

Nobody Ever Said
It Would Be Easy

*The life and some of the times
of Louis Mikkelsen*

August 1984

Foreword

It may be an understatement to suggest that the circumstances of the first twenty or so years of my life do not fit the usual mold. I have related bits and pieces of the story to my loving spouse, Mary, but I have never burdened anyone with the full account. Mary has persuaded me to write the story. I agreed, with some reluctance, to do so. I do it in the hope that those whom I love and respect the most may have a better understanding of some of my idiosyncrasies and shortcomings.

Some of the reports that follow are not very flattering to the people involved. I have always tried to avoid being judgmental, and it is certainly not my intent to be so in this account. I cannot assure the reader that the reporting is completely accurate, for some of the events were observed through the eyes of a child, and the memories have been filtered by the passage of time. I feel, however, that the things that happened, or at least my perception of them, are important elements of the narration.

My memory is not good enough, nor am I well enough organized, to write a straight chronological account. Rather, what follows is a series of vignettes describing some of the key chapters.

I dedicate this to those who, over the years, have had a positive influence on my life.

This year (2009) I revised and supplemented the original document which I wrote two years after my retirement in 1982.

In The Beginning

It was in 1923 on a farm near the small town of Ringwood, Oklahoma that my lungs were first filled with the atmosphere of Planet Earth. I was christened Louis (-) Mikkelsen. I was saddled with a middle name that I detested and found to be acutely embarrassing. When I later had to apply for a delayed certificate of birth, I conveniently forgot to include it, so I legally have no middle name.

The proud (I hope) parents were Louis Jacob and Elizabeth Kathryn (Niehaus) Mikkelsen. I am an only child, but I have suspected, from bits of overheard conversation that there was an older brother at some point. I have no direct memories of the Ringwood era, but it can be seen that I grew to be a fierce and fearless hunter.



I was told that during this period my best friend was a German shepherd named Bouncer. Bouncer was my constant companion, and on some occasions, we were the object of searches through the woods after we wandered away from the farmhouse. I was never worried about being lost. Why should I worry? Bouncer was there. Bouncer's demise came about when he became so protective that he was vicious when my parents attempted to discipline me.



We must have moved to Enid, Oklahoma when I was four or five years old. We lived, for a time, within walking distance of Grandma and Grandpa Niehaus. I have vague memories of getting Hail Columbia for deciding to visit them without announcing my intentions beforehand. I don't remember much about this set of grandparents. They both died while I was fairly young. I do remember that I loved to visit them, and they had a wind-up Victrola, which I would play for hours at a time.

When I began school at McKinley Elementary School, we were living at 440 South Arthur Street. At that time, this was on the extreme western fringe of Enid. Let the record show that I walked a mile each way to school in all kinds of weather. In retrospect, I feel that I had the advantage of being in an excellent school system. It was strictly no nonsense. If anyone misbehaved at recess or disrupted class, they quickly found themselves in the office of Miss Ginrich, the principal.

Chronic troublemakers were introduced to the paddle she kept in the office. The net result was that discipline was never a problem in the classroom. I was invited to visit the office on only one occasion. Miss Ginrich spoke gently to me, but that was all it took. It kept me on the straight and narrow for the remainder of my academic career.



I always enjoyed school and did well. It was never discussed explicitly at home, but I knew instinctively that I was expected to do well, and I had the feeling that the consequences would be dire if I did not. My Uncle Pete Niehaus was very interested in me. He and Aunt Cecil visited us with some regularity. Pete enjoyed giving me verbal brain teasers to test my assimilation of the academic skills. It really tickled him if he caught me in a mistake. In later years, I always visited him when we were back in Enid.

We never had much in the way of money or material possessions during the years on Arthur Street. The house, which consisted of a "front room", two bedrooms, and a kitchen, was sparsely furnished, and had outdoor plumbing. My mother received an allowance of \$5.00 per week on which she ran the household. Once a week I would go with her to the Piggly Wiggly market (yes - there were markets by that name), two miles away, for the week's supply of groceries. If she had the money, we blew 20 cents for the round trip bus fare. If not we walked. Any money left after the household expenses, she could spend on herself.

I recently took a tour of Enid with the assistance of Google Maps. The house on Arthur Street is gone, and I would be a total stranger if I were to return. I shouldn't be surprised, but I felt a strong tinge of nostalgia.

My other set of grandparents lived in Covington, Oklahoma, a trip of about twenty miles. We used to visit them about once a month. I loved navy beans as a child, and Grandma Mikkelsen would always have a huge pot simmering when we visited. My chief entertainment during these visits was reading their World Book Encyclopedia.



Mikkelsen Family Four Generations
—Photo by Mrs. Louis Mikkelsen
Pictured above are four generations of the Mikkelsens at a recent reunion in Covington. Left to right are L. J. Mikkelsen, 215½ West Main, H. Mikkelsen of Covington, father of L. J.; and Louis Mikkelsen of Ann Arbor, Mich., holding his eight month old daughter.

Four generations of Mikkelsens are shown in the photograph, which was taken by Mary.

Because of our economic circumstances, I certainly was not overindulged as a child. Once a year - at Christmas - I could look forward to receiving a toy or plaything type gift. The Christmas celebration was rather spartan. Sometime after sundown on Christmas Eve, my dad would take me for a short ride. On our return, the item would be in the front room. That was the extent of the celebration; there were, as I recall, no gifts for Dad or for Mother. One year the gift was a chalkboard that I almost wore out.

Another that I remember was a football. I was thrilled, but there was a problem. The bladder was defective, and I had no resources at my disposal to get it repaired, so, I stuffed the ball with rags and went on with the game. On some years, there would be a bonus gift from my Aunt Mattie in Colorado. It was usually clothing or something else, which was practical. However, I remember one time when the gift was a harmonica. My joy knew no bounds!

I do not recall any feeling of being deprived during those years - it was just the way things were. I have always been blessed with an innate capability to maintain a positive outlook when things were bleak. Perhaps it was more a matter of not being able to recognize when things were bad. At any rate, this trait was to be a lifesaver in later years.

The only entertainment available to us was the radio. The one I first recall required the adjustment of three separate condensers to tune in a station. We would sit on the front porch on hot summer evenings listening to several favorite programs. The all time favorite - by a large margin - was Amos and Andy. One could walk down the street while it was on and never miss a beat. Almost every house on the block would be tuned in. Another favorite was Fibber McGee and Molly.

For my generation there were the programs such as Little Orphan Annie and Jack Armstrong, All -American Boy. They came on soon after school was out, and I never willingly missed an episode. On Little Orphan Annie, they would give a coded message at the end of each session. These messages contained information vital to the continuing saga of Annie's perils. Decoding devices were available for these messages, but alas, the cost was the foil seal from a can of Ovaltine.

There was no room in our budget for such frivolities as Ovaltine. I wanted one of those devices as badly as I have ever wanted anything. By some means - I don't remember how - I communicated my urgent need to our next door neighbor. Mrs. Murray was a softhearted person. She bought a can of Ovaltine and gave me the seal. Such happiness does not occur many times in a single lifetime.

The west side of Enid was the "right side of the tracks." It tended to be where the businessmen and professional people lived. By the standards of that era, the average resident of the west side was well off. As a result, I had not much in common with my schoolmates. There was no

discrimination. I was accepted as a peer in the playground activities at school. After school, with one or two rare exceptions, there was no contact.

The closest I had to a friend during the elementary school years was Tom Arvin, who lived across the street. Tom's family was affluent by our standards. His dad had been a plumber for many years, and he was known for not spending a penny needlessly. However, he did loosen the purse strings for Tom. Tom had what seemed to me to be an infinite collection of toys and playthings. Different circumstances notwithstanding, Tom and I had something in common. Neither Tom's parents nor mine had been able to pass on to us any social skills, so we were not very good at making friends or mixing with our peers. We therefore gravitated toward each other.

We had tremendous imaginations. For a long time, during summer vacation periods we were detectives. Almost every day we would spend several hours working on the "case." The "case" was marvelous. We had many exciting adventures that took us all over the world. Tom was generous in sharing his things with me. I remember learning to ride a bicycle on his bike. The last I heard about Tom, he had graduated from Harvard Law School.

After McKinley, I began my career at Emerson Junior High School. Instead of a mile to school, it was now more like 2.5 miles, but by this time, I had a bicycle. In the 7th grade, I showed some promise in track and football.

I remember two teachers. Miss Mary McClellan was my homeroom teacher. I remember her as one of the kindest, most compassionate persons I have ever known.

The other was Miss Muegge, my 8th grade English teacher. It was fashionable for the kids to bad mouth Miss Muegge, but it was only talk. In the classroom, she was the greatest motivator I have ever encountered. She drilled the fundamentals of the English language into us until they became a part of us. A sea of hands would go up, each clamoring to be recognized, when she would ask a question in class .

Parenthetically, a number of years later, I took freshman English in college and found it to be a very light review. My professor was Margaret Edwards, who had taught high school English for many years. I remember that I got 100% on all the exams, but because I refused to do the homework assignments, ***I had a D at mid term.*** I finally dazzled her, though, with a term paper, **The Infrared Absorption Spectrum of the Carbon Dioxide Molecule. *I got an A for the course.***

Mother and Dad

Life was not kind to my dad. He was one of nine children. He had a fourth grade education, which limited his horizons, but he was a man of complete honesty and integrity. He was industrious. Whenever there was a job to be had, he was working. He was a proud man. He would never accept public assistance, and he had great disdain for those who did. He had served as an infantry private in World War I and had suffered an injury of some sort. I think he was in a troop train wreck. Partly because of this, he was rather frail in his later years.

In the culture of his youth, the only accepted manner of resolving a difference of opinion had been physical violence. This carried over for him into the years of my youth. Several times I remember his coming home and relating to us that he had corrected a wrong or a perceived wrong to him with an uppercut. It was not boasting for him; he was simply relating his experiences of the day.

In later years, I discovered, much to my surprise, that he harbored intense racial prejudices. To his credit, he did not pass them on to me.

Until I was old enough to have established my own identity, I was very much afraid of my dad. I would agonize endlessly before asking his permission for unimportant activities. On occasion, when I exceeded the bounds of acceptable behavior, my mother would say, "We'll discuss this with Daddy when he comes home."



On those occasions, I fervently wished to be on a slow boat to China. I don't know why I was so afraid. The punishment was never more severe than a couple of light whops from a small razor strap he had. He never mistreated or abused me. Maybe it was just that he never seemed to have any meaningful interchanges with me except on those occasions. I can remember no times when we had "normal" father/son activities. I have no memories of playing catch in the yard, or going for a hike, or going fishing, or of his going to one of my school functions.

During my younger years, I thought it was because he did not care. More recently, though, I have concluded that this perceived aloofness may have arisen from a pair of causes. First, I now believe that the stress and strains of survival of every day life left him with very little to give at the end of the day. Second - and perhaps more important - I think he may not have known how to reach out to someone for whom he cared. I can relate to this, for sometimes I have the same problem.



I can believe this from having seen, much later, his behavior upon becoming a grandfather for the first time. It was not unlike that of my own behavior when Becky, our first granddaughter, was born. I could not get over to State College, PA often enough, and I was putty in Becky's hands. Mary and I were in Norman, Oklahoma where I was working on a master's degree when Sarah was born. As I remember it, Dad was down there (a non-trivial trip) within a day of his having received the news.

I know nothing of my mother's background, but I remember her as a very kind and gentle person. She played the piano and gave me enough lessons that I could play a little. I remember being very proud of being able to play America.

On some Sunday mornings when I was small, she would walk with me to Sunday school in a small church about 1½ miles from our house. The denomination was Church of God. I don't remember much about it except that around Christmas they had small bags of candy for the children. That was a great treat.

I used to dread Mondays, for that was wash day, and I was pressed into service. The procedure consisted of hand scrubbing on a washboard, rinsing, wringing, and hanging the clean items on the clothesline. It seemed to take an endless amount of time to finish the job. Later, of course, there was the matter of ironing. No electric irons were available to her.

Of necessity, she made all her own clothes and many of mine. I don't think that she was a great seamstress. I remember once when she saved and scrimped for a considerable period to buy the material for a new winter coat. My memory tells me that she worked on it for months. My memory also tells me that the end result would not give a professional seamstress feelings of job insecurity, but it was hers, and I do remember that she was proud of it.

There was another aspect of Dad's behavior that I cannot explain away. To my knowledge, he never physically abused my mother. Verbal abuse, however, was another matter. My memory is of frequent and highly intense verbal abuse. He seemed intent on demeaning her and casting doubts on her value as a human being. The tirades ranged over a variety of subjects, but the one I remember coming up most frequently was that of her fooling around with other men. I was with her all day every day, so I knew that there was no basis for them.

These harangues did not stop at bedtime. They some times continued well into the night. On more than one occasion, I can remember crying myself to sleep as this went on in the adjacent bedroom.

The time came when she could no longer cope with the verbal abuse. I was present when she snapped. It was while we were eating lunch. I don't remember the subject of the tirade du jour, but she suddenly became incoherent, turned over the table, and went after Dad with a table knife.

She was committed to a state institution for the mentally ill at Fort Supply, Oklahoma. In those days, it was called an insane asylum, and horror stories abounded of the conditions there. The last time I remember seeing her was as she was being taken away. She died at Fort Supply several months later.

My memory is a total blank for much of this period. I don't remember if we visited her. I have no memory whatever of any funeral or memorial service. All I know is that she is buried in the Enid municipal cemetery. I was thirteen years old when all this was happening. I was frightened, confused, and bewildered. I didn't understand then what it all meant. I am not certain that I do today.

Today I believe that my mother was no more insane then than I am now. I feel that she was pushed beyond the capacity of the human spirit to cope. I believe that she lost her will to live and died of a broken heart.

I think I have been able to forgive my dad, but many things are permanently etched into my memory.

Hilda

During the period I have described my dad was employed as a route driver for the Oklahoma Laundry. It was his job to make house pick-ups of dirty laundry and to deliver later the clean items. Sometime during my eighth grade year, Dad began seeing quite a lot of Hilda, who was also an employee at the laundry. Toward the end of the school year, they were married. Hilda and her daughter Marguerite moved into the house at 440 Arthur.

Marguerite was 5 or 6 years older than I was. I remember two things about her. The first was that I was introduced to sex education at an advanced level as I heard her describe to her mother some of the activities of her peer group. At that time, I didn't know what all the words meant, but I gathered from Hilda's reaction that they were not words to be used or discussed in polite society. The second memory is that she delighted in parading before me clad only in her underwear and taunting me, because I refused to look at her. My stepsister and I formed no permanent bonds.

I don't know if Hilda ever liked me or not. I am pretty sure that by the end of that summer, she barely tolerated me. I must admit that I contributed to this state of affairs. The ability of a teenager to get under the skin of adults is well known, and I exemplified this phenomenon. There was nothing mean or vicious in my behavior; it was just the cocky, smart aleck behavior of a fourteen-year-old boy.

Apparently, Dad and Hilda felt the need for a fresh start; so sometime during that summer, we packed all our belongings into a trailer and headed for Colorado. Marguerite stayed behind in Enid.

El Rancho Grande

We arrived in Crowley in Eastern Colorado in the summer of 1937. Crowley was a very small town. The business district was about a block and a half long on one side of the main street. Crowley owed its existence to sugar beets, tomatoes, and cantaloupes. These crops depended upon irrigation water from the Arkansas River, and when water was in short supply, things were pretty bleak. Without irrigation, the entire area would have been a desert.

Crowley was located midway between Ordway, where my Aunt Grada lived, and Olney Springs, where Aunt Virginia and Aunt Mattie lived. The three aunts were Dad's older sisters. I was particularly fond of Aunt Mattie. A nice old gentleman drove a bread delivery truck along a route that included the three towns. He was stone deaf, but he could read lips. He knew Aunt Mattie, because he delivered bread to her grocery store. I used to flag him down and hitch a ride to Olney Springs to visit my aunts. I remember that he had a lead foot. He drove as if the devil were in pursuit, and there would be a long trail of dust as we blazed over the dirt road.

For a livelihood, my dad had acquired ownership of what can only be described as a beer joint. The building - on the main street - was thirty or so feet across and about a hundred feet long. It had a high ceiling, perhaps twelve feet, and there was a half height partition across the

width at about the midpoint. In the front was the bar. It was a good size, somewhat ornamental structure. There were some booths and a few tables occupying the remainder of the space.

In the rear was our living quarters. A series of wires were strung around at a height of about seven feet. From these wires hung the cloth strips, which partitioned the space into "rooms". Privacy was not an attribute of this arrangement.

Our clientele was limited to the Mexican farm workers who did the backbreaking labor for the farms. There was another similar place three doors down that was patronized by the "respectable" people. We treated the workers with respect, and they responded in kind. I recall many raucous evenings but no trouble.

Once, one of them brought us some Mexican chili. We did not realize that for the Mexicans chili was a hot sauce to be used on meats and other foods, so we proceeded to eat it the way chili should be eaten. It must have been made exclusively from ground jalapeno peppers; I remember that it burned twice.

The workers were paid on Saturday, and on those nights, the place would really jump. I was pressed into service as assistant bartender and waiter. As the beer flowed freely and the party began to get lively, they would keep a steady flow of coins going into the jukebox. It was stocked exclusively with Spanish language songs, and they loved to sing along with them. I would be sent off to bed sometime around midnight, and many times, I went to sleep to the strains of *El Rancho Grande*. It was their favorite by a large margin. I still remember most of the words to that song "... *Habia una Rancherita, que alegre me decia ...*"

I loved to read. I would read anything I could get my hands on, but Dad and Hilda forbade me to read during the summer. They maintained that it was unhealthy for a young boy to "keep his nose buried in a book." They thought that I should be engaged in "outside" activities. As near as I could tell, they cared not a whit about the nature of those activities, so long as I was not underfoot during the day.

I have always been pretty good at circumventing the system, and this was no exception. Crowley had what passed for a library. It was a small one-room affair across the street from our place. I established that I was allowed to check books out, so all that remained was to find a place to read. I found the perfect place.

The cantaloupe-packing shed was along the railroad tracks a few blocks from our place. It was elevated, built on pilings, and the space underneath was open. I spent many satisfying days reading there. At the end of a day, I would hide the book up among the floor joists of the shed.

Toward the end of the summer, the tomatoes ripened, and I joined the labor force to pick them. The pay was a nickel per basket. By breaking my back from sunrise to sunset, I could make the handsome sum of \$2.00, an amount that was not to be sneered at in 1937. At any rate, I was able to accumulate a small nest egg for school expenses during the coming year.

Going through the ninth grade at Crowley High was not one of the highlight experiences of my life. The average student needed to learn only enough to be able to run the farm, and the curriculum was geared to this. Because of the excellent background I had, I was able to cruise along with minimum effort and get good grades. I represented the school in a statewide high school competition in the subjects of math, science, and English. I don't remember how I fared.

During an English class, I was supposed to recite a poem from memory. I forgot one of the lines, but I ad libbed well enough that only the teacher recognized what had happened. From this, she concluded that I was a prime candidate to compete in an upcoming extemporaneous speaking contest. Was she ever wrong! The time limit was five minutes, but I was not looking at the timekeeper. After about fifteen minutes, they practically had to drag me off the stage.

Because of my connection with the beer joint, I didn't occupy a high position in the social register. Add to this the fact that I was probably a little bit cocky, and some of the faculty - the math teacher/ football coach in particular - recognized that I was coasting. The net result was that I was not considered a person or student to be taken seriously. This is preamble to the description of an episode that, for some strange reason, I remember clearly.

Just at the close of the school year, the coach organized a "choose up" football game for all present and potential members of the team. I showed up for it and was given a uniform. I don't know if the choosing was rigged or not, but it ended up with what amounted to the first team on one side and the residue, along with me, on the other. I was asked to play an interior line position.

I was a fairly good athlete, and I was very quick. I had played enough sandlot football in Enid that I knew what the game was about. At any rate, the opposing team soon found me playing in their backfield. They quickly double-teamed me. This freed up some of my fellow team members, and I still got my share of the tackles.

At half time we trailed by one point. The coach expressed amazement at the closeness and remarked, "I didn't expect this to be a contest. The fact that it is can be attributed to Mikkelsen." It is hard to believe how good this made me feel.

I continued to do a lot of reading during the second summer. As tomato season approached, I camped in the employment office of the local tomato-canning factory, and my persistence paid off. They hired me. I can't be sure, but I think the pay rate was twenty five cents per hour. I had wanted the job so badly that I really hustled when I got it. I can remember the older workers pleading with me to slow down because I was making them look bad.

The beer joint business was not prospering. As the beginning of the school year approached, it became apparent that I was not destined to be a student that year. It was sad for me to see the school year begin without my participation. Before long, we were packing the trailer again.

Hillbillies

Our destination was Stockton, a small town nestled on the edge of the Ozark Mountains in Southwest Missouri. Our place was isolated well back into the hills. Electricity and telephones were not to be found in the area.

Soon after we arrived, our nearest neighbor came trudging over the mountain and through the hollow to pay us a visit. I remember his first words well. "You'uns got nary a dog?" he asked. I think he quickly figured out that we did not fit into the local culture. We never saw him again.

There was no discussion of my going to school. It seems that education ranked considerably below survival on our priority list.

What passed for a house was a primitive cabin-like structure. I have forgotten whether it had two or three rooms. It had a large fireplace in one of the rooms as the only source of heat. In winter, my dad would place a large log in the fireplace and let it smolder all night to keep us warm.

On one memorable night, he overdid it, and a fire started in the wall behind the fireplace. This made for a pretty dicey situation, for the only source of water was a spring about thirty or forty yards down the hollow from the house. I was unceremoniously roused out of bed to take part in the emergency bucket brigade. We raced frantically back and forth, sometimes stumbling in the dark. We did get the fire out, and from that point on, we put extra covers on to stay warm at night.

Our only income that I knew about was the proceeds from my rabbit trapping. I rigged a half dozen or so traps and distributed them around the property. Each morning I would make the rounds of the traps. In town, I could get ten cents each for the rabbit skins. On a good week, the yield would be as much as fifty cents. The money went into the family survival fund. Sometimes a squirrel would take the bait in the traps. When this happened, we had some meat on the table.

Largely, we lived off whatever cash reserve was left from Crowley. It was an austere existence. For weeks or months at a time, our diet consisted exclusively of corn bread and navy beans. Sometimes we were missing one or the other. On a few occasions, we had neither. *I have known the experience of going to bed hungry.* Today I find it amazing that I still like navy beans.

Twice in my life, I have - for brief periods - experienced the empty, desolate feeling of utter hopelessness. The first occurrence was in Stockton. It was the Christmas season. We had gone into town for supplies, and I was walking around by myself. I went into the Dime Store, as we called it then. As I walked down the aisle past the Christmas candy, the sudden realization that there would be nothing for Christmas was devastating. It seems trivial now, but at the time, it was tough - really tough.

Soon after Christmas, we reached the end of our rope in Stockton, and we packed the trailer one more time.

The Breadwinner

We had come full circle as we arrived back in Enid. We found an apartment on Market Street where a lady had converted the second story of her house. It was not much, but I was impressed because it had indoor plumbing!

By this time, my dad had lost either his will or his ability to work. It probably was some of each. I don't remember that it was discussed, but I fully understood that it was up to me to bring home the bacon. My first venture into the job market was a disaster.

I answered a newspaper ad to take over a newspaper route for the Daily Oklahoman, an Oklahoma City newspaper. To my great chagrin, I discovered that what they were seeking was someone to start from zero and develop a route. I was definitely not the person for that job. I was painfully shy. I vividly remember pacing up and down the sidewalk for many minutes trying to screw up my courage to knock on a door and ask the inhabitant to subscribe to the paper. I quickly realized that I must look elsewhere for employment. This problem, incidentally, has not diminished with time. I would have exactly the same difficulty today.

I don't remember how I made the contact, but I found a job at Frazer Drug Store, which served the neighborhood where I had earlier lived and gone to school. I was one of two bicycle delivery messengers for items that had been ordered by telephone. It was seven days a week from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., and weather never prevented a delivery. The pay was \$5.00 per week plus a fifteen-cent per day allowance for lunch from the soda fountain. This was enough for a peanut butter sandwich and a glass of milk. The \$5.00 took care of groceries and rent.

My best guess is that I rode the bicycle for a minimum of twenty miles a day during that era. The bicycle I had should have been in a museum; it was a real clunker. It was a negative status symbol and an embarrassment to me. I developed almost an obsession to improve my wheels status.

It had been a long time since I had had any sense of being part of a family unit. Home for me was just a place to eat and sleep. This plus my bicycle-kindled emotions perhaps partly explains my subsequent irrational venture. I decided that I needed to go it alone, and I really went into action. I found a room that I could rent for a dollar a week. I went downtown to the hardware store and arranged the time purchase of a Schwinn bicycle that was a real beauty. It was state of the art! I gave Mr. Frazer, the drug store owner, as an impeccable reference, so the deal went through. I was bursting with pride when I rode the bike out to the drug store and invited my associates to examine it.

My bubble burst when I told my dad that I was moving out. Then **he** went into action. He quickly cancelled my room reservation, returned the bicycle to the hardware store, and had a talk with Mr. Frazer. There must have been some intense behind-the-scenes activity at the drug store. When I returned - with the old bike - everyone treated me as if nothing had happened. Soon after, a deal came up where I could obtain, at an affordable price, a used but considerably newer bike. It belonged to a young man who had graduated from delivery to soda fountain service. I was no longer embarrassed by my bike.

The teachers at McKinley Elementary School ordered their lunch from the drugstore fountain almost every day. Although I felt rather strange delivering these lunches to my former teachers, there was not the slightest hint of rebuke in their demeanor toward me. I think they understood my situation and were compassionate.

After some time had passed, I was promoted to soda jerk. I received a 40 % pay increase from \$5.00 to \$7.00 per week. Among my duties, I was responsible for maintaining a supply of chicken salad (made from pork) and ham salad (made from bologna). I was good at the job. On summer evenings, there was a flourishing curbside fountain business. I could take verbal orders from four curb hops and keep up with waiting on the counter without a hitch.

Dr. Fred Enriken

Dental hygiene was a foreign concept in our household. It is therefore no surprise that my mouth was a total wreck by the time period I have been describing. My dental problem came to a head one afternoon as I was riding in the cramped back seat of a coupe belonging to one of my drug store associates. We hit a sizeable bump, and I was bounced off the seat. Coming down I broke off two front teeth as my chin encountered the back of the front seat. I was in no immediate pain, for it turned out that the teeth were quite dead.

One of the very nice ladies who served as cashier at the drug store - I remember her only as Margaret - recognized that I needed attention. She called her own dentist and set up an appointment for me. It was Dr. Fred.

Margaret had prepared Dr. Fred for the fact that I was unable to pay anything, and after a preliminary exam, he made a proposal to me. He proposed that he would work on me outside normal office hours if, when I was able, I would pay for the materials used. I think he was excited by the challenge I presented. At any rate, it was the beginning of a lengthy association. For the better part of a year, I was to spend Saturday mornings and many evenings in his chair.

He yanked my four front upper teeth and made an excellent gold-based partial plate. Receiving the partial significantly increased my self-esteem. I could smile without being self-conscious about the appearance of my teeth. The remaining teeth were the recipients of a host (about a dozen) of magnificent gold inlays. Even today, some sixty years later, dentists and technicians comment on the quality of those inlays. Each inlay was a project involving multiple visits over a period of weeks. He was a meticulous worker; I particularly remember that he did not believe in using anesthetics (Ouch). When he was preparing to go into the navy in WWII, he gave me a very modest bill and asked if I could settle up. Fortunately, I could.

Dr Fred was very proud of his work. Later, after we both had returned from WWII, I used to drop in to his office occasionally just to say hello. On more than one occasion, he asked my permission to show his handiwork to someone who was in the office.

Dr. Fred is one of the many people to whom I owe a great deal.

Charles Norman Duff

Good and highly positive influences can sometimes emanate from the most unlikely sources. Charlie was a superb manifestation of this truth. He was my age; he was bright; he was an extrovert; and he had been totally spoiled by his parents. He was selfish, and I have seen him heap public ridicule on individuals who had done him no harm. He was not well liked by his male peers, although the girls seemed to find him attractive. If anyone came between him and something he desired, he was capable of going right for the jugular vein. He did not consider himself bound by the normal rules of fair play. He was not - by most standards - a nice person. Having said all that, I must hasten to say that my life would have been much different and less satisfying without the influence of Charles Norman Duff, so, on with the story.

I was offered an opportunity to transfer to the downtown drug store. I jumped at the chance, for by this time we were living in a small house on the extreme Northern edge of town. The transfer cut two miles from my bicycle travel to and from work. I was still working as a soda jerk under the supervision of the fountain manager, Cecil Brady. My duties expanded to include running the grill during the breakfast rush. I became quite proficient at whipping up bacon and eggs, hotcakes, etc.

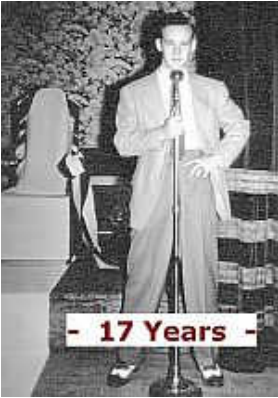
At this time, and for a considerable period before this, I was a social recluse. At home, there was no conversation that was not necessary to the mechanics of eating meals. My dad seemed to feel that he had abdicated the right to give me parental guidance when I became the breadwinner.

My social life was centered around - and limited to - the Kirkwood Billiard Parlor. It was located upstairs over the drug store. Every evening, after supper, I would hop on my bike and cruise down to the pool hall. I didn't have the money to play pool or the coordination to play it well, so my attention focused on the moon games.

Moon is a game played with dominoes. It has some similarity to bridge in that there are suits, trumps, and bidding precedes the playing of a hand. There were three or four tables; the players would ante ten cents each for a game, and the winner took the pot.

I didn't have many dimes, so I was mostly a spectator. It was at the moon table that I became acquainted with Charlie, who was a consummate player. To this day, I don't know what motivated Charlie to take me in tow. It may have been compassion, but this would not be consistent with his overall behavior. Maybe he liked me. Perhaps it was an ego trip to have me around. It may have been that - all appearances to the contrary - he, too, was lonely. At any rate, we became inseparable companions, and my social life began to branch out from the pool hall.

On Charlie's coattails, I was invited to a number of social functions involving young people of my own age. The affairs I remember were not parties in the formal sense with dates and the like. They were simply gatherings of young people - boys and girls - usually in one of the girl's home, to enjoy each other's company. I gradually began assimilating the skills of relating to other young people in a social environment.



It was in this environment that a seed, which had long lain dormant, began to sprout. It was the seed of a sense of humor. I remember the first time I came up with something bordering upon being clever or humorous. Charlie stopped the conversations and said, "Hey, did you guys hear what Louis said?"

Under Charlie's tutelage, I became a member of De Molay, a junior organization of the Masonic Lodge. I became the presiding officer. The photograph shows me as I was preparing to emcee the affair at which our queen was crowned. Later I was to become a Mason, largely due to the influence of Charlie's dad. I didn't stay with the Masons very long. A lot of the rituals made no sense to me.

Charlie's parents seemed to be fond of me. I always felt very much at home when I was in their house. Mr. Duff, in particular, paid a lot of attention to me and encouraged me on many occasions.

A number of years after WWII, Charlie and I were fellow students at Phillips University for one year. Charlie had a pretty heavy thing going with an attractive blonde named Sue Roekle. They set me up with Sue's roommate, Juanita Wells, and we had a number of double dates. Charlie and Sue were married, and they were to have one son. They went to the University of Indiana where he got a degree in political science, and following this, they moved to Washington, DC.

The last time I saw Charlie must have been in the late fifties. We were in Enid on a visit, and I called Mrs. Duff. She told me that he was back in Enid and in the hospital. I was shocked when I saw him. He had always been a little plump, but his weight had ballooned to over three hundred pounds. He and Sue had been separated for some time. From the conversation during the hour I was there, I concluded that his sole remaining interest in life was womanizing. He described in some detail a number of his conquests. All I had to talk about was a wife and three kids. It was with a deep feeling of sadness for Charlie that I left the hospital.

Enid High School

After some months at the downtown location, I was able to switch to a night job on the fountain. The hours were 5:00 pm to 11:30, plus an hour during the noon rush. In September of that year, I enrolled in Enid High School as a sophomore.



I had been out of school for three years, and I had figured out that if I were to improve my lot in life, education was the route. The association, through Charlie, with the kids who were still in school helped lead me to the decision.

I was well motivated, applied myself diligently, and became formidable competition for the younger kids.

By that time, we were living in an apartment at 215 ½ West Main, one block from the drug store. It was upstairs over a fairly large commercial building. The apartment manager was a nice woman named Ollie. She seemed very old to me - she was probably in her sixties. Ollie liked me and gave me the job of keeping the halls and stairway clean. Every morning at about six, I would bounce out, grab the broom and dust mop, and give it fits. For this, I received \$2.00 per week.

Sometime during that year, my dad applied for and was granted a small disability pension from the Veteran's Administration. This lifted some of the responsibility from my shoulders. For the first time ever, I could keep a portion of my earnings as pocket money.

A typical day would go something like this: at 6:00 am clean the halls; at 8:30 report for class; noon hour at the drug store; school at 1:30; at 5:00 pm go to work; at about midnight start on my homework. The apartment was small, and the only place I could do homework without disturbing Dad and Hilda was the bathroom. I would frequently be in there until two or three AM plugging away, but I was always prepared for the next day.

A number of memories stand out for that year. I will recapture only a few of them. I remember Miss Stewart, my history teacher in an afternoon class. Apparently, the principal had briefed my teachers on my circumstances, for I would occasionally doze off during Miss Stewart's class, and she would instruct the other students not to disturb me. I received A's in the class.

Mrs. Keller was my geometry teacher. She drilled us relentlessly on the theorems and principals of plane geometry. She would accept nothing less than a perfect knowledge and understanding of the principles involved. I think that it was under her guidance that I began to develop the capacity for analytical thinking. It was also in this class that I became acquainted with Sheldon Elliott. Sheldon and I were later to become classmates at Phillips University and in graduate school at University of Michigan. Mary and I had a great visit with Sheldon and Dorothy in London where he was the European manager for Phillips Petroleum.

We had intramural football teams. I was the captain and quarterback of our team. I could throw the ball a mile, and one of my team mates had an uncanny ability to go up in a crowd and come down with the ball. We were the champions, and this came to the attention of the football coach. He persuaded me to go out for the spring practice that year. I must have shown promise, for he spent some time expounding the virtues of Texas Tech. He also tried to persuade my employer, Mr. Sanford, that I should be given time off, with pay, to play football. Mr. Sanford did not buy it.

There was a young woman named Virgie McKenzie, who also worked at the fountain. Virgie was tall and not really very pretty, but her flaming red hair gave her a rather striking appearance. She was a freshman at Phillips University, and she was impressed by the fact that I could help her with her math homework. I was smitten with Virgie.



One night during the year the building custodian was ill, and Mr. Stunkle (as in uncle) asked Cecil Brady, the fountain manager, to stay after closing to sweep, mop, and get the building ready for the business of the next morning. One of my character flaws has always been that I really enjoy helping people. On this occasion, without having been asked, I grabbed a mop and broom and pitched in. I didn't expect any reward or want any gratitude, but I think I was eventually paid off.

A number of years later my dad was in an advanced state of what was to be a terminal illness (cancer). He needed, but could not afford, some rather expensive medication. We were in town for a visit. I went to see Mr. Stunkle, who now owned the business, and asked if he would open a charge account for my dad and bill me in Connecticut. Without a moment's hesitation he responded, "Certainly."

In December of that sophomore year, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and once again, my education was interrupted. I finished the school year in flying colors, and then it was off to new adventures.

The Wild Blue Yonder

"*Off we go into the wild blue yonder...*" These were the opening words of the Army Air Corps song. I was destined to spend quite a lot of time in the wild blue during the next several years.

The CPT

The prospect of being drafted and becoming a foot soldier did not thrill me, so I signed up for the Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) program. It involved several levels of flight and ground school training. It was designed to make available to the Air Corps a pool of pilot material. I had to tell a little white lie in order to be accepted. I became, *on paper at least*, a high school graduate. It is ironic that, as the program developed, I became the math guru for the group of fifteen or so bona fide graduates.

In addition to the training, the program provided room and board plus transportation to and from the training sites. There was no stipend, which meant that at no time during the program did I have as much as two pennies to rub together.

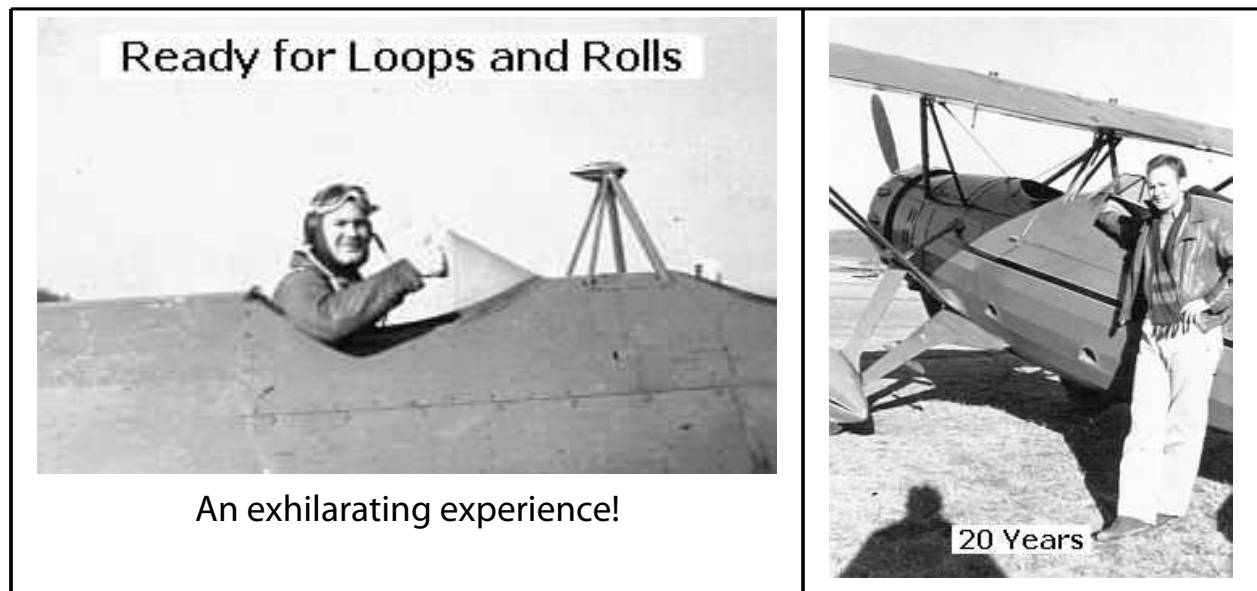
Elementary Training

The first level of training was conducted at Enid. In addition to ground school, we had about twenty hours of dual flight instruction and spent another twenty hours in solo flight. I found that I had an excellent aptitude for flying. I loved it, and it came easily and naturally to me.

Cross Country

The second level involved cross-country and night flying. We were quartered at a junior college in Tonkawa, Oklahoma, and the flight training was from nearby Blackwell. Again, it was a piece of cake, although there were some adventures. One night I was doing solo practice for spins and other maneuvers. I went into a spin and miscounted the number of revolutions. When I came out I was within ten or so miles of the home field, but I was totally disoriented. It was a frightening experience.

On another occasion, bad weather very late in the day caused me to make a forced landing in a pasture. I spent the night as the guest of the farmer and his family. On my solo cross-country flights, I didn't always follow the rules. I would sometimes fly for miles at an altitude that required me to detour around oil derricks and to pull up when I came to a fence.



Fayetteville

Aerobatic flight training was conducted in Fayetteville, Arkansas at the University of Arkansas. We moved up to higher horsepower planes and spent many hours in maneuvers such as snap rolls, slow rolls, loops, chandelles, and immelmans. I was a good student, and I was able to learn the maneuvers quickly and execute them flawlessly.

On one memorable morning, I had an hour of dual instruction in loops and snap rolls. We landed, the instructor got out, and I went back up for a second hour to put this new knowledge into practice. All went well until the end of the hour. Just before my wheels touched down for landing, I lost my breakfast. I hit the throttle and went around again repeating the procedure on the second approach - and the third! By this time, the people on the ground were quite concerned for me, but I made it on the fourth approach. By far the worst part of the experience was being required to clean out the cockpit.

It was in Fayetteville that I experienced, for the second time in my life, a feeling of deep despair and hopelessness. As with the first occurrence of such a feeling, it was the Christmas season. I was still enamored of Virgie McKenzie, and I had no money for a Christmas present.

I brooded about this until, in desperation, I wrote to my former employer, Mr. Sanford, asking him to lend me ten dollars. To my surprise, a letter from Mr. Sanford arrived in a few days. In it was a check, together with a promissory note, for ten dollars.

I had twenty cents left after I bought and mailed the present. I spent the twenty cents to buy a bottle of wine for Paul Hickmon. Paul and I had a good deal in common. He, too, had grown up under stringent economic circumstances. Of our CPT group, we were the only ones who were sans funds, so we would sometimes commiserate with each other.

There was, however, an important difference between us. Paul knew, deep down inside, that things would never be any better for him. I never had any such thoughts, positive or negative, for myself. It has always simply been my nature to do the best I could with what I had at any given time.

Some time after completing the CPT program, Mr. Sanford made quite a ceremony of the occasion when I repaid the loan. Virgie very gently let me down and went on her way. Paul's thoughts and feelings became self-fulfilling prophecies.

Instrument Flight

The last phase of CPT was training in instrument flight and radio range navigation. It was in Tulsa, Oklahoma that I received twenty hours of simulated instrument flight training plus another twenty hours in a Link Trainer. For the flight training, a green transparent plastic covered the cockpit windows, and we wore red goggles. We could see the instruments but nothing outside the cockpit. We were required to rely on "needle, ball, and airspeed" for controlling the plane.

At the end of this program, we all went back to Enid to await a call to active duty. I soon received in the mail a pilot's license with a full instrument rating. It is interesting to note that at this time I had never driven a car.

Bombs Away

After a period of two or three months, I received my orders to report for active duty. All of my CPT buddies received the same orders. I am not sure the army was ready for a group like us. We were all reasonably intelligent, well motivated, had a certain spirit of camaraderie, and we had minds of our own. These were all qualities, which tended to get us in trouble in military life.

Sheppard Field

We all dutifully reported for army basic training at Sheppard Field in Wichita Falls, Texas. There was very little training in basic training. We did learn to march in formation, and there were

endless make-work details. I have memories of such inspiring events as a captain lecturing to several hundred of us on the purpose and the correct use of toilet paper.

We were organized by barracks, and I sometimes felt almost sorry for the poor corporal who was in charge of our barracks. Under his direction, we would fall out for a formation early in the morning, and then there would be a roll call. He would then march us off for the make work detail of the day. He would be at the front of the formation, and several of us had learned to line up so that we were at the rear.

He would give a "column left" command, and when the rear of the formation got to the turning point, we would go right instead of left. We would then spend the rest of the day trying to look busy so that we would not be apprehended. It required a considerable amount of energy and ingenuity.

The physical training was rigorous, but we were all in superb condition. I remember doing pushups to the point of total exhaustion when someone anonymously invited the PT officer to "blow it out his barracks bag." He vowed that we would continue until someone identified the culprit. No one did.

It was during this time I learned that I was not to become an army pilot. I failed a physical exam and was told that I would be unable to withstand the rigors of high altitude flying. Later I had occasion to ponder on this when I became tail gunner on a B-26. **Military Logic!**

Instead of going to pilot training, I remained at Sheppard Field for training as an aircraft mechanic. This was something I could get interested in, and I thoroughly mastered all of the training material. I was usually at or near the top of the list when test scores were published. Most of my CPT buddies were sent to a training program for glider pilots. It is probably fortunate that I didn't qualify, for that was extremely hazardous duty.

Fort Myers

Fort Myers, Florida was the site of an aerial gunnery training school. I remember well my arrival at Fort Myers. It was in the evening and they were in the middle of one of their 25-year record low temperature periods. The barracks window material was chicken wire, and there were no blankets. I survived the night by huddling between two mattresses.

I rather enjoyed most of the training. There were rifle ranges, skeet shooting, moving base (from a truck) skeet shooting, and turret skeet shooting. I also greatly enjoyed my leisure time walking out to the edge of the base to observe the flora and fauna of the Everglades Swamp.

I never learned not to volunteer. On one occasion, I was the guinea pig in a high altitude chamber demonstration. We went to a simulated altitude of about 20,000 feet. I took off my oxygen mask, they gave me a pencil and a pad, and I was asked to write repeatedly, "*I am Superman. I do not need oxygen.*" Afterward I was shown the result. The writing became progressively more illegible until it trailed off in a wavy line. After I passed out, they replaced the oxygen mask, and the process completely reversed itself.

Sometime later, I volunteered again, and this experience should have cured me. I was on temporary duty at an airstrip for fighters at Naples, Florida. A fighter had gone down in the Everglades, and volunteers were requested for a search party. Naturally, my hand went up. Shortly after noon, we left dry land and proceeded into the swamp.

The water level ranged from knee deep to chin deep, and the bottom was soft. Each step was an effort, and there was always the knowledge that we might be disturbing an alligator or a water snake. I had sense enough to pace myself and conserve my strength. A few tried to maintain maximum effort from the start. Later, we had to carry or drag these individuals out of the swamp.

During the night, fighter planes with their landing lights on flew over us to provide a little light. About ten o'clock the next morning our feet were again on dry land. What a great feeling! It was an exercise in futility, though, for the pilot was dead when we found him.

Barksdale Field

At Barksdale Field outside Shreveport, Louisiana, I was assigned to a B-26 crew. The B-26 was at that time considered a pretty hot bomber. It had very high wing loading and was sometimes called the flying vagrant, because it had no visible means of support. This was a time of some apprehension, for the planes were over used and under maintained. There were frequent crashes.

The crew was headed by the pilot, First Lieutenant Bud Harris. He was quite competent and pleasant, but he tended to take himself rather seriously. Second Lieutenant Douglas Locke was the copilot. He was a very nice person. The navigator/bombardier was Lieutenant Krupianick. He was very much a loner, and none of us got to know him very well. Al (Pappy) Milani was our armament specialist and top turret gunner. Phil McConnel was our radio operator and waist gunner. I was flight engineer and tail gunner. I became fairly close to Pappy (the oldest member of the crew), but Phil also was somewhat of a loner.



The training went well, but Krupianick was not that great as a navigator. On one training mission, he was hopelessly lost and asked the crew to look for recognizable landmarks. I suddenly realized that we were over North Central Oklahoma, which I knew like the back of my hand. I enjoyed the view for a while before I got on the intercom to tell him where we were.

Queen Elizabeth

New York City was our port of embarkation where we boarded the Queen Elizabeth, which had been converted into a troop ship. It was about midnight on a cold, rainy, dreary November night in 1943, and a band was playing *Keep on the Sunny Side of the Street* as we boarded. I had some questions about the propriety of this selection.

The German U-boats were still quite active in the Atlantic, so most boats crossed in convoys. The Queen however was too fast for the escort vessels, so we struck off alone. We took continuous evasive action all the way across the Atlantic.

Those of us in air crews crossed in relative luxury. There were, as I recall, eight of us in a stateroom designed for two. The poor foot soldiers were in hammocks on the decks. Before boarding, all our money had been changed to English currency. None of us had the slightest knowledge of the value of the various denominations. Poker games were our principal diversion on the trip, and they were hilarious because of the money. It was commonplace to see someone throw two one-guinea (about **one English pound** each) coins into the pot and say, "*I'll bet two big ones.*"

We crossed without incident and disembarked at Glasgow, Scotland. From there we went to a staging area called Stone on Trent in England, where we were to spend several weeks. We had many opportunities to fraternize with the natives. I found them to be friendly, and they seemed to genuinely appreciate our presence.

Finally, we were assigned a B-26 and found ourselves on our way to a base in the north of France. It was near the village of Roye, and the nearest town of any size was Amiens. We were quartered in the hayloft of a farmer's barn. We had cots, and we fashioned mattresses by stuffing mattress covers with hay. It was reasonably comfortable.

I quickly learned enough French to survive. The residents of the area seemed to have enough food, soap and cigarettes were great luxuries to them. I became quite adept at bartering with the farm wives - soap for fresh eggs. I think we both came out ahead on those exchanges.

Often I would take a train into Paris when I was off duty for a few days. GIs could ride the Metro subway free during the war. I used to get on the Metro, get off at random stops, and walk around exploring the neighborhood. I became well acquainted with Paris.

I well remember one night after one of these trips that it was so dark that I couldn't find my way back to the air base. Blackouts were in force, and the only thing I could see was a narrow sliver of light from a farm house window. I timidly walked up and knocked on the door.

When a man answered, I asked, in my very best French, "Où est la base?". After much pointing and hand waving, he got me headed in the right direction.



I should point out that the attitude of the French to Americans was quite different during that time than it is today. They were very grateful for the Americans having been a major force in liberating them from the Germans.

On another occasion I had heard that a friend from basic training was stationed at Amiens about fifteen miles north of Roye. I had borrowed a bicycle to pedal up and try to locate him.

After about ten miles I had a flat tire and aborted the mission. As I was pushing the bike back toward home, a French man, who was also walking, caught up with me.

We didn't communicate well verbally but with the few words we mutually understood plus a lot of gesturing we got along OK. He was describing to me some of their experiences with the Germans both by bombing and during occupation. After a half mile or so he turned off into a driveway and beckoned for me to follow him. He became my friend for life when he repaired the puncture and pumped up the flat tire!

Combat



German fighter resistance had considerably diminished by the time we got into combat, but anti aircraft fire, or flak, remained extremely intense until the end. On a mission, I had several duties in addition to managing twin caliber 50 machine guns.

I would stay in the cockpit until we crossed the front. I would help the pilots put on their flak suits and then head for the tail. On the way back, I would arm the bombs. This relatively simple task was challenging on occasion. The space in the bomb bay was very tight, and I was not a small person. Once or twice my parachute harness became tangled in the bomb racks and claustrophobia struck.

After the bombs had been dropped and we were on our way home, I would go to the bomb bay again and transfer fuel from a reserve tank to the main tank. I did not take this duty lightly, for the transfer procedure was not idiot proof. It was quite easy to transfer the fuel into the atmosphere.



Ground controlled navigation was just being



introduced, and the planes had no radar. The closest we had to total disaster was some very near misses with other planes in the clouds.

We had a lot of tense moments and a few real adventures on the 22 missions we flew. I occasionally

unlimbered my guns at German fighters.

The biggest problem other than flak, though, was surviving the wind and cold in that tail compartment. The waist gun windows would be open, and at 250 miles per hour air speed,

the wind would really whistle into the tail. I kept a diary of the missions, and the lowest temperature I recorded was - **37** °. I hesitate to guess the wind chill factor.

We had clothing, which kept our ears, bodies and feet relatively warm, but my hands were the problem. In the tail compartment, there was a 1,500-watt emergency signal lamp. I survived by turning this lamp on and laying my hands on it.

I particularly remember my 18th mission during the final push toward the end of the war. The following is a transcription from my mission diary.



#18; March 24, 1945 Bocholt, Germany. "This morning we watched the sunrise from our plane. Our mission was to go in fifteen minutes before the arrival of glider borne troops for the purpose of taking out a concentration of flak guns about 2 miles south of Bocholt. Flak was intense and accurate, but we got the gun positions. I only hope we made it a little easier for the gliders, for I knew that some of my friends would be in their cockpits.

The bomb load was 18 260 lb. fragmentation bombs. On the way home, over Brussels, we began meeting the gliders going in - hundreds of them, as far as the eye

could see. I had my fingers crossed for them."

Celebration

Our second European location was an airstrip located in Germany at the Dutch German border, near the town of Venlo, Holland. We were there when word came that Germany had surrendered. Words cannot express the joy and euphoria triggered by this news. Many of the guys headed for the flight line and began firing the machine guns into the air. Several people were injured by falling bullets.

Our happiness was tempered by the knowledge that we were slated to be trained on a newer bomber and head toward Japan. We had another tremendous celebration when news of the Japanese surrender came. After a month or so, we were moved back into France for a wait of something like six months before going home.

A Long Wait

We were in tents in a cornfield. We were comfortable with four in a tent, but there was very little excitement. Fortunately, I had the good sense to make good use of the time. The Armed Forces Institutes offered a number of correspondence courses. I took, for credit, a course in elementary physics. The really significant effort was in college algebra. I got hold of one of the correspondence textbooks and plunged into it with great gusto. I spent several months methodically solving every problem in the book. When I finished, I had a solid foundation in algebra.

Finally, this chapter of my life was concluded, and I found myself back in Enid.

Phillips University

It was November 1945 when I returned to Enid and my attention was focused on two items: getting a job and getting back into the school scene. The first was easy. I soon found a job at a cold storage warehouse. The pay was OK and the hours were flexible, but the job was physically very demanding. After a few months, I was strong as a horse, fit as a fiddle, and could have whipped my weight in wildcats. As always, I worked hard, and my boss began helping me to arrange my hours so that I could pursue my second objective.

I was twenty-two years old, and I had achieved a reasonable degree of maturity, so I had no desire to return to high school. Phillips University was a small school located on the eastern edge of Enid. It was associated with the Disciples of Christ church and was comprised of a liberal arts college and a seminary.

I got an appointment with Dean Shirley of the liberal arts college and explained my situation and my desires to him. He, in turn, conferred with Mr. Selby, the high school principal. The two of them came up with a plan. I was to be allowed to enroll on probation with the understanding that if I made it OK, they would take care of the red tape details. I took the plunge and enrolled in such courses as second semester freshman physics, second semester college algebra, and the other usual courses for a total of eighteen hours.

I should mention that the availability of GI Bill benefits made all this much easier than it would otherwise have been. The Bill paid all costs for tuition and supplies. In addition, there was a modest stipend. I have always been grateful for this assistance.

I particularly remember the algebra course. The regular math professor had not yet returned from the navy, and the course was taught by a nice old gentleman who had a Ph.D. in education. He was great for forming math clubs, but algebra totally defeated him. It was a review for me, so no damage was done. My classmates and I were able to get the professor through the semester. He soon disappeared from the scene.

Physics was different. Professor Watson was a good physicist and a good teacher. Among other things, he persuaded me to major in math and physics instead of electrical engineering, which had been my intent. I now believe that the advice was sound.

I finished that first semester with a grade point average of about 3.8 (out of 4.0). Two years later, I was to receive in the mail a diploma from Enid High School, dated 1943.

Champlain Oil Company

Champlain was a local, family owned oil company with offices in downtown Enid. They had a pipeline, which extended through Kansas up into Nebraska for their products. Their private phone line paralleled the pipeline, and operators along the line would phone in hourly reports. They employed two students to take these reports between 5:00 pm and midnight. My friend George Berry (later to become a vice president for Conoco Oil) had one of these slots. One of them opened up, and George arranged for me to get the job.

It was perfect. There were desks, calculating machines, and typewriters available for homework. The boss did not mind if our friends came in to study with us. On a typical evening

there would be from three to six of us there, banging away on the assignments for the following day. Those of us in that study circle were tough competition for our less privileged classmates.

Lysle C. Mason

Prof Mason was the one-person math department after he returned from the navy. He had a degree in actuarial statistics from the University of Michigan. He could have made more money in industry, but he loved to teach.

He taught us (me at least) a lot more than mathematics. Between classes, his office door was always open, and there would generally be a group of us congregated in it. No subject was taboo, and we had immensely lively and stimulating discussions and arguments. Prof would always articulate his position concisely and persuasively, but I never knew him to try to stifle an opposing point of view. The grizzled old veterans like me constituted the majority in these discussions, but the younger students were welcome participants.

Prof made no secret of the fact that he was a Christian, but he made no overt effort to proselytize us. I so admired him that I began attending University Place Christian Church, where he was very active. I soon decided that it was right for me. I made my confession of faith and became a member.

Sometime later the young woman, Mary, who was to become my wife attended services with me. There were two very startled people in the congregation - Mary and Walter Moore, the pastor. It turns out that they had grown up on adjacent farms in Missouri.

I took many math courses from Prof Mason. In his classes, you did not solve problems by the rote plugging of numbers into a textbook formula. Any one who could not start with basics and derive the formula was in dire jeopardy.

Prof Mason is another person to whom I owe a lot.

The Little Things

During my junior year, I boarded one of the city busses and found that my second and third grade teachers, Miss Weickoff and Miss Shearer, were aboard. I sat by them and we talked. One of them remarked that they had heard good reports about my progress at Phillips. My casual response was that I should be expected to do well since they had given me such a good foundation. It was not a flippant remark, for I knew that I had been fortunate in those early school years.

I was ill prepared for their reaction. Each of them took hold of one of my arms, and they began to weep. It dawned on me that these two ladies had devoted their lives to others while rarely, or perhaps never, receiving any feedback on the results of their efforts. My remark was profoundly important and rewarding to them. Since that day, I have been alert to similar opportunities to do or say the little things, which might give someone else a boost.

After seven semesters and two summer sessions, I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in math and physics.

Mary Lavina Smith

Toward the end of my junior year, my physics professor, Don Mitchell, asked me if I would be interested in a summer job. It was in the R&D labs of Phillips Petroleum Company in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. I jumped at the chance, and I was soon on my way to B'ville. There was a minor logistics and supply problem. I found a room in the home of the Carver family, and after I had paid a month's rent, I had only two or three dollars in my pocket. Payday was a month in the future, and I wondered how I could support my eating habit in the meantime. A very nice lady came to my rescue.

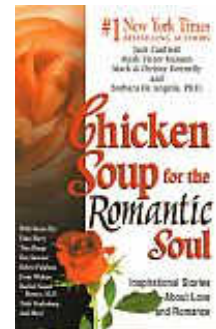
Nora Potts

My job was in the infrared spectroscopy lab, and Nora was a long time member of the staff. She sensed that I was strapped and asked me if I needed to float a loan. I accepted a modest loan and heaved a sigh of relief. I did some arithmetic based on the amount of the loan and placed myself on a very strict budget for eating. After payday, I decided to stay on the budget. By the end of the summer I had lost weight and felt great.



Nora also played a key role in what was to become the great adventure of my life. One afternoon a very attractive young woman came into the lab to chat with Nora. She had lovely dark brown hair, an engaging smile, and a perfect size ten figure. I took considerable notice as she entered. Nora introduced me to Mary Smith, who was a mathematician in the geophysics section of the lab. I wondered if Mary Smith was an alias.

My desk was adjacent to the door, facing the wall. As Mary left, I fell out of my swivel chair with a resounding crash. Mary is fond of saying that I leaned over too far in order to watch her walk down the hall. Let the record show, however, that I was retrieving the pencil that I had dropped. Many years later Mary had the audacity to have that story published.



The local YMCA sponsored a young people's group, which met regularly for dancing and light refreshments. The price of admission, as I recall, was twenty-five cents. Nora, bless her heart, suggested to me that I might get a favorable reception if I were to ask Mary for a date for one of the Y functions. I did; she accepted; and we soon became regulars. We had a number of dates during that summer. Sometimes we would go to the Y; sometimes we would just walk and talk. For our first "real" date, I took her to a circus.

I went home with her to Mount Vernon, Missouri one weekend. In church that Sunday, the minister introduced me as "an oil man from Oklahoma." Mary's niece, Mary Margaret, was

about five years old at the time. She took an immediate liking to me and spent two hours or so telling me everything she knew about the family.

I didn't move very fast in developing our relationship. This was partly from my shyness and partly from respect for Mary. In retrospect, I suspect that she wondered why I didn't get on with it. By the end of the summer, I knew that she was very special, and I was sometimes in awe that such a desirable, marvelous person could have an interest in me.

End of Summer



I had been hired as a technician to take raw data from an infrared spectrometer and to reduce it to a form in which it could be interpreted. It was a most tedious process, but I brought to the job a good degree of creativity and innovation. I got a lot more done than anyone had expected. All in all the summer had gone very well.

Back To School

The fall was extremely busy. Prof Mitchell had organized a bus trip to Washington, DC for the science majors in the school's athletic bus. It was to attend an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) meeting. Our group was featured on the cover of the AAAS journal. Upon our return, it was nose-to-the-grindstone to make up for the time lost. By the time I got back to Mary, she probably thought that I had been a ship passing in the night.



MARY L. SMITH ANNOUNCES :
TAKE HEED, YOU WOLVES,
I AM NO LONGER _____
...AVAILABLE...



I caught up a little and made some visits to B'ville. It was during these visits that bells began to ring and fireworks began to explode. I saved my money carefully and finally got enough together to make a mail order purchase of an engagement ring. Memory tells me that it was in February that I presented the ring and popped the question.

We began planning for a June wedding.

Family and School

Monday June 11, 1949 was a hot day in Bartlesville. It was also our wedding day. Feverish preparations were in progress for the ceremony to be held in First Christian Church. I was a nervous and somewhat uncomfortable spectator in the background. The action didn't slow down much as the ceremony began. It seems that the heat had been so intense that the icing had melted and slid off the cake. More frantic action behind the scenes!

The place was crawling with people. My dad and Hilda were there, as were Mary's parents and assorted other relatives. Mary had many friends and it seemed that the entire R&D lab turned out. Bob Crum (one of my Phillips classmates) was best man, and Mary's sister, Anna Lou was matron of honor.

Mary's dad was weeping during the ceremony; he did not want his baby (27 years old) to be married. He may have been thinking about a sentiment he had expressed somewhat earlier: "It looks like one of my daughters could have married a democrat."

At any rate, Rev. George Beazley tied the knot, and we began our big adventure.

We departed on our honeymoon in a rental car. The radio did not work, so after a time I pulled into a service station and asked a service man to look at it. He came back shortly with a puzzled expression and said, "Sir, this car doesn't have a radio." We proceed on to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, which had billed itself as a resort. On a scale of 1 to 10, I would rate it 2 as a resort. However - on a honeymoon who cares? I remember that, at one point, I locked the keys in the car. A good Samaritan came along and opened the door with a coat hangar.

Soon it was back to reality. We began our venture in domestic bliss in a tiny apartment over a garage at 804 Osage Avenue, and I began looking for a job. It was a recession year, and there were no summer hires for Phillips. There was a major construction project, the Adams Building, in progress. I persisted at the contractor's office until I was hired as a laborer. My good friend Bob Crum also was hired. It was hard work, but I was in great shape, and I gave it my all.

At one point during the summer, the foreman encouraged me to back off a little and let some of the others do a little more. At the end of the summer, I told this same foreman that I was quitting to go back to school. His response was, "You're too old to be in school. Stay on the job; you will be a foreman someday."

Our first effort in entertainment that summer was to invite Bob Crum for dinner. Mary had prepared one of her specialties, pineapple upside down cake, for desert. Disaster struck! The cake stuck to the pan. Fortunately, Bob was a very close and understanding friend, so the mental anguish was minimized.

Bob was to go on and get a MS in physics from the University of Kansas. Following that, he went back to Kansas City and got a job in the same Proctor & Gamble factory where his father had worked. We still hear from Bob at Christmas time. He retired from the factory about 1982.

Boomer Sooner

At the end of August, I loaded everything, including my pregnant wife, into our 1939 Chevy and headed for Norman, Oklahoma and the University of Oklahoma. Mary has never articulated it, but I suspect that she must have had a few misgivings. After all, she had given up a comfortable and secure existence to head off into the sunset bearing the child of a young man who possessed nothing but a gleam in his eye.

I wasted little time at OU. In two semesters I completed thirty hours course work, passed oral and written qualifying exams, completed a thesis project, and got my MS and PA (Papa) degrees.

Sarah Louise Mikkelsen, a healthy young lady, arrived during the early morning hours of April 18, 1950. We were living in C-47, a 16X16 foot Quonset hut that had been erected for military trainees during WWII. It was in these spacious quarters that we quickly and happily settled into the pattern of learning to be parents.



I recall an episode late at night, while I was hitting the books. We had Sarah in a bassinet, which was on wheels. Whenever she became restless, Mary would shake the bassinet to try to settle her down. On this particular night when Sarah began fussing, I picked her up, fed her, and changed her. All during the time I was doing this, Mary was shaking the empty bassinet. She was miffed when I told her what had happened.

My dad seemed to be excited at becoming a grandfather, and he was genuinely fond of Sarah - as well as later of Bob and Don. I had not seen this side of him before.

My major professor, J. Rud Nielsen, arranged for me to get a fellowship in the physics department at the University of Michigan. Off we went again.

Ypsilanti

During WWII, a large bomber plant was located at Ypsilanti, Michigan, and a large barracks complex had been hastily erected to house the workers. In 1950, the plant had been converted to production of Kaiser automobiles. U of M students and Kaiser Factory workers shared the barracks complex.

It is an understatement that our apartment was not elegant, and Mary lost her composure for a brief period when she first saw it. After an intense period of activity with brooms, mops, and paintbrushes, it was livable.



Ferdinand Schultz, our next-door neighbor, was a worker at the factory. He was an unforgettable character. Ferdie consumed prodigious quantities of beer, and his physique testified to this fact. He was a philosopher in the Archie Bunker mold. He and his wife, Marge, were very fond of Sarah and very kind to us. My first memory of watching television was in their apartment.

1208 Prospect

Professor emeritus Harrison McAllister Randall, for whom the physics building was named, was a remarkable man. He was in his eighties when we knew him, and each day he would spend six to eight hours in his laboratory. His project was the study of the infrared spectra of the tubercle bacillus. My fellowship duties were to assist him and to operate the first recording infrared spectrometer to exist in the US.

After a month or so, Professor Randall invited us to move into his house in Ann Arbor. We occupied the second floor of his three story house. In exchange for our rent, Mary was to take care of his aged aunt, and I was to manage the furnace and take care of the yard. I think I shoveled ten tons of coal into that monster furnace that winter. We were privileged to become well acquainted with the professor.

It turns out that I was not an outstanding yard man. One day he asked me to weed the flower beds. I was hard at work when the professor came flying out the door shouting "No No! Those are the flowers!" He later said to Mary "Louis doesn't seem to have much interest in gardening."



Sheldon Elliot was also at the university in pursuit of a Ph.D. in mathematics. We spent many pleasant times with Sheldon, his wife Dorothy, and their daughter Linda. Inevitably, when we shared meals with them the main dish was tuna casserole.

On the academic scene, I fared well in the course work, but I began to understand that a Ph.D. was not in the works for me. My GI Bill benefits would cease at the end of the year. The average time spent by those who received degrees was five or six years in the Ph.D. program. My decision to leave and seek employment was an easy one. During the Christmas vacation, we went to Oklahoma and Missouri.

I visited the R&D labs in Bartlesville and talked to Vernon Thornton, who headed the spectroscopy labs. By the time we returned to Michigan, I had a firm job offer at a salary of \$400.00 per month. This was remarkable, for we were still in a recession, and jobs were scarce. I was the envy of all my classmates at the university.

Bartlesville Revisited

We were back where it had all begun for us. It was a great relief to have some feeling of stability and continuity. It was in Bartlesville that two additions to the family came along. Robert Knowles arrived on April 27, 1952, and Don Louis on October 5, 1954. Mary's birthday is October 4, and she was disappointed that Don did not make it on that date.



Fifty Nine Years

That joint venture which had its beginnings in 1948 had lasted as of the original writing for forty-one plus years. (It ended up lasting for a total of 59 years until Mary's demise in 2008.) It produced three children who are fine human beings and five grand daughters plus 5 great grandchildren of whom we are very proud. We have known the comfort of constant love and warm affection. We liked and respected each other, and we shared a mutual trust that was nothing short of absolute. **Thank you, Nora Potts**

The Corporate Scene

I reported for duty at Phillips Petroleum in early summer 1951. I was destined to spend the next 34 or so years in the hurly burly competition of the corporate scene - mostly in a R&D environment. My career at Phillips did not last very long. During the first year, I was aware that they were more than satisfied with my performance. Some months passed into the second year, and there was no discussion of salary. The starting salary had been generous, but I knew that individuals with similar performance and responsibilities were receiving significantly more.

I was not greedy for money - I have never been guilty of that sin. However, my sense of fair play had been violated. I quietly went across town and applied for a job at the Bureau of Mines (now the Department of Energy).

I got the job. Within two hours of the time I announced my departure from Phillips, I was offered a 20% increase.

The Bureau offered me the opportunity for significant growth. Three people reported to me, and in addition to infrared, I was responsible for UV/Visible spectroscopy. Some time during the first year, we inherited a mass spectrometer from a Bureau station that had closed. We had the funds to get a manufacturers representative to install it and initially get it to run, but then it was sink or swim for me. It was most satisfying for me to be able to master this mechanical and electronic monster.

By the time I left the Bureau, I had published two mass spectrometry papers in Analytical Chemistry. At the Bureau, I also received my first exposure to gas chromatography, a technology not widely known in the US at that time.

Culture Shock

In 1956, the next challenge came along, and I accepted a job managing the analytical lab for Escambia Chemical Corporation. The R&D labs were in Cambridge, Massachusetts, adjacent to the MIT campus. It was on the banks of the Charles River across from Boston, which was cultural shock in several ways.

First, there was the layout. In Oklahoma, all roads were along the cardinal points of the compass, at one-mile intervals along section lines. In Boston, the roads seemed to have been laid out on cow paths. I remember trying to go around a block and never getting back to the starting point. My sense of direction has been shot ever since. I had rented a car when I went for an interview. At the end of the day I could not find the rental agency.



80 Ripley Street

I went ahead of Mary and the kids. I bought a house (80 Ripley Street in Newton Center) without Mary having seen it. The family arrived early in July. It was quite cold on July 4, and I built a fire in the fireplace. That was when I discovered that fireplaces had dampers.

It was also in Boston that we were exposed for the first time to the harsh realities of prejudice. When we were settled in, we discovered that we were not a good fit with the demographics of the neighborhood. Its population was half-Jewish, half-Irish Catholic - and the Mikkelsens. Fraternization between the children of the two groups was forbidden.

When we observed the kids of one group trying to chase the others out of our yard, we laid down the law. Our yard was to be neutral territory. We were the United Nations. It is interesting to note that once this was established, the kids got along fine. During this period Sarah was to have the lead part in a Hanukkah festival play.

We knew, going in, that the lab would be moved in two years, so we made like tourists the entire time. Almost every weekend we would head up into New Hampshire. I have memories of such things as a picnic in August along the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee, wrapped in blankets to keep from freezing.

The job lived up to my professional expectations. In addition to the instruments mentioned earlier, I became heavily involved with gas chromatography. The lab had purchased, prior to my arrival, the first commercially available gas chromatograph. It was a dog, but I was able to get useful results with it. Spurred on by its deficiencies, I began building my own instruments.

Lake Mamasasco

After two years, the lab was moved to Wilton, Connecticut, about seven miles up Route 7 from Norwalk. A number of the employees, including myself, experienced some trepidation about seeking housing in the Wilton area, which had a reputation for very expensive housing. Most of us were young, just beginning our careers, and had limited resources. We encountered a contractor who was prepared to build houses in our price range. He had purchased the 24 acre estate of Jascha Heifetz, a well known concert violinist. It contained a very large estate house and a carriage house. He sold the big house for enough to recover his initial investment, and he divided the remainder into one acre lots.

Several of us signed contracts with him for houses in the \$24,000 range. This was unheard of in Ridgefield where the estate was located. In order to be able to consider one of them several of us contracted to do the interior decorating and the landscaping ourselves. He promised that they would be available to us in August.

This was OK until November when we found ourselves down at the nearby lake very late at night breaking through the ice in order to to clean our paint rollers. It was even worse for Mary and me. We had rented and moved into one of a group of summer cottages with a fireplace as the only source of heat. I got quite tired of chopping trees up in order for us to keep warm.

The contractor was not a good manager, and got into financial difficulties. At the end we had to engage a lawyer to handle the final negotiations so that we could take possession. After these harrowing housing adventures, we ended up in a delightful place on the shore of Lake Mamasasco, in Ridgefield.



The contractor had **guaranteed** a dry basement. I reminded him of that at 3:00 one morning to tell him that our basement was ankle deep in water as a result of the first significant rain after we moved in. The drains had been improperly installed. When the drains were dug out, all the landscaping I had done came out with them.

I spent many delightful winter hours ice-skating with the kids. Christopher Road meandered down a steep hill to a dead end in front of our house. An exciting sled ride down the hill could be terminated only by plowing into a snow bank. Many times, I came roaring down that hill with one of the kids on my back. There were many opportunities, for we had eighty inches of snow during our first winter.



I also spent my spare time for the first year clearing some of the virgin timber which composed the lot, pouring concrete for sidewalks, building a retaining wall, transplanting dogwood trees around the perimeter of the lot, etc. Later as we prepared to sell it because of our move to Wilmington,

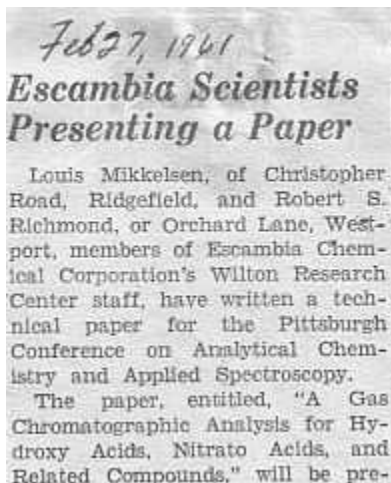
Don said to me, "Daddy, please buy a used house in Wilmington." I asked him why, and he said "so you'll have time to play ball with us."

Production facilities for Escambia were located near Pensacola, Florida. I was frequently called to Pensacola for trouble shooting in the production processes. By coincidence, it seemed that I was there almost every year on our wedding anniversary. Once my good friend and next-door neighbor, Erwin Schoenbrunn, and I took a side trip to Baton Rouge to visit Escambia's vendor for vinyl chloride monomer. We happened to be in New Orleans on June 11, and we had dinner at the famous Antoine's restaurant. I never understood why Mary was not pleased when I gave her a menu from Antoine's to show her how I had celebrated our anniversary.



In later years, Mary got even. For fifteen years or so she spent the second week in June at a porcelain art seminar in Cazenovia, New York.

Things were going well at the lab. We had purchased a gas chromatograph from F&M Scientific Corporation, a small, newly formed company located in Wilmington, Delaware. The instrument was state of the art, but getting good results with it was much more an art than a science. I was able to solve some formidable problems with it, and this led to a major publication in Analytical Chemistry.



One day the receptionist called to say that Mr. Martinez, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Martin were in the lobby to see me. These three were the co-owners of F&M. I took them on a tour of the lab. They seemed most interested in the procedures I had developed and the instruments I had built. I didn't learn until sometime later that it was not a social call.

At the next *Pittsburgh Conference on Analytical Chemistry and Applied Spectroscopy*, they offered me a job as manager of their applications lab.

The Cutting Edge

The F&M facility at the time was an old barracks building at the New Castle County Airport. I remember that in those quarters I had to ask the marketing manager to move his chair so that I could open my desk drawer.

Mary and the kids had stayed behind to sell the house, so I had rented a room in nearby Newport. I got into town on Sunday evening and drove by the plant. To my surprise, the lights were on, and several cars were clustered around the building. I went in to say hello.

I got off to a most auspicious beginning . They were in a panic. The first instrument of a new model had been promised for delivery the next day, and they were unable to get it to work. It was serendipity in action. The problem was in the sole area of electronics about which I was knowledgeable. I was able to diagnose the problem from the schematic diagrams, and the shipment went out on schedule. It was nice to be an instant hero.

During those early days I was living in a rented room in Newport, DE. As I thought about my situation, I had some serious misgivings. I had left a very secure job to join this neophyte organization. Had I made the right decision? It is now apparent that I had; two years later Escambia Chemical ceased to exist.

We finally sold the Connecticut house and moved into a house at 2402 Brickton Road in Chatham, a suburb north of Wilmington, DE. We were to remain there for twenty five years. Sarah, Bob and Don were to progress through the school system and graduate from Brandywine High School. Later, they were to graduate from Texas Christian University, Virginia Tech, and Indiana University.

My staff for the lab was John Wiesniewski. Ski was a graduate of a local vocational high school. He was intelligent, we hit it off, and I think we taught each other a lot. In those days, almost every instrument sale hinged upon our successfully demonstrating that the instrument would solve a customer's problem. Every new sample was an adventure, and we had some hilarious experiences with customers. Being on the cutting edge of a rapidly developing new technology was an intoxicating experience.

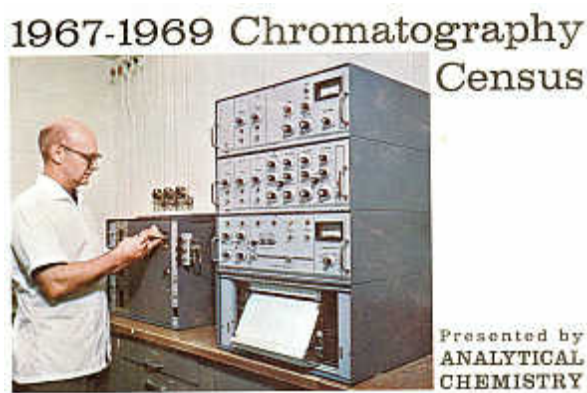
During this period, I was also to become acting advertising manager and editor of the F&M house organ, which was published monthly and distributed to everyone on the mailing list. And... I ended up on the cover of a widely distributed document prepared by the publishers of **Analytical Chemistry**.

All good things end. F&M had moved to the present plant location near Avondale, PA. I suddenly found myself with the imposing job title of Director of Research and Engineering. Abruptly I shifted gears from managing a staff of one to a staff of about twenty-four. I had zero preparation for such a responsibility.

On balance, I think I did a good job. One or two of the projects I originated turned out to be turkeys. Another (shown above) which I pushed through over the strenuous objections of our marketing group, paid most of the bills for six years or so. However, I was not comfortable in the job. It was a heavy burden for me to exercise such power over people's lives.

Hewlett Packard

By 1967, F&M had developed cash flow problems and was unable to finance needed expansion. The owners had also developed differences of opinion about the direction the company should take. Hewlett Packard solved these problems by buying the company.



Dave Packard and Bill Hewlett perceived that I was misplaced in the job I had. It is indicative of their enlightened approach to management that the two of them plus their vice president for personnel made a trip to Avondale, PA to discuss it with me. I was delighted to be given a chance to switch to a job that I could enjoy. I was later to have the great privilege of becoming very well acquainted with these two gentlemen.

The details of my roller coaster experiences of the next twenty or so years are of interest only to me, but some generalizations may be relevant. I was to become a project manager twice and a R&D section manager on three more occasions. It always seemed that my punishment for doing a good job was to be pushed into management.

In between stints as a manager, I experienced periods of benign neglect. I would be left to my own devices to putter around on whatever interested me. I think this occurred for two reasons.

1. I didn't fit any of the standard molds. The lab was populated with chemists and engineers, and I was neither. I used to characterize myself as a creative misfit.
2. Because of my long experience as a user of gas chromatography I had a clear vision of the improvements our customers would want and need.

Into The Computer Age

I had my first exposure to computers during one of those periods. A time share Basic language terminal was available in the lab. A colleague showed me how to logon and how to write a very simple program. I was intrigued with it and I was quickly writing some moderately sophisticated programs. HP began supplying some of them to customers with the purchase of an instrument.



Some time later the first mini computer came into the lab. It had 8K, 12-bit-words, core memory and no other storage. Disk systems were prohibitively expensive in those days. Input and output was limited to printing and punched paper tape the 10 character per second teletype produced. I buried my nose in the computer manuals to teach myself the Fortran language. I patiently ran my source code through a four-pass compiler. I was up to my ears in punched paper tape.

I had earlier written a Basic program for Simulated Distillation. This program was in demand by refineries and used to monitor the performance of their distillation towers. As the program use accelerated, I had to switch to Fortran to provide the enhancements desired by customers.

As desires for enhancement continued, Fortran ran out of gas because of the computer memory limits and I had to dig out the manuals again and learn assembly language. The listing for the last such program I did was about 50 pages in length. We sold a lot of these, and I'm proud to say that we never had a bug report from a customer.

Still later, with more sophisticated computer equipment, I branched out into programs for real time data acquisition for up to 16 of our instruments running simultaneously. This became the basis for a whole new business for HP.

It is interesting to note that I have had **no** formal computer training.

Back On The Firing Line

During the late 1970's the R&D group at Avondale embarked on a most ambitious project. It was the development of a user programmable gas chromatograph that operated under the total control of internal micro processors. It was far more capable than anything on the market at that time.

The project manager was an excellent engineer, but he tried to micro manage the project, and it was in trouble. Several papers had been submitted to the upcoming Pittsburgh Conference On Analytical Chemistry and Applied Spectroscopy (**PitCon**). This was the conference of the year for chemical lab workers and potential customers. Everyone in our lab except the project manager recognized that the instrument was not ready for introduction.

This happened during another of my benign neglect periods, so I was an interested but concerned observer. This status came to an end when the division manager and R&D manager dropped by my desk and asked me if I would take over the project. My first two answers were "No", but they persisted. To add to my dilemma they placed the preceding manager under my supervision but not on the project. ????

I immediately withdrew the PitCon papers, did some minor reorganizing and began conferring with project members. They were a group of very talented people, so I mostly kept out of their way and let them do their jobs. The following year we did introduce the instrument at PitCon, and it was a great success. Some time later Mason Byles, our division manager confided in me that it had become the leading revenue producer for the HP corporation.

South American Adventure

Soon after the introduction above a week long training session for the HP South American sales force was scheduled in Sao Paulo, Brazil. It was for the recently introduced instrument. I was invited to accompany the young man whose full time responsibility was training. I suspect that this trip was regarded as a reward for my for having handled a hot potato.

We were all checked in for a Sunday TWA flight to take us from Philadelphia to catch a connecting flight with Varig at Idlewild airport (now John F. Kennedy). A thunderstorm came in, and the TWA flight passed over Philadelphia.

We were in a panic, for the session was to begin on Monday, and the next Varig flight would be on Tuesday. After a quick huddle my buddy scrambled to extract our checked baggage from TWA while I tried to arrange surface transportation. I was able to hire a limousine, and we barely made the connection in Idlewild.

The training went well, and I thoroughly enjoyed interacting with the sales people. I practised my high school Spanish on them. They were pleased that I made the effort. During a side trip to Buenos Aires I had another chance to practise. In the Sheraton Hotel my elevator got stuck between the 13th and 14th floors. I had get on the phone and explain the problem to the man downstairs.

He understood me! I was not always so successful. In Rio de Janeiro on the way home I ordered a beer and got an ice cream cone. It was very tasty!

Hanging It Up As A Manager

My last managerial tour of duty is very clear in my memory. I had become, for the second time, manager of the R&D computer systems section. Avondale had been going through some tough times. Budgets and programs had been cut back. Morale was low. To put what happened in context, it was part of the Avondale culture for marketing and R&D to have an adversarial relationship. The data systems effort was on dead center.

I reserved the ballroom at Hercules country club and invited everyone involved in any way with data systems to a combination lunch-business meeting. After lunch, it was time for me to take the stage. I made a public confession of the sins of R&D, made an impassioned plea for the troops to rally around the cause, and make something good happen.

Afterwards in the parking lot, our division manager, Mason Byles, told me that in his opinion I had earned the right to do anything I wished to do at HP.

The climate changed. Within a few days one of the really bright young men from marketing asked if he could transfer into R&D. The answer was a resounding yes. I made him manager for the project I had been trying to get started. I helped him for a month or so in coming up to speed on his job, and then I took Mason up on his offer.

I found a cubicle I could occupy, latched onto the first personal computer to come into Avondale, and set about mastering the mysteries of the PC. Roughly two years later, HP offered a generous early retirement incentive. I gratefully accepted the offer.

Looking Back

As a manager, I think I was a very effective leader and motivator. My subordinates were productive and loyal. As an administrator, I had trouble rising to the level of mediocrity, and administrative details became increasingly important as time passed.

I was able to make a lot of significant technical and product contributions, and this knowledge is some source of satisfaction. What I really feel good about, though, is the large number of people I was able to help during those years. In some cases, it was simply physical assistance. For some it was words of encouragement, a sympathetic ear, lunchtime algebra lessons for technicians. For others it was being able to assist in a significant career boost.

For still others it was just a matter of treating them with dignity. In one case, it was to help a recovering alcoholic put his life back in order.

Not once had I done anything to advance my own situation at the expense of another. When I ponder on these things, I am at peace with myself.

Around the World in Many Days

For most of the twenty five or so years with F&M/HP, I was one of the principal - and often the sole - technical spokesperson. It was understood, without discussion, that I would present a paper at most of the major scientific meetings dealing with gas chromatography. Later this expanded to include computer systems.

My estimate is that on twenty occasions I presented a paper at the Pittsburgh Conference on Analytical Chemistry and Applied Spectroscopy. I had been responsible for the development of a computer system for the *real time* data acquisition and processing from multiple gas chromatographs. I spent two or three weeks lecturing and training customers on the use of the systems. I visited laboratories of petroleum and chemical plants all along the gulf coast and up the Mississippi River.



I was on stage at a number of national and regional meetings of the American Chemical Society. More times than I can count, I made technical presentations in customer's labs. On several occasions, I was a featured or invited speaker at symposia (some of them international) on gas chromatography.

As a by-product of all this there were some memorable trips. After the kids had left home, Mary would automatically start packing when I was scheduled for an interesting trip.

Mary and I visited 16 countries, some **multiple times**: Argentina, **Austria**, Brazil, **Canada**, Czechoslovakia, **England**, **France**, **Germany**, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Scotland, Spain, **Switzerland**, and Russia.

Vienna/Montreaux

Our first joint venture into foreign territory occurred in 1972. Because it was Mary's first visit to Europe, I took some vacation time and we combined business with pleasure. We flew to London and spent some time sightseeing.



We attended an Evensong service at the abbey and contributed our melodious voices to the singing. The price of admission was listening to the longest, most boring sermon imaginable on the subject "*Are Angels Real.*"

We boarded a double-decker bus (second deck) to the airport on the way to Vienna. The bus crashed into a car, and during the delay, we struck up a conversation with a man seated opposite to us. He was from Vienna. We told him it was our first visit to his city and that we were looking forward to it with pleasure.

When we arrived in Vienna - during the evening rush hour - our new friend helped us through customs and got us loaded on a bus into the city. At the airline terminal in the city, he waded out onto the traffic, got a taxi, and deposited us at our hotel. As he left, he apologized profusely because he had an appointment and could not show us the city that night.

After several days, we rented a car and had a most interesting drive to Montreaux, Switzerland. I was to present, at the Chromatography 1972 Symposium, a paper titled *Gas Chromatography/ Computer System with Programme Control of Operating Parameters*. We were housed at the elegant Palace Hotel where the symposium was held.

One memorable event occurred as a group of us were having a meal in a small cafe. As we were eating, a cockroach strolled leisurely across the table. Some members of the group were no longer hungry.



The castle, on the shore of Lake Geneva, is famous as the place where Lord Byron, a well known poet, was imprisoned for many years.

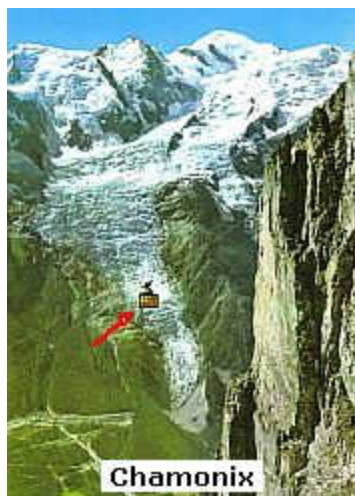
The symposium banquet was held in the large, lovely formal dining hall of the castle. On a balcony high over our heads a group of uniformed trumpeters played a fanfare as our call to dinner.

When we travelled by car in Europe, we preferred to get off the autobahns and take the back roads and smaller highways. This gave us a much better perspective of the beauty of the areas through which we were going.

For Example:



We rode a number of cable cars or ski lifts during our travels:



Chamonix, at the foot of Mont Blanc, was frightening because of our awesome height above the valley floor.

I was a featured speaker at a French gas chromatography symposium where a trip up the mountain was scheduled for the participants. High winds aloft caused the cancellation of the event. Instead, we were bussed to a restaurant for lunch. We were seated on both sides of a rather long table, and a very awkward silence ensued.

Mary, who had accompanied me, poked me and whispered "Introduce yourself." I stuck out my hand and introduced myself to the guy across from me. We began talking, and suddenly there were conversations in progress all along the table.

On another occasion our German friends, Herbert and Gisela took us to the top in a cable car, and we had lunch there. Mary had ordered some of the German sausages, and when she punctured one with a fork it exploded and splattered the German lady sitting next to her. Mary's discomfort was not assuaged when Herbert burst out laughing.

A new German Friend

A pleasant and unexpected adventure came as a result of Mary's desire to visit Oberndorf, Austria to visit the site where Silent Night was composed. As we left the site, we made a spur of the moment decision to cross a nearby small river which was the border with Germany.

The German border guard was seated in a small shack open at the front. When he looked at my passport his face broke out in a big smile, and in a friendly and very enthusiastic manner he said "**Oklahoma! I vas dere.**" He had fond memories of having been in a prisoner of war camp in Tonkawa, Oklahoma during WWII.

Birthday in Barcelona

I don't remember the year, but we were in Barcelona where I was participating in another of the international gas chromatography series. Mary's birthday coincided with the date of the official symposium banquet, held in the hall where Queen Isabella had welcomed Columbus on his return from the new world.

It was a delightful banquet. We were the only Americans at our table, and someone called attention to the funny way that the Americans handled the knife and fork. It was all in good fun, so we were only slightly self-conscious. One of our fellow diners asked Mary why she had her left hand in her lap. In the spirit of the occasion she responded "I'm holding my six shooter in it."

After dinner, while the speeches and acknowledgments were going on, I heard the French emcee say, with a thick accent, "... and appee birthday Madam Louee Mikkelsen." I poked Mary and said, "He's talking about you." Our table was showered with the floral centerpieces from surrounding tables, and later many people came around and autographed Mary's souvenir menu. How does one top that? If anyone would insist, Mary could whip out that menu on a moments notice.

Heilbronner Weg

This trip, in 1974, began with a week in Böblingen, Germany, the location of the HP facility. Our principal German hosts were Herbert and Giesla Knoesel. The second week was spent by the two families at Nesselwang, an HP employee vacation retreat village nestled in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps. We shared a nicely appointed two-bedroom cottage. It was delightful. Herbert and I would go into the woods to gather mushrooms for supper, and he would say, "I sure wish I had brought my book with me."

On the third week, the two families headed for Vienna for the **International Symposium on Computers in Analytical Chemistry**. I was to present a scientific paper in one of the imposing halls of the Hofburg, which had been the palace of Emperor Franz Josef during the heyday of the Habsburg Dynasty. The title of the paper was ***The Use of New Computer Technology in Chromatography***. As we prepared to return home Mary remarked, "Isn't it amazing? We lived with them for three weeks, and we still like them."



Behind the Iron Curtain

I had been invited to lead a panel discussion on laboratory automation at the Blue Danube Chromatography Symposium. It was held in Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia in April 1980. A good Viennese friend took us by car from Vienna to the meeting site. On the way, we spent two days in Prague, a memorable experience. We were treated royally and given the VIP suite at the Grand Pupp hotel where the meeting was held. One evening during the meeting, participants were taken by bus to a remote location for entertainment. The food and the entertainment was not much, but the rest of the evening was unforgettable. At our table was a man from Texas A&M along with his father in law, who lived near by and spoke no English.



Walt Supina, whose parents were Czech, was there. Walt was from State College, PA. Also at the table were three Russians, two men and a woman. We were having some interesting conversations at about midnight when we noticed that the place was suddenly very quiet.

The bus had loaded and gone off and left us. A river flowed past our hotel as well as past our location. We knew that if we followed the river we would eventually get to the hotel. There was, however, a lively debate about whether we should go upstream or downstream. Our choice was correct, and after a couple of hours, we straggled into the hotel.

Mary and I knew that we were going to try to go to the Moscow Baptist Church during the following week. She asked one of the Russians about the church. The reply was interesting, "In Russia we discourage such sects." Such was the nature off the **Iron Curtain**.

Prague is a combination of the ancient city and across the river the modern city. We spent two days there and would have enjoyed two weeks. We were aghast at one of the spots we visited. Hitler had ransacked and looted many of the synagogues in Europe. In Prague he had placed many of the worship items and artifacts in a building he had labeled as a "Museum Of An Extinct Race."



We returned to Vienna and from there flew to Moscow. We arrived on April 25th, and they were still shovelling snow at the airport. In Moscow, I gave six hours of lectures with

наук Г-н Луис Миккельсен, Нач. Отдела исследований фирмы «ХЬЮЛЕТТ-ПАККАРД», США

simultaneous translation. The underlined words in the box are my name in the Cyrillic alphabet. It was Easter week for the Eastern Orthodox Church. We attended a moving service at the Moscow Baptist

Church. There were probably four hundred people in a building with a capacity of one hundred fifty. As we left, everyone who could reached out to touch us. Soldiers were in the street after the service.



We were registered in the Intourist Hotel, where foreign tourists were required to stay. We had a great view of Red Square and St. Basil's cathedral from our hotel window. Normally foreigners were required to have a government supplied guide if they wished to roam around.

Fortunately the HP representative in Moscow knew his way around and procured a delightful unofficial guide for Mary while I was busy.



Sophia spoke excellent English. She had been a translator for a Russian general at the Potsdam Agreement, where Europe was carved up after the war. She had **no love** for the current Russian government. She took Mary and me, when I was free, to places that official guides would have vetoed.

At one point Mary and Sophia prepared to have lunch at the Intourist hotel. Russians were not permitted in the hotel, so Sophia said to Mary, "We must be careful not to speak Russian in there."

There were many other business related trips, but these stand out.

Engines and Mumps

The memories include such things as plating the Pennsylvania Turnpike with oil from our crankcase during the early morning hours. We were driving straight through, to save money, on our annual pilgrimage from Connecticut to Missouri when the ominous red light came on. We made it to Michigan City, Indiana early on Saturday morning. Mary's mother wired us the money for a rebuilt engine, which would not be ready to go until Monday. We went to the movies that first night. Afterward Bob didn't want the soda I had gotten for him, so I finished it. That was a bad move on my part!

Bob came down with the mumps while we were there. Later, back in Connecticut, Don got them and Sarah got them. Last but not least, I got them; I was about as sick as one can be and survive.

The Wild West



In 1966, we had a fantastic vacation. We flew to San Francisco and spent something over a week in the area. On a side trip, we stayed in Glacier Point Lodge, high over the floor of Yosemite Valley.

Mary's brother, Johnny, was with us. We then flew to Las Vegas, rented a car, and spent a full week driving from Las Vegas to Denver.



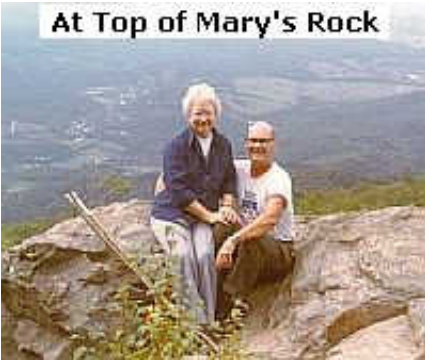
Music in the Air

All three kids had a lot of musical talent. Sarah was a visual delight as she made the timpani walk and talk in the Brandywine High Band. Bob played the clarinet and Don the trombone. We greatly enjoyed a number of performances.

Shenandoah

One of the family's favorite places has been Shenandoah National park in the Blue Ridge Mountains. We were regulars at Skyland Lodge for almost twenty five years. One Fourth of July night, we sat on our porch and looked down at the fireworks at Luray, in the valley floor below. I remember climbing Old Rag - and freezing my tail off on a cold, rainy night with a group of Boy Scouts along the Appalachian Trail.

Mary's Rock

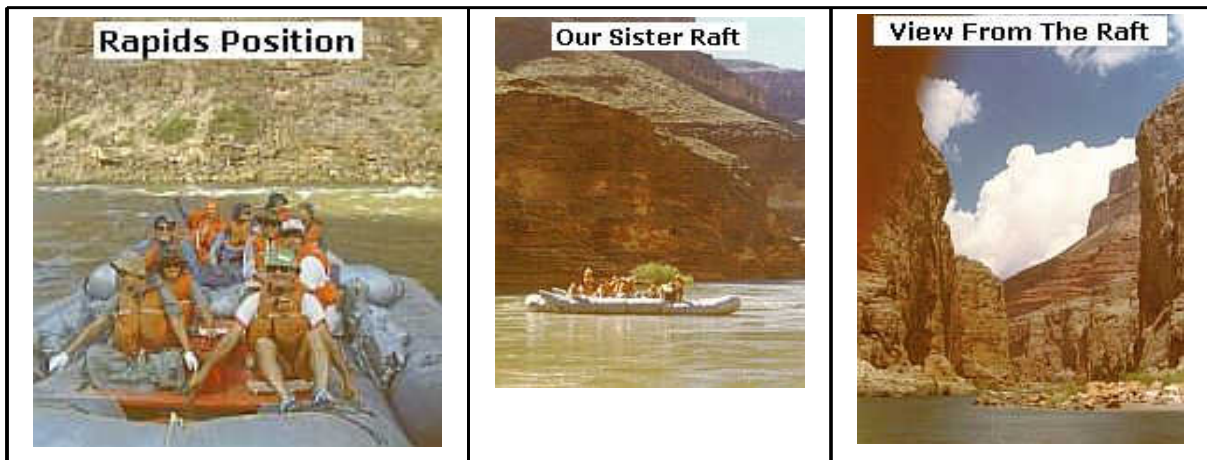


I was definitely in the doghouse as we struggled up the steep climb on a hot day with swarms of flies and gnats buzzing around our faces.



But all was well as we sat on Mary's rock (its real name) and enjoyed the view of the valley far below.

Rapids Position



These were words to be taken very seriously as Mary and I spent nine days going through the Grand Canyon on a raft. We started at Lake Powell and ended at Lake Mead. Some of the rapids were awesome. The trace of white water signals our approach to a one of the rapids.

We were all seated and hanging tightly to ropes beside us. I was riding point; that was my preferred position for the entire trip. The lady in the rear waving her hand at the camera is Mary. I should mention that it took me three years to talk her into the trip.

It was a fantastic experience. We slept on the sand under the stars. The sky was so clear that we could count the satellites going over. Later when someone asked Mary about the experience her words were, "It's a little like being pregnant. When it's over, you're glad you did it."

First Christian Church

In response to a newspaper ad in 1965, our family attended a meeting in Bethany Beach, Delaware. Joe VanBoskirk, the Disciples of Christ regional minister, presided. Also present were the Kerr family, the Rudge family, Jim and Mona Dike, and Rev. Meyers Goodhand, a retired Methodist minister. The group made a covenant to form a Disciples congregation in Wilmington. Rev. Goodhand was our organizing pastor, and we began meeting in homes.

The congregation thrived. It was always an itinerant group to some degree because of DuPont company transfers. Some 400 people passed through the rolls. The church was an important part of our lives. I filled every position of leadership multiple times. We have made some wonderful friends.

Hit the Bricks

Sometime during the sixties, I began running for exercise. It was one of the best things I ever did for myself. For several years, I would do one or two miles daily on the indoor track at the Wilmington YMCA. Later I discovered the pleasures of outdoor running and the distance increased to an average of five or six miles daily.



Still later, I began running instead of eating lunch at HP. I was a curiosity at first, but I infected many of my colleagues with the virus. It would become commonplace for groups of a dozen or more to hit the back roads around the plant at lunch time.

I got the bug to enter the racing scene in 1977. The Caesar Rodney half marathon (thirteen plus miles) was coming up, and I decided to go for it.

I wasn't ready for that kind of distance, but I did it and finished - well back in the pack. I remember that I had my own private cheering section. It seems that every time I rounded a corner either Mary or Mason Byles was there with encouragement. Mason was inspired by this to start running and later competed in the Boston Marathon.

Emery Rodgers had preceded Mason as division manager. He was a gentleman, a runner, and a friend. I had sent him a photograph of my crossing the finish line. His letter in response has a cherished place among my memorabilia. Below is an excerpt from his letter.



Caesar Rodney Finish

When a good idea springs up somewhere around the analytical circuit of Hewlett Packard, it can almost always be traced back to a quiet, original suggestion or demonstration by Lou Mikkelsen.

We all owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude. You have shown us so many good ways so many times.

**Best Always,
Emery**

Later I was to enter several other half marathons and countless 10K races.

Epilogue

I made the happy discovery that there is life after retirement. I hung out my shingle as a computer consultant, and the results were gratifying. I had a half dozen or so individual clients, who called upon my services - mostly desktop publishing. I regularly did some PC tutoring. I put together two newsletters each month. I had a consulting contract with Hewlett Packard, and I did four or five major projects for them.

In between my projects and Mary's porcelain art projects, we have done a modest amount of traveling. There was an enjoyable trans-Canada train trip. We went on 13 Elder Hostels, including a week on the Alaska Marine Highway ferry and a week in Savannah. They were all interesting and enlightening.

I must express a final word of gratitude to Mary. In many ways, she had the toughest part of the job in the role of homemaker, raising children, and always being supportive to a sometimes hard-to-live-with husband.

Addendum

Some time during 2008, just for kicks, I did a Google search on "Louis Mikkelsen" (with the quotes). I was surprised at the number of hits. It was a nostalgia trip. The titles of publications and a few comments are listed below. I should mention that I had one or more co-authors on most of the papers.

Vibrational Spectra of Fluorinated Aromatics. VIII.

1,4-Bis(trifluoromethyl)benzene E. E. Ferguson, Louis Mikkelsen, J. Rud Nielsen, and D. C. Smith **Journal of Chemical Physics** 1953

I obtained the Raman Spectral data for this paper as a part of my Masters thesis (Physics) at the University of Oklahoma.

A Gas Chromatography/Computer System with Programme Control of Operating Parameters at the "**Chromatography 1972 Symposium**" in Montreaux, Switzerland October 1972. The symposium contents were published in book form.

This was personally notable for several reasons. At this time the paper was on the cutting edge of the technology of the use of computers in chemistry. It was the first of my several appearances on the international stage. Mary accompanied me.

The Use of New Computer Technology in Chromotography

Published in **Chromatographia** September 1974

This paper was presented in one of the majestic halls of the Hofburg Imperial Palace in Vienna, Austria. Mary got to attend this one also.

Advances in Temperature Programmed Gas Chromatography

This was a book chapter in a series edited by Cal Giddings.

The remaining papers were published in **Analytical Chemistry**.

Mass Spectrometer-Type Analysis for Olefins in Gasoline

My first exposure to a mass spectrometer occurred when one was delivered to my lab at the Bureau of Mines in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. It was transferred from another Bureau site which had closed down. A manufacturers representative set it up and got it running. I received no training; it was sink or swim. Fortunately I was able to swim. The major oil companies had wanted such an analysis for a long time.

Partially Resolved GC Peaks: Analytical Accuracy With an Electronic Integrator

Gas Chromatographic Determination of Oxidation Products of Isobutylene. Hydroxy Acids, Nitrate Acids, and Related Compounds

Identification of Thiophene and 2-Methylthiophene in Virgin Petroleum

Spectrophotometric Determination Primary Aromatic Amines

Analytical Separation and Identification of Sulfur Compounds in a Petroleum Distillate Boiling to 100 Degrees C.

US Patent 3399974 Gas Analyzer 9/3/1968

US Patent 3257847 Detection Method for Gas Chromatography 6/28/1966

It may seem strange that all the chemistry oriented publications came from a physics major. It was a case of intense on-the-job learning of the chemistry as needed.

In addition to the publications, I can't even guess at the number of unpublished presentations I made at various scientific meetings over the years. It was a great ride while it lasted.

Links to other writing efforts:

[Images](#)

[Odyssey](#)

[Memories](#)