

1979 - 1985

FAA - Huron

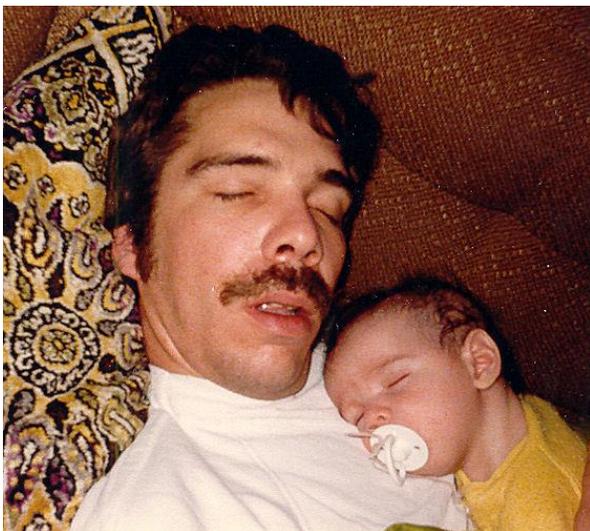
- See Appendix II for stories and anecdotes from Huron FSS -

We hadn't been able to do any house hunting prior to the move so we stayed in a hotel in downtown Huron while we looked for a house. We finally found what we wanted to buy but there were some problems with the paperwork on the house so we spent the full 30 days that were allowed in the hotel occupying two adjoining rooms. The state fair was held each year in Huron at the end of August and beginning of September. During this period there were never any rooms available in town, but the hotel let us keep our rooms at the agreed upon rate right through the fair. It was noisy as the lounge was a floor or two directly below us, but it was interesting. On one occasion as we were taking the elevator up to our rooms and members of the Oak Ridge Boys got on. One asked to hold David saying he missed his son at home.



Home 1979-1985: 758 Simmons SE, Huron, SD

The kids had to start school while we were still in the hotel and the paperwork problems were still holding things up, so when our 30 days ran out the owner of the house allowed us to move in even though we still hadn't closed on it. This house had been bought for taxes, gutted and remodeled. I later saw the assessment paperwork and learned that the owner had doubled his money after the remodeling expenses. At any rate the house had been empty for some time and the day after we moved in I was working a midnight shift (it seemed like almost everything happened when I was working mids) when Sue called. We didn't even have a phone yet so that was a shock. Kasi had used the toilet sometime after everyone was in bed, the toilet wouldn't stop running and overflowed, and Sue couldn't figure out how to stop it. She'd run down the street in her house coat at 2 in the morning to find a neighbor who'd let her use the phone. For years after that she was paranoid that the neighbors thought she was a crazy woman!



Jim and David - September 1979

Once we got settled in the house it was worked pretty well for us. The kid's school was only a block away, I really liked working at the facility and we grew to like Huron. Sue was pregnant again by early in 1980 and she didn't make any trips to the chiropractor this time.



There were something like 14 or 16 specialists at Huron Flight Service and our Flight Plan Area was roughly the south half of the eastern third of South Dakota, which included Sioux Falls, the largest city. Everyone got along pretty well but we did have some characters.



Huron Flight Service Operations

One was Don Holmes. Don was generally a nice guy and we grew to be friends. In fact we asked him and his wife to be godparents for Tommy but sometimes Don just didn't think. One day a middle aged man and older woman came into the flight service to check weather and file a flight plan. I was helping them when Don walked up and said, "So what do we have here, a mother son team?" You could have heard a pin drop. The guy looked like he was about to come over the counter as he quietly, but very brusquely, said, "This is my wife."

I was so embarrassed for everybody that I wished I could find a crack to crawl into and meanwhile Don just went on as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. He never realized what he'd done.



Another character was a guy named Terry. His wife was a successful realtor and her brother was our family doctor, a guy named George. Terry had an opinion on everything - and he was always right. He had grown up in Huron and his wife was a local gal. At some point he'd been a tower controller in Duluth, Minnesota but he quit to move back to Huron. We all thought it was because he'd rather be a "big fish in a little pond" than a "small fish in a big pond".

He was once late for work at 6 AM and when he finally got to work he was livid. He'd gotten a ticket for running a red light. His defense, when the cop pulled him over, was that he ran that light every morning and the cop had no business stopping him on a morning when he was running late anyway.

Another time he made the comment that as a kid he'd worked at a pool hall and made \$100 a week. Now he was a successful Air Traffic Control Specialist and he only had \$200 a week for spending money.

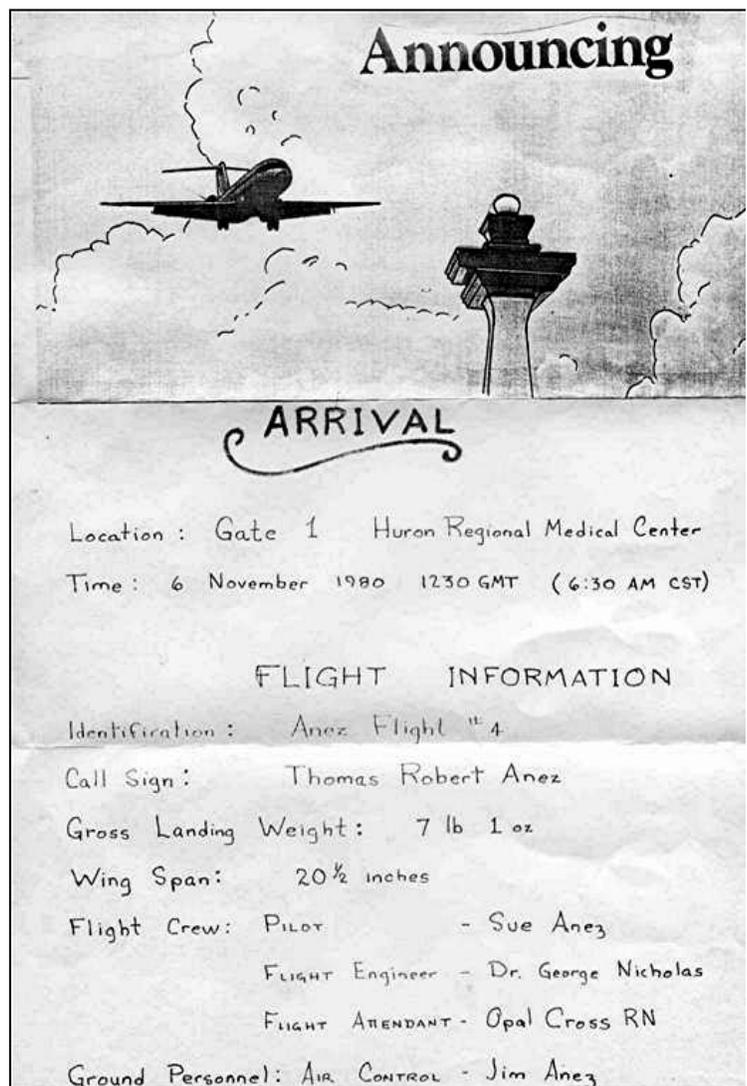
One day in October of 1980, when he was on a day off, Terry came into the FSS and went immediately into the manager's office. He came through ops so fast we didn't get a good look but we thought it looked like he'd been in some kind of accident. When he left the manager's office he went straight to the break room and then left by the back door. We never saw him again. It turned out that he'd been caught in bed with George's wife and George had beaten the shit out of him.

As a result of his visit with management he got an "emergency" transfer to Great Falls FSS.

By this time Sue and I were seeing George weekly as she was in the last month of pregnancy and the visits were a little weird given the circumstances. George just didn't seem to have his "head in the game" and, because he knew where I worked, the conversations were somewhat awkward.



On the morning of November 6th Sue called (I was working a mid-shift again!) to say she was in labor. I called Don Long, who was supposed to come in at 6:00 AM and he was at the facility in only about 15 minutes. I hurried home, picked up Sue and the kids, dropped the kids at a friend's house and then, because I realized I didn't even have change for a coffee machine, stopped at an ATM. While there the cops came by and asked what we were doing at that time of the morning. When we got to the hospital we had to ring a doorbell to gain access and then while I was completing paperwork they took Sue up to the labor room. It turned out the ATM stop was a waste as the vending machines only took coins. I then went up to the delivery area and the nurses assured us that the doctor had been called. Things progressed fairly quickly and they took Sue into delivery by around 6:00. Sue kept telling the nurses that the baby was coming but they said she had plenty of time and the doctor was on the



Tom's (humorous) Birth Announcement

way. The nurses got me gowned up and were across the room putting their gowns on when I glanced down and saw the baby crowning. I yelled at the nurses to get over to Sue and they did, just in time to deliver him. Then the doctor showed up.

I noticed that it was just getting light outside, glanced at my watch and realized it was only about 7:15 so I commented that I still had time to go back and finish my shift. It was a joke, but Sue didn't think it was very funny.



Sue and Tom - November 1980



Dave and Tom - November 1980



By the 1981 Sue's Ford had quit running. It didn't seem like it was worth trying to get it fixed so we sold it for a couple of hundred dollars to some kids that wanted a project and we bought a Dodge Aries station wagon. Chrysler was having financial trouble and came up with the K-Cars which were small and cheap. It was the first car Dave and Tom knew and they called it, or any car like it, the "mama car".



When we bought the house the siding was a prefinished white with a very light blue trim and one of our first decisions was that we need some color. "We" ended up deciding on a beige color that I always thought was nearly pink and during the early summer of 1981 I painted the house. It was the first, and last time, I ever painted an entire house and the project seemed to go on forever.

One unforeseen consequence of the painting project occurred one day when Sue went to visit Lorraine Urban. She and Sue had met when Sue was in the hospital prior to Tommy's birth and Stan Urban was the shop manager at the Dodge dealership where we'd bought the Aries. Their home was only about three blocks from our house and Sue had gone over with Tommy and David for a visit.

When she was ready to leave she went out to the car to discover that both tires on the left side of the car were flat with gashes in the sidewalls. She called me and said that someone had slashed her tires and then called the police. I hopped into my car and drove over there to deal with the flat tires.

I got there before the police and as I drove the last half block up to her car I could clearly see the from the tread marks on the pavement that the tires had been flat, or nearly flat as she drove up to the house. Obviously she'd run over something while driving so we cancelled the call to the police. On the way home I looked for anything in the street that could have caused the problem and as I pulled into our driveway I saw it - a paint scraper that I'd been using was laying at the edge of the driveway!



1981 Dodge Aires

In August 1981 we took our new car on vacation to Longmont and Denver, Colorado to see Rick Waller and his family and Tebbi Lowery and her family. Coincidentally, they'd been best man and bride's maid at our wedding and only lived a short distance from each other! Rick was working at Denver Center at the time and had to go to work on the midnight shift the day we arrived. He was late getting

home the next morning because PATCO had gone on strike and he was held over for 2 hours (the maximum allowed) after his shift. He never went back to work for the FAA and we'd discuss the strike issue everyday while we were there. He didn't particularly like the union but wanted to support his co-workers so it was a shame he lost his job. When we left Longmont we went to Denver to spend a few days with Tebbi but we didn't stay as long as we planned. I thought it would be good to get back to Huron because the Flight Service system had taken on quite a bit of extra work due to the strike.

Sandy Moore, among others, was sent to Sioux Falls to help the Tower controllers. She did well enough that they kept her. Many of us were given the opportunity to change options and go to a Tower or Center because of the strike. I was offered the chance to go to Mansfield, Ohio but told management that I wasn't going to move any further east just for more money.

The main impact of the strike for us was that we had to control the number of aircraft that got into the air traffic system. Initially each airport was limited to a certain number of departures per hour (I think it was 3) but eventually, at least in South Dakota, we were given some latitude to redistribute this allocation to better match the limitation with the demand. The most unbelievable about the implementation of the quota system was that that it was being implemented and no one told us how to go about it. The night before it went into effect another specialist and I had to devise procedures to administer and track the allocations.



Huron FSS was the "Flight Watch" facility for South Dakota. Flight Watch or Enroute Flight Advisory Service (EFAS) operated from 6:00 AM until 10:00 PM and was intended to provide more in-depth weather information to pilots. Although there was no extra pay specialists assigned to the position normally didn't have to work midnight shifts. EFAS specialists got additional training and a separate certification so it was also seen as career advancement. So in 1982 when there was an opening I applied, and was selected, for the position and our "vacation" that August was in Oklahoma City while I attended the month long training program. Sue and the kids had a great time at the pool every day while I got some of the best training of my whole FAA career.

I enjoyed working Flight Watch as we talked to pilots across the entire state and collected and disseminated weather information. While the schedule still rotated it only required an occasional midnight shift - usually when covering for vacations.



The rotating shifts actually had some benefits in my opinion. Because I had days off in the middle of the week and worked either 6AM to 2PM or 2PM to 10PM I got to spend a lot of time with the two little boys. When the weather was nice we'd go for walks in the morning, with me pulling them in their wagon, and stop for donuts or other treats.



Sue, Kasi, Kevin, Davie and Tom
Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. OK - August 1982

The boys always got along pretty well. Kevin was especially good at looking out for his little brothers. Sue told me about one instance when the kids, playing in the back yard, had somehow stirred up a hornet's nest. Kevin was stung two or three times and despite this his main concern was getting David, who'd also been stung, into the house so Sue could take care of him.

In August of 1983 we went to Minneapolis for, I believe, a wedding anniversary. As part of the trip we took the kids to Valley Fair, an amusement park in Shokopee. Kevin was very watchful and helpful with the younger boys going on rides with them and making sure they stayed together.

Somewhere around this time Sue decide David was old enough to use the phone. She told him about 911 and she showed him where my work number was posted and explained about emergencies. So one day when I was at work and she was doing laundry in the basement she called David to the top of the stairs and, as a test, she said to pretend she'd fallen down the stairs and what should he do. I was at my desk at work when the administrative line rang and upon answering I was greeted with, "Dad, mom just fell down the stairs." Before I could panic I heard Sue laughing as she took the phone and explained what had happened. She said that as soon as she proposed the "test" David disappeared and before she could get up to the kitchen David was on the phone talking to me. David always took things very literally.



Dave, Kevin & Tom (Sue in background to right)
Kevin is pulling Tom to safety after
he got scared in the room of balls

There was one time when I got a call at work that prompted me to rush home and, fortunately, it was the middle of the day so there were plenty of people at work and I could leave immediately. Sue called to tell me that David had locked himself in the bathroom and couldn't get out. The bathroom door had a sliding bolt lock and he'd locked it but couldn't figure out how to open it. When I got home I had no more luck trying to explain to David what he needed to do to unlock the door so, pressed for time, I got to kick the door open. A few days later when I repaired the damage I repositioned the bolt so it was high enough that only an adult could reach it.

There were also times when things didn't go so well. One evening, Sue was working and I was in the living room watching TV with Tommy while Kevin and Dave played with their trucks and cars in the kitchen. Suddenly I heard a cry of pain from the kitchen and I rushed in to find Kevin bleeding from a gash to the side of his head. Kevin had been teasing David and David took a paint scraper that he'd found and stabbed Kevin who was bleeding profusely. I took Kevin into the shower, washed the wound, got the bleeding stopped and shaved enough hair away to apply a bandage. When Sue got home she was really angry that I hadn't taken him to the Emergency Room, saying that he'd have a scar. I figured that unless he went bald no one would ever know. I don't remember what happened to David because of this, but suppose he got a good spanking.

About a year later, we were sitting in the living room watching TV in the evening and Sue was again working. David was playing on the sofa and fell off the end hitting the back of his head on the base of a floor lamp. It was a very similar situation to what had happened to Kevin but this time I got the bleeding stopped and then took him to the nursing home where Sue was working. We discussed whether a visit to the emergency room was necessary and finally she called a doctor who was visiting patients in the home. He said that a band-aide would do fine but Sue was insistent about the ER. Finally he said if that's what she wanted to go ahead and go. So I took Dave to the ER where the doctor put in one stitch. The funny thing was that he did this with no pain killer and David didn't even whimper. After the wound was bandaged the nurse gave David a sucker as he sat on the treatment table. David dropped the sucker and when it hit the floor it shattered and then David started crying!

David was a stubborn kid (some would say like his father). We have home movies of him in front of the house shortly after he started walking. Every time Sue let go of his hand he made a bee-line to the street.

One summer evening Sue was at some sort of meeting at the YWCA and she called because she'd forgotten something important. I don't recall the exact circumstances but I told Kevin, who was 11 or 12, to watch Tom and Dave while I took the papers to Sue. It was about 5 minutes each way so I didn't expect to be gone very long. David had just learned to ride his little bike well enough that we'd taken the training wheels off and he was doing OK but we were constantly having to make him stay out of the street.



Caught! David in the cookie jar (1981)

On my return from the "Y" I glanced down a side street about a block from home and saw David on his bike. I continued around the block and when I got to the intersection where I should have met him I found that he'd been hit by a car. The poor driver was heading west, directly into the setting sun when David rode in front of him. The bike was mangled and David had a bump on his head but was otherwise OK. When we got home Kevin was beside himself with worry. He said that he'd seen David riding away and couldn't catch him. He didn't want to leave Tommy, who was 3 or 4, home alone so he didn't know what to do.

David ran away at around age five. There was no particular reason I was ever able to determine - he just decided to leave. When we discovered that he was gone (and was running away) we had no idea where to look but I decided to check the neighborhood towards the home of some friends. They lived about five or six blocks away and it wasn't until I got in the vicinity of their house that I saw him. He said he wasn't running away, he was trying to go to the house where Kevin was playing and got lost, but he knew I'd come get him.

On the lighter side I walked into the bedroom one Sunday to find Sue, David and Tommy playing with a tape recorder. The boys were probably about four and five at the time and Tommy really didn't say much on the recordings, but David was great. Initially, Sue said something like, "What

shall we talk about? I know, David, why don't you tell the recorder about Melissa Larson who calls you all the time?" Melissa was a girl down the street who David played with sometimes. David's response was, "She's not my... she is a girl-friend but she... I'm not in love with her." A little later in the recording Sue said, "Well what else? David, why do you tell about what happened this morning in your pajamas?" David's response was a very matter of fact, "Oh, I kaka'd in my pants." Sue asks him to tell the tape recorder why he did that and David says, "God never told me I was going kaka.". Sue says, "See we have diarrhea going on and David got up really early and had messed just a little tiny bit in his pants... which isn't the point. The point is... well David what did you say again?" and to this, with a sigh of resignation, David replies, "I said, God didn't tell me I had to go."



I was on a committee that met once a year to evaluate employee suggestions. At one of these meetings I was heavily recruited to move to northern Michigan. One of the supposed advantages to northern Michigan was that they got so much snow all the fences were buried and you could snow mobile cross country without having to worry about fences! Winters were bad enough in the Dakotas and I really didn't want to move any further east (or north).

While attending one of those meetings in Green Bay I caught a cold and on the return flight my ears plugged up. I felt fine, except that I couldn't hear and had to take sick leave. This was the same thing that had happened while in boot camp, but after a week of taking over-the-counter medication I went to the doctor. George Nicholas was always a pill guy so he prescribed a stronger version of what I was already taking. It didn't help and a week later when I saw him he prescribed even stronger meds.

Sue was working for a couple of Urologists whose main office Mitchell, about 50 miles south. She talked to them and they arranged an appointment with an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist in their clinic. This guy explained my problem and said if I was his patient he'd drain my ears, but since I was under the care of our family doctor he didn't want to do that. He said if after my next visit with George I wasn't referred to an ENT to come back and he'd treat me.

On my next visit with Dr. Nicholas he said he didn't know what I should do and wanted me to see an ENT. When I went back to Mitchell the ENT pierced my eardrums and drained the fluid in a procedure that took about 5 minutes. Instantly I could hear and I was embarrassed by how loud I was talking - finally understanding why everyone had been complaining about the volume.



By 1984 I was starting to look for opportunities to get into management. I'd bid on some supervisory positions if they were in locations I thought I'd like. The philosophy at the time was still "move around to move up" and I was counseled that FAA management didn't look kindly towards individuals who only bid selectively on the "best" locations and I would need to bid on all positions if I really wanted to be selected.

Sue started working on getting her RN degree attending Huron College. One of the funnier events was when she was taking "computer science" and supposedly learning to program. She had

an assignment to write a really simple program in "Basic" and I knew just enough about programming to know it was really simple. I'd bought a Texas Instrument TI99-4A computer and was learning to use it. The computer has 16 kilobytes of memory, no data storage and had to be hooked up to a TV set to use. It was really a learning experience. Sue went to the college computer lab one Saturday to work on her programming project. Not long after she left she called to tell me she was having problems and asked if I could come to the college to help her. When I got there I discovered that the problem was that she couldn't figure out how to turn the computer on - and neither could I. It was a state of the (1980's) art PC and I'd never even seen one for real. The lab was full of students and all we had to do was ask someone how to turn on the computer and then it really was simple.

I kept an eye on the bid announcements hoping that any supervisory jobs that might come up would be in locations we would want to live. Fortunately the next opportunity came up in 1985 and it was for a supervisor's position in Watertown, South Dakota. The current manager was being promoted and would be replaced with a supervisor who would answer to the manager in Huron. I bid on the position and was selected in the fall of 1985.

The economy in Huron had taken a severe hit during our years there when the Armour's Packing Plant shut down. Employees there had all been highly paid union workers and they wouldn't budge on contract negotiations so the plant just shut down. After the packing plant closed the economy really tanked.

Guys were willing to do just about anything and it almost cost me. We had a couple of Chinese elm trees in the back yard that were infested with beetles. Because of this infestation most all of the trees had been cut down in Huron and I decided that was the only recourse for ours. I hired a couple guys to remove the trees only to discover that they were about as skilled at tree removal as I would have been. They felled the trees but they fell sideways and came within two feet of taking out our neighbor's fence.

Armour's had been the largest and highest paying employer so the sudden high unemployment rate really hurt. Our house, that had cost around \$30,000 (houses used to be cheap) was probably only worth \$20,000 - if we could even sell it. Fortunately the FAA had a program in place that they would arrange for the purchase of the house if the owner couldn't sell it. We still only got about \$24,000 but we were able to get out from under it and had enough to pay off the mortgage.