

# Earl's Memoir

Now, I begin the story of my existence in the Navy. I say existence because one does not live here. He just exists like a caterpillar in a cocoon, waiting for the day when he can shake off the threads that bind him and really live. Then, happiness is where you find it, and it can be found even here despite bos'n mates and ninety-day wonders.

Therefore, instead of crapping out as I usually do, I will donate a few of my more miserable minutes to relate the trials and tribulations of a sailor. Sailor, Earl Wilkie, no: 6190972, height 5'7", weight 135 lbs.: hair, brown; eyes, blue; two arms, two legs; ten fingers and ten toes. He is about the same as five or six million other fellows in the service. Only a little better to his mother's way of thinking and a little worse to everyone else's—except a curly-headed little dishwater blonde in Oklahoma. Therefore, that is me. Now close your eyes and try to forget it.

I came into this little scrap a year and a day after that eventful December 7. I raised my hand like everyone else and swore to love, honor, and obey. Well, I have obeyed, anyway. They left me home until the 16th and then gave me a nice trip free of charge to Farragut, Idaho. Now, that is the place: mud, snow, fog, and all-around unhappiness. I got into my little boots like everyone else, served eight weeks in the galley to help my country end this war, and was turned out to be a finished product of Camp Hill, Farragut, Idaho, early in March.

“Such intelligence as yours, you ought to be a radioman,” said the all-wise officer. Not that I had asked for it, but just out of the goodness of their hearts. So, on March 5th, I officially became a student at the University of Idaho to learn the fine art of copying code. (I neglected to mention that all my life, I have wanted to work

in radio and that I had applied for radio technician training and passed the test with high colors only to be turned down because of age. Also, I sort of hinted to the right guy at the right time that it was the course I wanted.)

I knew my theory well, so I had only to struggle with my code. Also, typing was in the bag, though to look at this, you would never believe it. The few other requirements fell into line, and eventually, the code did too. That much sought-after crew soon pierced my sleeve, and I became one of the happiest guys on the ship. The townspeople were more than excellent, and one of the families there simply took me under their wing. To put it truthfully, the Diamonds were the bright spot of Moscow and wore their name well.

Then came the day when I could go home. I had nine whole days to get to San Francisco. Just think of it. Now, with four and three-quarter days used for traveling, I had a chance to be home all five days and three or four hours to see the folks.

On the train between Pendleton, Washington, and Denver, I received the first discourteous treatment at the hands of civilians during my naval career. That line of the Union Pacific Railroad was the rudest, most unfair, and uncooperative group of individuals I had ever hoped to meet. Not that I had to buy two tickets to get one ride, nor the fact that they held off all service members until the civilians were on the train and had been fed, nor the fact that they overcharged us half again as much as they charged the civilian trade; but the idea of putting us into old converted cattle cars and then refusing to let us move to the nicer cars as civilians vacated seats.

It was swell to be home, and I made the most of it. The folks were the same as always, only even better. Mom's cooking was perfect, as

only it can be. Dad was working on the house as usual. He never is still. He works long after dark, even after he has done a full day's work at the plant. I don't see how he does it and keeps it alive, but I guess it makes him happy. I took in all the highlights of Denver and spent a perfectly wonderful Fourth of July on top of a mountain trying to get a picture of a beautiful doe. All in all, it was far too short, and I hoped to get another leave soon—but not how I got it.

On July 9th, I reported to Goat Island, San Francisco. There, I shuttled between Treasure Island and Goat Island until the 13th, when I went aboard the LST 23. I was the radioman for the LCT 366, which was carried on top of the 23 to be launched at the destination. Then started one trip that I shall never forget as long as I live.

We pulled out on July 17th for Kiska, an island held by the Nips in the Aleutian group. We skirted the coast, off Canada, off Alaska, and stopped for a day at Kodiak. There, we saw the show *The Youngest Profession*, a picture about autograph collecting and young high school kids. It was fairly good, but I picked up the nickname "Schylor" from it. This stuck for the rest of the trip. We were loaded with troops, Army engineers, and one of the best bunches of men I have ever had the pleasure of meeting.

They were more than swell, and we made some very close friends among them. We also had high-test gasoline and explosives. As part of the LCT crew was Susie, a parrot which presumably had its origin in Panama. Later, she was owned by a minister, sold to a pet shop, and then bought by the crew. She talked very little but muttered some of the words omitted by Webster's. Sometimes, she whistled, but she was the life of the ship anyway.

At Adak Island, we were launched. That was a sight worth seeing,

and I want to see it again sometime. Make a note of that. This was a hellish day, though. It rained terribly; oil was all over the deck and on everything. We had to unload everything on the LCT and then load it again. Slippery, cold, and wet, we worked at top speed hour upon hour. The first night aboard was mighty rough, and we were unable to get any sleep. However, it will never compare to the last night we spent aboard it. Nor will anything else.

We worked in Adak and the Bay of Islands for some time and finally pulled out for Amchitka. This was the advanced base for Kiska. We hit Kiska on August 17th and were the most surprised group of men ever seen on the face of this earth.

We were quite disappointed, too, since we had been eager for a long time to get our chance at the Nips, only to find that they had decided not to wait around. It was most important, though, that we have the island, and everything was going to be thrown into it. I went ashore quite a few times and got a nice Jap blanket for a souvenir. It was very warm, and I slept under it after washing it thoroughly.

We had lots of excitement in spite of there being no Japs, and booby traps killed quite a few fellows. In addition, the weather was so hellish that we had no rest. Those days, we worked terribly hard, and it was quite a relief to hear that we were going to head to the South Pacific by way of San Francisco. We left Adak sometime around the 2nd or 3rd of September.

Through the Bering Sea past Dutch Harbor, through Umnak Pass into the Pacific Ocean. We were hit by a terrific storm that lasted six days. We were in a convoy of LSTs and LCTs with two destroyers, the Dewey and the Farragut, for protection. Perhaps you would be interested in what happened on September 9th, 1944. If not, I'll tell it to you anyway. Whose story is this anyway? All you have to do is be bored with it until I finish or just get up and rudely leave if it gets too bad. So here goes.

I was standing watch in the wheelhouse until 10 p.m. on the 8th of

September. Several of us fellows were singing and having a regular harmony session (I provided the discord) for some time. The storm kept getting worse all along, and I was somewhat uneasy.

I hit my sack around 11 and could not turn on the radio. We had been leaving it off, as we did not have enough batteries to last us. It was against orders to leave it off, but we knew that we might need it in an emergency. We needed it. I got one of the fellows to stand watch on it, went back down, and hit the sack. All of a sudden, bang bang, I was tossed out of bed and crawled back in, only to be tossed out again. I knew something was wrong, so I grabbed my trousers and slid them on just as “all hands on deck” was called. You can imagine the feeling that sound can give a person when he knows that rescue from this ship is practically impossible. I grabbed a battle lantern, and the quartermaster and I (he had called us up) made for where the ramp had sheared off. A vain attempt to save it was made, but we were not fast enough. Then, too, I don’t think it could have been saved even if we had been out there when it happened. But we tried, regardless, and got the motor started.

The chain snapped, and it was all over with. I grabbed the lamp again and crawled up on the port bow to see just what the score was. It was then that I fully realized our predicament and exactly how dangerous a position we were in. I never again expect to see water that angry, ugly, dark, and foreboding. Every wave seemed to be a hand grabbing me as it broke over me. The wind tore at me like a fiend while the ship pitched and rolled as if trying to shake me off. Drenched to the skin,

I crawled back and opened up the radio. I gave our story to the chaplain on board the LST and the destroyer, who came back saying that we must have faith. To be truthful about it, that is about all we did have. There were five feet of water on the deck, and the ship was pitching in such a manner that we couldn't stand without holding on with both hands.

The radio on the LST ahead went dead, and we had to use a blinker. And I was the only man aboard who could use it. So there I stood with a blinker gun in one hand and the end sticking out the porthole, cans on my head, mic in the other hand, wet to the skin and frozen to the bone. Man, it was cold!

The crew tried to get the pump working, but it was drowned out. We were taking on water in all ballast tanks and slowly sinking. The way she was situated, she was ready to go under at any time without the slightest warning, and a man could live for 19 minutes in that water. The old Alley Eute kept her head up and all motors going until the last.

A good craft she was, in spite of her odd design. Most of the crew went back to their sacks while the skipper, myself, and a couple of others stayed up. Among the men who deserve credit are Bill Frazier and Bob Varney, motormacks who did a wonderful job and needed many guts to do it. I neglected to mention that we had no life raft since ours had been torn off in the heavy surf at Kiska. We were ordered to prepare to abandon ship around 5 in the morning, and by 7, the order to leave was given. From then on, we were trying to get off.

They shot lines for us, and four of our men got to safety that way. That was 9:30. They were still on the table at 11:30 when I got over

there; one was still out. They had passed clear under the screws of the LST because of a change in the wind. How they lived to tell about it is one of those miracles that will have to be explained in the next life. God was with us that night.

There is no other explanation. Somehow, we maneuvered the ships close enough together to jump. Over went the first bunch, and again we came alongside, and another man left. Meanwhile, I had secured the radio and had gotten our pet parrot. I had put her into a signal box and secured it around my neck so that she would be saved. The rest of us left the next time, with the skipper getting his leg crushed in the bargain. Well, that's the story. Like it?

Now, to continue with my sad tale of existence. I have to have something to do to keep me awake at the present moment. Seems like I am on watch around three in the wee hours, and it is getting me down. The circuit I am on is dead, so I have switched it to a loudspeaker affair and am boring you with this. To keep everything straight, I came to Diego and spent a couple of months hanging around in the radio material and sound shop after taking leave. Learned a little here and there, but not too much.

Then, due to much asking on my part, I got put out to sea. It was about time because the joint was driving me boogy nuts. They first placed me aboard a LOC (Landing Craft Control Boat), which was attached to the USS Solivar, and APA (No. 34). This is the outfit that sets on the line of departure, helping the troops get to shore. Definition of the line of departure: the bull's eye of a target on a sniper's firing range.

We are to receive the necessary information and see that the troops, boats, etc., get to shore at the proper time. It is something new, and



this is the first time they have ever been used in action against the enemy. But I am ahead of myself. First, we went on a little maneuver and took San Clemente Island, a little joint about 90 miles from Diego.

We bombed, blasted, and shelled the hell out of it. Then, we got our troops ashore in proper order. It only lasted four days but was really rugged on us because we had to spend the entire time on the LCC, which was very crowded and wet the entire time, with no place to sleep and only bologna and bread to eat. As a result, our executive officer had to be put ashore at Lahaina Roads, Hawaii, with a case of double pneumonia.

We left the States on January 13 at 9:45 am, destination unknown. Well, we know now. We hit Lahaina Roads on the 21st and pulled out on the 23rd. Then, we began to get the information. We already knew that we were bound for the Marshall Islands and that this was only a small part of one of the largest task forces ever assembled. Even bigger than the African campaign. Our particular job was to take Kwajalein Atoll.

The main attack was to be on the two largest islands, Roi and Namur, whose code names are Burlesque and Camouflage Islands, though I am not sure which is which. We are to take Roi, which has a big airfield. This atoll is far in the middle of Japanese-held territory and a plenty daring attack. This is all to take place three days from now. But you might find the highlights of this trip interesting. First of all, there is a submarine whose home port is Tokyo, lying sixteen miles ahead of us.

We have been followed by it the entire trip; it torpedoed a merchantman thirty miles to our port the other day. It was not a part of our convoy, although it was a United States vessel. Every

afternoon we have simulated air attacks using our own planes. Man, am I glad those planes are ours! The day before yesterday, while we were watching an "attack," one of their motors quit on them while they were only forty feet up.

The pilot crash-landed on the water, and he and his gunner leaped to safety. The plane sank less than a hundred yards from us. Then, the same day, a plane crashed into a carrier and set it afire, killing the pilot and placing the carrier in a dangerous position. The fire that started was finally controlled, and they buried the man at sea the next afternoon. We are plenty anxious to get into the thick of it, and I am sure glad that I am here. It is going to be a mighty rugged affair, I guess, but then, who gives a damn?

### Kwajalein Atoll

Well, it is February 8, or D plus 9, which all in all means that we saw the Nips 9 days ago. We made the trip all right, circled the Marshall Islands, executing one of the cleverest military moves of the war, dropping in on Nippy who was completely taken by surprise. He did not expect us here in the northwest part of the Marshalls, although he sort of figured that we might drop in on the southeastern part.

On D-Day, we lay off and bombarded the hell out of them. The Marines went in on five of the smaller islands and took them without too much resistance and placed us in a position so that we could hit Burlesque (Rio) and Camouflage (Namur) islands on the following day. The islands were completely covered with flame and smoke, punctuated with explosions and an occasional smoke geyser lifting a thousand feet in the air. These were ammunition dumps, I imagine. Rio and Namur were given such a pounding that it is almost inconceivable. They let us have a few shells but were sort of half-hearted in their work. I can't say I blame them much. Seeing the battleship Maryland go right into the beach and destroy a

blockhouse was interesting. Those things are mighty hard to destroy, too.

And after the smaller islands were secured, we went into the pass the next day, leading the waves for one of the beaches on Rio. There were two beaches for each island. They were blasting that island until smoke covered everything clear into the water. We got our waves off and followed them into a thousand yards.

While getting them off, I worked in the radio room. We all needed a dozen pairs of hands and then some. The noise was mighty rugged, and we got shook up a good deal. I don't know how close shells were landing or if they were even shelling us, but the explosions kept hitting us as if they were meant to. Eventually, we went on in further and were within a hundred yards of the beach. There was lots of fighting going on, and shells came our way. After we had done all we could, we left for the ship and came aboard late that night.

First thing next morning, we were off again and lay about a hundred to two hundred yards off Burlesque most of the time. Fighting was very fierce, and a good many shells were thrown our way. I was out of the radio room most of the day and saw lots more than I had seen the day before. Many of the shells missed us by inches, and once, we got caught in a crossfire and had to move out fast. Then, a munitions dump exploded a couple of hundred yards away and about knocked the heck out of us.

Debris fell all around us, and we were glad we had helmets. Once, after a bullet zipped between our heads, one of my buddies and I were ordered in off the bow. Then, we moved out, picked up some men, and began to take soundings. We got nothing much done that day since we started too late, but the next morning, we got our hydrographic men and did plenty.

Along in the afternoon, we took off for half an hour and went

swimming. Man, the water was swell. The next day, we went ashore and met with quite a mess. Our losses were very slight in comparison to the enemies. There was still fighting going on, especially on Camouflage. While over there, they buried 23 marines but just piled up the Japs or tossed them into trenches, shell holes, etc.

D plus five, we made hydrographic reports and went swimming several times, the same with D plus six. We came aboard D plus seven early in the morning, expecting to take off. But as yet, we have not and are just waiting, for what I am not sure. The islands have finally been secured.

Feb. 21

Time for me to do a bit more writing on this little trip of mine. Right now, it is 6 o'clock in Pearl Harbor, and I am sitting as pretty as you please in the radio room doing nothing in particular that is worth telling about. Across the room, there is a radio blaring—or rather, there is some pretty music right now. I often have to stop to take a message (I have a pair of cans on my head), but I don't let a little thing like that worry me. February 21 is the date, and it is afternoon. We hit here on the 15th after a very pleasant little voyage. We left the next morning and took our marines (2,000) to Maui, which is about 90 miles away.

We stayed there a couple of days and then headed back this way. We pulled alongside a dock, and here we sat. All divisions are secured from their watches except ours, and we copy FOX as usual in spite of the fact that it is copied for us not a quarter of a mile from here. But that is the way things go. I was to have liberty yesterday, but had to stay aboard because I was late for muster one morning. Reason: no way to tell the time, and I started in that direction just as the bugle began to blow.

Tomorrow is my day out, though, and I am going to look at Honolulu over. Opinions of the crew: De Angelo came back from liberty

yesterday with a disgusted look on his pan and said, "No wonder the damned Japs only hit it once." And I can see a basis for his statement. Well, it is time for me to take my turn at copying FOX, so I will end this here.

Well, it is now June 8, 1944, and I am out at sea again. For the past couple of months, I have been sort of busy in a way and also have had a little time to leaf [possibly meant "relax" or "leaf through some books"]. Coming back from the Marshalls, we took the 2nd, 4th, and part of the army over to Mālaea Bay, close to Lahaina, for maneuvers.

In the first month, we made three trips between Hilo, on the island of Hawaii, to Mālaea, which is on the island of Maui. Hilo is a darned good place for liberty. Then we returned to Pearl Harbor, but I didn't stay. I went back to help the army maneuver at the same place. Mr. McBreen, Mr. Carr, and a signalman, Berle, went, and we were aboard YMS's, LCI's, LST's, and larger transports. We went aboard the Clay (PA 39). We got in a little swimming and fishing too.

We pulled out on the 30th of May for a little session with the Japs. We are headed for Saipan and Tinian, which are going to be mighty rugged deals from all appearances. They know we are coming, according to Tokyo Rose, who knows more about the 2nd Marines than they do themselves. The second day out, a sub was spotted, and on the 1st of June, a sub tossed two fish [naval slang for torpedoes] at the convoy.

They missed, thank God. They passed astern and forward of a carrier, missing by a scant 30 feet. The captain will be washing his skivvies this week. Maybe the sub commander will commit hari-kari, I hope. The date for the attack is tentatively set for June 15, which isn't so long from now. Guam is to be taken by another outfit at the same time. It is really going to be hot this trip, and I don't mean the weather. We are having practice drills half the time and mock raids by our own planes, etc. Well, wish us luck.

It is early afternoon on the 12th of June, incidentally. We are far out at sea on the way to Saipan, having left Enewetak a couple of days ago. Nothing particularly exciting has happened, although there have been Jap planes within a few miles of us several times. Thirty bombers headed our way while we were anchored at Enewetak, but they decided to bomb another place instead.

Just now, a contact report came over about an enemy plane. A few minutes ago, we had a fire in one of our holds, the one containing a lot of high-test gasoline and ammunition. I was copying Fox at the time and had to keep copying while everybody else ran for the bow. That was the farthest place from the fire and gas. The chief was testing to see if the distressed outfit was in working order, then he left. They got it out toot sweet [French slang, meaning "right away"], though.

That is about all, although we have lost several men at sea, none of our ships, though. This is D-3 day, and Saipan and Guam are getting their first dose of good old gunpowder today. In fact, they are probably getting a gutful of it right now.

The Devil's Holiday It is June 19th, 1944, and a lot has happened in the last week. So much that I find it hard to remember it all. Many of the highlights have slipped my mind, leaving only the lesser important details. However, many things forgotten now will be remembered in the future.

We, a crew of 15 and often more, are still sitting out on a little 56 ft. craft of the LCVP design. The invasion of Saipan has hit the headlines of the daily papers by now, but the fighting is far from over. It continues both day and night, with no quarter given on either side.

We were in the water by 5:30 a.m. on June 15th. We were set off at the 8-mile mark and continued on our own. We formed our waves

and started for the line of departure. H-hour was set at 0830 but was delayed by 10 minutes. We started in at 0838, firing everything we had. And then, with a very outdated phrase, "all hell broke loose."

The devil had his day, and what a day. You could almost hear his mirthless laugh above the mortars falling around us. Maybe he danced with glee when a plane directly above us went down in flames. Perhaps it was he who placed the mines that blew up our tanks. Maybe he fashioned the barrier reef, which held us back, costing us lives and precious time.

We passed the LCIs slowly and came directly under their 40 mm fire. I can think of no place in the world where I would feel more exposed than that moment. Casualties! Load after load of casualties. The radio begged us to send blood plasma, corpsmen, stretchers, and doctors. "Plasma, and more plasma. For God's sake, send us plasma!"

On through the day and into the night. Then broke another dawn, and the day passed as before. The stench began to rise the next evening and became so overwhelming that sleeping was difficult, tired though we were. We continued to unload reserves, medical supplies, and ammunition. Finally, we sent in the 27th Army artillery outfit. We unloaded night and day. The Navy continually burned several flares over the beach and shelled a volley every 12 seconds throughout the night. There were about five shells to a volley, and this continued for several days and nights.

On the second day, our ship pulled out on us and left us alone. We began to think we had been stranded, but she pulled back in this afternoon. I guess we will get to go aboard her for a few minutes tomorrow.

The second night, we saw our first plane—Jap, that is. Four came over, but we laid down such a fierce barrage that they turned and ran. A short while later, one lone plane arrived. I never thought it

possible that any being could be so lucky. Thousands of shells passed him by inches, some no doubt going through his plane. He came around for a strafing run at us. He pulled into a dive while we let go with our three twin .50s. When he saw what the valiant LCC 72 could put out, he changed his mind fast. He made a funny jerk, a 90-degree turn, and a strafing run over the beach. He finally got his over on the other side of the island.

On the third day, all ships pulled out, with the exception of the screening destroyers. We learned that the Jap fleet was on its way up to meet us. We figured it was a showdown fight, and we were left alone! That afternoon, an officer came around and told us that there were 300 Jap planes about 90 miles out, waiting for sundown to come and give us the works. And the only thing we had was small boats!

That evening, at about dark, three big groups started in. Then, suddenly, they just disappeared! Actually! What happened to them, I do not know. One night, a plane dropped 14 big aerial flares that lit up the islands so brightly that you could easily read a book if you felt like reading. I didn't.

About all they did was take pictures and sort of scare us a bit. We had to turn on the lights again because of our work when they had gone. The all-clear had been sounded, so we figured we were fairly safe. Ha, safe? We had hardly done this when we heard the drone of a diving plane. Closer, closer, and closer it came. Then explosions. Apparently, Tojo had dropped several bombs on each side of us. Oh well, better luck next time.

We have virtually complete control of the air. Even so, we have several raids a night. Most of them do (flash red!) (flash red- 0138 a.m., June 22. Result: Jap threw a long dive at us and opened up. He missed.) To get back. They haven't done much damage until now, and I hope they have the same luck.

The Japs got our range on the line of departure the first time and



kept us in explosives the entire time. We, in particular, seemed to be choice targets as they did not know just what we were. Even after they quit shelling the boats, they would take careful aim at us and bend a couple of shells at us. One, a five-inch, I think, passed us from stem to stern between our gun turrets, missing our heads only because none of us were standing in the center of the boat. The wind from it almost knocked me down. Many shells came too close for comfort. An LCI took one off the stern. She was a hundred yards to our port.

Our beach was the hot end. We got our men ashore and continued to rush in reserves and supplies. But during the first night, they pushed our boys right off the beach, and it took a couple of days to secure it again. Now we have the southern half of the island, the half close to Tinian, and they are beginning to bring ashore the big guns to shell it with. On D plus 3, the radio sent orders to several ships for each to send 50 cases apiece of canned milk plus food for women and children. Hard-hearted people are we. I wonder what the Japs would have done.

The second night, a war correspondent from the *Chicago Daily News* came aboard. He had spent the night in an Amtrack that had been stranded on the reef. In the course of battling the breeze, he took my name and said he would put it in the paper. I don't guess he did, though.

We got ahold of a Jap skiff the other day, and for the moment, having nothing to do, I and a couple of others took a row to the reef. Later, the LCC had to move, so we tossed them a line. They towed us, and what a ride! No speed boat can compare to that. We have gone swimming several times, mainly to wash off. We have no extra water, sometimes not even any to drink.

The night of June 28th started off wrong in the first place. I crawled up from below, having been relieved of my watch, and then a couple of big fellows dropped alongside. They almost bowled me over. I returned to the fantail and hit the sack—or rather my one blanket,

which softened the steel deck. I stole it the other day. Tough, tough.

We were on the north (and hot) end of our line of beaches. A terrific explosion halfway down the beach shook me up and lit up the country for miles. The Japs had slipped through our lines and gotten one of our ammunition depots. For the rest of the night, we had an explosion on top of the explosion. I've seen other dumps go up, but none like that one. .38 caliber ammunition popped for hours, and flares kept flying up like a gigantic fireworks display on the Fourth. About the time the Japs opened up with mortars from the mountain, while the boys on Tinian did their share with their big artillery, they made a big drive and caught our boys on both sides, in the middle, and all around. It got sort of embarrassing there after a while.

The night wasn't nearly over yet; a Nip crawled out on the reef a couple of hundred yards ahead of us. He was spotted from shore after placing a few shots too close to some guy who wanted some sleep. So they cut loose at him, letting us catch a few he missed. Someone astern of us cut loose on him, too. To make matters worse, a bunch of tanks tried to move up from Garapan to attack from the rear on the beach. Some LCIs moved in and sank them.

It began to get a little warm, so we moved down off the beach where the ammunition dump was to help a bit. We were pushed back in all directions that night, but the next day, we gained it all back and more. Casualties were heavy, particularly on our beach and on the beach where the ammunition had gone up.

Fighter planes came in yesterday (June 22. I am writing this as I progress and as things happen). They were a very welcomed sight. Jap planes haven't done too much damage to us, but we sure don't like their flying overhead all the time.

I got a laugh at us the other day. During a raid at dusk, we were all out watching, waiting for them to come a little closer before opening up on them. Five or six large fish began to feed alongside

the boat, and the first thing I knew, the raid was of minor importance; we were more interested in watching the fish play.

Well, the bloody 8 came in. We got to go aboard for a couple of hours for a shower, etc. Gosh, how we needed it. They told us to get things ready for a month's stay aboard the LCC. Gods, but they must think we are rugged. So we got our stuff together, refueled, watered, etc. Shortly after, we left, and the old BB left for parts unknown—either Honolulu or Australia. Anyway, we're orphans—15 men on a 56' craft, with at least a month to go. Ye gods!

This is July 7th, and the fourth air raid of the night is in progress. A big artillery duel exists between our forces on southern Saipan and the enemy on Tinian. The shells whiz by, going both ways over our heads.

For a while after the Bolivar left, we lived on the LCC. Then, we split the crew up and took 24-hour turns on duty. The rest would live aboard the Ashland, LSD 1. Later, we had to move to LSD 6, the Belle Grove. Tomorrow, we have to leave her and go ashore to live. It won't be bad as most of the Japs are no longer. The rest are bottled up in the northern half of the island, along with the snipers, who are sort of thick.

Meanwhile, we have set up coast guns and AA guns, built concentration camps, set up supply depots, finished airfields, etc. There were a lot of civilians here, plus a heavy garrison of Japs who were reinforced by 14 shiploads of troops. We got the 14 ships, but not soon enough. Plenty of ships on the bottom around here, and the most interesting thing about them is that they are all Japanese. Strange, don't you think?

The Germans had control for some years but left the island about like they found it. Then came the Japs, who made little use of it until 1938, when they began their serious rearmament program.

Now all this time, the people held their church much as any good Catholic in the States. They had their own priests, nuns, etc. They lived without want as the island was self-supporting. They were, without a doubt, living in a paradise and could not have been anything but supremely happy.

The Jap changed this. He imported civilians and Korean workers, worked the natives shamefully, tried to force them to worship Buddha (their worst mistake), and starved them. This attempted change of belief left a scar so deep in the heart of the native that he will never cease to hate the Jap, though all other misuses be forgiven.

The net result is that Joe Civilian out here is a very religious Catholic, a hater of Japs, with a great liking for us; he is a very willing and industrious worker who does not need watching and who gets paid for his work. We have no trouble from the natives of the Marianas.

We will now take the Japs, the sons of bitches! There is no sneakier race alive. And I mean sneaky, underhanded, below the table, untrustworthy, just plain no good. This has been shown time and time again in many serious situations. But take, for instance, something that isn't serious but that just shows their nature. They are issued cigarettes and matches, not only by the authorities, but the enlisted men themselves will often give them some of their own.

They are given full permission to smoke when they wish, but regardless, they will light up when the guard isn't looking and keep the cigarette out of his sight, hiding it behind their backs and passing it slyly from one to the other. Then they snicker at the guard when he isn't looking because of how slick and sly they have been.

Yes, they are "slick." On some battlefields, they lost as many as 40 to our one. Yes, actually. 1500 of them tried a raid on some 300 of our soldiers. And that's the odds. 55 officers decided to become

heroes one night. They charged, so now there are just that many fewer officers for us to kill. The saki drive of theirs was the real slaughter. What the real odds were, I don't know, but those who were on the field the next day claim the Japs numbered 40 to 1. One machine gunner got over 200 alone. How's that? He said that no sooner would he get set up someplace than a bunch would head in his direction. It was just like sitting ducks.

More than that is the difference. Moros work hard, stopping only at the word O.K., and like it. A gift is really appreciated. A guard starting to hum a tune will soon find everyone humming with him. They like the Americans and show it. And just let them see a Catholic with his rosary—man! We have some good citizens of the future.

The air raids have ceased. Our lives, no doubt, were saved by the big air battle. Had they gotten into us, I'm afraid that things would have been pretty tough. We were alone, naked, and a perfect target. But now it's time for the Bolivar to return. Mail! Payday! Hot meals! Showers! A mattress! After a month and a half! Wheeeee! Luxury!

\*\*\*\*\*

July 21 The Bolivar has not returned. We received instructions on Tinian. We hit a very narrow, white beach and go into 300 yards, dispatching 17 waves or so. It should be a very hot spot. There are about 17,000 fighting men on the island, plus 5 or 6 thousand civilians who will help. All Japanese, no natives. 30,000 in all, and today is W day, or the day Guam gets it. J day is a couple of days from now; I'm not sure exactly.

This isn't going to be any Sunday school party in spite of the constant shelling. They still shell back and throw up plenty of AA fire. They are known to still have a 14" gun in usable condition and lots of 8-inch stuff. I would guess the heavy AA fire to be 5-inch material,

though it may be only 3. We expect to secure the island of Tinian in 7 or 8 days. Let's hope less. Where is the Bolivar????

Thursday evening, we swam through the first air raid. We pulled up off the reef ways, cut our motors and lights, and in we went. Along came Vodvil 46 (LCC 46), doing the same, and we had a regular moonlight swim. I couldn't help thinking of the song "Sleepy Lagoon"—"a tropical moon, and two on an island." It was just the kind of tropics you dream about or see in movies.

A full moon, coral reef, heavy surf, tropical shore fringed with palm trees and backed by a large mountain. I swam off a little from the rest of the fellows and just floated and thought. I would have given anything for such a night as this with Alcy. The planes didn't bother us.

Friday morning, we went ashore. I spent the morning fixing the mosquito netting and spent the afternoon looking over our part of the island. You have to be careful, or you might get slapped on a grave digging detail, step on a mine—I saw lots of them—or play "hit me and win a cigar" with a Jap sniper.

They were making the Japs work for their keep. But then they were well treated, given smokes, good food, rest periods, etc. I wonder how our boys are treated once taken. The prison stockade is on the island's south end, while the civilians were in a stockade about 500 yards from our tent. Then, the Geisha girls are kept just east of this in what we call "officers' country" because no one is allowed up there. The civilians are separated into two groups: the Japanese and the Chamorros.

There is a great difference between the two. The Chamorros are much cleaner and better built. They seem to be much more honest and straightforward, too. They work like fiends, while the Japs are the worst goldbricks and sneaks alive. The Moros are Catholic, having been Christianized by the Spanish. The enemy's worst

mistake was trying to wipe out Christianity on this island. The result? The people welcomed us and, in the future, will make the best of citizens.

The clothing is very scant, consisting of a waist-down sarong or shorts. Very few of the women cover their breasts. This tended to greatly increase our interest in the civvies. The children run around naked until they think they are grown, and all women seem to be "expecting" or "it has just arrived."

They have beautiful bodies up until they get older when they become the baggiest old bags imaginable. They begin to have children at the ages of no more than twelve or thirteen. The kids had a game of baseball and a game of tag going while I was there. The island was supposed to be secured by July 4th, but the resistance was stiffer than expected. So they secured the 2nd Marines to rest up for Tinian and left the 4th and the 27th Army to fight.

This was a mistake because, on the night of the 6th, the Nips counter-attacked and took 2 miles of territory. We took it back the next day, but there were some heavy losses. Most of the place was cleaned up close to our tent. Most of the dead have been taken care of, but the insects are terrible. Not to speak of the human insects.

Now, if you haven't died of boredom by this time, you perhaps are interested in this detail's flying side. The biggest thing was the big air fight when our boys got 300 of the devils. We knew that they were out there and on their way in. We were all set for them, but as it stood, we were apparently poorly protected, as everything of any size had pulled out on us. They started in that night in three groups but never got there. I hate to think about what they could have done had they gotten in.

We have from one to four air raids every night, but most of them are small, and not much damage is done. I will admit that they have tried and have come close, much too close. But luck has held with

us, and the valiant 72 is still in one piece. I've heard them whistling down more times than I care to tell about, once hitting a ship anchored 200 yards from the Ashland where I was sleeping—or rather, I should have been sleeping.

The bomb didn't explode but went clear down the stack into the bilges, where it was removed the next day. They tell me it killed two men, but the plane that did it will never get another chance because it went down in flames a couple of hundred yards further on.

One of the most spectacular sights was the night a Negro shore battery got a big bomber on the first three or four shots. He was about 20,000 feet up when he was hit. He caught fire and flamed down. Then, righting himself, he made a desperate run for Jap-held territory or at least the ocean. He made possibly a mile. But he kept sinking all the time and finally nosed into a dive from which he never recovered. He flamed and burned down to about 800 feet when he exploded. And so it goes. We have a fair-sized air force here already.

We began to land planes on the island on the 3rd or fourth day. A funny incident occurred when a Jap landed on a field which we had captured that day. As he crawled out of the plane, he found himself looking into a dozen rifle barrels. PBM Mariners began to arrive the first week till, and now we have 25 of them. Then there are about 20 of these night fighters, or Nighthawks as they are called. What is more, we have the "Piper Cub". Then, too, there are planes of all types and by the dozens.

We have been told that we would probably be in on the Tinian deal. Now, you ask, what have we been doing to the various rodents on that sunny little isle? That is a simple question to answer. We have a dozen or so very fine planes that stay over it about 99% of the time, bombing and strafing. Of course, they get a little fire turned on them while doing this, and it is a thrill to watch heavy tracers passing our



planes— just as long as they keep passing.

Of course, we have several frisky destroyers and cruisers who enjoy kicking up their heels. And they do it most of the time. Then we have some of the noisiest shore batteries, which keep people awake 24 hours a day. Damn it, another red flash! So solly, please excuse me. No, I am not crazy. I just wear this straight jacket to keep me warm. It is Saturday, the 8th, along mid-afternoon.

July 13

Everything considered, we have a better-than-average foxhole. It is dug fairly deep enough, and what's more, it is lined with sandbags. It is a three-man affair, so that means eight or ten will fit. I think that is the proper ratio. Our first night wasn't exactly pleasant. The kind you like to sleep through. They came over about eight, unloaded a bit north, and droned over us to do the same further south. We hit the foxhole for this, but we returned to our sacks after they passed.

They played around all night, strafed the other side of the swamp from us, and then strafed the beach in front of our tent. This was much too close for comfort. After this, they dropped a couple of big fellows which whistled an hour in falling and shook the living hell out of us when they did hit. We headed for the shelter, but as no more fell, we returned to the tent. There was a lot of sniper firing in our area all night long, but as far as I know, none in our immediate area were hit.

July 13, early morning.

Yesterday, I got the thrill of my life. Not that last night didn't have its little excitement, but you see, I had been shot at before. The day was dull heavily clouded, and there were sprinkles of rain every now and then. A heavy cloud formation lay over

Tinian and northeast over us. I had just gone aboard the LSD 2 to hand down batteries, a troublesome little chore—and a regular one—when I took a glance at Tinian to see how things were made out there. There was always some kind of a show going on, but the one that caught my eye was far different. For there, coming directly at us was a thing that froze the hearts of all South Sea sailors. For there, bearing down on us with amazing speed was—a waterspout! It was just off the Tinian beach, which lay about five miles from us.

In less time than it takes to tell, it was almost on the LCI that lay a quarter mile away from us and directly in between. It was a funnel-like affair much similar to the pictures of twisters of the Midwest. Spray and vigorously churning water, while its cone led vertical partway then curved slowly up into the cloud. This formation lay about 1,200 feet or better, judging from the little flying I have done.

Comparing the width of the cone to the LCT, I should judge it to be at least a hundred feet! When it was almost on the little ship, the base exploded. The upper section began to twist itself to pieces, and almost as suddenly as it appeared, it was gone! As I said, the night preceding proved to have a few highlights itself. A Jap machine gun suddenly began to cough just behind and south of our tent, about a hundred yards away.

He spat lead for about an hour, much of it in our direction. He didn't hit our tent, though we could hear them sing by. I don't know how much damage he did, but our boys lined up behind our tent, trying to locate him. He hit someone, and the poor devil screamed for quite some time, but the son of a bitch never did get hit himself.

Our day ashore is still partly used watching the civilians. We trade candy and cigarettes for money. The girls have no modesty—particularly the Japs. One bitch was sitting about 12 feet from the fence under a tree close to where we were trading. It was hot, and I was tired of trading, so I sat down just opposite to watch the other fellows trade.

This gal didn't crack a smile; she just kept looking my way. Pretty soon, she swung herself around with her feet in my direction, spread her legs as far apart as she could get them, and pulled her skirt up till she was bare to her waist. All this time, she never smiled or moved otherwise. It was too much for me, so I rejoined my buddies and began to trade some more.

A little aside from the "arts of war" is the subject of "the conquered." And it is, in many ways, just as interesting and twice as pleasant to talk about. Today is the 18th, and we expect the Bolivar back sometime tomorrow. Tinian. Saipan is nearly over, and today, I sit halfway between the four or five miles, piecing together the things that have happened.

The original natives of the Marianas were a race very similar to the Samoans. Very clean, industrious, good people. The Spanish came and left some of their blood to mingle with these "Chamorros" and something much more important. They left the Christian religion, which the people believed with the firmness of the church's original founders.

July 29

Tinian—we crossed over from Saipan in the 1st shore-to-shore movement of the Pacific War. Stayed all day the preceding day aboard the Thuban, AK 19, an ammo ship. We hit the LCC that night, and the next morning, we started on the long trip over. The strategy was to have a fake invasion of the far end of the island. We were to hit the north side about midway. Our beach was several hundred yards closer to Saipan than the other one.

The shelling was the best ever done in history. It was not only the heaviest but, by far, the most accurate. Few mortars were used against us at our beach, and there were few mines; the other beach had both. We got strafed all morning, and our boat was hit several times by machine gun fire.

One particular fellow kept firing at us for two hours straight. We could see him and his gun but could not fire back at him. A TBF Avenger arrived at the scene and dropped an anti-personnel bomb on him. It hit him in his vest pocket—one bomb, perfect hit. I saw him go up in flames.

The strategy worked perfectly, and the enemy was taken by surprise. They rushed to the island's far end and did quite a bit of damage to the fake landing force, including a hit on a battleship and another on a destroyer. The battleship returned to action and really made up for it. Also, several barges got it.

There are only a few real highlights that were more than usual. All day and night and on into the next day, two tanks fought two machine gun nests. They just couldn't knock them out. The tank would fire with its 3-inch, and then the nest would fire. This kept up for a long time. Finally, one of the tanks got tired of fooling around with this nest.

So what does he do but back up, turn around, hit the water again, and come in from the other side, taking the nest by surprise. Result: one less nest. The other nest withstood every kind of fire there was. It even withstood flamethrowers, which is really something. I never did find out how it was knocked out, but they attacked it from every side with every weapon we had.

I went aboard a YMS a couple of days after J Day. There was a sort of bottleneck of small boats waiting for the beach to clear, and they lay some hundred yards in from us. The Japs suddenly began to shell them, several shells landing directly in the middle of the 50 or 60 small boats without a boat getting hit or a man injured.

A few minutes later, they began to shell our way. I heard the first whistle and thought I was a goner. It was the scariest I have ever been. Two more followed, forming three points of a triangle around our YMS. All deadly close.

We boarded the J. Franklin Bell AP 15 and left for Enewetak on the 29th. I was aboard her once before in the Aleutians. We met the Bolivar at Enewetak, and I got aboard her for a couple of minutes. I learned that I had received a raise in rate, the one I had been promised six months before and the one I had worked my head off for. I had held it for a month without knowing it.

Well, that's it. We arrived in Hawaii on the 9th of August, were put off the Bell on entering the channel, and learned that we were no longer a part of the Solivar. We took our gear the next day and moved to a base. Sort of curious about what comes next. Boring War Stories—Mid Pacific

The survivors' leave from the loss of our outfit in the Aleutians was a much-needed respite. Being home was nice, particularly with my future bride visiting. But I soon found myself in San Diego, taking trips to Los Angeles, Mexico, and, in general, trying to enjoy life. It should be said here that I was never given a physical; the Navy simply ignored those of us who spent time enduring the cold, winds, and high waters of the Bering Sea. And no, I wasn't in very good shape, for ice water had infiltrated my forehead through the ice-cold winds and water and through an icy spray, finding the openings of my nose and ears.

Being drenched constantly by icy water has left me with a permanent problem, and spending hours in the wet spray or the ice water has left a mark that will continue bothering me probably for the rest of my life, for we were not equipped for icy weather, and had received none of the protective gear that would later be distributed.

About eleven or twelve of us were grouped for a future job, being taught to control a Higgins boat, using sonar, radar, and other such things. I formed some close friendships with this group. But on New Year's Eve, we were told that we could leave for the day, but

we must be back on a ship called "the Bolivar" absolutely no later than midnight.

With only two dollars in my pocket, I sat in on a blackjack game being played by other members of our future crew. Although invited in, I protested I had no money, and one of the guys insisted I borrow \$20.00 from him until payday. Soon, I was raking in everybody's money—in fact, I cleaned the house, the only time in my life I have ever done that.

"Guys," I said, "I think we will pull out about midnight. Let's all go out for dinner and a movie—I'm buying." We had a magnificent afternoon, each knowing that it would be our last liberty in the States for many months. The show, incidentally, became my all-time favorite, "Up in Mabel's Room." We climbed the gangplank by 11:00 p.m. and were followed by one of the drunkest officers I have ever seen.

Then, the ship pulled out into the inlet. It was exactly midnight; the new year was only instant old when suddenly hell broke loose. It all should have ended there because suddenly, horns were tooting, and we saw a tug barreling directly at us. Our skipper altered his course rapidly, as did the tug, and there were only inches to spare as we slid past each other and headed for the open sea.

We found ourselves on a former President Line cruise ship but with many changes. Now, a troop carrier, or an APA as it was now known, was suitable for carrying some 2000 troops as well as our craft. The LCC was perched amidship to be lowered later by a giant crane installed for that purpose. We also got acquainted, finding it to be a 56-foot craft with only two bunk beds no other sleeping amenities, but with three twin 50 machine guns, radar equipment, sonar equipment, navigation equipment, and a "head" as restrooms were titled then.

My three radios were pinched into a cubbyhole that could not even pass for a small closet, yet complete with a watertight door and no ventilation. Here, I spent a large part of a year, 12 men, no sleeping quarters, and meals served out of boxes similar to those of the infantry. I believe they are called "K" rations. A monstrous crane would set off the LCC the ship; we would board it, all 12 of us, and head to a rendezvous area to line up the attacking waves of Higgins boats, amphibious tanks, and underwater demolition boats.

We found we were to control beachheads, leading in the attacking force and staying just off the beach to lead in other waves. Most of our crew were in electronics, but all were trained to fire twin fifty-caliber machine guns with which we were to try to protect ourselves. On most beachheads, we would be within seventy-five yards of the beach, but sometimes, we were required to go on the beach itself. Shore fire targeted us fairly often, and we were a choice target for dive bombers.

A couple of months passed as we practiced our new trade, and I enjoyed Honolulu. Our crew were all nice guys. But I learned to sleep on the deck using a kapok-filled life preserver as my mattress, or many times just using the deck. Remember, there were a dozen of us and only two bunks for the officers. But finally, it was time to get back to work.

There were to be at least six beachheads, and as we neared each other, we would find an enemy flotilla of submarines trying to get into position to torpedo us. On our first beachhead, three fleets of enemy planes, estimated at about 320 planes, came at us while we did our best to dodge a couple of torpedoes. When a plane loses a bomb, it will whistle, and whistle, and whistle until you know it is going to hit you—then it will hit the next boat or drop harmlessly in the water.

The Doine was our sister ship, and we were almost always traveling side by side; if 200 yards is side by side. One of their sailors was

Caesar Romero, a well-known and well-liked actor of that time. Everybody liked him, and he never shirked his duties or claimed any special privileges.

Caesar. One night, The bomb fell for what felt like forever, whistling all the way. Then it stopped, a small crunch, and the Doine took a hit which went right down to the very bottom plate of the hull, but no explosion. How is that for plain, pure luck? The estimated 2,500 men on board had a chance to sleep the rest of the night.

We hit Kwajalein in the Marianas, and later Enewetak. We learned firsthand how to make a beachhead, and fortunately, the attacks were not defended as hard as we would find later. The attacks were successful, and the Bolivar picked us up and returned to Pearl.

The month to rest up was greatly welcomed, but soon, we were off again. This time to the Marianas and four of the most vicious attacks imaginable. The Japanese were fighting with everything they had. They were well dug in and in caves, and with air superiority, heavy bombs from other islands, and fighters with all classes of fighting equipment, we had our hands full.

It started for us by being set off the Bolivar some distance from the two islands we would attack. We had to travel between several small islands with large gun emplacements. The water was extremely rough, and I was ordered to close the watertight door to the radio shack to keep us afloat if we were hit. This area had no ventilation, and I bounced around like a fish bobber in a mountain stream. I had to hang on to maintain my position in front of the radios, all the time gasping for breath.

I remembered my radio instructor in Moscow, Idaho, who told us that we would never be complete radiomen until we bounced around enough to get seasick, had to reach over with our foot to get the wastebasket, and then lost our last several meals. Well, I became a true radioman that day.



Roi and Namur were joined by a fairly small piece of land, yet separate enough that they were indeed separate islands. We hit Roi first with our heavy equipment, keeping the spit of land under fire to the extent the Japanese on Namur could not help those on Roi.

When our cruisers and destroyers destroyed the heavy shelling from the smaller islands, our attacking forces were able to eventually control the island. I do not remember any of our air force being involved in this combat, probably due to the extreme distance from a base to operate from. This would certainly change later as the carriers were a real asset, but then again, I could not have seen their pummeling the islands from my limited point of view—or rather, no point of view, for I could not see out.

We brought in several floating tanks, and soon, one that was closest to us got into a duel with some enemy holed up in a small cave. They would pop out very close to us, take several shots, and dive back into the cave before the tank could shoot, only to be answered back by a similar fire from the tank.

We were very close to shore, probably 75 yards at most, and could easily see both sides of this duel. Suddenly the tank pulled back, headed towards us, and then ran along the shore, followed by turning onto the shore only to be waiting for the Jap to show his face again. When that happened, kaboom! And the Jap and his group in the cave ceased to be.

With a day or two of pulling back, our forces hit Namur hard and heavy, the attack lasting several days. I went ashore as things were slowing down, only to run into a battlefield burial service of some 80 Marines. To this day, I cannot get the scene out of my mind, along with raising the flag and playing taps on the trumpet as the burial service ended. I remember saluting the flag as the strains of taps subsided and the volleys of fire filtered through from not too far a distance. The attack was still on fairly close to the interment. A few days later, the Japs would give up, and we took many

prisoners.

Again, it was back to Pearl Harbor to prepare for our next attack. It was going to be a dilly! Equipment was becoming more available, and as the various ships pulled in, we pulled up to the "coal docks," an area not far from Ford Island where many of our planes were practicing, getting ready for the next mission. It should be mentioned that there was a large armory just across from us, housing vast stores of munitions. Also, six LSTs pulled in and tied up just forward of our position, one being LST 23, which had rescued us during the storm in the Aleutians. I visited that ship and was real pleased to shake the skipper's hand and visit with some of the crew.

A few days later, I would come to remember forever. A welder making a repair on one of the six LSTs tied up together caused a spark, which caused the ships to explode and begin to drift across the bay toward the ammunition dump. This inlet was fairly narrow, and a PT boat was called in to protect the ammunition dump. It torpedoed the LSTs, sinking every one of them. I don't know how many of the LST 23 crew survived, if any.

During this fairly short intermission, I got to Pearl several times, as well as over to Kaneohe on the far side of the island, and should have become a statistic when my ride back from Kaneohe crashed, killing all passengers just after I got out to go to Pearl a different way.

I caught a flight several times going to the Big Island. It was very plush, had a lot of cattle, and I got to go to the top of Kilauea, the active volcano. It was not active at the time I went, but it was enjoyable. Also, several of us were moved to an ocean-side cabin set up for holding some thirty people. You could not have found a more perfect "vacation" spot, with a perfect ocean beach just outside our doors. I swam every day and took hikes, some of them up one of the mountains, and the beachcombing was perfect.

But all good things come to an end, and our new flotilla was made up of some thirty ships, each with about 2,500 soldiers or Marines. We were the last ship on the left of the three lines of transports, but we had the "flag" or the controlling admiral for the operation. Also, the commanding general for the combat was aboard and in charge. It was he that I knew and was responsible for me "to start the Saipan invasion!"

Yes, I maintain that I started the Saipan invasion, but first, a mail clerk who I knew fairly well saw me and told me he had a letter for me but couldn't find me yesterday. Hurrying, we got the letter, and I read it before going to my station. It was from Jo Anne Fellows, a neighbor two doors away, who was engaged to my very best friend, Bill De Thorne. The letter told me that Bill had been killed in a flying accident in which he was a combat pilot. I could not have been more devastated.

A few days later, I was on Fox Watch at about noon. Fox watch is copying continuous code over the various stations, most of which are encrypted. We radiomen would be assigned to this duty while on transportation, usually 4 hours on and four hours off. It kept me in practice, but the loudspeaker suddenly blared this particular day, "All hands on deck!!! Go to your abandoned ship stations!!!" The communications officer burst through the door and ordered everyone but the fox man to get out and do it quickly. I was at the Fox watch desk and asked, "Hey, what's the matter?"

"We got about 100 barrels of high-test gasoline in the compartment immediately below. And there is a fire in the next hold!" "You have to stay, but everybody else is out!" With that, he slid out the door about as scared as anyone I have ever seen. The orders were changed from "abandon ship station" to "all hands fore or aft," moving the sailors to the front or the rear of the ship, but I didn't mention that this included some 2,500-plus fighting men who were aboard. I don't know how this mess of humanity made it, but I personally sat over a raging fire for at least four hours while they

fought it and finally got it under control!

During our trip to Saipan, we were targeted by enemy torpedoes nearly every day, and oftentimes, night bombers would try us for targets. Thankfully, the Bolivar missed out on all these attempts, but when we pulled up to Saipan very early in the morning, all was a bustle. The commanding general saw me on deck expecting to go shortly into the LCC as soon as it was downloaded. "Wilkie," he said, "go down to the radio shack and bring up the last weather report. I don't want to start this without knowing the weather." So I ran down to the radio shack and soon had the most recent report to hand to the general. "Great," he said. "Now we can go!" So, I can say that I started the Saipan invasion.

Our LCC was lowered to the water, we got in, and we moved to the "line of departure," which, unfortunately, was directly in front of a cruiser that began pounding the beaches with its big guns. In fact, we were so close that my ears hurt terribly from the noise, and I was very afraid that one of those shells would fall on us. For about four hours, they pounded the beach with my ears hurting more and more, leaving me with permanent tinnitus and a hurting head and ears.

A volley of six twelve-inch shells zipping only a few feet overhead was a real daytime nightmare. They would shoot a volley of six shells, move over a few feet and shoot another, and continue down the beach, only to raise their aim slightly higher and come back down the beach. This went on for four hours while we were a hundred feet in the water in front of them.

We had eighteen lines of attack boats filled with fighting personnel, and each line had some twenty boats or amphibious tanks, fully loaded with troops to get to the shore. In all, some twenty thousand troops would hit the beach that day, but the fighting was very fierce, with much loss of life on either side.

Our beach was "Red Three," which was the far-left beach directly

under Mt. Suribachi. We would get to shore, then be run off, only to attack again. But for over thirty days, we sat under the mountain with regular mortars aimed at us. We would hear the mortar round go off, hopefully, move away from our location, then watch to where the mortar hit and move again. They came far too close, but their aim needed improvement. The beach would be recaptured several times, but finally, it was made secure.

It was my turn to go ashore; the fighting was quite fierce, and the piles of bodies were both long and high. I wound up watching a colored radar crew putting up their radar and, at nightfall, stayed in their area. About midnight, a Japanese bomber came across at about 20,000 feet. The radar crew targeted it and on their third shot, hit it. It burned all the way to the ground.

A few days later, on the LCC, a duck (truck able to travel in the water) came by with about 20 badly injured men. They were the radar squad, and it was my duty to get transportation for them to the hospital ship. It took far too long, and I have never been as infuriated as when trying to get help for these guys. Finally, a hospital ship answered my request and sent a boat to our LCC to pick up this crew. Don't ever let me hear you say anything against the valiant colored fighting men.

My favorite story of the war is about me and about the reef in front of us. On the tenth day, I decided I wanted to go on into the reef to look at the coral, which was undoubtedly beautiful. It was safe during the day, although at night, we had to contend with snipers who had crept out on the reef to be close and improve their accuracy as they shot at us.

So with a life jacket and tennis shoes on, carrying my 10-inch Bowie knife, which I constantly wore, I swam into the reef and crept along looking at the beauty of the coral—until all of a sudden, there it was!!! A terrible beast with waving tentacles just sitting there waiting to attack me.

I backed up, waiting for it to charge, but it didn't. Finally, I felt brave enough to take a tiny step forward, but it only waved its tentacles at me. Then another step forward, then another, until finally, I was quite close to the beast, but it hadn't attacked. Without the tentacles, its body was probably eighteen inches around, but the moving arms covered a couple more feet each way, and it looked like some kind of octopus.

I finally got up enough nerve to take my 10-inch Bowie knife and creep close enough to touch the monster with its point—solid metal! Apparently, a coil of some kind of wire had been hit by a shell and splayed out the strands to look like moving tentacles in the wavy water. It was the most realistic thing I can ever remember seeing.

The fighting continued without let-up. One night, some 30 Japanese boats tried to make a run for it, but our destroyers and cruisers saw them. The destruction was complete, and I had an unwilling ringside seat, each boat carrying about 50 people.

As the fighting diminished, we were ordered to another location. All during this time, the island of Tinian, about 6 miles from Saipan, was under fire from cannons and planes. It was now time to make the only shore-to-shore maneuver of the war. I remember being on a floating dry dock getting our outfit repaired from the fighting and watching the bombing of Tinian going on.

The Japanese soldiers had tunneled into the ground for safety, and it was rare that we actually did any damage. But this day, as I watched, a full-grown waterspout appeared between us, swirling and twirling its evil head. It broke up but was the only waterspout I have ever seen.

We lined up our attack forces and led a large number of attack boats across to "Red Three," again the hot beach. We had to go in real

close, close enough to see the full bodies of the enemy. As we were trying to get one wave through, a Japanese machine gunner using a heavy repeating gun played havoc with us and also those coming into the beach. About noon, a low-flying plane at maybe 100 feet dropped a small bomb.

The Jap saw it coming and stood up to run. The bomb caught him on his left shoulder, blowing his head and helmet off and up, up, up. We could continue to land troops with less loss of life and more safety for ourselves. The next day, also at about noon, another plane came overhead at about the same height. However, it was hit by a shell in the midsection and exploded. I was watching it when it was hit.

The plane zigzagged around and finally hit the water several miles from where it was hit. After the war, I got a chance to talk to Houston Ray, my cousin, who I knew was flying off the carrier Essex in a similar plane. I asked him if any of his buddies had been hit at that time and location. "Yes, I was! And I'm still carrying a piece of shrapnel, which the doctors say is inoperable."

One last story before I call this writing to a halt. On the fifteenth day of the Saipan operation, everything was quiet for the evening. Suddenly, several radios broke out with warnings that planes were on their way in, and we were the largest thing on the beach since all the other ships had left.

There were "300" from one direction, 300 from another direction, and a third 300 almost on us. We knew we could not survive under these conditions, but we manned our twin fifties and waited for the worst. We waited and waited, and finally, it got dark with no enemy planes in sight. About 9:30, someone said, "Hell, this is a false alarm, let's go swimming." And swimming we did, and I must say it was the finest swim I have ever had.

But the planes? Some smart Air Force colonel lured these planes off course and south toward Guam, some fifty miles to the south.

There, they were met by 180 of our planes and the darndest dogfight that ever occurred. Houston Ray was in it and said that every time he kicked his plane around, there was a Zero in his sights, and a squeeze of the trigger ended that.

He was credited with 8 planes, but he thinks he got at least a dozen. The Japanese lost some 680 planes, with our loss of 17. This was known as the "Great Turkey Shoot" and is documented in the encyclopedias. This will be the last dogfight ever, according to many spokesmen.

I will end this little story by telling you that at Pearl, a car backfired, and I suddenly found myself in the hospital with serious trauma problems. When released, I was sent to the States for two more hospitalizations before being discharged.

I have been seeing an Army psychiatrist who thinks I'm crazy but has me down as a seriously disabled swabby. But as I said at the beginning—I still love my country, I like my life, I love my wife, and I'm happy!





## OUR LOVE STORY

The “Almost” Complete and Unabridged Version (updated  
2/14/2024)

Benny and I met in 1977 at “Joe’s Store” across from the high school. This was the hang out for all the school kids during the lunch hour. Benny’s cousin owned this little store and Benny worked there. I had seen him there at times when I would go for lunch, but we didn’t “officially” meet until the summer of my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Benny had just graduated high school and I had just completed my freshman year. By the time my junior year started we were “going steady”.

In the summer of 1978, we became engaged and on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1979 we were married. Benny was 21 and I was 1 month shy of my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Our wedding week was hectic to say the least because prior to our wedding we went to my Senior Prom, my Senior Baccalaureate and my Senior Graduation, ALL within 10 days of our wedding. Needless to say, my mom and dad were probably ready to get me out of there. J

Sound like the beginning of a perfect love story so far? Not

in the least.

Benny and I weren't sincere born-again Christians, and we definitely did not live a moral life. We were young and stupid to be quite honest. Sure, we went to church with Benny's parents at times but sitting on a church pew doesn't make you a Christian or moral.

By the end of the year 1983 we had 3 children. 2 of them were our own biological children and 1 child was my niece that we had adopted in 1981. Even with trying to raise these 3 children we just didn't get it right.

We even went through a brief period of trying to "play church". We had moved to Lawton because of Benny's business, and we began to attend a very large church. We became very involved with the young married couples. I went to ladies Bible studies, I taught Sunday School, I did all the things I thought I was "supposed" to do to be a good wife and mother, but then we moved back to Blair.

At first, we tried to continue with our new way of life, but as there was no root. All those "seeds" that fell in Lawton only fell away. *Matthew 13:20-21 "The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away"*. Our choices of friends, our choices of weekend "fun" and our own failure as a young family trying to live life without a true and sincere salvation led us, led ME, to a divorce in the summer of 1988. I thought I wanted "freedom", I thought I really didn't love this man, I thought I could do better....I thought so many stupid and foolish things.

After the divorce my biological children and I moved to Lawton, about 60 miles from Benny. Our adopted daughter went home to live with her biological mother, my sister. (A story for another time) I was a new “free” single mom! I thought at the time that I had just what I wanted. Was I ever wrong!

I thought this new found free life was going to be just what I wanted, but it wasn't long at all that I began to sense a void in my heart and life. I spent my weekends partying, drinking and simply trying my best to fill that void. Benny had remained in Blair and had the children every other weekend, which again gave me even more “freedom”. Little did I know that Benny was going through the same, only his heart was angry, hurt and bitter and rather than trying to fill a void he was trying to deaden the pain with alcohol and drugs.

In late November of that same year, I received a very distressed phone call from my father in law concerning Benny. The circumstances of our divorce had just become too much for him to bear and he had voluntarily checked himself into a mental rehabilitation facility and I was told he was not in a very healthy state of mind.

Have you ever felt the overwhelming, crushing conviction of God that you had really, really messed up big time? This phone call and this news about this man that I “thought” I no longer loved brought me literally to my knees.

The children and I lived in a tiny, minutely tiny, apartment. I could literally walk about 5 steps from the phone on the kitchen wall to the couch. After I hung up the phone I could barely breathe as I took those 5 steps to that couch.....where I fell to my knees and broke. (I can still to this day vividly see this

place and this event in my mind.)

I knew how I was “supposed” to pray, but I, also, knew that those forms, those repeated words I had learned were not what I needed to do this time. I remembered how I had seen and heard my Granny pray when I was growing up. She always seemed to be talking to her best friend and believe me, she said exactly what was on her heart and her mind and I never doubted for a moment that God was hearing her.

So I prayed.....and I cried. I cried for Benny and for our children and for everyone that I knew had been hurt because of my own selfishness and then I cried for myself. That was such a moment of confusion, questions, doubts and insecurity at first. I knew what I was supposed to say. I knew how the Methodist's, with their words in the back of the hymnal prayed. But, I knew how Granny prayed so I knew God would hear me if I just poured out to him everything; every hurt, every wrong, every lie.....every sin.

I began to re-evaluate my life and my marriage/divorce and the decisions I had made that led up to the circumstances that were happening at that time with Benny. I began to realize that the saying "You don't know what you really have until you lose it" was 100% truth. I began to realize and admit to myself that this situation that I was in was my own fault. You see, people that refuse to accept their own faults, their own mistakes, their own failures will never be able to humble themselves enough to admit they need help. God gives us a free will to choose Him and to ask for His help. He will never ever force anyone into salvation, but that night no one had to tell me what I needed to do.

I made a commitment to God that night. I admitted my own

failures and my own faults in how my marriage failed and how my little family were torn apart. I knew it was my fault and I knew that I wasn't going to be able to do it alone. I made a promise to God that night that if he helped me restore my marriage and put my little family back together that I would serve him for the rest of my life. I knew that it was going to be a difficult road, but I was determined to do whatever it took for as long as it took. At some point along that road though this "bargain" that I made with God grew into a deep and personal commitment for me and no longer a conditional means to get what I wanted. Many things happened between that night on my knees and the next 4 months. I had a determination and resolve that I was going to do whatever it took, no matter what it took, to fix my wrong. Only now it wasn't just me alone, I had Help.

In December the kids and I moved back to Blair and by March of 1989 we moved back home with Benny. However, just because we were all living in the same house didn't mean that things were healed. Benny wasn't saved at that time and was very bitter and had in fact become an atheist. He was still hurt and angry, very angry at everyone and blamed me....and God. He continued to drink and stay away from home quite a bit. But, no man is beyond God's reach of mercy and grace and over the next two years things began to change.

In the fall of 1990 my brother, Billy, was living in Humboldt, Tennessee with my uncle. Billy had been a long-time drug addict and had gotten saved under my uncle's ministry and was being a powerful influence on my husband. Not only was he helping my uncle in his church, but he was very actively involved in the homeless ministry that they had there at the church.

My brother knew the condition of Benny's heart at that

time and how he felt about God. He also knew the circumstances regarding our divorce and rocky reconciliation. He knew about my commitment, and he knew Benny's doubts, not only about me, but about God. He began to call Benny and talk to him, witness to him, almost every day.

After much coaxing from my brother, Benny and I decided to make a trip to Tennessee. My uncle's church was in a revival at the time of our trip and that revival became a very important turning point, both in our marriage and in the life of our little family.

When we arrived that night the church service was still going on. Now you need to know that Benny and I had neither one had ever been to a Pentecostal church service. I had heard all the crazy stories. We had 2 of "those" churches in the small town where we lived. Benny's parents were members of the Methodist church and any involvement we had with a church was with a Methodist church. We knew nothing about a "spirit filled" church.

When we got out of the car and got closer to the building we could hear the music. The closer we got, the louder it got, nothing at all like the Methodist hymns we were used to. Then when we opened the door and walked in you could instantly feel something stirring. It wasn't really loud or different style of music, it was just different. Benny and I really didn't understand it, but we both acknowledged later that we felt some kind of "electricity" in the air.

After the service that night Benny and I sat up with my brother and my uncle drinking coffee, eating vienna sausages and crackers and talking about the ministry that they were doing. My uncle loved to stay up late but believe it or not that night he went

to bed before we did. In fact I think that night we literally didn't go to bed until the sun was coming up.

For me as a big sister, to see such a change in my brother's life and to see how God was using his life to help other men in that community just absolutely amazed me. To hear him share God's word and witness to Benny was something I'll never forget. Billy's story was one of a young boy caught up in a world of drugs, wrong friends and wrong choices in life to a complete life of service to others.

The next night of the revival though was a turning point in our lives, the turning point for our marriage and family.

The evangelist that was doing the revival was very prophetic in things that he said to people. Benny and I had never met this man and my brother said that he did not give him any details about our marriage situation. He wanted Benny to be sure and know that if anything happened it was coming from God and not man.

During this service we were completely amazed as we sat and watched this man go from person to person and tell them things about their life that no one else knew. One in particular was with a lady that had come to the revival that night. He went over to her and began talking to her about her grieving over the loss of her husband. Then he told her that God wanted her to know that her husband had perfect vision now that he was in heaven. The look on this woman's face was of absolute shock. She began to cry and cry, but you could tell it was tears of joy and not sorrow. We later found out after service that when her husband passed away he was blind.

He went from person to person doing this and you could tell by everyone's reactions that they were in fact speaking to God's prophet. Another thing that was happening is that each time he spoke to someone he would lay his hands on their head, and they would become so weak that they either had to sit back in their seats or some of them simply fell to the ground. Then the evangelist came over to me.

I will be very honest and tell you that I was a little bit afraid. My brother and my uncle immediately came over to stand by me. The evangelist looked at me and said that God was telling me that I was going to have a beautiful new home someday. At first, I thought that was so odd that he was telling me something about materialistic things. Then he just looked at me and smiled and laid his hands on my head and down I went. It was like something very warm and very strong rushed from the top of my head down to my feet and I didn't just fall to my seat or my knees but to the floor. I began to cry with such a feeling of joy that I had never experienced before. When I looked over at Benny and saw the evangelist heading towards him I tried very hard to stand up, but couldn't. My legs were like spaghetti noodles and my brother and Uncle Dickie had to stand me up because I definitely didn't want to miss what was going to happen next.

When this man came over to Benny you could see the tension in Benny's face. He was skeptical to say the least. The evangelist had Benny stand in front of him. He looked Benny in the face and said, "You don't believe in God anymore, do you?" The look of surprise on Benny's face was very obvious. Then the man said, "But you want to, don't you?" Benny was obviously shaken up at this point. Then the man laid his hands on Benny's forehead and said, "And you will." At that point Benny fell to his



knees and became so weak that he couldn't even stand.....

That night, at the Church of the Firstborn in Humboldt, Tennessee my husband did begin to believe again and with God's help, our lives changed. That "new home" that was prophesized to me was not about a new house, but a "new Christian home". Our lives began to change that very night and on February 14th, 1991 in a little church in Vernon, Texas, with our son and daughter as our attendants, we were re-married. 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.

Although that was 33 years ago today when Benny and I celebrate our anniversary we do not count the divorced time. But in order to honor the reuniting of our family, plus Benny says it's easier to remember, we celebrate every Valentine's Day as if the divorce never happened. So today makes our 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Have we had problems in these last 44 years? Most definitely. Have we had times when Satan tried to destroy "what God had joined back together"? Beyond a shadow of a doubt. Has my commitment that I made to God that night knelt on my knees in front of that little couch changed? Never, wavered a little, yes, but never ever have I gone back on my word and nether has God. I've had doubts, I've had questions, I've had hurt, but I've never broken that covenant I made with God, my husband and my family that night. Have I learned what being a spirit filled Pentecostal means? Absolutely!

This may sound like a perfect fairy tale love story, but it's not really. There is only ONE true and perfect love story and if you would ever really like for me to tell you about that story, all you have to do is ask.

*John 3:16-17 “For God so love the world that he have his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but the world through Him might be saved.”*

**To hear “the rest of the story” you’ll have to buy the book. #theunconditionalstandard**





## The Missing Peace

(edited June 2024)

Every time that a baby is born into God's world, they are born with a piece of their life's peace missing. That piece of that puzzle has one distinctive shape that can never be duplicated but must be filled with the original piece designed just for that person.

The Bible says that we are knit together in our mother's womb. Well, I believe that in part of God's knitting he purposely leaves a gap in his work that can only be filled with that one piece that was created only by him.

As that baby grows into a young child you will begin to see the first signs of their search. When you see a struggle on their face in making a choice to do what is right or what is wrong, they are beginning to feel that tug.

As they grow and become a young person they begin to notice a void, a "missing" feeling, but they can't explain it. They don't understand what it really is so they begin their search. At first, they think that maybe it's a boyfriend or girlfriend that they need or maybe it's the act of doing things to "fit in" with the popular people like drinking or experimenting with drugs, but no matter what they try that emptiness is still there.

As this person reaches adulthood the search for that missing piece begins to grow stronger. Many times, men and women mistake that longing inside them as a need to be in a relationship with a man or woman, many times even involving sex in that relationship hoping that even that will fill the void, but it doesn't. They go from relationship to relationship.

Another search leads people into marriage, fairytale fantasy marriages that aren't based on a mutual search of the couple, but of them each looking for something different. Many times men think that they must fill that void with money or things. They mistakenly think that the buying of things will make their wives happy and it only adds to the stress of the marriage. They mistakenly feel that they must have the best job, the best house or the best vehicles to fit in with their peers, but inside they're really searching for that one thing to fill that void.

Other times women feel that if they only had a baby then that empty feeling inside will be filled. Sometimes after the birth of a baby a woman can be so busy and preoccupied that they almost feel like it's worked because they don't have much time to think of anything else than the child, but then that longing resurfaces. Those quiet times when that baby is sleeping become times of noticing that void again. These women feel like they may not actually be satisfied now with that child, so they begin searching again. So no they go into the job market, to feel successful, but it just doesn't "fit".

Many, many times these searches lead both men and women outside of their own marriages and into arms of other men and women who are only doing the same thing....searching. Why do we do this? What is it inside of a person that makes them notice

this void? Sometimes people actually do begin to realize that this emptiness must have something to do with God.

“If this emptiness has to do with God,” they say, “then let’s find some of Him and put it in that space.” They begin to talk like they’ve found him. They start using phrases such as, “I’m praying for you” or “just have faith and believe”. They begin to refrain from using bad language, they don’t frequent the bars any longer, they even have Bibles in their homes. And even on rare occasions, mainly holiday’s, they will attend a church service.

Wow! To those on the outside it would appear that they have finally found the missing piece. They’re doing all the “right” things now.....but why do these people still feel that emptiness? Why is it when they’re all alone that they still sense that void in their heart?

They’re “talking the talk”. They’re being “good people”. Some may even claim that they are a Christian, but why do they not feel whole then?

When these people get to this place in their life all they have done is traced the shape of that puzzle piece and made their own version of a “God piece” to fit, but it’s still man made. It’s filled with criteria; lists to check off that people think that God expects out of them or that other peers or family members expect from them.

God’s design was for fellowship with man. He wants man to seek out a relationship with HIM. He wants a life given to service and to HIS will. He doesn’t want you to look outside the puzzle box and see if you can find a different piece that can be squeezed into “your” place. He designed one piece for one person.

The true beauty of this analogy is that when you do get to the point that you believe you have found that peace with God, and you go to Him and He shows you exactly where he placed your piece of

the puzzle, when you lay it down and it “clicks” and lies smooth with the rest of the entire vision of your life, you’ll know. Your search is over. Now you can spray that puzzle glue on this treasure and display it so that all can share in your genuine and true masterpiece of peace!

*Psalm 139:13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*

*Colossians 1:17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*



## THE BEAUTY OF OUR TOWN

The beauty of our town Is really quite unique  
We have no fancy shopping mall Not even one boutique

The beauty of our town You can't see in a store  
But you'll see it in our faces By our smiles and more

There's such a special feeling  
That comes from love that's shared That comes from friends and  
family That really truly care

When bad times come and they do We all do so much better  
Knowing friends in our home town Will all be there together  
The Lord said, "Love your neighbor As you would love yourself"  
For that's the beauty of our town By far it's greatest wealth

By: Paula Wilkie May 5, 1991





# Daddy

(originally written in 2012)

A few years ago, I attended a lady's church conference in Mustang, Oklahoma. At that conference we were given a small card with this question, "How would your life be different if you knew (on a gut-level, not superficially) that you were always, forever, completely and lavishly so-loved every minute of your existence?" We were to write our answers on the back of the card. My answer was, "I would never ever have to feel insecure again." I keep this card on my bulletin board right above my desk so that I can see it every single day, because since that day that I wrote my answer on that card, God has done some miraculous things for me showing me that He does love me "always, forever, completely and lavishly every minute of my existence!"

My perception of an earthly "Father" couldn't be any more

perfect than daddy. Growing up daddy was the hugger, the kisser and the affectionate parent. Daddy knew how to love each one of us kids so much that we all thought we were his favorite. Now momma loved us just as much, but her personality was just different than daddy and she wasn't as outwardly affectionate.

I can honestly say when I think of the expression "my daddy" it gives me such a feeling of immeasurable love in my heart. ♥ I have no images in my mind or feelings in my heart, of the neglect, hurt, and abuse of an unloving Father, but they are images of someone who loved me unconditionally, who knew how to show love, who felt my pain when I hurt, who forgave me completely when I messed up (and I have a LOT), who, without even blinking an eye, would grab me and hug me and make me feel "so loved". I have never, not even for the smallest amount of measurable time, had ANY doubts that my daddy loved me and would have given his own life for mine if it ever came down to that.

Daddy gave us the best example we could have ever asked for to show what the "love of a Heavenly Father" is really like. He helped us so much to understand what it really feels like to have those arms of "a Heavenly Father" wrapped around us. He showed us a true example of unconditional love. And because of the love I feel for my earthly father, it has given me the ability to love "my Heavenly Father" and to truly understand that he loves me in ways that are immeasurable!

Now .....I know that not every person has been blessed with a good or even a present earthly father. Some of you may not even know your father. Some of you may have been the one that actually suffered the abuse, neglect and pain from your earthly father. Some of you may not have even seen your earthly father for years. Some of you may not have ever felt that paternal kind of love from your father and therefore it makes it difficult for you to relate to your "Heavenly

Father."

For those of you, I would like to share a story.

Many years ago, I had a friend of mine, I'll call her Linda, who shared with me her story about her father. She has been abused as a child by her father, physically and sexually. Therefore, her image of a daddy was not a good one. As she grew into adulthood, she was a very, very insecure person, doubting that there was anyone alive on the planet that could truly love her. But there was one special man that God gave her as a husband that helped her to understand.

She wasn't a Christian when they married although her new husband was. As he tried to explain to her his relationship with his "heavenly Father" it became next to impossible for her to be able to empathize. To her the only image of a "father" that she had was one of pain, hurt and not of love. However, as time went by, she began to seek out the truth of God's love and did eventually become a born again Christian. But it wasn't until she was blessed to attend a Christian Ladies Conference in the mountains of Colorado that God's true "Fatherly Love" was revealed to her.

The theme of that Ladies Conference I remember dealt with "Our Heavenly Father", but although Linda was a born-again Christian the one area of her Christian Walk that she struggled with the most was fully being able to believe and "feel" the true love of a "Heavenly Father" because of the relationship she had with her earthly father. She would walk out of each workshop and hide in her hotel room because each one seemed to deal with things that just brought horrible images to her memory.

But then. ....In her hotel room was a large picture window that looked out at the huge mountain range there in Colorado. It seemed like the mountains went on forever and the beauty of it was

absolutely breathtaking. That afternoon Linda knelt in her hotel room below that window and cried out to God to reveal to her how He as a Heavenly Father could love her so much when her only image of a father was so painful. Then it was as if the window became a giant vision with nothing else in her view but the expanse of the mountains. She began to cry uncontrollably and couldn't see anything but the view from her window. She began to feel a warmth flood her body from her head to her feet and heard God speak to her and say, "Linda, do you see the expanse of this mountain range? Do you see the beauty of it? Do you see the size of it? Do you see that the borders of this range seem to have NO END? THAT, Linda, is how much that I as YOUR HEAVENLY, FATHER LOVE YOU!"

And at that same moment the door of her hotel room opened and some of her friends that she has gone to the conference with, and the speaker in the workshop that she ran out of, came in and knelt down surrounding her. One of the ladies said, "Linda, God sent us here right at this exact moment to tell you that he is YOUR FATHER and that HE LOVES YOU beyond what you can even comprehend and said for us to wrap our arms around you and hug you so that you can PHYSICALLY FEEL HIS LOVE and to NEVER DOUBT IT AGAIN! And they did! ♥

If your relationship with your Heavenly Father is something you haven't been able to quite grasp because of your relationship with your earthly father, then I want to encourage you to look out the window! GOD is a FATHER like no other and HE LOVES YOU BEYOND MEASURE! And your father's out there, please understand that YOU could be molding the very image of GOD in their minds.

I am so beyond grateful for the kind of daddy that I had, and I will miss him every single day of my earthly life. But because of my Heavenly Father, I know that I will see my daddy again.



## My Christian Heritage: My Granny

Many, many people In this world  
today  
Have no Christian guidance No one  
to show the way

But I have been so lucky So  
fortunate and so blessed  
To have a Christian Granny Who  
showed “the way” the best

She took us all to church  
As we grew, through the years We  
sat and watched her pray And shed  
those joyful tears

I remember as a child I used to sit  
and gaze  
And watch her cry, speak in  
tongues And lift her hands in  
praise

She always loved the Lord  
Through every trial or strife She  
taught by her example And how  
she lived her life

I use to watch her braid Her  
beautiful long hair  
She'd hold it between her teeth  
And use such special care

I remember chocolate gravy  
Cheese and crackers, and Papa's  
cokes And going in the summer  
time  
For those Canadian River soaks

I'll never forget the summer When  
watching T.V. had to wait  
Because Papa was glued to his  
recliner Watching Watergate

Through all those summers, all  
those years And each day in  
between  
Granny's faith never wavered And  
on the Lord she leaned

She prayed and prayed for all of us  
Each and every one  
To give our hearts to Jesus Christ

**God's only begotten son**

**I asked her once, when we were  
talking About her children one day  
If you could speak to them from  
heaven What words would you  
say?**

**With tears in her eyes and in a  
gentle voice She said, "Children,  
please don't wait.  
Please give your hearts to God  
Before it is too late."**

**Thank you, Granny, oh so much  
For this heritage you gave me  
You've lived your life and served  
the Lord And with his love you  
bathed me**

**Though my heart may be aching  
and my tears falling There is a  
peace so sweet  
Because I know in my heart in  
Heaven someday You and I will  
meet**

**There we'll shed tears of joy as our  
Savior looks on Because to Him I,  
too, gave my heart  
And though down here on earth  
you may be gone In Heaven we'll  
never depart**

**My Christian heritage, my sweet  
Granny So loving and her faith so  
true  
I love you, Granny, and the rest of  
my life I want to be just like you.**

# The Difference in Being a Parent and a Grandparent

My husband (a brand new grandparent at the time) and a friend of his were swapping bragging rights over their new granddaughters. My husband's friend made this statement, "If I had known that grandkids were going to be so much fun I would have just skipped the kids and gone straight to the grandkids." Tis so true! But is just having fun with the grandkids all that we grandparents are supposed to do?

I have heard grandparents make statements such as: "My role is just to spoil them, give them whatever they want and send them back home to their parents." "These kids aren't my responsibility they're theirs." "I don't have to worry about that, they're not my kids." And finally, "With grandchildren, it's all care and NO responsibility." While many grandparents may make some of these statements in jest I'm afraid that there are some who are as serious as they can be. Is this really the attitude that we as grandparents are supposed to have?

Let me ask you? Exactly what do you think the role of a grandparent is? What do you think the role of a parent is? Are they similar or are they two complete and totally different roles? I think the answer can be "both".

As a parent I was completely responsible 100% of the time for the mind, body and soul of my children. It was my responsibility to raise them ie: to see that they had food to eat, clothes to wear, a roof over their heads and an education, both in academics and of things spiritual. This was my full time responsibility from the moment of their birth until they reached adulthood.

Now as a grandparent, or NaNa as I'm called by my grandchildren, I feel that there is only 1 phrase in this previous paragraph that does not apply to my role....."100% of the time". I do understand that with there being so many grandparents raising grandchildren that they do have this role 100% of the time and I do commend those grandparents, but I can only speak from what applies to me.

During the time that my grandchildren are under my care, whether it be as their babysitter while their parents work, or as their play date captain if they come to "visit", I am just as responsible for their minds, bodies and souls as their parents are. There are often times that I actually feel more responsibility as a grandparent than I ever did as a parent. I think that it's because as a grandparent I still have the responsibility of being a Christian example to my adult children as well as now being an example to their children. I know, too, that this is going to become even stronger for me as my grandchildren grow and begin to really notice my example both to them and to their parents.

I do know that the parent's role is very different and they have the *ultimate* responsibility to "raise" these grandchildren to adulthood, but I don't want to ever forget that as their grandparent that I, too, have a role in the molding of these children.

Did you know that there is only one place in the entire Bible that mentions a mother AND a grandmother together in one scripture? 2Timothy 1:5 "For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your **grandmother** Lois and your **mother** Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well."

Wow! Can you imagine what kind of examples BOTH of these women must have been to Timothy? Here is an example of faith that transcended three generations! Take a look at where this faith dwelt FIRST....with the GRANDMOTHER! Can you imagine



making such an impact on your child and grandchild that your actual name would be mentioned in God's Holy word? That thought just boggles my mind!

I was blessed enough to have had one of the Godliest grandmothers on the planet and I like to think that I am a product of her life and prayers. Although a generation was skipped between she and myself as far as me having a Christian parent, I often think of her example to me as a child. If I can only be to my grandchildren what she was to me then I will feel that I have succeeded in this role.

Now, as the title suggests, what differences are there though in being a parent and grandparent? Well, first of all I got to go to the hospital and wait for the arrival of my grandchildren without having to endure the pain of a labor and delivery. That part was wonderful!

I have to tell you that there is no feeling in the world that compares to that moment when your child has a child. The first time that my husband got to hold Faith, our first grandchild, he looked down at her and then looked at me and said, "Our baby had a baby." That's really how you feel, too, and until you experience it for yourself there are no amount of words I can type that can translate that feeling.

When you hold that grandchild for the first time and know that it is your blood that had a role in creating yet another life through your child it is very humbling. When that grandchild looks up at you with the eyes of their parent it is like a step back in time. The feeling that comes over you is almost like the love and devotion that you had for your own child has now, in the blink of an eye, been multiplied a thousand times over. It's one of the hardest feelings to ever truly convey to someone else who has not

experienced it yet. If you are a grandparent reading this then I know that you know exactly what I'm talking about. Now let's see, what other differences can I find?

1. When a parent stresses out and nearly has an coronary because their child has poured the entire box of Cheerios on the floor, a grandparent just smiles and says, "Oh, that's okay. It's not that big of a mess."
2. When you're out at a restaurant and the children are misbehaving very badly, as a grandparent you just brush it off while their parents look at you and say, "You would have never let us get away with that!"
3. When parents tend to use the words "Just wait a minute" or "I just don't have time to do that right now" all too often, a grandparent tends to take advantage of every minute they have with a grandchild.
4. (One of my husband's favorites) When your infant grandchild has a messy diaper and their parent asks if you could go change the baby's diaper as a grandparent you can say, "Nope. I'm the grandparent and I don't have to do that."
5. When your grandchild is hurt, for whatever reason, as a grandparent you feel that pain twice as much when you see that it is hurting that child's parent as well.
6. When you become a grandparent you are given a very special story telling gift. Rather than reading a book we have the ability to dig into the recesses of our memories and come up with the most wonderful tales of adventure that leave that grandchild saying, "Tell me another story, NaNa."
7. As a grandparent chocolate is one of the 4 major food groups. As a parent.....not so much.
8. As a parent you can sit "criss cross applesauce" in the floor with the children and in an instant jump up to a full standing position and walk normally. As a grandparent you can't jump up quite so fast and you walk a little wobbly until your hip joints get readjusted.

9. As a grandparent you have the ability to kiss the hurts of the grandchildren and in an instant make them all better. The parent can be in the same room, but the grandchild has a way of knowing whose kiss has more magic ability.
10. As a grandparent there is no other feeling to compare to when that grandchild wraps their arms tightly around you and nestles their little head in that “nook” between your head and shoulder. This is something though that I don’t feel is a difference between parents and grandparents because no matter the size of the child, be they an adult or a toddler, there’s just something about that “nook” and they just fit.



## SEASONS OF CHANGE AND A CHANGE OF SEASONS

What do you think about when you hear the word "change"? The dictionary defines the word as "a transformation or transition from one state, condition, or phase to another. *the change of seasons.*" And if you look up the word "season" it is merely "any period of time."

What was the first season of change that took place in your life? You would think it would be the day of your natural birth, going from a womb to the natural world, but that wasn't it. Before you ever came into this natural world and took your first breath, you had already gone through your first "season". That development from conception to birth was and is a process of continuous change, a period lasting about 40 weeks ie: a "season". When you think about it, after our birth our life is then another process of continuous change, but full of many different seasons.

I believe with my whole heart that the development within the womb is a process that is guided by God's hand. Psalm 139 13-14 says "*For you created my inmost being; **you knit me together in my mother's womb.** I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*" But who takes over the continued development and nurturing of our little bodies after our natural birth? What other "change" happens here simultaneously with a baby's birth?

In a matter of seconds a baby is born, his first season changes, and he becomes totally and completely dependant on an earthly parent. At the same time another season changes and the woman ceases to become just a wife and now becomes a mother. Together with her husband, who is now a father, they become totally and completely responsible for this baby.

Through out the time that the parents raise that child he will go through many seasons or better called “phases” when relating to children. I’m watching this happen right before my eyes, once again, as I watch my grandchildren grow. My daughter has asked me the same question I’m sure I asked my mother, "Are they ever going to stop doing this?" I can’t count the times that I have told all my girls that their children will continue to go through these phases until they leave their home.

The one difference in watching these phases as a grandparent versus a parent is that I’ve read the end of the book on this one. I know by my own experience that these little mini seasons do cease eventually. Sometimes they come on suddenly, last for short or long periods of time and then leave as quickly as they came. Some of these seasons can be very pleasant and you bask in the sunshine of them, but then there are those that aren’t so pleasant, in fact even painful and you wonder if it will ever pass or change.

When you become a child you eventually do change into an adult. Although after reaching adulthood you forever remain an adult, you do go through seasons of aging. As a wife, good Lord willing, you will remain a wife “until death do you part”, but that is a choice. You can cease to become a wife by one means or another if you so choose that option.

But, when you reach parenthood there are no options out, no escape clause; for this “change of seasons” is permanent. Once I became a

mother I will forever be a mother. Even if I were to legally “disown” my own children (only making a point here) it still would not change the fact that on June the 11<sup>th</sup> in the year 1982 I gave birth to my first child and forever entered into the role of motherhood. And once my children had children I again had a change of seasons and entered into another new and permanent season, that of being a NaNa.

Just as spring is one of my favorite natural seasons, this new season as a grandparent is one of my favorites so far. Watching these precious children grow and change with each passing month is like watching all the “newness” of spring.

When reflecting, however, on our natural weather seasons we know that every season is not always pleasant. We have often even seen the tragic effects that the changing seasons can have on our weather. We have either experienced these effects personally ourselves or we have been an observer through the realm of the media. Both can result in the experience of pain and sadness, be it first hand or through feeling compassion for another. But as God’s word says, ***“To every thing there is a season; and a time to every purpose under heaven” Eccleastes 3:1***

One constant and reassuring fact through out our lives is that although many things around us do change God does not. ***Malachi 3:6 For I am the Lord; I change not.*** From that first “knitting” completed by our heavenly Father, he is always and evermore in control. That first period of “change” that we experienced for those 40 weeks ended in the birth of a new life. From that moment of birth and throughout our lives we are going through another “knitting” process; a process that will someday, for those that are born again Christians, will end in the most miraculous new life ever dreamed!

Blessings!

NaNa Paula