal. Deke, Jim and Benny were seamen and were working on charts. They had to go through each Notice to Mariner publication for each chart and make any pen and ink changes necessary to bring the charts up to date. Bob was a First Class Petty Officer and I think Bob had been working on the ComTac (Communications and Tactical) publications but turned these over to me upon arrival. I have no clue what he did for the rest of the time we were in New Orleans. Each publication would be in its original printing with any page changes that had been issued since the original and any pen and ink changes since the last printed page change. I had to bring each publication up to date. I'd learned the basics for this while waiting for Radarman school to start at the beginning of 1969.

As we got closer to the delivery date for the ship we began for standing watch on the ship at night. This was miserable as there was no heat and by late November it started to get pretty cold as we patrolled the ship.

It was a pretty exciting day when the shipyard took the ship to sea for the first time. Most of us got our first real look at the ship as it passed our facility on the way to the



Our first view of the ship on Mississippi River going to sea for first time

Gulf of Mexico.

Finally, when the ship was finished, we rode along while the shipyard crew delivered it to the US Navy in Charleston, SC. It was good that I didn't need to do anything because I wasn't feeling great most of the trip.

The ship was commissioned in Charleston in December. I was put on Shore Patrol for two weeks over the Christmas - New Year's holidays. About March, after shakedown and shipyard work, we sailed to our new Home Port of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii via the Panama Canal and San Diego.

In January 1972 we departed for Westpac, returning to Hawaii at the end of August. On September 5th I left the ship to travel to Treasure Island for separation from active duty.

- See Appendix I for a detailed chronologic history of the Navy years and my time on board USS Ouellet -