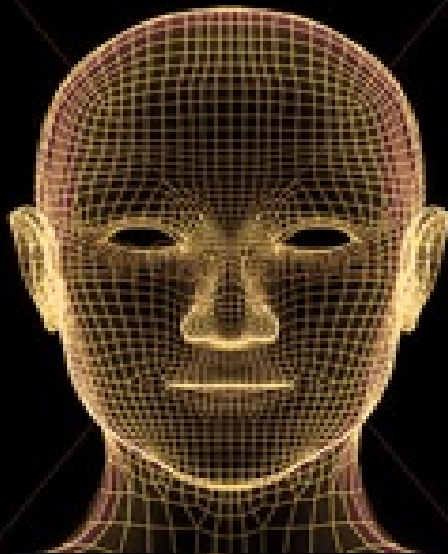


INVISIBLE WARRIOR



T. RANDALL

FULL DISCLOSURE

INVISIBLE WARRIOR

– WITH –

FULL DISCLOSURE

INVISIBLE WARRIOR

– WITH –

FULL DISCLOSURE

NONFICTION

BY

T. RANDALL

PENTAGON'S HAMMER Series, Book IV:

INVISIBLE WARRIOR – FULL DISCLOSURE

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DISCLAIMER

This book is based on real events, places, and times, though the names of the participants, and their identities have been changed to preserve their privacies. *INVISIBLE WARRIOR* is both fiction, and nonfiction in nature, using fictitious names for the principle cast, and real names where authorized. Locations, and events are based on actual events, and experiences during a career filled with challenges, and rich with action. Much of my career was spent overseas in the vastness of the Pacific, Asia, Indonesia, Indochina, and Europe.

Although after thirty years working as a government contractor, and at times had access to highly sensitive information inherit to the Intelligence community, it is not my intention to disclose any sensitive or classified materials to the public, or to the enemies of the free world.

Notwithstanding being an autobiography, I have intricate knowledge of organizational, and governmental structures, and their workings in the arenas of Intelligence, defense, and science, and technologies as described, and exemplified in this, and previous books written in the form of novels. The initial sections of the book are written from my true point of view with all subsequent sections written, and illustrated from Alex Bauer's perspective, a perspective carried throughout this book, in the form of narrative nonfiction. The change in personalities became necessary to reach into the recesses of my mind on how I perceive the world between my early years of existence, and the present. The transformation, though dramatic, took place when I was unexpectedly torn from the reality of life, and thrown into the realm of mystique, stealth, and secrecy.

Alex Bauer is not singled out as an only invisible warrior. There were many others during the various phases of the AUTODIN system, the highly-classified precursor to the modern-day Internet, each equal in personal dedication to serve the nation. Regardless of individuals coming together from every possible way of life, the collective goal was universal: to protect the United States government, and citizens from atomic annihilation. Where over the following decades most of the invisible warriors have retired, or have passed on, the system, though transformed numerous times from the original blueprint into a modern-day autonomous self-serving engine, is very much alive, alerting the country about ill-intended adversaries and intrusions to the world's best protected nation.

FOREWORD

INVISIBLE WARRIOR is a comprehensive narrative nonfiction based on the vulnerability of the United States defense system. Due to the complexity of my life, and career, this story expands in volume size over the average novels, and many chapters were necessary in its development. Making up the chapters within the sphere of this writing were dozens of characters, and organizations from the national defense sector to military organizations dependent on each other, in the case of an all-out attack.

My principle reason is to create public awareness of an ever-increasing threat on the nation's safety, and the wellbeing of the American citizens. Despite warfare having been with mankind since the dawn of the ages, with the development of modern weapons, and communication technologies it seems that fighting has increased exponentially, making warfare evermore probable to remain with mankind through mass killings, and slaughter inflicted by warmongers, rogue nations, extremists, and radicals.

The book is about individuals that held important, and critical positions in government, military, commercial contracting, and support functions necessary for the design, engineering, deployment, operations, and management of its functions so that the citizens of the United States could prosper in a safe, and protected environment. An army of invisible warriors is diligently at work supporting the multitude of critical projects, and programs necessary to protect the wealth, and prosperity of a free nation.

The primary concept of this book is in writing my autobiography. It deviates from the norm in that it is written from several perspectives, mine, and my career colleagues, as well as the principle character of Alex Bauer, and his Castle crew. The transformation was necessary to produce a meaningful product written from perspectives journeyed through a lifelong career. In real life, along with my dependents, coworkers, and support personnel, due to the critical nature of their work, have never attained public credit, and recognition. In this book, at least, we will have the opportunity to obtain proper credit, and deserving gratitude bestowed through the dedication of the reader.

My Mission

Develop the series of novels was based on missions that absorbed much of my adult life. Educate the general population on why the country needs a strong defense system which can only be achieved through maintaining the

nation's leadership in technology, continued advances in sciences, and knowledge to develop products desired by an insatiable world population.

The system

The AUTODIN system, highly controversial at times for infringing on the individual's constitutional rights, was solely designed for the protection of these rights. But to achieve, and preserve these rights, with crime, and disorder increasing, not only in the U.S., but across the globe, it is integral that the system is maintained. AUTODIN is not the only system highly classified in nature. Many government information systems operate within a similar environment. The U.S. citizen was given an equal chance, though unclassified, when the AUTODIN system was released in August, 1991, in the form of the modern Internet. Whether it was the right thing to do so, I'll let the gained popularity speak for itself.

Storyline

The preceding trilogy, summarized in *PENTAGON'S HAMMER*, was based on my career experience, and work environment. While many of the plots, and actions were illustrated as real events, the storylines were suggested possibilities that could, in today's unstable political climate, explode at a moment's notice, or take place in the near future. In contrast, events as described in this book, *INVISIBLE WARRIOR*, and *FULL DISCLOSURE*, are based on realistic scenarios possibly triggered by world powers, and rogue nations such as China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, Pakistan, and more. It would not take much to elevate a diplomatic dispute into a major conflict, which would be fought with unconventional weapons of mass destruction in the form of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. To cite recent events, North Korea, Iran, and Pakistan are real life examples.

For those readers not familiar with the term Full Disclosure, I'll explain it to you. I may sound biased against conspiratorial mongering, and rightly so. Life is difficult enough just coping with everyday challenges, and problems with meeting obligations, and responsibilities. Therefore, I pose the question, "Who gives them the right to confuse, and interrupt everyone else's lives?"

"It is people themselves who demand it."

Many people thrive on the unknown, the mysterious, and the enigmatic. It is us that need the unexplained to maintain individual sanity in a world full of uncertainties. It is mankind longing for the impenetrable. Without it the world would be a dull place. Perhaps yes, perhaps no. It all depends on how busy,

and realistically-minded the individual is. At least making up stories provides for interesting reading, and listening material. One only has to visit bookstores, and libraries to get the idea of how much material there is to serve the diversity of readers.

Through all of the prevailing confusion, my principle intentions with this book, no matter what the consequences, is to “set the record straight” for the majority of readers. It is up to the individual to pass personal judgement. Life will go on as it always has because some people question the unexplained while others shrug it off as nonsense. It all depends on one’s perception to an experience. Some are in tune with their genetic inherited body, and mind; others are not. The point to remember is that mankind needs, and provides both, the aware, and the unaware. It is what divides us into leaders, and followers.

All chapters within this book are one hundred percent factual in describing my life, and career. Some of the dialogue with career associates, and family members may slightly vary due to the passage of time, but the context remains as accurate as recollected. There are three exceptions, in Volume Three, Part One: “*FULL DISCLOSURE*,” the last three chapters, “The Pentagon, National Security, and Central Intelligence” were written in transitional fiction to maintain continuity with upcoming work. With nothing but favorable feedback from readers on character development, storyline, and suspense action, the author has decided to maintain the character values as a guarantee to his valued reading audience.

AUTHOR DEDICATION

The INVISIBLE WARRIOR, section of the book is my autobiography. Rather than explaining my rationale for writing in pseudo-narrative, the following verses state my reasoning.

I was born a Nobody...

I realized my dreams...

I achieved my goals...

I will die a Nobody...

But the legend of Alex Bauer lives on.

Anno Domini – 2019

T. Randall

AUTHOR BACKGROUND

As a preamble for you reading this book, I feel obligated to explain my reasons for writing it in first place. Due to the insistence from my daughters that I write my autobiography, primarily to reveal my life, and where I came from, since we never talked about it because of the nature of my work, and lifestyle, it was meant to be a nonfiction work. However, shortly into the initial chapters I was compelled to change direction primarily based on the declaration of the previous page. With all the knowledge, and opportunities my career presented, I felt it my duty to share what was considered reality, but sensitive material, nevertheless, unknown to the general public. Over the past several decades, so much confusion for unexplained behavior, and strange conduct by this nation's leadership has been displayed, and propagated that the record had to be set straight. I made it my mission to explain the stated behavior to the reader without compromising the parameters of national security.

My principle reason was to acknowledge an army of scientists, architects, engineers, designers, technicians, and support personnel instrumental in achieving the goal set in 1962 by President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, in creating a survivable communication system for the protection of the United States citizens, as well as in safeguarding the country's acquired wealth. For those who were not born then, what led to JFK's inception was the 1962 standoff with the Cuban Missile crisis that brought us to the brink of an all-out nuclear war. With both, Nikita Khrushchev and John F. Kennedy's fingers on launch triggers, the following thirteen days of standoff proved to be the most critical in U.S. history.

The result, after four years of manufacturing work in hardware, software, and system development was a secure network, connecting the Pentagon with the White House, DOD organizations, other government offices, U.S. Embassies, military Command and Control, and Intel communities in the case of an all-out nuclear attack by our adversary, which was then the Soviet Union, and other potentially hostile nations.

In response to JFK's directives, three levels of classified systems were built, and deployed worldwide wherever there was a U.S. presence, and allied assets to protect. Where the complex system was initially a five-year program, it turned into a 30-year career event, and more for many of its participants. Numerous upgrades rapidly followed based on technological

advancements, such as satellite integration in the 70s, moving land-based trunk lines into the skies, technological upgrades to the ever-growing internal computer demands in speed, and memory capacity, external data storage devices, and increasing transmission speed, with the plan for eventual autonomous self-governing implementation by its visionary creators.

The 80s brought on more changes due to corporate demands to integrate large businesses into the well-established global communications grid. First, national laboratories were tied into the system which was quickly followed by major universities such as MIT, SRI Stanford, Cal Labs, and leading computer manufacturers such as IBM, UNIVAC, CDC, NCR, RCA, GE, DEC, Honeywell, Sperry Rand, Westinghouse, and Bell Labs, with Philco Ford holding the primary contract award. To achieve a seamless public transition, the highly classified top-secret network accesses needed to be declassified to a proprietary-level use, while still maintaining network, data, information, and access integrities. This challenge was accomplished through rigorous background investigations by the FBI, and other processing authorities such as DISCO¹, Military, and Intelligence agencies.

The next integration challenge came with the early 90s. By this time, the system had run flawlessly without one single security breach or hacking intrusion for thirty years. What elevated the system to an unexpected, unpredicted performance level to a public shift were several elements falling into place, namely: IBM produced the PC; Microsoft developed Windows, 2000 server platform, and business applications; Intel creating the microchip; and DARPA releasing the TCP/IP network protocol tying it all together.

What followed took the “NET” by storm. Public demand for cheap computers, challenging games, and designer software put such a great demand on the network, now declassified for public use, that it grew like uncontrollable, distributed spiderwebs, first in the U.S., and rapidly followed by Europe, Japan, Russia, and elsewhere, impossible to ever be stopped, or shut down. Unfortunately, JFK did not witness the monumental growth of his vision, today’s Internet, but his goal has been achieved to a much greater extent than ever envisioned.

While public users were presented with the world’s most sophisticated information system to enjoy, and benefit from, an army of hackers, spammers, and criminal elements were quick to make use of it with illicit intentions. Regardless, we, the visionaries, designers, and engineers, had never envisioned the potential benefit for private, public, and industries that

has elevated humankind to an unimaginable level in information sharing, communication speed, and education, affecting every lifestyle from using the Internet.

Furthermore, some autobiographies can be quite bland, and boring unless the subject personage is of importance, such as a prominent leader or perhaps a ruthless dictator. As such, I took the liberty to illustrate my life, and career through the eyes of the main character in my previously written novel series, Alex Bauer. In addition, I present many important events that occurred, and affected my real life as well, embracing capable individuals that became part in my career. Aside from the cast of principle characters, and work teams postulated in this book, I encountered thousands of individuals having had personal interactions with, within my thirty-year career, representing many organizations, agencies, and corporations working for, and within the parameters of the Department of Defense and military Intelligence. Every one of these individuals was important to the cause of protecting the nation from foreign attackers constantly putting pressure on the western world.

Regardless of the many efforts initiated to protect the nation, lasting peace, while a possibility, will never become a reality unless world leaders change their ambitious, egotistical, and self-serving mindsets. There is always someone, or faction, ambitious enough with a desire to take down the Giant, in this case the United States of America.

AUTHOR DECLARATION

It must be understood that Volume One, in this book, *INVISIBLE WARRIOR*, was not an endeavor by only one single person. To make the defense system work, an army the size of multiple brigades was necessary to design, develop, built, and deploy it to the world, with follow-on obligations to maintain all functions by another multitude brigades, hired and commissioned to manage the system for the duration of its functional lifespan.

The system, designed, and developed in conjunction with DARPA, DCA (currently DISA), and numerous other public, and private entities was built, delivered, and managed for the DOD by one or another government contractor, with segments subcontracted out to a multitude of smaller corporations, applying specific skillsets as required. Once all system elements were delivered as a whole, they were tested by an independent government monitoring agency prior to operational release. For deficiencies identified, and corrections necessary, a primary contractor was retained for a specific time, after which the system was turned over to one or more military organizations to be managed. Where a typical lifespan of a government and military system is designed for a duration of ten years, many lifespans were extended beyond the original lifetime by ten, twenty, thirty years, or more years (i.e., the Nuclear Defense System), directed by the nation's budget limitations, economic conditions, political settings, and global state of affairs.

While every sector deserves acknowledgement, the principle software architects, and specialists warrant special consideration for developing, and maintaining the world's most sophisticated software designs for its time.

Regardless of accrued costs and expenses, a national defense system is necessary to initiate, and maintain readiness to protect citizen's wellbeing, and the nation's safety. It is these conditions that drive and dictate cost, and readiness by government and military forces with a runaway technology in a world of uncertainty by an otherwise peace-loving, humanitarian, and democratic people of the western world. The struggle may all be in vain for the survival of mankind, but, in the end, humankind is created to enjoy the beauty of life to its fullest extent, hoping for a prolonged, and healthy existence in a relatively unstable environment created by a species driven by ambition and inspiration, destined to expand into the universe.

One should only hope that the future will provide a more manageable, and organized environment for all, striving for a better, and safer existence.

Whether globalization is a good thing or not, it is our eventual destiny, nevertheless. It takes a dedicated, and well-educated authority panel, sanctioned by all nations, to fight inhumane behavior initiated by terrorism, repression, and totalitarianism, to assure, and maintain the livelihood of each and every one of us. It is awareness, understanding, and compassion that elevates us above the animal kingdom, and should be valued, and preserved at all costs.

This book, as well as my previous three novels, was written to establish a trusting relationship between myself, the authorities, and my readers. Regardless of my intentions, many readers, especially the ones aspiring to conspiracies, paranormal, and supernaturally-inclined behaviors, refuse to accept the truth. They are the invincible who think that they know it all when, in fact, the only thing that matters in the cosmos are facts proven through science, not through fantasy, spirituality, or dreams, no matter how vivid, and believable a vision may be.

The second volume, *FULL DISCLOSURE*, is specifically written for the general public, and the logically, levelheaded individual to set the confusing, and mystifying accounts of Aliens, and UFO phenomena straight. *FULL DISCLOSURE*, the world's most anticipated announcement, expected by the public to be released directly by the government, will never take place. Volume Two, in this book will present the reasons.

The third Volume, *REALITY TODAY*, are mostly my own impressions and opinions after many years of research and studies into the worlds of science, human behavior, and ancient history, among others. Though biased to my own personal intellect, alternatives are not ruled out. It is up to the reader to investigate and formulate their own conclusions. I am only one brain pitted against eight billion presently living on earth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This attribute is for my family to let them know for how much I appreciate all of them. I could not express the patience each has displaying during my lengthy absences from family fun, and obligations. To justify my cause in the pursuit of a childhood dream, in hind-sight, I had no right to ever get married, and have children while hopping from country to country pursuing a full-time dedication to my job, and my country. No sane person would knowingly have put up with me, but in my defense, events overtook my rationale, resulting in a marriage to a beautiful woman, who managed to raise three girls in her image into responsible adults, bringing joy into our lives.

Also, my gratitude to my families across the oceans for keeping in touch with me, notwithstanding my many job-related, at times, lengthy disappearances without me sending back reports on my whereabouts and well-being.

My friends, and coworkers deserve as much reverence for treating me with respect, and gratitude equal to their own. I appreciate all of their efforts, and support, extended no matter what the situation—we all knew what I am inferring to—The Invisible Warriors.

Right from the start of my career contracting with DCA/DOD, I gained a new self-awareness after adapting to Alex Bauer. For the remainder of my life I plan to maintain this awareness by retaining recognition, and notoriety, as deserving of my alter ego, since it rewarded me with adventure, exploration, and a lifetime of fulfilling rewards. Since my acquired notoriety would quickly fade, reverting back to my birth identity, after retiring from contracting work, life would have reverted back to becoming nameless again. To preserve my acquired status, I continue to write as Alex Bauer within the volumes of my fiction work, which not even my eventual death will erase. After all, while human life is limited, fiction prevails into eternity.

In the name of national security, this book is dedicated to an army of Invisible Warriors, who, much like myself, devote an important part of their lives to a career instrumental for a critical cause. To share my recognition, I would have liked to list the names of core elements working on the AUTODIN, and other highly classified programs, with many more assigned from every military sector, civil services, government organizations, Intel agencies, and commercial contractors, but would require their permissions to do so.

Many at this time are still alive, while some have passed away, or enjoy retirement, but their efforts are not in vain. Their legacy will stand tall for many years, and ages to come, in a human, and technological evolution destined for a passage from Earth, eventually causing us to migrate through the cosmos, and on to the vast spaces of the universe, where we “Invisible Warriors” will leave our mark for eternity.

There is one important person that deserves special acknowledgement, not only for dedicating his career, but devoting his entire life to our cause. His name, as all of you will recognize is Robert Lawrence Krantz Sr., within the defense community also known as Mystery-man. “Why Mystery-man,” one could ask. Because not many, outside of his immediate career family, knew much of him other than his name. In contrast, I had a special connection with the man dating back to the closing of WWII. We were interdepending in each other in planning, testing, and evaluating new technologies not only for AUTODIN, but other classified systems he took part in. I dearly miss him, and so does his family. I was granted permission from his family to attribute the next section to his accomplishments.

ROBERT LAWRENCE KRANTZ SR.

SPECIAL DEDICATION

Computer Systems Analyst

Robert L. Krantz Sr., of Unison, Virginia, born April 16, 1921, in New York City, NY, passed away peacefully on January 26, 2013 at the Warren County Hospital in Front Royal, Virginia from a lengthy illness.

He was the only child of Frederick L. Krantz and Marietta Reirden Krantz. He spent his childhood living between New York City and Old Greenwich, CT. He graduated from Greenwich High School with the class of 1939. He later received his BS in Business Administration, from the University of Maryland.

He was a member of the General Motors Parade of Progress until WWII began. At that time, at age 20, he enlisted in the Army Air Core, and served as an Army pilot and instructor. He married Edna Ann Winters, from Providence, R.I., in Coffeyville, Kansas, while in the second phase of his flight training. At the end of the war he left the military for a short period and then joined the Army in 1948.

During his long Army career his family joined him, in Japan, Korean War, Germany, and several stateside assignments. He took only one assignment without his family, and that was to France. It was during his long Army career that he began his lifelong work with computers in the early 1960's. At that time a computer was the size of a tractor trailer, as he called it. He never could have imagined that they would shrink to the size of a chip, held in one's hand. He helped design the first computer for the Army Signal Corp, as the Army Intel it was known back then. Retiring from the Army in 1964, after serving from 1942, he remained in the Army Reserve until retirement.

His next career was with the Department of Defense, Army Strategic Communications Command as a Computer Systems Analyst working with DCA's AUTODIN system development. As program liaison to DOD, installed defense communication systems throughout the world during the Cold War. His vast knowledge in defense communication systems allowed him to be a mentor to thousands of others working in the defense industry. He, and most of his peers, spent much time overseas in the company of the military, embassy staff, and other more covert arenas. It was for people like him that the nation today is a safer place to live than it was during the Cold War.

Following his permanent return to Washington, DC, he continued to work with the Overseas AUTODIN system working on the 73 AUTODIN Enhancement Project, developing the A&E Design Criteria for the relocations of the Alaska ASC to Taegu Korea, and Nha Trang, RVN to Augsburg, Germany.

With the drawdown in Southeast Asia, he developed plans for the re-homing and removal of the three ASCs in that area, after which he worked with a task force charged with developing the specifications for the Memory/Memory Control Upgrade of 1978, and the 78/79 AUTODIN Upgrade Project. During the late 70's, he conducted many consolidation studies and analyzed plans for installation of Army AMME'S in CONUS and Overseas.

The AUTODIN Processor Replacement Project, which advanced the Overseas ASCs to keep them operational until the mid-90's, was the first large project which was solely under the control of DCA. Mr. Krantz had been deeply involved in that project from its origin, having participated in the development of the Statement of Work, Request for Procurement, Proposal Evaluation, and the review and critique of contractor deliverables. He continued to work with this project until retirement at age 73.

While at DCA, Mr. Krantz received eight outstanding performance awards, one Sustained Superior Performance award, three high quality performance awards, and the Director's Meritorious Civilian Service Award.

He enjoyed his retirement to the fullest living on his farm in Unison, with his wife of 70 years, Edna Krantz, his herd of Registered Black Angus, and keeping his farm equipment operational. He stayed active and involved with the Loudoun County Library Foundation, The Loudoun County Hospital Sale (in charge of electronics), Election Polls, reading, writing his autobiography, and spending many hours each day on his computers keeping informed and in touch with his many friends around the world. He was a member of the Returned Services League of Australia, and a member of the American Angus Association.

He was a man who had a "Joie de vivre" and exuded that to all around him. He worked, and traveled the world, clocking millions of miles and making lasting friendships. A voracious reader with an inquisitive mind, he enjoyed a glass (or two) of wine and good conversation with family and friends. He was known for his huge smile, and his laugh, and never met a stranger.

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VOLUME ONE
INVISIBLE WARRIOR

PART ONE EARLY LIFE

POSTWAR GERMANY

How do I begin to describe my persona, or rather, the dual personas of the author of this book, and action man Alex Bauer, chosen to defend this nation against radical Islam, and other potential threats? Where one was born into postwar Germany, the other, Alex Bauer, did not emerge until adulthood, seeking out an adventurous future, but instead was provided with endless challenges extended by the nation's largest Intelligence organization, the Department of Defense. To reach this point in my life, and to understand what created the foundation for my very being, I must start with the beginning.

I can remember certain snapshots of life's splendors while securely cuddled under a blanket resting within the security of the baby stroller my mom put out in the backyard to catch the day's waning sunrays while hanging up washed linen on the drying line. My brain, still in its infant state, was not yet capable of assimilating the big picture, the immediate environment, until several years later during my first school years. For now, I was content with watching the most prominent face in my life occasionally checking in on my wellbeing while my eyes kept staring at the blue of the afternoon sky. Then something wondrous happened. A small creature darted in and out of my vision every so often, too quick for my brain to comprehend. What I watched was a bird picking cherries off the tree. Many months would pass before my brain registered the similarity of the incidence when introduced to my first picture book. There are many more snapshots like this, all absorbed, and recorded in my brain.

When I entered first grade, I was overwhelmed by the many kids crammed into the classroom I had to share my days with. Already then, I sensed that there were certain differences between me, and the other kids. Since I had been brought up in a very sheltered environment, primarily by my mom protecting her child from the aftermath of WWII, the results clearly reflected on my personality. Undernourished, withdrawn, and introverted when on, and off school ground, I was bullied almost daily, if not by the class's principle bully, then by other kids trying to get their licks in on a timid young boy. It was not an ideal environment for any child to grow up in. Winding up with an occasional black eye, bruised rib, or blue toe with the nail falling off some days later, I was fearful many days while walking the mile to school, not

knowing what the day had in store for me. Well, one endless year went by after another, only broken up by the annual, and too short, school break, mostly spent at my grandma's farm.

It was there where I blossomed over the six weeks of summer break by forgetting the world of obedience, and discipline. For most of the year my days were occupied with learning, and homework, but here it was nothing but playtime. My days were filled with adventures, whether it be fishing in a creek, boating along the Danube River banks—which, by the way, bordered the farm's property line—or accompanying my uncle, and Grandpa on their frequent hunting trips. It was a time to explore the wildlife, plentiful along the wooded riverbanks, and to receive much of my early education on worldly things. It was also a time that formulated desires for a life of adventure in the times ahead.

While I had siblings, one sister, and one brother, I spent much of the time alone. Then one day at age seven, we children were split up; my siblings were sent to Austria to live with one of Dad's brothers, and family, and I sent to another of Dad's brothers, and family as a result of the early death of my mom, a casualty of the war. I silently watched while Dad grieved for years. He was heartbroken.

I was too young then to realize the great loss of a personal death other than watching Dad fall apart emotionally as well as physically. But as the saying goes, time heals all wounds. Dad showed up two years later at Grandma's place to take me back home to his household. Right away I realized how empty the home had become with only me, and Dad living in the house. My siblings would remain with my Austrian relatives through the remainder of grade school. He did not have the time, and dedication to care for all of us. With him working fulltime, and me finishing up what remained of my grade school years—after which I thought the misery of going to school back home would turn around—somehow, I managed to keep afloat. But it did not last. Our bond was broken one day with the appearance of a stepmother. Dad had remarried for the reason of having the family back together again, but things would never be in harmony as they had been with my deceased mom.

Life with a new woman in the house became unbearable at times, especially for me. For reasons I would never understand, Dad turned against me. I became the whipping boy for my stepmother until she bore her own children over the following years. Already in my early teens, I became even more withdrawn. Well, grade school finally came to an end, but not without

leaving lasting deep psychological scars. I came to dislike the culture I grew up in because everybody bore down on me in an environment where I had to endure disciplinary acts wanting to escape it all. But destiny, as unpredictable it is, kept a hold on the independent future I so desperately sought.

Not all was misery. Since Dad was a mechanical engineer, on a relatively harmonious day, I learned quite a bit from him. From him, I picked up the basics of analytical thinking, troubleshooting approach, and problem solving. The best way to learn any of it was through demonstrating by example. It avoided learning through books, and shop manuals. One day Dad came home with a bicycle frame, and a couple of pedals, and wheels somebody had ditched at the junkyard. He spent some money on wheel bearings, and other minor parts to get started. Then we put the rest of the bike together, aligned the handlebar, and wheels, and tested it.

I was the proud owner of my first bike. It took me around the neighborhood, and to nearby stores, though not without mishaps. First, there were no brakes. Drum brakes were not available, and the handbrake was not usable. It lacked innertubes for the wheels. Rubber products had been used up by the war, and manufacturing had not yet geared up. The resultant bike ride consisted of shudders to the spine, and blurry vision accompanied by many spills from the lack of brakes. The bike received an upgrade the following year after innertubes became available. But it got me places for several years.

Years later, after landing my first job, again with instructions, and help from Dad, I would learn how to strip, and rebuild my first motorcycle.

Following grade school, at age twelve, due to my dad's insistence, I spent some time on the farm, "to get in shape." I even entered the agricultural school in a nearby city to get educated in farming, and raising livestock. What I inherited from the ordeal were heaps of hard labor, and complete social separation, but this resulted in the physical strength I had been lacking. I could have never believed the dedication, and labor the small farmer puts into making a meager sustenance. It was up before daybreak tending to livestock, milking cows, and taking care of barn, and property, spending a minimum of eight hours in the fields. Depending on the season, the days might be occupied with sowing, weeding, watering, mowing grass for fodder, and plowing fields for eventual harvesting the fruits of the earth. Life was difficult. The ten-minute lunch break in between morning, and afternoon shifts, which wore away the limited energy I had, refueled me only with a

cold bowl of milk accompanied by a slice of bread in the morning, and the day ending with the only warm meal, hearty, but limited by selection. After tending to animals, and the stable at days end, I then dragged my weary body to bed, totally exhausted, only to repeat the pattern the next day, then the next, and another, and so on, year in, and year out.

At the end of the second year my dad came to visit. Surprisingly, he presented choices. There were only two. "You can stay here, and become a farmer," he offered, "or you can come back home again, and find a job."

Neither choice was very appealing, but I made up my mind without much consideration. I chose the latter. I was not cut out to be a farmer, and preferred to live with my dad, hoping things would work out with my stepmother. The reason was clear to me. While farming, by its very nature, may contribute to personal health, and longevity from intense physical activity, the rewards back then were very limited. From a recreational perspective, there were none. From the incentive point of view, there were even less, and the same for intellectual rewards. With nothing but work, there was not much time or energy left for the farmer to enjoy life. Situations today are quite different, but not everywhere. I have learned the hardship farmers have, cutting out a meager living in poor countries. In industrialized places, with the aid of mechanization, and automation much of the physical labor has shifted to machinery, but this came with a new burden: higher prices on goods, and services being passed on to consumers. Regardless of its effects, it is called progress, nevertheless.

At the end of my time on the farm, my personal reward was a second-hand bicycle presented from the matron of the farm before bidding me goodbye. Since my dad arrived on his bicycle after a strenuous, twenty-hour ride, at least now, he had company on the way back. Unlike today, the bike was built solidly, and heavy, but came without a shifter. The ride back home from dawn to way into dusk turned out enjoyably. Aside from the bike, and learning the rudimentary of farming, I had acquired one more benefit. I had gotten in shape, as Dad had wanted. Our talks on the way home were mostly huffs, puffs, in between grunts while straining uphill, followed by cheers of the downhill rush. Riding in file, conversation was limited because of traffic rushing past on the open roads. We made it home in one piece without mishap, and much like after a day's work on the farm, I was exhausted.

Showing off my only possession in the world to my buddies back home, I was proud of my "new" bike. My old bike, to my dad's objection, went to the

junkyard. Being the proud owner of new transport meant I was ready for the world. In the following years during summer break, this bike took me to places I used to only dream about.

Where many of my school buddies would spend summer lounging at the lakeshores of the Bodensee (bottomless lake), I adventured across the borders into foreign lands, and languages. Over the span of several summers, I made it to Italy, Spain, France, Austria, and Switzerland, sometimes seeking campgrounds, and other times spending the nights at a hostel. Aside from absorbing nature's splendors—the Alps left in the distance, the slowly passing terrain on both sides of the way to the next destination—I was able to visit places like Rome, Pisa, Venice, Milan, Florence, Monaco, Nice, Marseille, Barcelona, and Gibraltar, as well as enjoying pristine beaches all along the Mediterranean Sea.

My most memorable place of it all was Venice. Even though I had just entered puberty at age thirteen, I could sense a romantic energy prevalent throughout the city amid the narrow passage ways, canals, gondolas, San Marcos Plaza, and Lido Island with its clean, but popular beaches. In the evenings, while leisurely strolling alongside the canals, aside from getting hit by an occasional whiff of sewage odor, the attraction was overwhelming. After several more visits there, to this day I can still feel a great sense of romantic notions when thinking of the place. Since then, while waste removal still presents a problem throughout Venice, attempts have been made, though gradually, to treat, and process waste with modern day techniques to attract more pampered, and demanding travelers.

Despite the pleasures of enjoying my travels, it was not always fun. To get to places, I had to overcome the barrier of mountains blocking easy passage. Mostly headed southward toward the Mediterranean Sea, my annual destination, I had one of three choices, and challenges to overcome. They were Brenner Pass through Austria, Saint Goddard Pass through Switzerland, or Saint Bernard Pass through France, in addition to several minor foothill passes along the way. Getting across the passes was backbreaking, and laborious. With only one gear on the bike, loaded down with a backpack, and tent strapped onto the carrier, my weight on the pedals was not always enough to move the bike along. The only option was to walk, and push uphill on foot for close to four hours until I reached the top, the border crossing. But a reward was waiting after reaching the peak. The downhill ride, with the wind pressing against my face, and body, was pure pleasure for the next

twenty minutes into the valley. From there on it would be another eight hours of laborious peddling until I reached the next target destination to bed down for the night.

Though strenuous for most part, the six weeks of travel always paid off. After only a few days the results became clearly visible on muscle tone, physical endurance, and mental disposition. All problems accumulated throughout the year melted away, waning by the day. At the end of the journey, my body was as hard as could be with a mind to match the year's challenges ahead until the next summer.

A change came at age twelve with Dad having an announcement one day after returning from his work. "Son," he said, with the sternness I had grown used to, "I've got a job for you." I had been preparing for college, but the announcement was not an unwelcome revelation. Dad was an established mechanical engineer, and had been on the design, and development team for the Hindenburg airship among other renowned engineering achievements, such as the very first hydrofoil-powered ship. It became apparent that he wanted me to follow his career line. Although I was startled at first because of the trust he extended, it only took minutes for me to decide on accepting, as though I had a choice.

Learning the location for the job, I readily accepted. The workplace was located some twenty miles from home nearby an ancient city. Lindau, a walled city built into Lake Constance near the Austrian border, is a jewel among German cities. Built by the Romans two thousand years before as their last outpost expanding to the north, it has served the local population well. Its walls are still standing today, its buildings reflect a Roman architecture of the same age, streets bedecked by cobblestone, it's isolation from the mainland by two bridges, and ships, and townspeople are protected from the natural elements by a harbor guarded by two landmarks, a lighthouse on one side, and the symbol of the city on the other, a huge monument signifying the city's heritage, a challenging lion for anyone not welcome from across the lake. The city, confined by walls, maintained by a steady population of fifteen thousand, had been stable since it was built, and is solely dependent on small merchants to serve the citizens, and tourism. No other industry was home to the place.

To get from home to my workplace involved commuting almost two hours each way beginning with a lengthy walk to the station. A train ride, followed

by another lengthy bus ride, got me to my final destination. In spite of the time wasted in transit, it did not take long for me to embrace my new environment. I was introduced to my training coaches, met new faces my age, and was exposed to the wonders of modern-day industrial technology. I had earned a scholarship with one of Germany's aircraft companies. The reason I was hired on so early, at age twelve, was due to the country's post war situation. I was recruited during the first wave of a new industrial workforce for the purpose of rebuilding German's industry, followed by managing it once we were trained, and proficient with handling the foreign labor the industry was forced to employ.

With the loss of seventy five percent of the capable male population during the war, Germany was caught up without a labor force. The women who had worked in the industries, primarily weapons and munitions manufacturing, while their sons and husbands were fighting on several battle fronts, could not support the industrial plans the Allies had in mind for rebuilding the collapsed nation. As a result, the borders were opened, offers were extended, inviting labor forces from Italy, Spain, Yugoslavia, Greece, and other surrounding countries. Much like in the present day E.U., available prospects arrived by the thousands. The only difference between then, and now was that the arrivals were invited, and extended a five-year green card with possible citizenship as long as the demand for labor was there, whereas today the onslaught of unskilled labor forces fleeing their countries has been a great burden for E.U. nations to carry.

It was this diverse labor force that made up postwar German industry, and population expansion. There was only one catch to it all. None of the immigrants were trained for the jobs, let alone how to manage others. It was this situation I acquired when entering the Industrial Academy of Southern Germany. Organized, and run much like any academy, our morning hours were spent in classrooms, with industrial training for the remainder of the day, much like an apprenticeship covering all forms of industrial machinery, materials shaping and processing, metals fabrication, and whatever skills it took to create an industry left in shambles by the war. The success became obvious in only a short time. There was, however, still the question of managing the rapidly-growing demand throughout the various industry sectors, namely automotive, transportation, power, and every other part of infrastructure necessary to build a successful nation.

My future was promising, and I was destined for success. But to achieve

it, I spent four years of daily intense education at the academy, followed by many laborious hours at the industrial complex, emerging fully exhausted at the end of an arduous day to commute another two hours back to my home town. What made the experience somewhat endurable was that we were paid a stipend of 50 DM, a small, but welcomed monthly earning. Unfortunately for me, my earnings were mostly absorbed by train and bus fares. At the end of the month, I had a few bills left to buy, and enjoy one bunch of bananas, which had just come on the German marketplace, and which I thought was the marvel of fruits, and a cone of ice cream on Sundays, and that was it. The few measly Deutsch Mark remaining I saved up for nine months to be able to purchase my first pair of pants, a jacket, and a shirt with matching tie, in the fashion of the world popular singers' attire back then, such as Elvis Presley. The singer, popular in the United States, found new notoriety overseas after he entered the U.S. Army, and shipped off to Germany for his tour of duty. He became everybody's idol, including mine.

I should point out that the four years at the academy was not only demanding work, and rigorous learning. While limited on recreational activities, there were times for fun, and games as well. Aside from scholastic achievements, I also participated in intercollegiate soccer, sculling (single, dual, and four teams), fencing (skilled in foil, and dagger), and sailing at the shores of one of Europe's large freshwater bodies, Lake Constance. Most enjoyable was the spectacular view into the world known as the Bavarian Alps locally, the Austrian Alps to the east, and the Swiss Alps to the south, across the lake. It did not take many years of a prospering Germany to draw a society of affluent travelers seeking to enjoy the southern shores of the lake, which became the northern European's vacation paradise to enjoy swimming, diving, boating, and fishing pleasures the expanse of water offered.

Growing into early adulthood surrounded by likeminded friends, I enjoyed my time while in back of my mind a germinating seed was growing, to explore more of what the world had to offer. Television was already an established entertainment vehicle in America, but it was not yet available in Germany. With a limited budget, though my stipend grew to 100 DM over four years in meager advancements, my only options available were frequent visits to the local library, or an occasional American-made Western film, which I totally enjoyed. I became an avid reader. It was here where my future was ultimately forged into becoming an adventurer. My environment, as promising, and rewarding as it would have been, was not good enough

anymore. Though mostly dormant, and subconscious at the time, my aspirations were set much higher.

As a result of my reading everything I could get my hands on, one day sparked my interests. I should mention that because of Adolph Hitler's burning of literary works, not much German cultural reading was available in schools, and libraries. Schools were prohibited to teach about the world wars, and there was a scarcity of materials available as well. There was, however, ample material on hand from other countries, especially those authored by British, and Americans. It was these that changed my life. At first, I came across a set of adventure novel series written by James Fennimore Cooper, a prolific, and popular American writer of the early 19th century, translated into German language by Karl May. Cooper was best known for adventure novels set in the American Old West, spurring my spirits.

Months later, I took on a series of novels written by British novelist Perl S. Buck, the daughter of missionary parents to China, Indonesia, and other oriental places, who further inspired my dreams, though distant, and unreachable at the time. As I was highly intrigued by writings from her Asian travels, it added fuel to my future planning. Only a dream then, it took more years of labor before destiny would allow me to fulfill my aspirations.

The relationship with my dad, for the most part, was tolerable. Though there were times of tension, and disagreement, life at home was endurable as long as I played by his rules, which was not always the case. As every youngster can attest to, there is a feeling of injustice usually accompanying the end-result in a disagreement, with the youngster succumbing to the parent's ultimate decision. One such example became a major dispute between me, and Dad. It was over the first automobile I had purchased without his prior approval. The thought of asking him never occurred to me. I will cite the dialogue exchange that followed. The vehicle in question was a BMW 1928 classic, which I purchased in the spring of 1956. I had just turned sixteen, and obtained my driver's license.

My first choice was the newly manufactured Beetle, the most popular car at that time. Unfortunately, because of its popularity, there was a nine-month waiting period for a delivery. Aside from that, I couldn't afford its purchase cost. My second choice was a dated vehicle, pre-war, which was cheapest at the time. I suspected that someday these vehicles would be appreciated once more, but classic cars had not made their appearance yet. To find an affordable vehicle, I canvassed the German countryside on weekends. As

luck had it, the car I found turned out to be a vintage model, red in color, sporting a black top, and trimmings, large, and shiny headlights: a first-built model 1928 BMW coupe. The current owner, a farmer, remembered one stored by his father, but forgotten under a haystack in the barn. After digging it out from beneath the hay, I bought it on the spot for the mere cost of 400 Deutsch Marks, equivalent to \$100.

Right after Dad came home from work, he spotted the vehicle sitting in the driveway. As I recall, the dialogue was heated, and went like this:

“Whose piece of junk is sitting in the driveway?”

“It’s mine, and it’s not junk. It’s in mint condition.”

“I don’t care. Get rid of it.”

“But why?”

“What will the neighbors think when they wake up?” Life was lived for the neighbors. It was a common result caused by the war, where everybody, mostly woman, and children, was dependent on each other.

“I don’t care. I want the car.”

“Get rid of it or I’ll have the police lock you up.”

“That’s not fair. I just bought it.”

“As long as you live in my house, you do what I tell you.”

“Then I’ll move.”

“You stay until I say so.”

“For how long?”

“Until you are twenty-one.”

The decision was made. I was trapped for five more years. One week later, I was given one last ultimatum to get rid of the vehicle. Unhappy, and beaten, I returned my precious classic to the farmer. He was just as unhappy about having to face the “piece of junk” again, as he called it. I told him to hang on to it for a few more years, because I’d be back again. Unfortunately for the BMW, and for me, the opportunity never came. To keep in harmony with Dad, I had purchased a scooter instead. Though it looked more like a toy, it pleased him while it got me around cheaply.

Living for your neighbors, was the prevalent mentality back then, not only for my dad, but with others as well for keeping law, and order. Dad lived, and abided by this law until the end of his days. Even to this day, many elderly Germans still live in the fear set forth by Hitler’s propaganda chief, Heinrich Himmler. It became a cultural condition not easily broken.

That’s the story of my first purchase, the controversial BMW. It was one

of the reasons adding to the cause for me turning my back on Germany, its people, and its culture. But that was still years ahead.

Another sore point in my early life was a stamp collection I lost to my younger stepsister. The collection included an extensive set of postage stamps I had gathered since childhood. Many came from an uncle, and relatives living in Switzerland. As director of the Swiss commodity exchange in Zurich, my uncle received mail from around the globe. Knowing my passion for collecting stamps, every so often he would send me a package containing the precious cargo. For this reason, I acquired a complete set of stamps featuring Hitler in full-colored uniform, in every possible portrait variance, slightly aging with time, popular during the initial years of his reign. The printed stamps were considered ordinary postage during the war years, but became valuable with collector's decades after the war. I don't miss the acquired value of the stamps. What I do miss was the hard-earned, collectible commodity from a past time of tyranny within a lingering, livid memory.

Four busy years later, after graduating from the academy with diploma in hand, I was set to conquer the world. Still being a minor in age, in order to leave home, I had to get permission from Dad, the ultimate decision-making power. When I approached him on the subject of leaving, naturally he refused. "You'll stay until you are twenty-one." That was it. I had not expected an absolute refusal. My dreams of moving on were shattered. In his mind, after my mom gave birth, and he raised me, in return, as was common in Germany, I was to pay my dues. There was no alternative, or way out. I was trapped living at home for several more years. It took weeks of mulling over the rejection to come to my senses, and see it his way. My life would be on hold until age twenty-one, at that age an eternity.

"What are my options?" I asked.

Dad, as usual, was ready with an answer. "You can work at my place. I already prepped management, who agreed to hire you." What I did not know at the time was Dad's influence with executive management at the manufacturing plant. Germany, in pre-war times, had five aircraft manufacturing firms: Messerschmitt, Heinkel, Junkers, Focke-Wulf, and Dornier². After the war, there was only one still in existence. It was the firm Dad worked at, and that I entered. Though prohibited at the time by the Yalta Summit Agreement,³ a joint Allied resolution on German's future banning

them from building aircraft, or other war-related machinery, the company had geared up by producing weaving machines for linen, and cloth production. While it was a lucrative business for its time, supplying weaving products worldwide, the firm's executive management could not abstain from building further aircraft. After lengthy deliberations with NATO Allied command, the company was eventually granted the first postwar craft assigned to the drawing board.

It was here where I started my job. Being member of the design, and development team, I partook in the production of the first postwar aircraft. The design, a reconnaissance craft, proved to be successful, with numerous foreign countries placing purchase orders for military use. With the end of the developing phase, the challenges I sought also came to an end. I had no desire to revert my job back to weaving production, and secretly prepared for an exit strategy, but it was not as simple as I had expected. Moving away from home, regardless of age or status, taking on a job, or relocating out of one's birth town required a local police clearance, picture ID, or passport. Obtaining any of those was a lengthy process of waiting until a personal background investigation was completed, and a certificate granted. Without one, due to national travel and employment restriction laws, it was impossible to find work in another town, or city. So, my patience was tested for several months.

The day finally came with the notification to pick up my approved documents. The next challenge was to get a job release certificate from my employer. Dad would surely be notified, but I lucked out. Unaware of my planning, he was stunned when I confronted him with the news. "I am leaving home."

"You can't do this. Not possible. I forbid it," was his response. "I'll have you put in jail."

Regardless of his refusal I stood firm, my plans set. "I already quit my job." It was another bombshell to him. In spite of his anger that followed, I felt sorry for my dad, watching the resultant emotional changes he underwent. Arguing was never an option with him, as was prevalent throughout German culture. A father's decision was the law. It had to be upheld by any son or daughter. After demonstrating my insistence over the following days, we finally came to an agreement. I did not have to further explain my decision to leave home. He was well aware that my life had turned into sheer misery after he remarried. My stepmother had it in for me.

For years, where my friends would be out playing, I would be forced to take care of the house, including her two daughters. She forced me into a slave-like position with household chores awaiting me from morning to late at night when not at school.

For this reason, Dad allowed me to temporarily visit Zurich, home of my deceased mom, under the supervision of her brother, the executive director for the Swiss Commodity Stock Exchange, who I would be living with. Expecting an independent life free from controlling adults, I readily agreed just to get away from home, and especially my stepmother. The day finally arrived when I stepped off the platform onto the train, ready to depart with Dad waving goodbye. It was the first time I saw him with tears in his eyes. Waving back, surprised but pleased, I surmised, "There are emotions in everybody." The train slowly pulled away from the station, accelerating rapidly towards my destination.

The train ride turned out pleasantly. The four hours, restricted within the coach compartment, went by quickly while I enjoyed the mountainous landscape amid lush green pastures spreading across the prolific habitat of the Swiss countryside. What the future held in store was uncertain. I did not dwell on it. My mind was open to any opportunity. It gave me time to think about the past, what could have been, and what should have been if my mother were still alive, in which case I may not have been sitting on the train. Thinking of her, and the short few years under her loving care brought on a certain sadness, but switching my thoughts to the present, and the reason impelling me to leave home brought me back to reality. I felt no guilt, and harbored no anger to either one. What did stay with me were two pieces of advice from Dad I would live by in the years ahead that essentially drove my ambition, and formulated my career. One set up the foundation for my future: "One must create one's own destiny." Most of us are not fortunate enough to either inherit wealth, or have the means for paving the way into one's future. The second rule I heard a number of times during childhood, ranking equal in importance, was his insistence: "Don't come crying to me unless you have the answer."

It may sound cruel to a child, but it certainly left its mark. Having heard the rulings throughout my growing up, they left Dad's permanent fingerprint on my brain.

SWITZERLAND

I will not dwell on the year that followed in Switzerland, but let me assure you it was filled with pleasure, and excitement. A city ranking amid the world's best in culture, industry, commerce, and trade, Zurich was built on an independent heritage dating back to Wilhelm Tell, and its founders. Why the city was built in the first place was the result of constant battles between the adjacent nations of Germany, Italy, and France during the medieval ages in late 15th century.

What made Zurich unique was its isolation from the rest of the world. But that was then, and on into the 20th century. Now, it is a thriving metropolis for business, and travel, much like any international city. Most renowned is its fame for secure banking, commodity trade, and weapons specialties. Yes, many of the world's precision weapons, and munitions are designed, and manufactured there. Ask any armament trader, and he will confirm it.

It did not take much with my credentials to find a job. I landed at one of the precision manufacturing places, which provided me with the means to support my prolific lifestyle, reserved for evening, and nightly hours spent at one of the city's thriving nightlife spots, the Niederdorf. One could find every conceivable activity from simple bars serving any drink fashionable at the time to more secluded, and private happenings taking place behind closed doors. As far as my participation was concerned, my recollection for the year could best be described as hazy, probably because it was the first time, I was free of the bondage my dad had held over me for seventeen years. While I was allowed out on weekends while living at home, my activities had been limited to a strict cultural abidance of: "What will the neighbors say?"

In contrast, now, living in America, where many of my neighbors live in an independent "Do whatever pleases you" manner, I still live by the standards of my inherited values, but I am not complaining. My standards are that of extending respect for "thy family, and neighbor, treasure nature, and its splendor," and enjoying the beauty of life every waking hour no matter what the political, and economic conditions may be.

The mistake I made that lost me the independent life I had gained was from the prodding of Dad to come home for the end of the year holidays. I agreed, though reluctantly, and made the journey home only to find out that, because I was still a minor, Dad had confiscated my passport, and visa to Switzerland since he still held ultimate responsibility over my life. The

reason for his actions was that I broke my promise to live with my Swiss relatives. I had rented a small, but clean room from an aging lady, who welcomed the additional earnings received from my rent.

Facing a restricted life at home again for the next three years, I endured it with a “grin, and bear it” attitude. It turned out to be tolerable since I had come to an agreement for him to be more accepting due to my current age, as well as my being a seasoned traveler with foreign working experience to boot.

My former employer offered me my old job back, and everybody was happy. Dad was happy I was able to pay rent for staying at his home; the employer was happy because they reaped the rewards of their investment on me. My former friends were happy they had their school buddy back. As for me, I tolerated my return to my former life in a disciplined establishment with a reserved reluctance, but made the best of it. I met a girl that I liked, had a deserving income, and did much traveling weekends, and vacation times, but one thought always stayed with me: seek out foreign lands. But, to achieve that, I had to wait three more years to earn the right as an adult.

The day finally arrived. I celebrated my 21st birthday with friends, and colleagues, a most joyful event in my life. To the disappointment of family, friends, and girlfriend, it marked the most important milestone to my existence. I made the announcement, “I am off to see the world.” But the world still had to wait for my arrival. I was short of funds. While I received an earning appropriate for my job skills, it was an apprentice’s pay, again with only a few Marks left after paying for commuting, and rent to Dad. On the positive side, my present job held a promising career with rapid advancements into management, and eventual directorship, but it would also absorb my life in its entirety. It was something I was educated, and trained for, but it was not the life I had dreamed of for so many years. I had to completely sever myself from the present environment, which I eventually did.

The only difference on the railway platform this time was that, instead of Dad bidding me goodbye, it was my girlfriend in tears. I promised, “I’ll be back to visit soon.” By then everyone knew of my plans, and ambitions, conquer the world. My immediate destination was Munich, where I spent one year earning enough to sustain a living, but not enough to save up for the voyage.

“A voyage where?” I had not the slightest inkling as to its ultimate aim, that of immigrating to America. While it was still a dream, it was not an option. The requirements for anyone to enter the U.S., aside from a passport, was by having a personal sponsor. My next stop was a visit to the immigration, and naturalization office. Conveniently, there was one in Munich. Six weeks later I held the green, bright, and shiny document to the world in my hands. I felt euphoric. Investigating further, to my displeasure, only Canada, and Africa were my options as an immigrant. Since Canada was too far away without the money for the voyage, I applied to Johannesburg, South Africa for acceptance. It was a place where it was feasible to reach with the meager savings, I had acquired working in Munich, and sharing an apartment with a friend.

With this immediate goal in mind, I considered it only a temporary step. I set out to purchase a vehicle, a used, but spacious sedan I converted to a sleeper by modifying its front seats to collapse. It would allow sufficient room to stretch my body for a night’s sleep after a planned-out daily journey headed south. Yes, I planned to drive the eight thousand miles to my destination. I had the route, and cost already planned, with direction, fuel stops, nightly intervals, and total driving time calculated to the day, providing nothing came along, such as breakdowns, interruptions, and delays which, by the way, I had no provisions for. I was forced to wing it all the way. The day finally came when I quit my job, packed my belongings into the trunk of the vehicle, and headed southwest on the lengthy trip. What made the time enjoyable was my best friend decided to accompany me for the journey. His goal was to reach his older brother, who had migrated to Africa years earlier.

The morning arrived when we headed off into an uncertain future in anticipation of hopefully reaching our destination without any unforeseen mishaps. Finally, on the road of my dreams, for the first time I felt like a true adventurer. The first leg would take us into France, followed by stops along the way in Spain, Gibraltar, crossing the Mediterranean Sea into Algeria, then on through Niger, Nigeria, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Zambia, and Botswana, with final destination Johannesburg, South Africa.

All went well traveling along the Riviera coastlines for the first several days until we reached Gibraltar. It was here where we decided to rest a couple of hours to enjoy the sandy shores, and blue swells of sea waves, too enticing to ignore. But fate was not in our favor. After spending time on the beach, and in the water, it was time for lunch. Having calculated out our

budget to last the trip, we usually skipped breakfast, and stopped for lunch, and dinner with whatever we could scrape together from marketplaces along the way. Today, even lunch was denied us. As soon as we approached the vehicle, “Dammit,” my buddy raged, “we’ve been robbed.” Taking stock, we saw that we had been ransacked of all of our belongings. Gone were our clothes, shoes, suitcases, money, and passports. We were stranded.

What does one do after realizing such misfortune? One panics, if only briefly. Rational thinking quickly takes hold over the unfortunate situation. What could one do when stranded, penniless, and unfamiliar with the Spanish language? Seek out the local embassy.

We lucked out. There was a German consulate in town. After submitting a theft report, we were issued temporary travel papers for the return trip, and handed some money, just enough, with our promise to repay after getting back to where we originated from. My dreams were shattered. It was the end of my becoming an adventurer. Disgruntled, disillusioned, and starved, three days later we arrived back at the German border crossing.

We did not return to Munich since I had quit my job, and gave up the apartment there. I had a better idea. I needed to be close to the Allied bases in order to get me into either Canada or the United States. With that in mind, my buddy, and I landed in Manheim, a city surrounded by American military bases.

BACK IN GERMANY

While the city by the Rhine River was an unplanned change in direction, it was still a new start. Finding work did not present a problem since industrial jobs in the area were plentiful. My problem was getting close to English-speaking servicemen. I found American soldiers everywhere I could, but it was not easy to make acquaintance. Many did not speak German, some only a few broken-up sentences, and hardly any could converse in my language. One morning I took the bull by its horns, and paid a visit to the largest military base, Coleman Barracks – USAREUR⁴.

“HALT,” the sign proclaimed. While a barrack was indicated, referring to a small army base, I found it to be a busy air field, adjacent to Rhein-Main International Airport. After asking the gate guard, who spoke the local language fairly well, for a job, I was directed to the management building. I lucked out once more when the desk administrator handed me a job application to fill out. I must have qualified for it since I received a call from the office a few days later stating, “You are hired. Report to the base tomorrow.”

My heart skipped a few beats as I readily accepted the position assigned. I could not have done better to get in amid the Allied forces for the goals I had set out years ago. Reporting for duty the next day, I was embraced by likeminded employees at the airfield, all working for the German Civil Service. Until that day I had not even been aware that there was such a service in the country. It suited me well. For once, I did not have to think, and the job was easy. It was a breeze, literally, driving an aircraft refueling tanker across the fields after acquiring the appropriate Class A commercial license. In addition, weeks later after receiving more training, I was able to shuttle arriving aircraft from the passenger port to the dedicated tie-down place assigned to the arriving craft. Military pilots, due to their mission requirements, were considered the world’s best pilots, but did not necessarily have the patience to maintain the craft. That was a task for people like me.

Almost from the first day, I began pestering American soldiers with my plight of finding a sponsor. While I captured many an ear, nobody was willing to commit to the responsibility. After all, a soldier was on overseas assignment detached from home with only one thing on his mind: having fun while in Germany, and they did. Local bars, and clubs were full of military patrons. For the establishments they were the best customers because they

had the money to spend which, consequently, attracted many young girls, in turn benefiting both customer, and hostess. I learned that many of the girls held similar aspirations to me, wanting to find a sponsor.

I always wondered where the notion originated for wanting to leave one's birthplace. It might have been the post-war conditions driving the desire, having lost most of one's family, or another personal reason. From what I read in newspapers, every ocean liner that left Hamburg, and Bremer Haven was filled with refugees headed for the North American continent. The driving factor for me was the adventure novels I used to read. Part of it came from Fennimore Cooper books, illustrating the vast lands across the Atlantic with everybody being a successful rancher owning large stretches of land, aside from a nation having a prospering industry, and healthy economy. But that was then, in the 60s. Many things have changed since in the once proud, and world-renowned nation. One can only hope that stability, and prosperity will return, and become part of the American nation again in the near future. I personally would like to see that day while I'm still alive.

Having nothing but fun on the job, the days on base went by quick. Work for me began at 7:00 am, and lasted until six with a one-hour lunch break. Exposed to mostly American-speaking soldiers arriving, and departing on the base, I quickly learned rudimentary phrases in the language. While many were commands spoken or called out in simple sentences, there was much joking, and humor during periodic breaks, especially during the winter months when employees, and hosts alike sought out the warmth of an indoor stove or fireplace. The base could get pretty cold with ever-present winds whipping across the airfield. Aside from learning the basics of English, there were two things new to me I immediately embraced. The first day on the job, one of my coworkers on the crew took me to a nearby kiosk for lunch. Since I was not familiar with the offerings in food, he pointed at the menu, and suggested, "Try this. You'll like it."

Being the adventurer that I was, not only in visiting foreign lands, but also in sampling new cuisine, and other novelties. "Hamburger, please," I said, placing my order. Unwrapping the contents when they were handed over through the window, I was surprised by a packet of rounded buns stacked with meat, and lettuce, topped off by slices of tomato, and cucumbers. It tasted much as it looked, juicy, and scrumptious. Much like American kids, I took to the hamburger from then on. Having reached a certain popularity among the GIs, the next tasty surprise came one Saturday evening when I

was invited to a party. I only had to take one bite of the slice of pizza served before I was sold on the miracles of fast food, again for much of my life.

Almost one year had gone by at the busy airbase, and I still had not made a connection for a sponsor. What I did make, though, was many friends. There was one particular establishment in the area popular with the GIs. Since the owner, and many of the patrons spoke some sort of English, the club predominantly catered to foreign soldiers. It was a busy place on weekends. It was also a place that attracted fights. As was the case with the young, confrontations were almost always over one thing, girls. As if there were not enough young women to go around with most of the capable male population lost to the war. Most fights were short lived. But some turned more violent, especially after a few bottles of beer, with a local patron defending his girlfriend from an inebriated, aggressive soldier. At times, one only had to throw a glance at a good-looking girl, and the fight was on, usually ending with one, both, or several more drunks getting involved, and hurt to a point where an ambulance was called. Having all of the right male qualities myself, I can speak from my own personal encounters. I too had my share of fisted bouts.

On one such evening I had the good fortune of helping out one soldier I though was a decent fellow. He was very appreciative for my coming to his aid. From that day on, to his dismay at times, I kept pestering him for a sponsor. Several more months had elapsed when one evening, out of the blue, he walked up, announcing, "Your wish has been granted." I was dumbfounded. I did not know whether to hug or to kiss him. That's how euphoric I was. We shook hands instead to seal the bond. I would be grateful, and indebted to him forever. He later told me that he was getting sick and tired of being pestered, and one day had called home. It turned out that his aunt was willing to provide sponsorship. That was all I had to hear to confirm his promise to be the truth. Weeks later I received a personal invitation, a letter, and confirmation from Anna, also a German immigrant.

"Now what?"

Again, I was confronted by a challenge. But this time it would involve the very dreams I had harbored since childhood. As I was still penniless, without a passport, unfamiliar with how to go about getting the paperwork started, Anna came to my aid. She sent the required documents via the American embassy to be filled out, and notarized. It seemed to be a straight forward task but turned out to be lengthy.

As before, I had to go through the same process of getting not only a local police clearance, and an employer release, but it also involved the German FBI, since I was permanently leaving the country. The background investigation, though my life had been straight forward without criminal incidents, still took its time because of government bureaucracy. Three months later all documents were submitted, processed, and approved. I was the proud holder of a new passport, an immigration document, and a ticket for a sea voyage on the oceanic ship *Berlin*, scheduled to leave the Bremen docks two weeks later.

Bidding my newly acquired friends goodbye was not so easy, especially the girls I had met. There were promises to keep in touch with possible visits or reunification in the near future, but all turned out to be empty promises. I had no plans for coming back, and my friends had no desire to leave their glorious homeland. My immediate destination was a last visit to Dad. After a lengthy eight-hour train ride home, he appeared heartbroken after I made the announcement, "I am leaving for America."

"But why?" he wanted to know. "You have such a great career future here. You're going to leave it all behind?"

"Dad," I tried to persuade him, "it's my dream. It's what I always wanted." We debated back, and forth for two days, him trying to change my mind with me holding steadfast to my dreams. My brother, and sister, who were living at home with Dad once more, were equally shocked when they heard of my plans. In spite of the promise of visits, back in the 60s it meant goodbyes forever. I should mention that, on the contrary, destiny was kind to me. Because of my successes, and effort, there would be many later visits.

The day for departure arrived with Dad seeing me off early morning at the train station. Waiting to board, I could see the sadness in his eyes. Similar to the day my mom had died, he seemed on the brink of tears. After I hugged him with promises of return, he handed me a bon voyage package. I boarded the train with a huge sigh of relief, and headed straight into the future, the United States of America, the destiny I was born with. I had only one day of layover at Bremen before boarding the ship, and the first leg of my lifelong journey began.

In retrospect, all my peers that I left behind landed executive positions with firms large, and new, flourishing into early retirement after enjoying a life of prosperity, and leisure. "But what about him? What happened to him?" It was a question posed to my dad by many of my former colleagues after

they heard that I had turned my back on what could have been a very successful career.

“Left the country,” was his usual reply. When prodded further, he was only too willing to share the successes I had found in my new land, the “land of milk, and honey.” A land of unlimited opportunities, America. The label “United States” was not used, and had little meaning in foreign countries. It was Americans setting the trends, and creating technological advancements.

VOYAGE TO AMERICA

Spending my growing up years amid poverty, with a shortage on everything, and being completely undernourished, was an arduous journey to get to this point in my life. If I had been a vain person, I would have been ashamed of showing my emaciated body on public beaches. I weighed a mere 110 pounds at 6' tall, and age twenty-three. After settling in on the ocean liner that left the dock well past noon, taking in the initial breeze blowing in from the British channel, I found that the dinner call was not far off. Famished as usual, especially during the past nine months of living on a pauper's budget, I needed to save up 800 DM⁵ for the voyage, and had a mere savings of \$50 in my pocket to get by for the initial weeks once on land again. The first on-ship meal was a memorable affair I had not experienced before. As I stepped up to the dedicated table identified by place cards seating twelve, and after exchanging hellos with everybody, dinner was served by a team of waiters. I cannot recall the specifics of the evening's fare, but I assure you that it was a feast fit for royalty. Service, and attention were nonstop for the following two hours from appetizers to soup, and salad followed by several selections of side dishes added to the main course, and finished up with a dessert of choice.

The voyage was expected to last ten days. The route taken after leaving the English Channel headed north past London with the Thames River to the left, with the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway gradually passing to the right of the stern. I expected each day to be like the previous day, but that was a mistaken assumption. The first day at sea we passengers were instructed in safety procedures in case of fire, and other catastrophes. Part of it was inspecting the ship for evacuation exits, ending with a visit to the captain's bridge. Lunch followed and, in case you missed it, each deck had rows of buffet tables lined against the hallways stacked with snacks, fruits, and drinks in addition to the scheduled meals. When I asked a passing waiter about meal times, I was told the kitchen was open from 6:00 a.m. for breakfast through dinner past the midnight hours. Having been starved for much of my early life, it seemed inconceivable to me to be able to eat whenever, and whatever was served, all-inclusive with the voyage's fare, and so I ate with the slightest hunger pangs, uncertain if this food-laden paradise would last.

In keeping up my health, and my weight down, I spent many hours

swimming at the indoor pool. It became obvious that after the first day, as soon as we reached the open seas, less, and less people showed up for lunch, and dinner. It did not take much to figure out, and confirm that people were getting seasick. By the third day, I was the only one left eating at the breakfast table. For lunch, two or three trickled in to make their appearances. When it was time for dinner, I was either alone or joined by a couple more diners.

“What is this?” I asked the waiter in bewilderment, watching him dish out servings for every dinner place setting.

“We serve the food regardless of who shows up,” I was told. I could not help but wonder, “What happens to the leftovers?”

“Gets dumped overboard,” was his response. Again, I could not find words for such wastefulness, and wondered what life would be like in the Promised Land. If I could have had psychic abilities, I would have seen many more surprises waiting along my journey.

After such a revelation, I cast the short phrase at the daily waiters taking the order, “What’s for dinner?” I did not care what was served. It all was plentiful, and tasted delicious. After the third day, my daily routine was set. Up for breakfast, one-hour swim, strolling the decks, late morning buffet snack, catching the sea breeze up front while swaying with the waves, late lunch, afternoon swim, deck time to enjoy the vast expanse of the ocean, dinner followed with one or two bottles of beer at the bar, late night buffet snack, ending the day’s culinary journey with a night of sound sleep until early morning. Entertainment as is offered on today’s ocean cruises were not available on the *Berlin* since it was configured as a refugee ship. Drinks were served, nevertheless. Coming from Germany, and practically raised on beer, I had not yet developed a taste for wine or other alcoholic drinks.

Exactly as forecast, by dawn ten days later, to the relief of the sick, the world-famous Statue of Liberty grew from the horizon the closer as we came. The splendorous view appeared straight ahead of the ship’s bow. When it was announced, every able body rushed to the front, craning over the rails for a closer look; otherwise the ship may have capsized if it had appeared windward or leeward. We had arrived. I had arrived at the beginning of the fulfillment of my dreams.

ARRIVING IN AMERICA

Docking was not announced until the next afternoon. It did not matter. I enjoyed every minute spent on deck, my watchful eyes darting between Liberty, Ellis, and Staten Islands, and the Manhattan skyline in the distance. I absorbed it all including the ozone given off by the sea, the blue skies above, and the busy ferry traffic in, and out of the harbor. The sight was so impressive it would stay with me for life, and draw me back to the city in the years to come. Stepping from the gangplank onto the docks brought back reality, and the reason I took the voyage. After ten days aboard the ship, the first few steps back on solid ground felt strange. I felt like an old sea hand still swaying to the imaginary motion of waves. With over one thousand passengers dislodging from the ship it took a while to locate my sponsors, who had promised to pick me up at the docks. I had landed in America on 12 May, 1961.

“You must be Anna,” I joyfully announced, approaching a pleasant-looking woman in her fifties craning above the sea of arrivals, and carrying a welcoming smile on her face. I recognized her from the photo she had sent. Her husband was not far off, rather a reserved person, keeping an eye on her. I was glad for the reception. As one can attest about a first foreign journey, they have their challenges. Collecting my suitcase, we left the dock, loaded up the car, and off we went to our final destination, Philadelphia, my new home. Anna offered the passenger seat up front which I happily accepted. My first view was the lengthy Lincoln Tunnel taking us a hundred some feet below the water surface onto the mainland. The rest of the way I enjoyed the scene accompanied by lively conversations.

Anna, an immigrant herself like Rudy her husband, was only too eager to get firsthand news on the progress of their distant homeland. I illustrated as much as I could with information I had. Two hours later we arrived at their home. Stepping through the entrance, right away I noticed signs of their German heritage, with a cuckoo clock ticking from the mantel, and other European-style ornaments hanging from walls, all neatly arranged. The place, a typical two-level suburban style home including basement, attic, and fenced backyard, would be my home for the next two years, as required by immigration policy. Regardless of my success in finding work or not, my sponsors were responsible for my wellbeing.

After being served a hearty German meal I was ready for bed, and

promptly fell asleep. It was not until 7:00 a.m. the next morning when I heard Anna's voice calling from below. "Time for breakfast." Unsure what to expect or what steps to take next—shower, dress, or eat—I went downstairs to the kitchen to find out what was customary. Breakfast was already dished out so I took the chair reserved for my presence. Following a short prayer, which I recognized being Catholic, my faith as well, I was instructed on the house rules, and regulations.

"Lodging, and boarding will cost you fifty dollars."

"Months?" I asked to verify.

"Yes, a month. For it I'll serve breakfast, and dinner. Lunch is at your expense."

The arrangement was acceptable once I had a job to pay for it. I realized that there were questions I should have addressed before I departed from home, but she assured me that I could pay off any dues after earning money. The next demand was not so clear.

"You will take two showers a day."

When I looked at her somewhat dumbfounded, she insisted, "No exception."

I felt that I had to explain my hesitation to her ruling. Coming from Europe, Germany was no exception to the shortcomings of hygiene as it was practiced in America. A not so clean body was as much a shortcoming as medical, dental, and grooming practices. In spite of Germany's long-standing leadership in science, and medicine, once considered pioneering in those respective fields, in actuality, personal hygiene had suffered. My time growing up in Germany, not having a standard to gauge customs against other than my visits to Italy, and France, which had similar practices, or the lack of, made taking a daily shower seem extremely wasteful. My daily cleaning routine growing up was either a quick body cleansing at the kitchen sink, sharing the same washcloth, and toothbrush with other family members, or waiting until Saturday when the bathtub heater was fired up for the weekly bath. In contrast to American living, most of the homes had no shower facility.

Any visitor to Europe in the last century, especially after riding a bus, train, or other public transportation, getting a frequent whiff of stale body odor, I am not proud to say would agree. Growing up in such an environment did not necessarily create an offensive awareness. Personal sensory receptors tend to adjust to the environment. Visiting home in Germany on several

following occasions, especially during summer when local high schools were closed, I found myself headed for the lake many mornings with soap in hand, and towel draped across my shoulder to wash, and cleans off the previous day's natural body residues. On such visits I was keenly aware, but also sympathetic of the hygienic shortcomings of not having a shower stall in every home. I am certain that conditions have changed since.

After accepting Anna's house rules, the first day I went off on my job hunt. This would set my daily trend for the weeks ahead, with breakfast, a walk to the bus stop, a trip downtown to one of numerous industrial parks, knock on office doors, inquire about a job opening, get rejected each time, eat a hotdog for lunch at one of many mobile stands, continue the job search through the afternoon, return home empty handed, only to have this repeated the next day and, in the process, watch my meager savings dwindle. Though I was very optimistic, and expected to land a job within days, reality would prove otherwise. Unbeknownst to me, the economy had gone into recession during the Kennedy election year, setting off numerous union worker strikes in Philadelphia, and other East Coast industrial parks, as was explained to me by Anna.

My break came six weeks later. After knocking on metal gates all day, a worker dressed in overalls, face, and hands streaked with grease, opened the gate, demanding, "What do you want?"

"I am looking for work," I replied.

He must have detected my German accent, and responded, "Ach so." His face turned into a grin. "Ein Landsman. Komm doch mal herein." (Ah yes. Fellow Countryman. Come on in.)

I was overjoyed to hear him speak my language. "You speak German."

"I should," he said. "I am from there. Let's meet the boss."

"How so?" I was still puzzled at the unexpected invitation as I was led to an upstairs office at the far end of the manufacturing complex. Striding along the interior, I immediately recognized the environment. It was a spacious place packed with metal processing machinery each manned by a worker. The reason the place appeared so huge was because the machines in use required enormous space. It was a typical industrial building reaching from one street to the next in length, spaciouly wide in similar dimension, and tall to allow space for fabricated structures, filled with the hollow sounds of hammering, shaping, and bending as metal was processed, and fabricated. There were clusters of machines I identified as lathing, honing, and shaping

ones. In addition, there were boring mills for cutting, dicing, slicing, and shaping all kinds of metals. I was impressed at the sheer size of the machinery. As he strode along the hall, my lead said something puzzling that aroused my curiosity. “Everybody here speaks German.”

We arrived at an office door identified by a “Visitor” sign. On entering, I was introduced to the general manager whose formidable persona, and smile would remain with me for the next five years. He listened attentively to my brief working history, which I followed up by handing him a copy of my diploma. After a quick glance at the document, he said, “How soon can you start?”

“Tomorrow,” I said with a grateful grin. I had a difficult time suppressing the euphoria I felt.

“How about Monday? Seven o’clock.”

I realized that the weekend was coming up. “I will be here,” I assured him, and hurriedly left. I wanted to share my good fortune with Anna.

Though I did not know it at the time, I learned in the days that followed that he had been searching for a qualified operator for one specific machine nobody at the factory was willing to operate, the boring mill. Among industrial processing machines, the Cincinnati Milling Machine was considered the killer of all machines. It took a special breed of worker to operate. Nobody lasts very long without damaging eyesight, cuts on hands, or having their skin sliced from flying metal shavings. In spite of it all, I had committed myself to the monster.

I began work the following Monday. Filled with expectations, I showed up on time, falling in line by the entrance to punch the time clock. Working hours were from 7:00 AM to 5:00 p.m. with thirty minutes for a lunch break.

The foreman who hired me, a German trained Meister⁶ by trade, led me to my dedicated workplace. Approaching the monster machine, I momentarily hesitated. “Guess we’ll have to train you on the machine,” the Meister suggested, looking around the hall for a willing subject, but nobody stepped forward.

“Not necessary,” I replied, to his astonishment. “It’s my specialty.” It was challenges such as these I needed to get up in the morning to face the day. Drudging through the day on mundane things would have been a waste of my time. I could detect some doubts in the face of the Meister since they had not been able to find anyone that could have operated the machine. It had been sitting there for close to two years in pristine condition.

To my surprise a contraption was already mounted, awaiting processing. The metallic piece, securely strapped onto the operations platform which was about four feet off the ground, was huge in itself. I was about to ask what it was when the Meister volunteered, “Nosecone.”

“Nosecone for what?” I said.

“Mercury space capsule.” I did not need more explanation. It being the early 60s, space exploration had just begun, and was at its height in demands on the industry. Every major industrial complex in the nation was jogging for position in the government-sponsored space endeavor. NEMCO⁷ was no exception. I had found my new home. Familiar with most of the boring mill’s controls, and mechanisms, I took my time to inspect the job at hand. While the piece was securely mounted onto the highly-polished steel platform, right away I faced a serious challenge. The shape, size, and composition of the piece was cast in tungsten, which, aside from diamonds, is the hardest material on earth. It was this composition presenting the challenge. The shaping tools necessary for processing the material had only recently been produced from a combination of alloy containing carbon, tungsten, and diamond fragments, molten, and heat-treated to sustain the required hardness for shaping special metals. Luckily, the proper tools were available, waiting for me at the tool shed. I was set to tackle the monster machine.

I suspected that wagers may have been placed about finding a victim willing to operate the boring mill. I felt dwarfed as I took a step towards the control panel to reach for the ‘Start’ button. I went to work. As soon as the tool took its first bite into the hardened metal alloy, neighboring workers, hearing the cutting sound, quit what they were doing, and gradually crept up to watch. The sound from the diamond-studded tool cutting into tungsten was eerie. The monster, sitting idle for years, had come alive. There was even applause, and cheering as the crowd gathered closer. I was dumbfounded at turning into an instant celebrity. It did not take long before the president of the plant, alerted by the sound, showed up, trailed by his office staff.

“Mike Milestone,” he introduced himself. “Welcome to my place.” I stopped the machine to shake his extended hand.

I was speechless, but managed to mutter, “Thank you for giving me a job.” What was even more enthralling was that the owner personally stopped to speak with a common worker. It had gone quiet. Glancing around the place, I noticed that my coworkers had stopped working as well. I also detected certain envy among the gathered.

Mr. Milestone, as I addressed him properly, went on asking personal questions about my home place, training, and what had brought me here. Much of his questions were interpreted by the plant manager, the Meister.

“Adventure,” I said, hoping he would understand.

“Well,” he gestured at the machine with a grin on the face, “looks like you found it.”

“Sure did,” I said before he walked off, with the crowd slowly dispersing.

“Looks like you made a friend,” the Meister said. “It’s not every day the boss comes down here.”

“Why me?” I asked.

“You made his day,” he explained. “Welcome aboard.”

I have to mention something of importance here. In the German industrial, and business environment, a distinct hierarchy from the executive board through management levels, and down to the general worker was strictly observed. It was very much a caste system. The structure was much different in America. Here, it was more of a causal relationship, especially in more recent years, as practiced in places like Silicon Valley.

In the old country, one strictly observed the establishment protocol. For the worker, one was only allowed to interact with the next level up, his or her immediate supervisor, and the supervisor with his manager, and so on up the hierarchy. Having the president of the company, in the years to follow, not only stopping by my workplace on his weekly visits, but actually caring for my wellbeing, was something unfamiliar to me. I was sure that during his first few visits I stammered quite a bit, and mostly listened. It took nine months before I was confident enough to converse fluently, though accented, with just about anybody.

The plant Meister came by daily to check on my progress, with the president making his weekly stop to chat, mostly on Friday. He always had a ready joke on hand to share with me. Whether I completely understood the meaning, or not did not matter. It was the gesture, and courtesy he extended through his sheer presence. I would also learn his heritage. He was a Jew with a family ancestry of long persecution not only by German Nazis, but Bolsheviks, as many Ashkenazi⁸ Jews endured. What impressed me most was that he did not hold a grudge against the Germans. Whereas I carried the stigma of being German open for ridicule at many a time, he seemed to have made peace with the past, and his ancestry’s persecutors.

I still marvel to this day when thinking back on how humble, and grateful

the man was. Mike Milestone: not only an industrial tycoon, but a true humanitarian hero.

Nosecone processing, while slicing into the metal cut after cut, was a lengthy process subjected to tool breaks, and machine mishaps. I could hear by the sound the tool made when to back off on the tool's pressure sensors. In spite of their tempered hardness, tools had to be replaced frequently so they could be sharpened. Several days later, I completed my first job. The capsule was ready for the next Mercury launch into orbit. A new piece had already been delivered, awaiting my attention, and so, in time, my position was assured as one cog in the machination wheel of the American space industry.

While there were other processing orders stacking up in my "in-bin," such as fabricating the first communication satellites, the Explorer series, among many other parts to shape, and support the nation's industrial endeavors, my mind wandered while the machine kept tearing into metal. After setting the machine's cutting parameters, I could switch the task to automatic, and dedicate my time to learning the local language. To accomplish this, I would take a copy of the previous day's Gazette my sponsor would set aside, reading column after column with a dictionary alongside. Complementing my learning progress, I soon acquired friends, and became proficient while on outings exploring nearby clubs, and other entertainment attractions. One such place, I recall, was Club Gigi, the city's first topless bar, which everybody seemed to flock to. Though I was not much impressed by nude entertainment, I checked out its novelty nevertheless. Closer to my taste in entertainment, I joined a popular gathering place in town, the German social club.

What interested me more was my future, and where I was headed. While immensely grateful to my employer for giving me the opportunity, it seemed I had reached my pinnacle. With the growing demand in the country's industrial sectors, I would have been set for life. It was a sound means with a steady income, compensated by periodic pay increases for any worker, but it was not what I set out for. My ambitions were much higher. To achieve them I considered having a serious talk with my employer on his next weekly visit. But destiny beat me to it.

"Draft notice?" I yelled out, staring at the paper handed me by my sponsor. The notice was a printed card notifying me of the date on the mandatory promise I had made upon entering as an immigrant six months earlier. I had completely forgotten about the pledge. My initial reaction was panic. In no way was I prepared to be drafted into the Army. I could have

accepted entering the Air Force or Navy, but it was too late for that. Once the draft notice was issued, it was a binding contract with the Army. I had made it a personal pledge that if I was forced to join a service, it would be the Air Force. Based on the pledge, I had a personal notion to become a fighter pilot, but never pursued it. Since the U.S. educational system did not honor a foreign college degree at the time, it would have meant four more years of college I was not prepared for. I was dumbfounded. What, and where one was educated should be honored in any country, but it was not the case here, not at the time. It would take many more years before a policy change would take effect to allow foreign education to become valid.

“There’s got to be a way out,” was my first thought. When I had entered the country, I was told about the possibility of getting drafted. My hope was that I would be passed over since my name fell towards the end of the alphabet-oriented draft procedure. Drafting was linked to a potential soldier’s name, with the odds in favor of the early letters, but luck was not on my side.

“Now what?” My only option was to report to the local draft board the following month.

The next day, still shocked but informed of the recruiting policies, I marched into the Meister’s office, and handed him the draft notice, expecting the worst. It became obvious by the change in his face that he had never expected such a disruption to the established, productive harmony between the firm, and their prized employee. After he placed a call to the company president, his face took on a less sinister bearing. “He’ll talk with you tomorrow,” I was told.

Sure enough— “Report to the office,” the PA speaker said the following morning. The next hour would prove to be the most intimate I had ever faced with a superior. To start with, Mr. Milestone put me completely at ease, stating, “Don’t worry about the draft. I’ve got the Local 123 in my back pocket.”

In the following hour, to my great relief, he proceeded to reveal more secrets of his prominence. As it turned out, his brother was the local teamster boss of the Philadelphia transportation union. There was more, but I shall leave that to history. More important was the fact that I was assured freedom from being drafted. “You’ve got my guarantee,” he promised me with a knowing grin on his face. Sure enough, two weeks later I received a deferment notice. “Due to mitigating circumstances, you are excused from reporting to the draft board.”

I was euphoric, and celebrated with my buddies the same evening with several rounds of beer. The real reason for the release from the draft, I learned the following day, came with conditions attached. It came in the form of Mr. Milestone's visiting my workplace, stating, "I hear you received the deferment notice."

"Sure did," I said. "I don't know how to thank you."

"Your continued work here is enough thanks. But," he paused, seemingly gathering his thoughts. Slightly surprised, I momentarily stopped the monster machine to pay strict attention to what he had to say. A "But" was never to be ignored. Right away I sensed a feeling of unavoidable commitment which was not in my plans.

"You will have to remain in my employment for the next five years."

And there it was, the unexpected compromise, the ultimatum. What option did I have but to agree? I took a few seconds to evaluate the commitment, then shook his extended hand. "Agreed." For the time being, for better or for worse, at least I had paid him lip service. What the future had in store for me I would handle when confronted.

Brought up as a righteous person by my father, with honesty, and integrity foremost to answer life's challenges, I did not regret my promise, but took to considering alternatives to my current job obligation. What I really wanted was a meaningful career outside of an industrial environment. Again, fortune was on my side. At just about the same time, I became aware of a newly developed, highly innovative technology on the horizon, that of the computer. I had always been intrigued by electricity, and its atomic mysteries.

Having learned the English language proficiently enough in reading and writing by reading beyond the daily news, I checked further into the technology. Unfortunately, there was only sparse information available. One had to enroll in college to acquire specifics on the discipline of computer science. It did not take much deliberation to convince myself to take the necessary steps. Shortly after, I enrolled in a new institution created for technology education, annexed to Drexel University. It would be a commitment of four years, demanding much of my time. To make the schedule fit with my job, I signed up for evening classes in addition to fulltime Saturday.

Though I was honoring my promise to Mike Milestone, and the five-year commitment, because of the anticipated schedule conflict of working many hours overtime, such as past 5:00 p.m. and Saturday classes, I disclosed my

ambitions to him, expecting pushback. To my surprise he congratulated me on my decision. “Just remember,” he said, holding me to my promise, “your soul is mine for five years.”

I realized then that even he, my employer, aside from showing nothing but kindness, had a selfish side. It did not matter. My time was numbered, not so much by the hours or days, but definitely by the years. “A few more years of hardship,” I calculated. “I can handle it.”

Arriving in the States in May of 1961, after being hired on at NEMCO, it was obvious why the toughest materials were needed for nosecones. Everything else would burn up on reentry. I would receive the raw cones just delivered from the foundry, machine the necessary facing for a tight fit to the reentry body, finish windows, and other openings to fit together without causing air leaks, and hurry it out of production to the next scheduled rocket launch. The pressure for an on-time delivery was always present, and because of it, I worked late many a night, as well as on Sundays.

In between processing nosecones, the next project I was handed was to build a set of satellites. It was a military project involving eight communication satellites. At that time their function, and purpose were unknown to me. I had to assume that management had more information on military activities than I did, but perhaps not. Secrecy exercised back then by the government was not much different from now. Many projects initiated by the government were classified, including some space launches. It was not until years later that I figured out the connection between the project I handled, and the Explorer series of satellites launched into orbit in 1962. The numbers matched, as well as the materials, and the configuration of the units.

Working prolific overtime was the reason why I could afford to pay cash for my first adult transportation after saving up nine months of earned wages. Relying on local trolley commute to get me to, and from work until then, I remember the joy I felt in taking possession of my first automobile in my new country at the cost of \$2,400. I was the proud owner of the largest, and most sophisticated car on the marketplace I could afford, a brand-new Pontiac Bonneville convertible, a cream colored, chrome encircled vehicle of my dreams. It had every conceivable built-in convenience, including an automatic retractable top, antenna, and unidirectional seats. I was truly amazed at what the American automobile industry had to offer. The purchase, after my immigration, was the second most important element of my dreams-

come-true. I was on my best way, destined for success, ready to take the next major step into the future.

Unfortunately, the vehicle did not last long. Within two years, it was destroyed. First, the vehicle was hit one night by some drunken driver while it was parked alongside the street in front of my place. Second, only days later I got T-boned on the passenger side, quickly followed by another distracted driver hitting the back of the car. To make things even worse, cold weather had broken in, accompanied with rain, during which time the convertible top was sliced open by some unknown, vindictive person. The interior leather seats, and dashboard cracked apart from rain, and sleet. Only two years old, my pride and joy became an eyesore to me, and the neighborhood. Making it even worse, due to my lack of collision insurance, none of the accidents had been fixed from people driving without an insurance. To make things worse, it seemed that I only carried liability insurance. Whether collision insurance was not available back then, or it was an oversight on my behalf, it didn't matter. I made the unhappy decision to have it junked. My replacement vehicle was another Pontiac Bonneville, but with a hard-top hoping it would last.

PHILADELPHIA

1966 exemplified the end of my educational training. It was a time when I gained a new identity, that of Alex Bauer. It was also the time my life took on an unexpected turn of events. In only a short time, after paying tribute to learning new computer, and communication subjects, my aspiration took on solid roots.

More than three years had passed of my dedicating all my time to reeducation for a potentially rewarding future when one day my software instructor asked me into his office after classes. It being close to midnight with my senses not at their sharpest. Curious about what he had to say, suspecting a pep talk on my grades or another related topic, I followed. To my surprise, it would become a revelation that ultimately would change my life, if I would make the right decision. But I am getting ahead of myself.

On entering his office, he gestured for me to take a seat across his desk. Sitting quietly, not knowing what to expect, I watched as he reached for a pad, and started to scribble something on the paper. I patiently waited for him to finish, and to speak. Anxious minutes went by before he finally looked up, handing me the pad. Holding a serious expression on his face, pencil in hand, he pointed at what appeared an organizational flowchart, saying, "This is where I want you."

Staring at the plot, unable to understand his thought process, I asked, "What's that?"

"This," he revealed in a most mystical voice, "is the structure of the Department of Defense."

I was completely at a loss. Having been in the country for close to five years, working on government projects such as space exploration, and communication satellites among others, getting educated in computer technology, I was completely taken by surprise. Not only had I never heard of a "department of defense," the notion that there might be a secret organization was beyond my comprehension. During my entire life, whether in Germany or the United States, the topic of clandestine acts, and secrecy had never come up. My ignorance must have been painted on my face.

"Okay," he said, waiting for my failure to respond. "Let me explain." Holding the pad so I could follow at the various blocks drawn on the paper, he explained, "This here," pointing at the top graph, "is the office of the Secretary of Defense. Next," indicating a series of blocks in the next level

down, “the Joint Chiefs of Staff, representing the various armed services.”

With him guiding me through the maze of office symbols, completely lost by now, I took his word for it while gazing at the successive levels of blocks indicating the various departments reporting upwards, illustrating segments of a military command hierarchy, space command, ground surveillance, and Intel agencies, aside from even more secretive operations such as the CIA, and the NSA. While I had heard of the Central Intelligence Agency during the failed Cuban invasion, to me it was only another political strategy at the time played out by the nation’s only covert organization. Being never the wiser, I did not have the slightest inkling about the many Intelligence services laid out on the flowchart. The box my instructor had indicated was labeled, “Defense Communication Agency.”

Aside from a confused stare at him, the only question I had was, “Why there?”

“It’s what you are being trained for.”

There was no point in delving deeper into the secrets of the nation. Checking my watch for the time, I saw it was already past midnight. He must have noticed my suppressed yawn, and offered, “Think about it, and let me know before the end of the semester.”

I had heard enough for one night, and hurried home to my apartment, trying to catch some needed sleep without giving it more thought. The topic never came up again for the next six months until he confronted me just after I’d finished finals. “Have you thought about the offer?” he asked.

I had hoped he would have forgotten by now. What had transpired within the previous three months were a series of job interviews with some of the major computer manufacturers with names such as IBM, RCA, DEC, NCR, CDC, UNIVAC, General Electric, Burroughs, Westinghouse, and Honeywell. I could proudly claim that I had passed every one of the logical, mathematical, and psychological examinations, and tests presented by the various companies. But with the company that I thought the most prestigious, and desirable, and that I wished would hire me, IBM, I had flunked the exams, denying any chance for employment.

Once more I had been speechless. “How come?” I asked, questioning my failure for not passing. On further examination, the answer dawned on me the following day. While the school trained us students in advanced electronics, and computer theory, the exams provided by IBM were still geared for electrical systems employing electricians, by then outdated by years. “It’s

their loss,” was my concluding thought, knowing that there would be opportunities with the other companies. Evaluating the various job offers over the following weeks, there were several choices I considered to satisfy my career ambitions. The first was an offer from UNIVAC with plans to send me to Germany as a regional system engineer; others were offers to various locations near, and far, located mostly in larger cities.

After the finals, my instructor confronted me once more. This time, I could not brush him off; he insisted. Reminding me of the efforts he had spent educating me—the earlier employment opportunity, the DOD—he insisted I hear him out. What else could I do? I owed him that much. Sitting in the school’s cafeteria, he went into the details, and insisted, “You’ll never get an opportunity like it again.”

Without getting too detailed, the following was his monologue, and my brief responses.

“There is a government directive in place for foreigners like you.”

“Like me? Why?”

“Ever hear of Operation Paperclip?⁹”

“Not to my knowledge,” I stalled, trying to recall anything close to it.

“It’s an organization,” he explained. “Created by the Allies at the end of World War Two to allow German scientist immigrants into the country. It permitted the government to bypass foreign immigration policies.” I listened patiently, but was unclear of what he was implying. He kept on talking. “You fall into a similar category.”

“Explain please.”

“I wished that I could hire you directly into the DCA, but with you being foreign born, the best I can do is place you with a contractor.”

There it was again, secret domain, and all that, I quietly thought. Then the light in my brain suddenly snapped on, and I questioned him, “You a recruiter?”

“That I am,” was his somewhat humble response, followed with, “and an instructor.”

With all of the cards dealt openly, he appeared free to talk, and talk he did. “There is a newly-created corporation, Ford Aerospace, who will offer you assignments to various countries in Europe, and in Asia.”

It was the word Asia that immediately perked my interests. Since I already knew most of Soviet-free Europe, the most logical, and desirable choice would be with that company, if the offer was sincere. It would fulfill another

wish of my dreams, that of the adventurer.

“But there is one hurdle to overcome,” he went on.

Too good to be true, was my responding thought, as I waited quietly for him to continue.

“The job requires a top-secret clearance.”

“What’s that?” I said, baffled once more. The talks with him were full of mystery, getting more confusing with each session. “It’s probably best I get a job with one of the other companies offers,” which I had informed him of earlier.

“Not necessarily,” he quickly replied, pacifying me. “There are ways for getting around.”

“Well.” I submitted myself into his hands. Aside from not giving me a chance to reject it, the opportunity to travel into foreign lands was too great, so I asked, “What do you need from me?” I practically watched the heavy burden he had carried for the past six months fall from his shoulders, uncertain of my acceptance.

“You’ve got the qualities they are looking for.”

“Despite the complications?”

“As I said before,” he indicated with a sincerity I had to believe, “you’ve got inside help.”

So, the dice for my future had been cast. “I accept the offer.”

The next step was to inform my current employer, Mike Milestone, of quitting my job. Not knowing his response, especially after he’d given me the chance to start a life in America, I approached him with mixed feelings, stating, “Remember your promise five years ago?”

“I’ve been expecting it,” he said, accompanied by a sad sigh. “Where are you going?”

“DCA,” I said, equally saddened.

“Defense Communication Agency?” he said, highly surprised. “It’s my favorite customer.” Although I had suspected a direct connection between NEMCO, and the government for some time, he had never divulged his association. I realized then how critical national defense really was. Every aspect of it was held in secrecy between partnerships, and individuals for that matter. I then told him of my decision for a career change. Though reluctant, he understood. “I knew you were only temporary,” he admitted. “You are way too ambitious for working in the factory. As a matter of fact, I was going to offer you a position in management. Interested?”

“I would have accepted three months ago, but I’m already committed. We’ll be working for the same cause.”

“I understand,” he said, bidding me goodbye. “Come back anytime if things don’t work out.”

“I will,” I said, realizing this departure would be final.

I was free to go. I was free to face a world with challenges of undefined proportions. What I did not tell him were my inner feelings about the industrial environment, which I’d harbored ever since arriving here. I am talking about the cultural, as well as professional, attitude people held within the heavy industrial environment. Whereas in Europe, in general, potential employees were specifically trained over four years to perform a future job with pride, respect, and gratitude, here it was just another job open to anyone willing to work. Aside from the German speaking recruits, most of the new people working for me on the various projects came right off the streets without any training. It was what it was, an opportunity for the moment to make some earnings without long-term commitments, which, in turn, reflected on personal attitudes and performance. What was lacking was pride in doing the work, no matter how trivial the job may have been.

“Have a great future,” were Mr. Milestone’s words when we shook hands, parting forever. I still called him Mister Milestone rather than Mike, as he’d offered on past occasions. It was the training, and discipline just indicated above. I never looked back other than an occasional reminiscent thought as I sit here by the laptop writing my life’s story.

“I am free,” was the euphoric thought on my mind the following week while driving to accept my new job. It was a forty-minute drive from Philadelphia, the city where I lived, to the place of my new employment. But that would change as soon as I was able to locate a suitable, and affordable apartment. I knew it would only be a short-term lease until I was assigned somewhere overseas.

When I started work at NEMCO, my earning was at an hourly pay of \$1.80, at the time minimum wage. Now, five years later, my pay had increased to \$3. The new job at Philco-Ford would start at \$3.20, minimum wage at this time. Recollecting the past five years of job advancement, and responsibilities, I believed Mr. Milestone got a great bargain when he hired me. It made me feel better. Though I’d been taken advantage due to my ignorance at the economy scale, I was still grateful for him taking a chance on me.

To begin with, I had been in the country for five years. There was one more missing element I had anxiously been waiting for. Though it should not present an obstacle since, unlike some of my German friends who got into legal troubles during the immigration period, and as a result were expelled from the U.S., I had kept my record clean. The day finally arrived where I was to be sworn in as a citizen of the United States. By now, I had already bought my second vehicle, taking the drive downtown to city hall early in the morning. Upon arriving, I was surprised to see the hall packed with immigrants waiting for the ceremony. Although everybody present would become a citizen, I could see in the faces that tensions were running high. The judge finally arrived at the scheduled time to proceed with the glorious act of granting permanent citizenship. Applause, and copious handshaking followed. There was nobody by my side to share my feeling of euphoria other than my affirmative nod accompanied by a broad smile. "I did it."

Commuter traffic outside of the city back then was nonexistent. Facing an unknown environment, I purposely let my mind roam freely. "What is my aim?" I thought, amid the hum of the engine purring beneath the hood of the car. I could not answer the question. I did not know what the future held in store for me. In contrast, I was keenly aware of what I had accomplished to date. The past was the only time I could freely let my mind wander. As a prerequisite, I never took the time to plan out the future. It was too much of an open door to explore, no matter what opportunity or inopportunity was waiting. For the most part, my mind was geared to wrestle with daily challenges. I never complained or turned the job down. These were the challenges I needed to face the day, otherwise I probably would have thrown in the towel long ago, and become a drifter.

I could not fathom a rudimentary desk job. Much like a scientist, and inventor, I needed the creativity to move forward. I was facing new challenges with every project I was handed. Today was special. I began a new journey in the land of unrestrained opportunities.

"What do I want out of life?" I thought, driving on. It was a question easily answered. "I came to America to explore, and to conquer." Well, it wasn't quite that easy. I had put in a lot of hours filled with concerns, worries, and apprehension for doing my best. As Dad had taught me, complaining, and messing up were not options.

CAREER TRANSITION

It was the end of 1966, with education, studies, and learning, part of the past. It was a time for changes, as dramatically as they would turn out. From here on, it would only be a matter of time until the beginning of a new phase in my life's journey. Fervent, and filled with expectations, I would soon learn that my dreams were put on hold for two more years while awaiting the clearance process, and the background investigation (BI) if it was approved. While I was optimistically looking ahead, there were mixed reactions from coworkers, and friends, with comments such as, "You'll never get cleared," to "wishful thinking," and, "better find another job." Receiving mostly negative input I never wavered from the original path. There were, however, two major issues that surfaced that I had to solve while my BI was in process. One was getting naturalized, and the other was committing to the contractor involved with the program I was being processed through.

The first issue presented no obstacle. It was only a matter of submitting the necessary documents, birth certificate, legal papers, and relinquishing my German passport to get naturalized. The rest was awaiting due process to take place with a final pledge of an allegiance ceremony. The entire process took six weeks after which I proudly announced to my peers, "I am now an American citizen."

I felt that celebrations in the company of friends were in order. Sadly, I had to leave my former work buddies behind, but embraced the opportunity for making new friends. Along with the career change came a new set of interests, and activities. The mentality, and mindset between blue-, and white-collar workers became clearly visible, and reflected in my attitude, aptitude, and interests. I became aware of being elevated into a new level in society, that of high tech. Regretful for the buddies I had left behind, I felt that I had come closer to my level of intellect.

The second issue proved to be more of a challenge, but was eventually solved through internal DCA¹⁰ processing I shall expound on. Regardless of whether I would be granted the Top Secret clearance or not, I was offered an entry position with Ford Aerospace, the primary contractor holding the AUTODIN program award. To understand the political ramifications in association with my case, being foreign born, in accordance with congressional laws, I would never be permitted to be directly hired into any of the numerous Intelligence agencies. There were ten such agencies at the

time. When I was informed, my heart sank to its lowest. It could mean the end of my dreams. All the training, the education, and sacrifices I made during the past four years to get into the rapidly growing computer industry was slipping from my hands. I was faced with the choice of returning to my old job or taking an offer from one of the competing computer manufacturers, which by the way were barely keeping above water with the economic recession prevailing at the time. It would take more years for JFK's promise of space exploration to take hold, in return benefiting the economy, and manufacturing industry.

In the process of making the selection, destiny came through, but this time in my favor. I received a call from the Ford Aerospace program director for an interview. I was only too eager to comply, and showed up at their strategic headquarters the following morning. As I drove the forty minutes from my apartment, in a residential area located near the city's renowned Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, to my destination in Willow Grove, my mind was churning with questions about how to handle the interview. From a technical perspective I would win hands down because of my credits in computer science, and extreme interest in the technology. Ford Aerospace, aside from managing a government program of epic proportions for its time, required all employees working on the program to be top secret cleared.

On arrival, a temporary ID badge was waiting at the reception desk, which I clipped to the lapel of my suit. Wearing a business suit for white collar workers in the sixties was mandatory no matter what the job was. An escort led the way along the corridors. I was surprised at being received in the executive's office.

"Come on in," I was greeted by a seemingly seasoned, command-experienced director. "We finally get to meet." I had not expected this type of greeting. It was as if he already knew me. "Coffee?" he offered. I readily accepted. Drinking coffee served at break stations, and offices seemed to be the norm here, not only in the mornings, but throughout the day. It was a new experience, but a welcoming one as well. I took to the aroma, and flavor like everybody in the industry. *Must be a government practice*, I surmised. Right away I sensed the change from my previous job environment. Here, everybody acted extremely professional, which was not the case at the numerous manufacturing environments I had left behind. I felt at home from the first moment on.

"Should I know you?" I replied, startled at his informal introduction. I

already knew his name since the nameplate was prominently displayed above the office entrance: “Robert “Bob” W. – Director.”

“Let me fill you in.” He ushered me into his office in a friendly manner. Not having to address my personal concerns, with him taking the lead, was okay by me. “You’ll report directly to me,” he stated. Again, I was floored. “I understand there is a problem with your clearance,” he added.

“So, everybody says,” I muttered self-consciously, shrinking deeper into the chair.

“Let’s not worry about it for the moment. I’ll keep tracking the progress with DISCO. Nothing you can do about it. I’ve got a job for you regardless of how the clearance turns out.”

I was dumbfounded once more. It seemed that I had been pushed ahead without having to lift a finger. He acted as if I was already hired. Awed, and overcome with wonder I had absolutely no objection to any of it, and completely submitted myself into his hands. “Ex-B-52 commander, SAC,” he proudly proclaimed when I asked about the many bomber pictures framed along the office walls. It was all brand new to me, the friendly attitude, his volunteering what must have been a challenging but rewarding career, the director position presently held on a program I had absolutely no inkling about. So, patiently I waited for what appeared to be my future, being laid out with a company I knew nothing about, but I promised myself I would get informed, and up to speed.

“Guam,” he said, explaining the combat pictures. “Pacific Theater. Call me Bob.”

“B-52s?” I asked. It was another thing I was ignorant of. “Never heard of it.” I realized that I had entered a zone only privy to the military. It was a zone, in due time, I would become intimately involved. But that was still years ahead. “For now,” Bob W. said without hesitation, “you’ll be an instructor until your clearance comes through.”

“What subject am I teaching?” There was no end to the unfolding marvel.

“Basic electronics, and computer theory. Mainframes.”

There it was in plain facts, my entrance into the wonders of electronics, circuits boards, and computers. I felt euphoric leaving his office. “Monday morning,” he said with a hearty handshake. “Office hours are eight to five, one-hour lunch break. Hope to see you.”

“I’ll be there,” I promised without reservations. “Thank you.” That was it. I was hired without having to sell myself. It was the second break I had had

in the new world. With my spirits at a peak, it seemed I was moving in the right direction. Destiny was on my side. I had several days to prepare for the job. But prepare what? The only thing I could bring to the table was my scholastic knowledge, and my verbal skills which, by the way, had improved over the last five years. But when it came to my inherited German accent, I had not been able to shake it, though I had not put much effort into doing so. I learned from experience that when it came to accents, and slang the credo was, "You either loved it or hated it." Whether openly or concealed, people will let you know up front. It's either "Love your accent," or prevailing silence. In the end, it did not matter. People match up based on chemistry.

PART TWO NEW BEGINNING

WILLOW GROVE, PA

Anxious to learn about the job, and project, I arrived at the work place ahead of time. My wrist watch indicated 8:00 am. It was the first time in my life I did not have to punch in on the time clock. Dressed impeccably in suit and tie, I was ready to tackle the world. While waiting for management to arrive, seated in the lobby, I took the time to check my current space. "So," I muttered into the quiet. "This' how white color workers live. What a contrast," I thought, slightly euphoric at the very thought, interrupted only by an occasional swishing sound from the entrance doors, whenever someone entered the building. Minutes later, I recognized the face on approach through the door glass. It was Bob W. Stately, assertive, prominence figure deserving his position, he headed directly in my direction when he spotted me, "Got here early, did you," he said, beaming at me.

"Work used to start at 7:00 am," I said.

"Ah, yes. Manufacturing. Office hours here start at 9:00 am. It's when the students arrive. Follow me." I promptly followed his lengthy strides to his office. "Have a seat," he directed. "Want coffee?"

"No thanks. Already had my cup."

"One thing you'll learn here," he indicated with a grin at the percolator, "how to drink coffee. But first things first." He paused, apparently with something on the mind. "I have good news and bad news for you."

I could feel my heart leap a few beats at the unexpected turn of events. *Maybe the job was too good to be true*, went through my mind while quietly waiting for him to tell. "The bad news is you won't be teaching."

"Ever?"

"Only temporary. Let me explain." After a brief moment he continued, "I was informed by DISCO that you need a Secret clearance first. It's government requirements. Without it, you won't be able to be an instructor. Here is the situation. You need Secret before you can touch the equipment. You need Top Secret to be involved with the software. You have neither. But rest assure, I have plenty of other jobs for you."

I saw the career, I so desperately wanted, slip away. "How long will it take?"

"To get Secret? Nine months."

I was devastated. My mind was already in the Far Eastern regions with its

mysteries waiting for me to explore. My face must have reflected the desperation when he said, “Only nine months. It’ll go by fast. Trust me. Besides, I need you for a more important job.”

Now that was something I didn’t mind, but what could be more important than exploring the world?

“I’ll assign another engineer to you. You both will be working from downtown, our manufacturing facility. It’s night shift, but only for a month.”

Well, I quietly thought, *it’s not too bad*, but said, “What’s the project?”

He then explained what it entailed. Apparently, the company, Philco Ford, had just recently installed computer systems in certain school districts in Philadelphia. It’s a pilot project for the educational system never implemented before. What it entailed was computerizing education, the entire process from curriculums to reports, tests, and final exams. The program had already been in operation for several months, but proved problematic right from the onset. The program, project GROW, stood for the City’s major high school districts, Germantown, Roosevelt, Overbrook, and Wannamaker schools. “The problem is,” Bob W. explained. “Grades averages have fallen from the 40s to the 30s ever since.”

“You mean student grades?”

“Yes. Student grades.”

“Nobody is passing exams?” I was stunned. Not so much at the new system, as to the grade averages prior he just mentioned. “What’s going on?” It took a minimum score of 70 to pass tests. But 40s?

“It’s what we need to find out,” he said. “Not only scores, but the system gets broke all the time. It’s up to you guys to find out what the real problem is.”

I met up with the other engineer the same evening at the designated location, the first school location. The night custodian led us to the various classrooms, delineating our workplace for the evening, to be repeated the following nights with the other schools. From here on, it became our nightly routine to fix problems the students caused during the daytime. Right away the problem became obvious. “What do you think,” I said, expressing my concerns.

“Sabotage?”

“I think so too.” It’d turned out that some students purposely damaged keyboards, monitors, and printers. The following week, we reported our findings to HQs management who, in turn, directed us to keep fixing the

damages. We followed our nightly routine until called into the office some weeks later.

“This is what we need to do,” Bob W. informed us. “The two of you will monitor classroom activities for the next few weeks to get to the source of the problem.”

“You mean,” I said, somewhat surprised. “Sit in with the students?”

“We installed one-way mirrors between classrooms and offices. You’ll cover each class, but only to observe. I don’t want any of you to get involved. That’s up for me and school administration. You report to me only. Is that understood?”

“Understood.” We left to face the boredom of classes for the following morning. As we already had expected, the students, high school graders, were separated into three distinct groups. There were the diligent students trying to get educated, not only with the computers, but the subjects taught as well with tasks ranging from arithmetic to biology, language, science, and more. They came in with the passing scores. What brought the average down were the other two groups with one specifically leading. Their strategy, we observed, was to interrupt everybody else from completing the self-paced curriculums, with some shorting out power supplies, manipulated in the back of monitors using knives, while others used pencils to hammer down on the keys until they snapped off. Where their strategy called for pacing through the course as quickly as possible time allowed with the rest of the sessions spent goofing off by playing all sorts of games and personal tricks, with ensuing secondary resultant damages to the equipment.

We reported our results to HQs, who in turn informed principle school administrations. What made the whole thing pathetic, none of the teachers complained during the entire time. They just sat through each class reading paperbacks. I would learn later that they had been instructed to distance themselves from reprimanding and disciplining students. It was a critical time, sensitive to racial conflicts the country was facing. Unfortunately, the issues could not be resolved. At the end, four years later, the computer systems were removed from teaching with only one lesson learned: self-paced computer learning was ahead of its times. It would take another twenty years before the next attempt was made, but this time it met with success.

Four weeks had passed since we started the project when Bob W. recalled and terminated our project GROW support. It was decided that routine computer technicians could handle repairs rather than using us higher paid

engineers. “I’ve got another job for you guys,” he happily announced the next morning. As it’d turned out, we joined a team getting ready to deliver a new cluster of computers around the country. Performing final test and analyses on a newly manufactured computer system, the PDP-8, built by Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), first generation Mini-computers, was destined for the country’s eight major cities from New York to Chicago and other East Coast regions, on to San Francisco and Los Angeles. What it entailed was computerizing the nation’s postal system to automatically read mailing addresses, sorted by size and destination, to be routed and delivered to their final destination.

Since it was another pioneering project, again, we faced challenges, but this time only from mechanical failures. It seemed, while computers functioned as designed, frequent mechanical failure plagued the system. Once the mechanical issues were solved, as it’d turned out, the system would prove highly successful. After multiple technological integrations and improvements, the system is still in operation to this day, but greatly improved in reading speed and accuracy.

The day finally arrived when I was called into Bob W.’s office once more. I arrived at the work place as promised. At the admin office, I was handed paperwork to fill out, documents to sign, and report to the reception station to have my photograph taken for the picture ID. Two hours later I was set, and ready for work. “Trailer 12,” I was directed. Stepping outside, I headed straight for the trailer park located across the sizable parking lot. At the far end was a cluster of trailers arranged much like a tactical command center, interconnected with wiring, cabling, and antennas, but here it housed a dozen temporary classrooms set up to process, and educate hundreds of newly-recruited technicians, and apprentice prospects into a program nobody knew anything about. Stepping up to the desk holding piles of neatly arranged books in a room filled with lively chatting students, I wrote my name on the blackboard.

“I’m your designated instructor for the next three months,” I declared. It was the timeframe allocated for a crash course in basic electronics, and computer theory to be forced into the heads of the students. It would not be sufficient time to learn about computers, communication equipment, software, circuitry, and programming, but it was the time allocated for one of the most pressing, and time sensitive government programs conceived after

the creation of the atom bomb. Being one of a dozen instructors, in hindsight, I can attest that we did our share in fulfilling contract obligations that were delivered in time, and on budget. When it came to government expectations, the allocated timeframe, and bottom line were the two most important factors to success. It was the contractor score card for winning successive project awards.

From here on out, instructing the student body proceeded at the scheduled pace, rapidly. With the backlog of newly hired there was no time to individually evaluate everyone's aptitude, and skills beforehand. I made the decision during their allocated semester. What was important was to get each student qualified, and certified for the field. By this time, already four years into manufacturing hardware, building computer equipment, and developing the operating system, the push was on for upcoming system deployments to overseas locations.

All I will state about the two-year teaching period was that it was hectic, and demanding to have the student body rotating in, and out every three months. To compensate for theoretical teaching at the classroom, it was just as important to get hands-on training on the equipment. This was what I mainly provided. Working the nightshift for the most part, my students, and I had the complex, a replica site of mainframes, switching gears, and associated storage, and peripheral equipment to ourselves. I did my share in cranking out newly-instructed students assigned to the various positions, and locations overseas in Europe, and Asia, as well as Hawaii, Guam, and all of the Pacific Rim nations, and islands. In complement, there was a parallel program implemented for processing the students as well. It was for the CONUS¹¹ arena. The program called for fifteen secret strategic locations dispersed around the globe, but it also called for an equal complement within our own borders between the Atlantic, and Pacific coasts, ranging from the Arctic Circle up north to the Mexican border to the south.

Aside from remote monitoring outposts in Australia, Diego Garcia, Turkey, and more obscure places, it assured global surveillance coverage for U.S. military, and Intelligence, an important aspect for the country's national defense posture, and security awareness. Unfortunately, national defense, to be effective, comes with a high taxpayer price tag, causing unavoidable controversy among the citizens in today's educated societies. Where a strong military presence used to be sufficient as a deterrent, today, it is not enough to keep terrorist attackers at bay. From all indications, the modern terrorist,

some with a mentality for self-destruction, seems to welcome the opportunity for personal sacrifice to the ravages of war. For the sake of Islam, one can only hope that the Almighty will appreciate the many sacrifices on His behalf.

Up to this state in my life, authoring, and assessing past historical accounts was pretty much an individual choice driven by two ambitious goals, satisfying my adventurous spirit, and enjoying eventual successes in my career, and personal life. I considered both desires to be of equal importance since they were interdependent for my ambitious notions, as well as my personal quest in gaining a wholesome knowledge on the world, its people, and the intrinsically colorful diversities in customs, and cultures. There was nothing extraordinary with my persona, habit, and lifestyle. I am one of eight billion individuals fitted into today's society populated by every conceivable color, creed, belief, and desire to strive for success, or at least a better life. Fame and fortune did not play a role in the goals I had set. Like many, I took life day by day as it was presented, driven mostly by my newly-acquired career change. I considered it a career for gaining new skills, and knowledge. What I did not expect was the personal recognition that came with it. It was this recognition that would eventually transform my future identity. But I am jumping ahead of myself again. First, I will explain the basic reasons for the transformation.

Teaching a new technology, as computer science and communication theory was, proved to be fun, sharing my acquired knowledge with my students. Most took to it with the enthusiasm I had experienced when I was taught in college, but with one difference. I taught it for a specific purpose and application, an opportunity providing the creation of a future career for anyone inclined to follow. It was not just for a job one could acquire. It was for a program unknown to the general public, and in many cases, not well known to the government and military, which had not been indoctrinated. It was for a highly secure program conceived by John F. Kennedy, and his secretary of defense elect, Robert S. McNamara administrations, AUTODIN.¹²

Whereas Western Union, the primary contractor for CONUS, was already well into building AUTODIN centers across the country, deployment to overseas locations was still pending facility construction completion managed by overseas construction firms within each foreign country. The

first Philco-Ford (to become Ford Aerospace) built system was scheduled for deployment the following spring to a secluded, joint U.S. and Royal Air Force-operated AFB in England. The next location on the schedule was Germany, followed with Italy, with a dozen more sites located in Asia, and other continents.

With world politics constantly changing, long-term projects involving other nations needed to be fluid for the deployment. Over time, some countries were added to the list while others were relocated or removed. One example was the war escalation in Vietnam which took priority with two AUTODIN installations ahead of the schedule. These were the locations immediately following the acceptance testing at Croughton AFB, England. The Department of Defense, U.S. military, and Intel organizations were extremely anxious for the test results. It was to be the first ever email generated by mankind. A success it was. The first test message (email) was a “Hello” message sent from England to the Pentagon in April 1967. It was the beginning of a new era in communication that would eventually explode into a spider-like web over the entire globe. But the commercial world was not ready for that. It would take another twenty-five years to achieve that after four major elements came together. In the early 90s the world was ready after Intel manufactured the microchip, IBM built the first commercial PC, Microsoft developed Windows 95, and DARPA provided the TCP/IP network protocol.

Back in the classroom, I was teaching the fundamental elements describing design, development, manufacturing, testing, the number of people involved in manufacturing, installation, and built led by scientists, engineers, technicians, operations, support, management, and the very purpose of AUTODIN.

“What’s AUTODIN?” was always the first question fired at me at the start of each new class.

“How many of you have been cleared for a need-to-know?” I would ask. All hands went up. It was enough assurance to proceed. After all, it was not my responsibility to lead the students through the gateway to national defense secrets. It was DISCO’s, the respective military services’, and Intel’s responsibilities.

“Okay then,” I would reply. “Since we know now the program you were drafted for, or selected by choice, let’s go on with the material. Please refrain

from interrupting with questions. Ours is a fast-paced curriculum, and we have a lot of ground to cover. I assure you that I will answer each, and every question you may have at the end of the sessions.”

In its fundamental principles, the program blueprint was conceived in 1962 by the DOD, designed, and developed by DARPA’s engineering pool in Reston, VA, over the next four years, manufactured at Ford’s Manufacturing Plant 55, Philadelphia, PA, with preliminary testing conducted at the PPM (Pilot Production Model), Willow Grove, PA, in conjunction with the Army’s signal school at Ft. Monmouth, NJ, principle test facility to ready the system for world deployment.

The original “Survivable Communication System,” and extended AUTODIN systems located at the various stateside, and overseas locations were under the management, and operational control of DCA (Defense Communication Agency). It provided the DOD with a worldwide, highly efficient, computer-controlled system to meet the ever-increasing demand for faster, and more accurate communications. In 1972, the Defense Special Security Communications System (DSSCS) was integrated into AUTODIN to provide communications support for the Intelligence community of the DOD. After the DSSCS integration, the National Security Agency, in conjunction with NATO, commissioned and operated the European site at Augsburg, Germany.

In its operational principles, each site was a store, and forward message switching center providing critical, immediate, time-sensitive information, as well as routine messages, to other communication centers, DOD, and its subscribers, overseas embassies, military bases, Intel centers, and CIA outposts around the globe.

In between the fundamental, and operational principle a new era was born, the staging for the age of information technology, the high-tech industry. There was much to teach from basic binary to the sophistication of the OSI stack, from digital designs to software applications, from hardware, and network protocols to systems language, from circuit boards to operating panels, from computer management to Comm, Comsec, and Crypto technologies, from shift supervisor to site manager, from logistics support to customer liaison, and, most important of all, for contracting personal to effectively interact, and coexist with the customer, in this case the government, and military services.

It had taken an army of engineers, technicians, ops personnel, logistics,

and management to implement the program with an initial budget slated, and appropriated at \$50 million. That would eventually escalate to a final price tag in excess of \$125 million over thirty years when the program was released to the public. At the time, it may have sounded like a lot of money, but in the end, it proved to be worth it, considering the impact the Internet had on the world not only from a survivable perspective, but for social implication as well.

AUTODIN, as the program was originally labeled, underwent numerous identity iterations, technological upgrades, and functional enhancements before being turned over to the public as it is known today, the Internet, a scalable network that has taken on its own life. Whether the invention was a good thing or not, time will be the judge. For now, it is an invaluable tool benefiting mankind in a fast-paced, public demand-driven world. But, as is the case with many innovations, it serves both factions in a world of behavior, and conduct, the good, and the bad, the benevolent, and malevolent, the criminal, and hacker.

Those were the essential functions for the instructor to instill onto the students who would be selectively assigned according to their skills to their respective positions, and site locations. As far as my teaching experience went, there were no dropouts. Although individual challenges were pervasive, all-encompassing, and energy absorbing to say the least, each student was trained to become one individual part in the complex of an information system the world had never before seen.

TRANSITION PERIOD

The 60s was also a time when the whole nation underwent change traumatic changes. They were changes such as the civil rights, women's liberation movements, fights for equality, civil protests against many issues, and the dismantling of the establishment. I, as well as many others had a difficult time adapting, and adopting. It was also the time when my transformation was taking place from the author to that of the "Invisible Warrior." It was not a sudden change. It was a change that came on gradually over a period of several months, affecting my personal identity, as well as my behavior, and lifestyle. Being absorbed into a highly classified system, for better or for worse, reflected on a person's identity.

Where previously, an individual may have been free-spirited, free thinking, and independent, now that same individual had to live by strictly-enforced rules. Every action, decision, and choice became a judgment call, consciously at first, but eventually turning into subconscious action. It was a call where national security became the most important aspect in one's life. It affected not only the time while on the job; it dictated the individual's social activity, friendship circle, discussion topics, and personal judgment calls. In short, each action became a topical subject that could compromise the acquired career position. In a way, if one wanted to maintain a sound status within the Intel-affiliated organization, the constraints helped develop a strong, and disciplined character. Every decision became the basis for the following ruling: Abstinence from gambling, drinking, and sexual inclination, three major factors for compromising not only the project, but its community members as well. The results became clearly noticeable. People thought first before they spoke or acted. It only took a slip of the tongue for the individual to be immediately escorted from the secured premises, and banned from the program forever. The chances of getting another job within the Intel community became impossible. I personally experienced inadvertent compromises on several occasions where one minute an employee would be working alongside, and the next minute he was escorted out without being seen, or heard of again. Big Brother was always watching and listening. An occasion like this always left a lasting impression not easily forgotten.

The question then becomes, is it all worth it—the restriction, the dedication, the devotion, or is the impact on personal life too great to handle?

The answer was irrevocably the same: "There better be a God." The

resultant choices, regardless of personal sacrifices, were always the same.
Nobody ever quit.

It was the time the Invisible Warrior fully emerged.

PART THREE NATIONAL DEFENSE

DEFENSE PROJECTS

Beginning with 1966, after its four-year design, and developing phase, I was assigned to become a team member with the AUTODIN program. With the program's development phase at an end, the next, and immediate stage was training, and deployment to specific overseas locations. Assigned locations at the time were based on trouble spots in which the U.S. military was involved. With the Cold War escalating after the Cuban missile crisis, the U.S. government-staged medium range, nuclear-tipped missiles to Europe, England, Germany, and Italy became our eastern defense perimeter. It was here where survivable communication became most important. These were the sites where first ASC¹³ were deployed.

Because of the political tensions prevalent across the globe involving the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Vietnam, the world watched unrestrained space launches initiated in the 60s by JFK, without having knowledge of AUTODIN, and its classified nature. That was how tightly security was enforced. Any compromise would have had dire consequences for the individual. However, there were occasional internal security breaches, though they were not through intentional or malicious behavior. It was mostly through a slight mistake carried by an inadvertent slip of the tongue, revealing a classified word, or program parameter. Despite being a miniscule, and innocent act by the individual, the information could have easily been picked up by an adversary Intelligence agency to the disadvantage of U.S. Intel status on foreign policies.

To get the idea, I will cite one example of a security breach. During the installation process at the NATO Intel site in 1972, near Augsburg, Germany, just prior to taking possession of the facility, during a final security sweep on the building more than seventy listening bugs, Russian in nature, were found implanted into walls, and ceilings during the construction of the building. The resultant dilemma was clear: should the incident be made public, or should it be suppressed? If revealed, the implications could escalate, and even become hostile with accusations thrown at each other, endangering an already tense political climate. It was these conditions pressing on national Intelligence issues instigated from both sides.

All in all, thirty AUTODIN communication centers were built in three

construction styles: underground to protect against foreign Intelligence intrusions, partially underground with management floor above ground, and tactical centers above ground in conflict, and war zones, with each serving its special purposes. Structure type one, underground, was a heavily-fortified, and shielded strategic center providing maximum protection against EMP strike, nuclear attack, and intelligent leaks from within COMM activities, and classified information processing.

Structure type two, partially underground, was similar in construction, and protection, but only to COMM, and COMSEC sections, while operations, and command personnel were situated above ground for convenience of access.

Structure type three, above ground, was protected against Intelligence leaks, spying, and compromises, but not against EMP pulsing. The reason was tactical orientation for a quick abandonment of the site in case of an enemy overrun, and takeover in a war zone. A typical example was the 1975 U.S. battle defeat by North Vietnam where highly classified materials had to be quickly destroyed from computer, and communication equipment, hardware, software, memory, and storage devices, an incineration process by strategically placed thermal bombs. No worthwhile information, and data were left to the North Vietnamese takeover other than the vacated facility with melted-down computer, and COMM equipment.

Security was tight from the onset of system deployment. It increased even more during actual operations. To gain access to an operational facility, without exception, everybody was subjected to strict security scrutiny. A top secret clearance was required, processed by the respective organization. If the site was operated, and managed by the Department of the Navy, it was Naval Intel handling the process. The same departmentalized process was followed by the Air Force, Army, Marine, and NATO Intelligence. Where the isolation may have improved security with responsibilities placed on the respective services, it was a duplicated effort, nevertheless. Aside from the cost factor, due to the uncooperative nature between different organizations, at times this hindered personal background investigations, and individual surveillance. Cost, and effort set aside, the result was a security barrier that was never breached in the lifespan of AUTODIN.

IDENTITY TRANSITION

The following year, 1967, more than one year had passed since I was hired on with the AUTODIN program. Students came, and went. The first lot had already been dispatched, and had taken up positions at the European, and Asian theaters while I still remained at the training center. I became more envious of my colleagues as the months went by. "Take care," I would bid the departing people goodbye when another crew left for overseas. "Wish I was going." Tensions ran high amid the students ready to face the world. I could see anticipation painted across dozens of faces getting ready for departure. "See you there" and "hope to see you soon" some responded on the way out. I always felt despondent when one class finished up, and left. Though it was only a temporary feeling until I became part of a new student body arriving for the next training class.

I felt the chill of another winter on approach. Being November, it had turned cold. I would face another winter in Willow Grove. What used to be a quiet residential town at the outskirts of Philadelphia, had turned into a busy place with town's people wondering about the sudden influx of young, and energized male arriving weekly taking over every available apartment and room for rent. Then just as mysteriously, they would depart three to six months later without a promise ever to return. Aside baffled girlfriends left behind, most townspeople did not question the migration as long as they paid their rent for the somewhat inflated lodging rates.

I had just started a new class when my name was announced on the intercom. "I'll be right back," I assured the students. Checking in with the department secretary, "He wants to see you," she said with a gesture at the director's office.

Anticipating another complaint from a student, as was the usual case, I stepped into his office sour faced. "How's it going?" he said, chewing on a cigar while avoiding my stare. "I hear you're doing excellent work in training. I thought about bringing you in with the engineering staff. Interested?" It was when he looked up to judge my reaction.

"You know what I want, dammit," I angrily responded, like several times before. "I want to be on the frontlines." Though Bob W. was considered God within the executive office, we had developed a special working relationship. It may have been my job skills, or personal openness, or both that formed our mutual respect for each other. As for me, considering his military career,

Major General in rank, I always adored the man. All I had to do was imagine him seated behind the controls of the B-17 flying fortress bomber, soaring into enemy territory to deliver yet another bomb load in the name of democracy.

“Think about it,” he said. “You’d be part of my staff. It’s not every day I extend such an offer. With you out there in the field, I can’t guarantee a position when you come back.”

“I appreciate the offer, and understand your generosity, but I’m not cut out for an office job. My mind is on foreign territory, you know it.”

He knew quite well of my interviews, and offers from the other computer manufacturing companies. I had offers from UNIVAC, RCA, NCR, HP, DEC, CDC, and a few more when I accepted the offer with Philco-Ford. He knew what attracted me to the job. It was the opportunity to travel overseas, to explore the world. It was my dream, and I could not afford to let it being shattered. We used to talk about it frequently with him telling me stories from his assignments with the Air Force as B-52 bomber pilot stationed in the Pacific—Guam, specifically.

“So, you say.” He got out of the chair, picked up an opened envelope from the desk, and deliberately advanced in my direction with an outstretched hand stating, “Then today is your lucky day.” He paused while I stared with awe at the notification addressed from the DISCO office.

“You mean...? I did not finish.

“Yes,” he beamed. “Your clearance was granted.”

I grabbed his hand with the most heart filled “Thank you” I could muster up. Despite the chance for losing me as a staff member his face lit up at my gratitude. “The world is yours,” he said accompanied with a grin. “I felt the same way when I took command on the B-52.”

With a Top-Secret certificate in my hand, I could wait no longer, “What’s next?”

“I have a position open as field engineer, I can have you assigned to.”

My heart skipped several beats while my mind was silently racing with euphoria. *Finally*, I thought, after years of anticipation, and waiting. “Where am I going?”

“Guam.”

“Guam,” I yelled out in disgust. “You can’t do that. Not after what you’ve said about the place.”

“Guam,” he’d explained on earlier occasions, “is a rock. There’s nothing

there. It's an island in the middle of nowhere. There's nothing to do unless you're into playing golf." Now, in presenting this offer, he was hoping I would be discouraged from leaving.

"It's the only choice you've got. There's nothing else available." I knew right away he was lying because the company had a difficult time manning the overseas ASCs¹⁴ quick enough to go operational at the scheduled dates. His body language confirmed my suspicion. Trying to avoid my stare, he squirmed in his seat. I demanded more. I had my heart set on the Philippines, Japan, even Vietnam, a conflict that had escalated into a full-fledged war by 1968.

"I'll quit," I said, and turned to exit.

"Wait," he called out. "Don't be so hasty. I'll make you a deal." I stopped, and turned to face him, waiting for how he'd get out of the trap. "You go there for the testing. It's only three months. After that, I promise you any assignment you want."

"Promise?" At least there was hope. Should I believe him. Regardless, it only took me seconds to decide. "Okay. I'll take it. But I'll hold you to the promise. When do I leave?"

"As soon as you can pack."

I knew the schedule well. I also knew that he had been trying to staff Guam as demanded by contract, but had a difficult time filling positions. I was not the only one that objected to an assignment there. From what I'd heard in the past year, everybody had the same idea: "Guam? Not me." Site acceptance testing was to commence right after the upcoming holidays. There had been already several delays with the opening of the site. First, there was Typhoon Agnes sweeping across the island in August, months earlier, leveling ninety percent of the island's housing. Then, with the holidays coming up, it was difficult for the company to find willing subjects to travel. Everybody wanted to spend Christmas, and the New Year with families back home. Bob knew I was single, and unattached. I was the innocent mark he had been looking for. I accepted with a silent mutter. *What's another three months?*

"Who else is on the team?"

"The site manager."

"That's it? Only the two of us?" It seemed incredible because the contract called for fifteen engineers, and technicians just for the testing phase alone. The full staffing would be ramped up to forty following site-acceptance on

March 15th, the time the site would go operational. It gave me less than three months to prepare the system without additional help. I realized right away that I had fallen into Bob's trap. The normal debugging, repair, and testing timeframe allocated was six months.

"Don't worry," he said, sensing my hesitation, "the rest will be there after the holidays."

I knew right away that I would have to hustle day and night to get the site ready. But it was the opportunity I had been waiting for.

"Stop by before you leave."

I scrambled for the exit before he could change his mind, or something else came up to prevent me from leaving. It was not that I was ungrateful to even be employed here, or to have the opportunity to be an instructor on the world's most sophisticated computer system, the latest design in mainframes, the Philco Ford-built model-102, a modified series 2002 system, the defense monster running at the NORAD Mountain. The Model-102 had a more innovative design for the central processing system than competitive manufacturers. To begin with, the internal adder registers were of predictive design. To understand the function of the adder, take two binary input numbers the size of its internal registers (48 numbers in length), add both numbers and, depending on progression, hand off the results to the next processing stage. What made it unique was that the adder would read, process, and provide the result based on their logical input before the numbers were even computed through the registers, greatly impacting speed, and performance.

Another innovation was the means by which data, and information were transmitted across the ether. Where IBM, the leader in the industry, was communicating over Token Ring network topology, the other manufactured mainframe computers were connected via Star, Bus, Ring, or Mesh network topologies, transmitting data, and information in standard serial fashion. The 102 processor had a different approach. Its design permitted simultaneous parallel transmission based on a new design concept, a time-slice scanner. Each data segment, and information stream was dissected into one binary bit (alpha-numeric character) at a time, sent out to one subscriber channel within one time-slice element, ready to release another data bit to the next subscriber line 250 times (number of subscribers), providing uninterrupted streams of data and information to all destinations simultaneously. The concept may be too complicated to readily understand for the novice reader, but I assure you

that the transmission speed was 250 times faster than its competitors. It was MIT, in conjunction with DARPA scientists that came up with this unique approach.

Being in a teaching capacity, I had obtained first-hand knowledge, and involvement into all aspects of leading-edge designs, and technology. The opportunity alone brought me to the forefront of knowledge, and skills in the area.

It took no time at all to find someone from the student body to take over my apartment lease while I was cleaning up my local affairs. The only things left were getting my travel orders authorized by headquarters, picking up traveler's checks issued by accounting, booking the flight, and packing two suitcases, and I was ready. I took the first available Pan Am flight destined for Guam. I still could not believe the good fortune, being on my first leg to adventure. It was how I had looked at the future. I knew that it had to be job or career related for such a lifestyle. I could not, and probably would have never been able to afford it on my own.

Seated in the comfort of business class travel in the Boeing 707, I realized then and there that the third milestone of my ambitious plans had materialized. With seatbelt sign just turned off, after being served a martini, I succumbed to the feel of heightened anticipation. It would be a long flight from Philadelphia to Guam, with refueling stops at Hawaii, and Wake Island. I did not care how long the flight would take. I was happy just being in the air with dinner served amid a couple more martinis. Stopovers were brief, only long enough to refuel, and take on additional passengers. I must have dozed off when "Fasten seatbelts," from the speaker sound seeped into my brain sixteen hours later, "we are getting ready for landing."

I had been dreaming. It was a repeating dream, played out in color of foreign lands, and cultures I had envisioned many times in the past. It was wheels touching the runway that jolted me from dream. The landing was announced by the stewardess: "Don't forget your belongings." I reached for my briefcase, headed for the exit, and with my first step on the ramp felt like I was being hit in the face by a board. It was the first time in my life I had been exposed to tropical heat. "Wow," I recall my first spoken words on Guam, U.S. Territory to Micronesia, central Pacific region. "Is it ever hot?"

Considering where I was born, and grew up, hot was an understatement. Still shaky-legged after the long flight, I carefully made it down the mobile ramp. I checked the airport over; it was ground level only, with insufficient

space for the recent growth in airline travel. Ever since the war escalation in Vietnam, travel to Asia with a brief stopover on Guam had seen tremendous increases. It would not take long thereafter for island contractors to build a new airport. However, it would be an airy terminal for some time to come, with arrivals subjected to the torrential rains prevalent to the region. Islanders had learned how devastating the annual typhoons could be to construction, and dwellings. It would take another decade or more to see modern construction flourish on the island, primarily funded by Japanese entrepreneurs.

PACIFIC RIM - GUAM

Stepping on solid ground, after a twelve-hour flight, to my surprise, I felt light headed not only in my mind, but in body as well. I did not feel my full 150 lb. living weight on the ground. It was exhilarating from the highpoint of the island's airport to see into the blue ocean in the distant horizon fading in with the blue sky above. I stood there in the midst of exiting passengers anxiously headed for the airport to depart while bumping into me. From the height of the airport location I took in the spectacular view. I could easily make out the crested swells breaking on the shores. I could even see a couple of towns in the distance hugging the shoreline. "How beautiful."

"Tamuning Bay," a person nearby pointed in the appropriate direction. "Rainy season just ended." A stewardess, as flight attendants were addressed back then, stopped to ask, "Where're you staying?" Slightly puzzled, though we had a couple of brief chats while in flight, I stopped to look at her, smiling pleasantly. I was not accustomed to being accosted by strangers in a rush to head for their destinations. "Hotel, I suppose," I said.

"You got reservations?" It may have been an invitation, but I did not recognize it as such.

"Not that I know."

"Then," she informed me, "you're out of luck."

"Why?"

"No accommodations. There's only one hotel on the island, and it's reserved for usflight crew. Joy," she said, offering her hand.

I was startled at her unexpected, friendly approach. Up to this point in my life, my focus was mostly set on career, and foreign regions waiting to be explored. Opportunities for a possible relationships, at this time, were farthest from my mind. Though, what I realized in an instant was my dreams taking shape. I vaguely remember giving her my birthname, but my mind had already adapted to the transition confronting me from here on. I decided to leave the past behind, and start a new beginning, that of Alex Bauer, the long-suppressed pseudo identity of my dreams. I was determined to turn it into reality, and follow a path suitable for my future.

From this point on, I will refer to himself as Alex Bauer. It would be a change not only job, and career wise, but character, and personality wise as well. The persona I was born with had gradually morphed into Alex Bauer. At this moment, I had arrived on the threshold of adventure, Day One in my

acquired identity.

“Alex,” I said somewhat reluctantly, returning her handshake. “Alex Bauer.”

“I thought you said...,” giving me a once over.

“I know. My mistake. My mind was in the past.”

Obviously satisfied with my appearance she said, “Look me up at the hotel. I’ll be here three days.” She was staying at the Cliff Hotel, located at Agana Heights, a place near the airport, as I would learn.

At this time, receiving travel cases on arrival was still conducted in the open. As soon as the truck arrived at the terminal to unload the pile of suitcases from the craft, travelers sought out luggage, and headed for the exit. It was a hectic affair. In Guam, though it was a U.S. possession, a custom-check was enforced. Only passengers arriving with U.S. passports were excluded from inspections. It became apparent that Guam was subjected to smuggling from territory islands, and surrounding countries. “Where else would the local population get their merchandise,” was my rationale.

“Bye. Hope so see you,” were Joy’s departing words before she was whisked away by the crew limo.

Not only did I make a friend, but she had mentioned her flight schedule to me. *What better introduction to the Rock*, I thought cheerily? The Rock will always be my label; Robert “Bob” W. had used the term to refer to Guam, and it stuck with me. Unfortunately, Joy, and I did not connect, not this time. I was swamped with a workload I had not anticipated. However, I received a call from her two weeks later.

“Remember me?” the cheery voice said on the receiver. What followed were pleasant times on each of her successive stopovers until one day the calls stopped. “She must have been reassigned,” I rationalized. Being part of the flight crew was a nomadic life in the 60s, and 70s. So was mine, as it would turn out. I had no complaints. There would be many more opportunities to make friends.

Now, upon leaving the terminal, to my surprise, I spotted my name on a receiving card held high by an individual dressed in a sailor’s uniform. “You Alex?” he asked when I approached.

“That’s me.”

“I’ve got your transportation.”

“Terrific. Where’re we going?”

“South. BEQ.”

“BEQ? Thought the site was up north.”

“Bachelor Enlisted Quarters.”

“Aha.” I was clueless, waiting for more explanation.

“Nothing else available. Typhoon leveled the island.”

It did not take long to find out what he was talking about. Everywhere I looked there was devastation. Whatever places were still standing had their rooftops torn off. “There’s no electricity. No air-conditioning either,” I was forewarned. His words did not sink in until the first night, when I was trying to sleep at the place. It turned out I had to double-up in a small, whitewashed, but clean room without the slightest cooling or windows. For the next three months I endured the conditions; it was not a pleasant experience. I began to see what Robert “Bob” W. meant. Extremely busy with system analysis, debugging, testing, my work schedule was so demanding the three months went by in no time. The holidays came, and went without my noticing. Christmas, and New Years were hardly noticed on the island. The steamy topical climate did not inspire much for caroling, and seasonal holiday songs as back home. What I did notice was the date. I made the call.

“Remember your promise,” I demanded, as soon as the distant receiver picked up thinking it was the director.

“What are you talking about,” the unfamiliar voice demanded in return. “Who are you?”

I realized then that it wasn’t the person I had expected. “Bob?”

“Robert W. is no longer working here. I took his place. Where’re you calling from?”

“Guam.”

“Ah yes. You’re Alex?”

“That I am.”

“What can I do for you?”

I was highly distraught. It was a turn I had not expected, especially not at the onset of a promising career. Anything could happen. *I could get stuck here forever, laid off, or even worse, get fired if my demands were not met,* went through my mind. But a promise was a promise, and I said so, “I called to find out about my replacement.” If it was a newly hired, he had to be trained which meant several more weeks on the Rock.

“What replacement?”

“Replacement I was promised before taking the assignment on Guam.”

“I don’t know anything about it.”

Hearing it, I became even more distraught. “But...”

“There is no ‘But’, the voice interrupted. “From the schedule in front of me your assignment is for two years.”

“Two years,” I yelled into the phone, and hung up. It was an unacceptable proposition I could not tolerate. I was fuming. It became apparent that there was either a communication break at the leadership level, or an intentional oversight. I was bound to find out. Checking my wristwatch, I realized that the office staff at HQs left work for the day. Since there was a fifteen-hour time difference, I had to try later in the day, around 5:00 pm, to catch HR in their morning on the east coast, 8:00 am. I kept checking my watch frequently for time. My day crew was just leaving when I made the call. The distant operator answered, courteous as always, “Whom may I direct your call?”

“Program director,” I demanded, in a not overly friendly tone of voice.

“Please hold.”

“Yes?” The same voice answered as earlier.

“I’d like to speak with the AUTODIN program director.”

“Speaking.”

“Listen,” I said. “I was upset when I called earlier, but I need to speak with the person in charge of the program.”

“That would be me. As I said earlier, Robert W. is no longer with the company. He quit last month. I am in charge now. You’ll report directly to me. Do we understand each other?”

“I don’t even know you,” I objected, but submitted myself to the unfortunate change.

“Arthur C.”

“Okay Arthur,” I started. “Here is my plight...”

“Call me Art, and I realize your position. I spoke with HR to check on your schedule. You are right. I understand your dilemma, but there is nothing I can do to resolve.”

“What do you mean by nothing?”

“There is currently no replacement scheduled for you. You are obligated to the contract.”

“But that’s not fair. I came here on good faith for the specific duration. Doesn’t a promise mean anything anymore?”

“I did not make the promise. There is nothing I can do.”

“We’ll see,” I said, and hung up once more. My mind was made up. I

stormed to the front office to resign. “You can’t leave,” the site manager objected.

“You know I was here for three months. Where is my replacement?”

“They never sent anybody. I need you here,” he pleaded.

“Not anymore,” I said. “Consider it my termination.” I abruptly left the site. It only took me two days to book a flight back, notify Naval Admin, and pack my belongings. The following morning I was on a Pan Am flight back to Philadelphia.

Twenty hours later, I checked into a motel near HQs, retrieved my vehicle from storage, and waited for the morning dawn. As soon as I walked into the building, people greeted me on recognition. “Where have you been?” I did not stop to chat. My focus was the director’s office. Still steaming, I walked in without prior announcement.

“Who are you,” Arthur C. demanded, him on the phone, and my eyes on the nameplate verifying his name.

“Alex Bauer.”

As soon as I made the announcement, he hung up demanding, “What are you doing here?”

“I quit.” Facing intentional consequences, it was the boldest statement I had ever made.

“Now just wait a minute,” he stalled. “First of all, you did not leave the site unintended, did you?”

“Naval Intel is in good hands. I left a trained crew behind.”

“Okay, but we still have to work things out. You can’t just quit.”

“I did. Want to know why?”

“You told me already. It means a lot to me, but I did not make the promise. What I do promise, we’ll work something out. I don’t want to lose you. You have the best reputation one could wish. We need to talk. Have a seat,” he said with a gesture at the office table. Seated across from him I waited for what he had to say. “I can’t replace you at the moment,” he started. “I just don’t have anybody that fits your qualifications.”

“You could hire and train somebody.”

“That’s true but I have a contract with Naval Admin for a specific number of contractors qualified to operate, and manage the Guam site. They demand full complement staffing for the duration. It’s why you can’t leave, but I have an offer for you to consider. It’s not a promise,” he said. “It’s a deal I hope

you'll consider."

I had been studying his face and persona while listening, watching his demeanor. Facing me was a self-assured, friendly mannered, face underscored by strong leadership ability. He seemed sincere. I waited for the offer.

"From your skills, and performance, according to our pay scale, I see that you are underpaid. I'll give you a raise effective immediately. Not only will you have a pay increase, I'll provide you with a promotion you deserve. How does Site Superintendent sound to you?"

I remained silent because my mind was rapidly processing the information he just offered. Though it was not exactly what I wanted, it just may work out. While I spent the last three months on Guam absorbed with nothing but work challenges, I had notions on many occasions in joining the team with their frequent recreational activities. Once my team settled in, with their dedicated jobs assigned for the next two years, or longer, their lives adapted to the local environment for fishing, diving, golfing, bowling, and other recreation mostly centered on weekend beach parties. In the presence of my new boss, realizing it now, I had envied them all.

"I need a week to arrange to take care of personal matters," I said. I had to terminate my apartment here that I had kept up paying, find a storage place for my vehicle and other personal belongings I wanted to keep before taking off for the next two years. "Two year?"

"That's the condition. You in?"

"I accept." We shook hands solidifying the deal.

"Come back in the morning. I'll have your travel orders and checks waiting when you get here, and call me Art."

"Okay Art." I turned and left, for the best part satisfied with the way things turned out.

One week later I was back on the island once more. Word had already preceded my arrival. "Couldn't handle the World?", and "You missed the Rock?" were some of the return greetings. There was a slight misgiving from one on the team, my replacement, who saw his new position in jeopardy. I assured him that it was not the case. He retained his job as site systems engineer. There was one situation that still needed to be resolved. My space at the BEQ had been reassigned. I was out of a room. As luck had it, I found a more suitable accommodation much closer to work. It was Guam's only

beach resort. When I checked at the place, as expected, I was told, “Room? Not possible. We are completely occupied, and have been since the typhoon came through.” The host was amicable, but could not accommodate one more regardless of my begging. “I’ll take any space. Just give me a closet, crawlspace, anything.” He did.

“Now since you mentioned it,” he offered. “There is a space under the staircase I could let you have, but it’s not suitable for living.”

“Just show me. I’ll be the judge.” One minute later I beamed at him, “I’ll take it.” After retrieving the key from the office, he opened the door to what I could only describe as closet. Fortunately, it was spacious enough to accommodate a small bed and night stand, tiny window, sink and faucet, no hot water, but cozy, and most of all, I would go to sleep at night by the pounding of waves from the beach only one hundred yards away. The following months turned out some of the happiest times I had. The host and I would become longtime friends. Shortly after I settled in, an island-wide warning was issued. “Typhoon imminent,” the weather center announced. “Forty-eight hours.”

“Not good,” was all I could muster, considering the recent past, and hoping for the best. By now, the islanders had gotten used to the many warnings sent out during the annual typhoon season. There had been a total of twenty typhoons, and four super-typhoons, including thirty-nine tropical depressions during the preceding year, with each contributing more to the island’s devastation. *No wonder, I thought, ninety percent of the island was flattened.*

Sure enough, a couple of nights later, it was past midnight when I received a phone call amid the roaring of winds. “Site is down.” It meant the electricity was out. As if my workload had not been enough already, I anticipated the worst.

As soon as I stepped outside I was in the midst of the elements. No matter how I tried to rationalize against taking the twenty-minute drive to the site, I had to make the trip. It was my responsibility to restore power. Hopping behind the wheel of my rental, a 1960 Volkswagen Beetle, I took to the road. Minutes later, after leaving the town behind, I was hit full force by the storm. It was my first experience wrestling with a typhoon, trying to keep the Beetle on the road. On several occasions I had to slow to a crawl to prevent from being swept off the road. If the conditions were not bad enough already, the rain was pouring from the sky. The windshield wiper quit shortly after,

unable to clear the torrents of rain from the windshield. Leaning out on the driver's side, I had no choice but to press on while getting soaking wet in the process.

I finally arrived at the site in spite of several roadblocks, mostly fallen palm tree branches amid corrugated rooftops slicing through the air. Sure enough, the facility was doused in darkness. Taking an initial assessment, aside from electricity being out island-wide, Naval contact was lost with the 7th Pacific base, as well as the Polaris submarine fleets, in a total communication blackout. Fortunately, I found no lasting damages to mainframe computers, and support functions. But there was one obstacle I had to overcome first. The UPS system had shut down. Unfortunately, backup generators, supposedly on emergency standby, had not kicked in. It was up to me to restore the site. But not all was hopeless. Minutes later, the power expert, also a contractor, made it to the site.

The UPS system, the core in every critical operation, was designed for automatic switchover, but at times, due to component breakdown, especially in the tropical humidity, the transition from batteries to generators failed. To get the system started it took two people to activate the spark initiator, a foot-long, manually-manipulated lever. When activated, closing the contacts was accompanied by an explosion-like sound generating streaks of sparks shooting through the dark. The first generator spun up quickly, followed by four more in rapid automation, necessary for carrying the full load to the onsite equipment.

The site, 7th Fleet, Polaris subs, fleet headquarters in Wahiawa, Hawaii, Naval Command in Norfolk, VA, and JCS at the Pentagon had communication from the Pacific back again. Aside from fighting the prevalent weather conditions, my crew came out champions. In the years ahead, the event was the first of many situations I was tested on to fight, and resolve. It took many more hours of apprehensive standby duty until the winds calmed down. I faced bright daylight when I stepped outside, headed home to catch up with sleep.

“You’ve got a visitor,” the site administrator announced a couple of days later on the intercom. As usual, I was busy with analysis, troubleshooting, and testing failed computer components.

“Who?”

“Don’t know. Ace’s his name. Says he’s assigned here.”

“Okay.” It must be an additional crew member headquarters had promised. Sure enough, I met him by the guard shack. “Alex’s the name.”

“Roland C.,” he returned. “But you can call me Ace. Everybody does. Was sent to work on the team.”

“Ace? Kind of unusual.”

“It’s what they call me.”

“Welcome aboard, Ace. Checked in at the Gate?”

“Not yet. Was told to see you.”

“Let’s do it,” I offered, headed for security shack located alongside the secured perimeter fence. Each time upon entering or leaving the facility, one had to pass the armed, Marine-guarded checkpoint. High-level security at each of our facilities was strictly enforced. The reasons? Just in case. The results? Nobody was ever killed trying to rush the gates. Peoples’ mindsets in the 60s, and 70s were different. Generally, people respected and looked out for each other on both sides of the fence, military, and civilian. Draftees were physically, and mentally conditioned for the services, with the free-spirited hippies, prevalent during the 70s, had not taken to violence. Their minds were mellowed from their daily drug dosage, fueled by expendable cash in their pockets.

“Where’re you from, Ace?”

“Georgia. Just been hired on.”

“Didn’t see you at the training center.”

“I was in the Air Force. Had done four years when I heard about AUTODIN.”

“Word gets around, doesn’t it?”

“Mostly rumors. Nobody knows much about the project. Heavy recruiting is taking place. That’s the reason I’m here.”

“I suspected it. Most of my trainees were ex-military. What skills do you have?”

“Computer programming. Trained on the job.”

“What systems?”

“SAGE.”

“I’ve heard about it, pretty complex. Well,” I said, patting him on the shoulder, “you came to the right place. I sure can use your help.”

“Glad to be here.”

“You eaten yet?”

“Nope. Just got off the plane.”

“Let’s have lunch.” With most local restaurants leveled by typhoons, there were only two choices of eateries, both located on base. It was either the Navy mess hall or the O Club. Since the mess hall was subject to dish clutter, the Officer’s club was a better choice to talk.

Watching him attack a burger, and fries, it became obvious he had not eaten. Our dialogue was brief, interrupted in-between taking bites. “How many are on the team?”

“What team?” I said, letting him know the current manning status. “Just the two of us, UPS tech, and site manager.”

“What?” He looked baffled. “I was told there was a team.”

“For now, you are looking at it. It’s you, and me, but more are promised.”

“You mean you’ve handled the job by yourself? The analysis, debugging, repairs, and pre-test?”

“That’s why you are here. I’ve been working sixteen hours a day, seven days a week nonstop. I’m lacking computer experts. It appears that everybody wants an Asian or European assignment. It looks like management has forgotten about Guam.”

“The word is out,” he confirmed, taking another bite.

“What word?”

“I was told you could handle the job by yourself.”

“Yeah,” I agreed, somewhat dismayed at the lack of headquarters support. “But even I deserve a break now and then.” I was happy to finally have some relief with the pressing workload. “Let’s find you a room. Probably need to recover from the flight. You can start tomorrow.” He lucked out. Some rooms had become available at the BOQs, right here at the Naval base, where the site was located. “Not bad,” he admitted when checking in.

“You’re lucky,” I agreed. “It’s been a miserable three months.”

“What’s the working hours?”

“I start early. 7:00 am, take a late lunch break, with more work until 10:00 p.m. It still gives me time to grab a bite to eat, and a drink before the clubs close at midnight. Since you are here maybe I can get a decent dinner for a change.”

“You can count on it.”

“Meet me at the mess hall in the morning before seven. Bye,” I said, headed back to the site, where much more work was awaiting me.

The following morning, as promised, Ace was ready for work, but I’d noticed

a flaw in his appearance. “That what you’re wearing?” He was dressed in casuals, a short-sleeved shirt, and sneakers.

He seemed puzzled.

“Dress code is formal.”

“What? In this heat?”

“Headquarters’ orders. No exceptions. We’ve got to match the customer’s code of dress, and conduct. Navy personal dressed in neatly-pressed uniforms. We’re required to wear suit and tie. Got one with you?”

“Lucked out. Packed the suit. I wasn’t sure what to expect.” He was back ten minutes later properly dressed.

While there were rumors about changes in the Navy, for now Air Force, and Army command still enforced inherited customs affecting discipline, behavior, and personal conduct according to long established policies. It would take several more years before the changes were instituted. Asserted by intense public pressure put on military services, the initial break to go casual, part of what the public called “antiquated customs,” came with Admiral Elmo Zumwalt¹⁵.

Up to that time, everybody working government contracts was required to dress up. For civilians it was suit, and tie. The only exception to the strict rules was while assigned to Guam, and other tropical places. Because of the constant heat, with the site not having air conditioning during construction, workers were permitted to remove dress jackets. Other than that, it was white shirt and tie, iron-pressed trousers, matching socks to polished shoes. When the changes finally come about, I was at a loss because on the one side, my crew demanded an immediate adaption while headquarters refused to comply. I even had to fire some on my team because of non-conformance. It took another couple of years for commercial industries to accept and conform to the changes.

“Ready?”

“Let’s do it.”

Arriving at the guard shack, Ace was handed an ID badge, and in we went, with me giving him a tour of the site. He seemed impressed at what I had accomplished, and more so by what still had to be done. While partially-configured computers, switching gears, memory cabinets, drum-storage units, comm, and COMSEC equipment were ready for acceptance testing, many more were waiting to be debugged, and fixed. At least now I had support and was hoping to proceed more rapidly. One person can only accomplish so

much while pressured by the schedule. It was either additional help or working extra hours, as was the case with me.

“See these cabinets?” I said to him with a gesture at a row of neatly-aligned equipment cabinets. “I haven’t gotten to them yet. They are yours. You can check out a set of logic diagrams, and an O-scope¹⁶, and whatever else you need with logistics.”

“What’s their function?” he wanted to know.

“Front-end processors connecting to the outside world.” It was not that simple. There was much more hardware, equipment, and software connected in between, like tech-control monitoring consoles, COMM equipment, and patch bays in line with COMSEC, and crypto gear feeding channels to hundreds of subscribers located across the Pacific Rim, connecting with fleets, embassies, and Intel stations at places like the Philippines, Korea, Japan, Okinawa, Thailand, Vietnam, and other, more or less obscured places of conflicts, and war. Okinawa, though a Japanese island in the Ryukyu chain, was still under U.S. military jurisdiction at the time.

Internal to the primary complex was a cluster of six interconnected mainframe computers with dozens of associated internal and external memory banks, mass data storage units, and switching gear, providing multiple, operational redundancies via an interconnected matrix in case of equipment failure. There were not only one or two backup systems. There were six altogether. It may have seemed an excessive redundancy but with transistor technology at its infancy, breakdown of components¹⁷ occurred frequently, almost on a daily basis. Once a system was operational, a technical team was assigned three shifts to maintain component integrity, and operation status to the site. The designers of AUTODIN had the foresight for automatic, seamless switchovers to standby equipment ready to take over.

Work proceeded more rapidly with Ace by my side. Because of the pressing schedule, we kept on working until most of the equipment was tested, repaired, and ready for acceptance. Relief finally arrived with additional help from headquarters. Assigned several leased cars from a local car rental, with four occupants to one vehicle, mostly dilapidated, and rusty from the ever-present humidity, the team was shuttled to, and from the work location, working long hours, after which a quick bite was assured before turning in to catch a few hours of sleep, our daily routine.

The day for the acceptance testing finally arrived. The annual monsoon

season was over with the dry season on its way. Tropical places such as Guam had two seasons, wet, and dry, with day, and night time temperatures fluctuating only slightly. The sun rose, and set each day at the same time. Relief from the heat came after midnight. It was a daily cycle repeated with cooler air currents surging inland from the sea, reversing the following morning when the sun began to heat the island. Body, and clothes turned wet as soon as one stepped outside an air-conditioned environment. Although cooling, and climate control on the island were marginal, for buildings containing electronics, air-conditioning was a necessity.

At the beginning of March, a government-sponsored test team arrived from the mainland, taking over the facility to prepare for acceptance, scheduled for March 15th. It would take two extremely busy weeks of more debugging, and fixing for site equipment to pass final test before being turned over to operations.

“You did it,” Arthur C., the program director said, shaking my hand. He had arrived a few days early for the turn-over ceremony. “You’ve made the company proud.” Since there was uncertainty within corporate management about completing the task, I, despite several technical setbacks, kept assuring them of my ability to satisfy my first customer, the U.S. Naval Command, Pacific.

There is one important thing I had learned from working in Intelligence: “Intel is the best career anybody could attain. It teaches one to analyze and solve every challenge thrown across your path.” But to attain it, strict prerequisite action is required to visit or take an assignment at an Intel center such as:

- The contractor requesting the clearance has to hire the prospective individual
- Access Clearance with a security processing agency was requested (*)
- When granted, the primary contractor is informed of the status (**)
- The individual is notified and prepared for location assignment
- Immunization shots and certificates are initiated
- A certificate message from the security agency is sent to the site
- The site security officer is notified of the new arrival
- After arriving on site, credentials and clearances are verified
- Depending on work assignment, if qualified, special access may

be granted

With Autodin there were three special access section:

- Computer Center: Highest access category (i.e. SPECAT, SCI, or ESI) (***)
- Communication Section: Highest access category COMSEC
- Comm Security: CRYPTO
- Operations: ESI and/or SCI “Restricted for Addressee Only” (****)
- Power Station: SECRET

(*) Two options were available:

- a. Commercial Contracting agency
- b. Military Intelligence agency

(**) Depending on level of clearance it may take from six month to two years to grant a clearance. My Secret took nine months followed by Top Secret that took another 1 ½ years. Most times the clearance will be granted unless the individual is caught lying about their past or committed a serious crime.

(***) Highest security clearances bestowed by the Government:

- SPECAT (Special Category)
- SCI (Special Compartmented Intelligence)
- ESI (Extremely Sensitive Information)

(****) Granted and accessible to only specific individuals.

With the successful turn-over of the site completed, the place settled in to a daily routine managed by a full complement of jointly-manned Naval, and contractor operations personnel. I caught up with Arthur C. before his departure. “Whatever happened to Robert W?” I asked.

“Got promoted. He’s managing several programs now. Couldn’t come.”

“It means from here on I report to you?”

“That’s right. I’m your boss. I was told you did a bang-up job getting the site ready.”

“I promised Bob W. I would.”

“Well,” he said, getting ready to board the plane to carry him back to the States, “take care of the Navy.”

From here on, though there was the anticipated, frequent equipment failure, my life on the Rock turned pretty much routine. I showed up for work like everybody else around 8:00 am, took time out for a regular lunch break, and worked until 5:00 pm, to finish up the workday. Most times I was stopped at the exit by the departing shift with: "Join us for a drink?"

With the Chief's, and Officer's clubs on base nearby, I readily accepted since I did not enjoy drinking alone. Most evenings turned out pleasantly. There was only one thing missing from the scene: companionship.

Women, at the time, had not been accepted to serve in the Navy. There were reasons for it, but it would not stay this way forever. For now, for my time serving on the island, I had to fend for myself amid the other single men on the team and, worse yet, thousands of young, and able-bodied sailors, and marines hoping for a chance to tie up with a local girl. I don't have to point out that the situation caused much concern among the local citizens, especially the young Guamanian. It was visible with the frequent bar brawls over a local girl. She might have wanted a flirt with the sailor from the mainland, but the local competitor did not want her to. It was not until years later when entertainers were brought in from places like the Philippines and Korea to provide entertainment pleasures. Soon, the solution became so popular that a nonstop stream of performers followed suit with a main objective to obtain citizenship in Guam. Word spread quickly of such opportunity because, as a result, it provided automatic U.S. citizenship.

One week into live operations at the site, supporting the 7th Fleet as well as Polaris subs assigned in the Pacific, one early morning, I had noticed a new face on site pacing along the walls checking equipment, floors, and ceilings. I was observing him from a distance when Ace walked up. "He's been asking for you."

"Oh? Where's he from?"

"I don't know. Didn't say."

"Thanks. I'll check with him." Before I made the attempt, I had a chance to study the man. Tall, assertive, graying temples, apparently methodical in persona, he kept snooping in and around equipment, above ceiling panels, and beneath the elevated floors. Since I was in charge of the facility, I followed him slyly. Minutes later I could not contain my curiosity any longer, and approached him. "What's up, Mystery-man?"

"Your cabinets need dusting." I was startled causing an immediate emotional reaction, "How dare he criticize my equipment." I did not expect a

newcomer to be critical of my maintenance crew. He then abruptly turned, and left the room. Angered at first at such boldness, I quickly checked myself with the notion, "Perhaps he's right." To find out I headed for the maintenance room. Taking stock, sure enough, there were no ladders, not even a stepladder. I realized then that it must have been an oversight when logistics, and facility tools were selected. I sought out the shift supervisor, "Haven't your guys been cleaning the top of equipment cabinets?"

"Can't reach high enough," was his ready response. "Don't have a ladder."

In retrospect, he was right. Nobody was at fault. I realized then that in subsequent visits it was Mystery-man's way for informing other site crews about the oversight. He was polite enough not to upset people in charge, but subtle enough to make his point. He was the only person tall enough to see over the top of computers. I gained new respect for the person I caught snooping my facility. I decided to get to know him better. Perhaps he had other, and more important suggestions I could apply to processes and procedures. I should learn soon enough that my assumption proved correct. There would be many more such encounters with Mystery-man.

To prove his point, I reached up, and ran my fingers along the edges of cabinets. I did not have to inspect the result. I could feel the grid of dust cling to my fingers.

Minutes later he was back deliberately eying me up, and down. "You Alex?"

"That's me."

"Call me Robert," he offered with an extended hand.

"Can I help you?" I replied.

"No!"

I was taken aback by the gruffness, and challenged him. "By the way, what are you doing here? What is your mission?"

"Checking for bugs."

"What? Roaches, mice, geckos?" I said, trying to be humorous. It wasn't every day some stranger showed up unannounced, not at this remote site.

"Intel bugs," he said, without volunteering further explanation.

"You want to explain?"

"There is nothing to explain. It's my job. You go about your business, and I about mine."

"Let me see your credentials," I demanded, irritated, blocking his path. "You better have a T.S. or I'll have you removed." I was ready to call

security.

“No need to get hostile.” He reached in his jacket pocket, retrieved an ID, and handed it over.

I took one glance at the card, and apologetically huffed, “Wow always wanted to meet one of you guys.” I was impressed. In bold lettering his office symbol read, “DARPA – Department of Defense.” Mellowed out, I immediately changed my attitude, “Sorry. Had no idea.”

“No offense taken,” he said. “I get it all the time. People don’t take well to the likes of me.”

“Why?”

“Think we all are spooks.”

“Can’t blame them. Don’t you think? After all,” I reasoned, “nobody knows anything about DARPA. Want to enlighten me?”

I watched his mind churning with reservations, but instead he said, “Meet me at the O Club. We’ll talk then. Six o’ clock.”

“I’ll be there. You can bet on it.”

For the next several hours I mulled over the unexpected visitor. While I must have come across as pretty insensitive, he displayed a certain confidence without having taken offense. It gave me a new meaning of fortitude. When I walked into the club, as promised, he was sitting at a table enjoying some wine. He spotted me by the entrance, and waved me over to the table. “Have a seat,” then, “Drink?”

“Wine please,” I ordered when the waiter stepped up. “SoMystery-man,” I prodded, unable to contain my curiosity any longer, “what are you doing here?”

“You German?” It was obvious he was stalling with personal questions.

“What gave it away?”

“The accent. I spent many years in Germany.”

“Oh?”

“WWII. Flew the B-17 Fortress.”

“Peace missions?” I could not help but rub in the damage the bombers did to the country I grew up in. He hesitated with the answer, clearly unsure how to respond. He eyed me sheepishly, then explained, “Just followed commands.”

“A hell of a job you guys did.”

“You started it, remember?”

“Well,” I offered, “it’s part of the past. I don’t hold grudges. Besides,” I explained, “I was a kid.”

“Look,” he offered, “I think we started off on the wrong footing.” He reached across the table, and offered his hand. “Robert L. Krantz, Sr. I am here to inspect your place for Intelligence leaks.”

“How formal. ‘L’ stands for Lawrence, I suppose?”

“Something like it.” While he meant his given name, referring to the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, a proper label in his capacity, my jest passed by unacknowledged.

“Actually,” he explained, “I am with the engineering branch for DARPA.

“Now I understand,” I said. “Brains cooking up all the secret projects.”

“That’s me.”

“Tempest team?”

“Not exactly. They come later. I am here to look the place over. The specialty team is on its way. My job is to verify that everything is implemented according to the contract.”

“You can trust me,” I said, trying to put him at ease.

“So, they all claim,” he responded in a somewhat cynical gesture. As was the case within every industry, contractors, especially inexperienced ones, when rewarded a government contract, were not always fully qualified to perform to the customer’s satisfaction. Representing DARPA, it was his responsibility to make sure that the contractor had delivered as promised.

“I can assure you,” I said, seeking out his face. “I only work above board. Always!”

“We shall see, won’t we? But let’s not quarrel. Would you care for something to eat? I’m buying.”

Knowing the quality of food served at military clubs, it was an offer I would never turn down. I had gone through the menu selections more than once, and enjoyed every bite of it. “Ribeye for me,” I ordered when the waiter showed up.

“Make it two,” Robert confirmed. “Best cut of meat.”

“I totally agree.” To Robert, I said, “Tell me about your organization.”

“You fully cleared?”

“Got the same credentials as you,” I said. “It’s the prerequisite for my position.”

“Superintendent?”

“It’s the label I carry when on site,” I explained. “Otherwise, it’s system

engineer. I grew up with mainframe computers.”

“I did some checking before I left,” he said, with a slight grin on his face. “You are top-man in your field. It’s why I’m out here.”

“You mean,” I prodded, “the gruffness was a charade?”

“I wanted to check you out first hand.”

“And?”

“You passed. I had to do it. In this business you never know who you can fully trust.”

“I’ll drink to that,” I said, raising my glass to him. “Salute.”

“I want you to understand,” he explained. “I need your full trust if we want to work together.”

“You got it.” In the years ahead, Robert, and I would cross paths many more times at places back home, as well as in foreign lands. He would always show up unannounced. He would spend only a few days, sometimes only hours at a time, on location, but I would always look forward to his visits. Since then, we had developed a completely trusting relationship with each other. We could openly share information, and data, political, as well as national defense issues. Through him, I learned much about the intricacies of who, how, and where Intelligence operations took place. For instance, though funded by obscured budgets, I learned about DARPA, and who created its innovative concepts, designs, and projects an army of dedicated, brilliant PhDs, diligently supported by thousands of creative individuals spread across the many black projects.

Back to WWII, as a child hiding in the protection of our basement shelter during air raids, little did I know that one day, I would meet face-to-face one of the B-17 pilots twenty-five years later, who would become one of the invisible warriors himself, Mystery-man. It was he, that became my counterpart working within the domain of DARPA’s defense parameters. Aside from DARPA and DCA, there were numerous other organizations and agencies we would interface with. Vietnam alone saw many such associations by virtue of U.S. military, and war-related support functions, in addition to numerous conflicts that followed near and far.

And here I was, thinking I held an important a position, that of “Superintendent.” Regardless of my extravagant status, the job I performed was just as important, keeping a site operational 24/7, supporting military, and Intel operations Pacific-wide from Hawaii to the Indian Ocean, and from Alaska to Australia. It was my gratitude to give all my time and energy to the

safety, and well-being of the services, and the country, while in turn, military services provided a safe place for all of us citizens of the U.S. and its allies.

More suitable accommodations for living quarters came in the form of relief with the construction of a trailer park on the island. These were fifteen, double-unit trailers, 12 feet wide, by 50 feet in length, flown in from the U.S. mainland, specifically built, and installed for my team. It turned out to be a God-send for all of us, not only for the relief from a daily thirty-five mile commute each way, but for their air-conditioned environment.

The park, initially a desolate spot by the ocean surrounded by dense jungle, in time with the help of landscapers, turned out to be as I had always envisioned a tropical island to be: paradise. It became my home for the next two years, but I am jumping ahead again.

REFLECTION ONE

“Hey,” Ace called out from the bar, waving me over. “Come, and join us.” As usual, he was having a good time among other team mates. With rotating shift schedules, one could always find some of the crew at their favorite hangout, the NCO¹⁸ club. I ordered my favorite drink, the Mai Tai cocktail, popular in the tropics. “Guy’s been bragging about you,” Ace added. “Is it really true you knocked a two-star general to the floor?”

“Well,” I said, recollecting the incident years earlier. It was a time I had just started this job.

“It wasn’t the best day I had. Got fired over it.”

“Tell us more,” he insisted, encouraged by the others. “Who saved your butt?”

It was at Ft. Monmouth, NJ, Army signal training center, a few years back. I was new to the project, but busy as hell trying to get the system ready for training. Since it was the AUTODIN prototype site, top official visitors came from all over the globe wanting to see the communications miracle devised by DARPA. I was moving swiftly between the mainframe cabinets, and system consoles up front debugging some final circuit problems. In my haste, turning one of the corners, I was suddenly faced by a cluster of visitors dressed in impeccably white uniforms. There was no room to sidestep my hasty pace. I collided with the first of the group, sending him sprawling to the floor. I was clueless about command rankings at the time. What made the situation worse, I did not bother to help him up or apologize, but kept on going on my quest.

Sure enough, five minutes later, I heard my name called over the PA, “Alex! Front office. Now!”

“Not good,” I muttered on the way there.

“Is it true,” the site manager demanded, “you ran a general to the floor?”

“I am sorry, but he was blocking my way. It was not intentional.”

“It’s too late for apologies. You should have done so with him. I’ll have to let you go.”

It was then when I realized the severity of my tactless behavior. I was fired on the spot. Driving back on I-95 from Ft. Monmouth to the home office in Willow Grove, PA, I had time to contemplate the situation. I did not realize how sensitive customer relations might be among high officials, and had to face the consequences of my rude behavior, which cost me not only

my job, but my career as well. Losing my security clearance was foremost on my mind. If revoked, it would be the end of my dreams.

“Is it true?” Art C., the new program director demand, shaking his head. He had replaced Bob and was new in the office back then. “You knocked a NATO general to the ground?”

“I did,” I admitted. “It was his fault for blocking my work, but mine for not apologizing,” I admitted, then told the rest of the story.

“Okay. At least you are honest enough to admit your mistake. This is what we’ll do. I can’t afford to lose you. Take a week off, and then see me.”

“But the site manager fired me.”

“Let me deal with him. I’ll take care of it.”

“A week later,” I explained to my buddies seated by the bar, “Art hired me back, but put me on nightshift for the rest of the testing effort with a precondition to keep my face away from daytime personnel.” I was forever grateful to him for having saved my otherwise shattered career.

“Wow,” Ace exclaimed. “You sure lucked out.”

“Then the rumors are true,” another said.

“I never make up stories,” I insisted. In my recollection, it was the first of many more incidents I would encounter over the next thirty years. Assigned to the frontlines of conflict, my life turned into never-ending challenges, not only with the authorities, but coworkers, and foreign officials as well. Along my future path, I had many confrontational encounters, including being drawn into destructive fights. It was the reason I became intricately involved with martial arts. Once my travels led me to Asia, I took the opportunity to join the best Dojos in the Philippines, Korea, Okinawa, and Guam. Kung Fu, popularized by Bruce Lee, was just emerging in Asia, and so was I. My life was directed by two interests: career, and survival.

MARIANAS ISLANDS

AUTODIN, as a whole, performed well even with the frequent breakdown of computer components. I had made sure that each electronic piece of equipment was thoroughly tested prior to switching it online. The basic configuration of the system was as follows: computer sector containing mainframe computers with their internal, and externally-connected memory banks, drum storage devices, interfaced via insulated cable groups to front-end data processors with its memories, and storage devices, and on to more clusters of computers each serving subscribers. From here, the digital data was handed off to the COMM sector with dozens of racks of COMM, and transmission gears whose function it was to convert digital data to analog, then forward the data on to the COMSEC room, the most critical aspect of the system, before sending encrypted information on via sub-oceanic cable trunks, implemented in the early part of the 19th century. Communication would be transmitted in this manner until satellite technology came of age ten years later, when transmissions were shifted from ground to space. Information coming in was received in the reverse order. Additional means for transmissions such as microwave dishes, and Tropo-scatters were applied in foreign countries where underground, shielded cables were not available. Those transmissions, however, were limited to line-of-sight to sparsely-populated areas. Energy used in this mode was very useful on flat terrains, but had its drawbacks. Concentrated into a solid beam created so much power it would heat up, and fry any living creature passing in front of the 30-meter dish.

With testing over, site personnel in place working three shifts 24/7, and visitors departed, I could settle into a semi-routine living. I had met my newly-arrived team members, ready to perform on a perpetually rotating work schedule, who had been set up comfortably at the 15-unit trailer park. With the team complement in place, my work load was drastically reduced. I could focus my time on activities other than just work.

“Let’s go diving,” Ace suggested, getting ready to leave the site. In only a short time, it had become obvious why he had acquired the nickname. He held up the true status of the title.

“Okay by me.” I readily took to his recreational activities related to fishing, diving, surfing, and flying. It would take us weeks to get acquainted with Guam’s numerous fishing, and diving spots. After taking a couple of

drives around the island, 80 miles in circumference, I realized the potential for an outdoor, and water-based lifestyle. Before long, my first year on the island became filled with such activities. I must credit much of it to Ace, since he was a licensed diver, as well as experienced pilot. In only a short time we developed a dependency on each other, necessary for such actions. There were other recreations I was involved in such as joining the contractor's bowling team, taking up deep-sea fishing, taking spills on motor biking, and most importantly, the weekly beach parties. I began to like living on the Rock.

After a workday finished, on many a day, Ace, and I would take to the water dressed in diving suits, snorkels, face masks, and flippers with a spear gun in hand, taking a running start, and leaping into a ten-foot wave breaking across the reef. It was exhilarating fighting the elements once I learned how to dive into the wave without getting smashed onto the reef. To this day, I still have scars on my back carved by fire coral, injecting its poison into my skin. Once the breakers were cleared the ocean became a new world to explore. Having glimpsed the water only from above until now, I was completely mesmerized at the prolific sea life taking place below the surface. It was truly amazing.

“Stay away from these.” Ace would gesture when I got too close to certain objects. Not all was safe to the touch. Especially dangerous were the stone and turkey fish, prevalent in these waters. It was not until either one was pointed out that they became visible to the diver. Where one would cling to the reef, blending in perfectly with the rocks, others would drift in schools nearby, like seaweed, seeking out prey. Both, when touched, would inject lethal poison into an unwary body, foot or hand, which would then have to be amputated to save an arm, leg, or life. I have witnessed this on several islanders, lucky to be alive, but permanently damaged with a deformed, or crippled foot or hand.

“The only means to stop the poison from spreading,” I was told, “is putting the appendage into boiling water.” Either way, skin, tissue, and muscles were destroyed. From here on out, being cautious, and aware of such living creatures, I exercised caution, though I felt brave enough to catch both species for my fish tank. Getting them to the surface proved to be a somewhat difficult venture without getting stung. The result was a tank filled with sea-born creatures, a miniature slice of sea life caught from the Pacific Ocean. One would not put a hand into the tank. Aside from the fun of diving, we had

several close encounters with moray eels, as well as sharks. Prevalent to these waters was the white-tipped reef shark. Inexperienced as I was with diving, the first time I was confronted by sharks was pure thrill mixed with panic.

Ace had just signaled to head back to shore. Spending another afternoon amid the thrills of ocean life, I had ignored the time. It was getting dark already. He was in the lead when I was intercepted by sharks. My first reaction was the thought of flight, but that was quickly followed with reason. Flight would mean being chased with possible deadly consequences. I decided to take a stand to face the threat, and headed for the bottom. At least one side was covered: my back. It was a struggle to stay alive. Three of the white-tipped sharks headed straight for me, kept on pressing closer, and closer. The only means of protection I had was the spear gun, and knife tucked against one of my legs. First, I considered shooting the most aggressive in range, but the last second decided against. It would have triggered a feeding frenzy with me being part of their catch. The sub-surface environment was spinning with sharks until my senses sobered. After reasoning returned to my senses, I fended off the assaults by jabbing their noses with the spear. After repeated thrusts, they gradually backed off one by one long enough for me to head back towards the reef. Inching my way along the bottom in the direction of the shore, I huffed, "What a trip," and scrambled to safety on dry land.

"Where were you?" Ace wondered.

"You won't believe my encounter."

"Sharks?"

"Yes, sharks," I sputtered.

"I spotted them. It's why I signaled you. Didn't want to alarm you."

"Thanks. Swallowed more water than I had all week. Next time holler."

"Right," he said. We both wound up laughing.

There were more such incidents but without the close encounters. I had learned to keep my distance from their feeding grounds. Over time, I came to find out that sharks were territorial creatures defending their turf. At the time, there was hardly any information available on sea life, and its dangers one could encounter. A special thrill was a night dive for lobster. On one occasion, Ace was knocked over by a shark dodging between his legs from behind after he dove to the bottom to retrieve the speared lobster. I don't have to explain that the shark won out for getting the catch.

At other times I would join a fishing excursion out into the ocean to catch

some of the regional fish. Common to these waters were tuna, bonito, sailfish, grouper, and snapper. All were excellent for eating. Among the teams were three fishing boats available with one taking off in the early morning hours most days. After gathering at dawn by the boat basin, it would be an eight-hour trip filled with fun and excitement for whoever was on the boats. How much partying preceded the evening before would determine how many faces would bend overboard after the first swells of waves washed over the rails. Fortunately, with exposure, and time, most got used to the sway of the boat without further sickness. The rest would remain on land, and refrain from further fishing excursions.

Once the favorite fishing ground was reached, the real fun began. Depending on species, each catch could be identified while still underwater. For this reason, different lures, and catching methods were applied. Cheering followed when a catch would reveal a tuna or bonito, everybody's favorites. Both were excellent eaten raw or BBQed for sushi, and steak.

To catch either one was not an easy task. First, the fishing grounds had to be reached. Depending on the season, the species would differ. But there was one spot off the island where a catch was guaranteed. It was the off-shore location where the Pacific Ocean met with the Philippine Sea to the north. It was a wedge-shaped region extending out from the island about forty miles. To enter these waters required extraordinary boating skills. Bordered by tumultuous crested waves, upon entering, the vessel would be jolted between the tops of waves only to drop vertically seconds later into the depths. I am sure there were silent prayers from my fisher buddies while I was usually elected to pilot the craft. Even I, at times, had doubts about whether we would make it back alive, but this always was accompanied by a rich catch. Some of it we would keep for the weekend beach party, and the rest would be sold to always present locals at the dock waiting for the boats to return. Back in the 60s, it was the usual means for the local population to get their daily fish, a staple for the islanders.

The following year, a couple of things occurred that almost cost me my life, both times. The first was a motorcycle accident on my bike, a 350-cc Honda, while I was tackling an obstacle track built on top of a mountain rim, 1450 feet high. The monsoon season had just ended when Ace and I decided to check it out. Driving to the top one Saturday morning, we jumped on the trail with Ace in the lead. Half way into the track, I watched him jump the first

obstacle in the path, a diagonal trench cut by torrents of rains. Seconds later it was my turn. I revved up for the jump but fell short, resulting in the front wheel of my bike dropping into the trench. What followed next happened so fast it was beyond my control. With my hands tightly clutching the handlebar to keep the front aloft, the sudden drop twisted the accelerator to maximum throttle, in turn twisting my bike 45 degrees into the bottom of the washed-out trench. At full speed, the bike, and I shot over the edge of the cliff.

While my mind registered the rapid sequence of events, my reactions were too slow to prevent the inevitable, a vertical drop to the coral reef I knew was fourteen hundred-some feet below. The forward momentum lasted only a second, with me seated rigid in the saddle, until the bike began to drop straight down. It must have been by instinct alone that I released my hands, turning my body forward into a stretched-out position to follow the bike. When I saw the ocean swells breaking across the reef below, I had one last thought. It was not a pleasant one. I cursed into the incoming ground, “God damnit. What a way to go.”

Seconds later, I saw the ground rush into my face. At the last instant I turned my helmeted head away from getting smashed in the face before blacking out. I don’t remember how long I was unconscious for when I opened my eyes, the first action was to take in air but this proved unsuccessful. No matter how hard I tried, my lungs would not work. I blacked out again. Sometime later, it must have been after the muscle function from my collapsed lungs returned, I was able to take my first lifesaving breath of air. Still dazed, I was gradually winched up to the top of the mountain trail. Thirty minutes later, as I was bandaged up, laying on the hospitalized gurney, Ace relayed the information for what had happened.

Driving ahead on the trail he was able to jump the wash on his 125-cc Honda. Considerably lighter than my 350-cc, he had no problems. “I watched you follow a hundred feet back when one second you were there, and the next you were gone,” he explained. “There was only one way you could have gone. Off the cliff. I backtracked to the trench, leaned over the edge expecting you a thousand feet below. But instead, I saw you had landed on an outcropping fifty-some feet below. Next, I was able to reach Tony”—a team member who I knew owned a Jeep with a built-in, front-end winch. “Thirty minutes later, we hoisted you up. That’s when you woke up. We realized your lungs were collapsed, causing the blackout. Resuscitation partially worked, long enough until you reached consciousness.”

“Man, am I glad to be alive. I thought it was the end when I saw the reef below. Don’t know how I can ever thank you.”

“You being alive is enough thanks,” he muttered, in his ever so humble manner. To thank the team, several days later I hosted a party after being released from the hospital. In spite of a broken shoulder, ribs, knee, ankle, and foot, I was able to hobble along on crutches. I should point out that many injuries, while I was still young, for the most part healed up. It was years later when the injuries resurfaced in the form of aches, and pain. Today, hardly a day goes by without feeling past damage to bones, muscles, and tissue. Nights are especially troublesome.

The second event equal in intensity, only weeks later, happened in the air. It was a trip we had plotted for my flight training. I was scheduled for the aviation test to get my private pilot license. Due to the lack of land area on many islands, with a three-point landing requirement by the FAA, a minimum flight distance of 250 miles at the time, aside from Hawaii, Guam was the exception to the flight restriction about flying over open water with a student license.

It was the dry season. The sky was blue without any chance for clouds or rain. I plotted the course to land on Tinian Island, then fly on to Saipan, land, refuel, and return to Guam. It would be an easy flight in the Cessna 172 I had rented. As usual, Ace was by my side, qualified as a flight instructor. The guy was amazing for what he had accomplished at his young age. Checking the weather report, submitting the flight plan at the departure desk, following the pre-flight check that included topping fuel tank, external craft inspection, and engine oil level check. Next came mechanical functions check for elevator, aileron, and rudder controls. Final check was cockpit inspection comprised of altimeter setting to local ground reference, compass heading adjustment for flight direction, radio dial for departure frequency, and a request for takeoff. After a short drive to the end of the runway, with all checked out, accompanied by Ace in the instructor seat, I took the craft to the air.

Cruising at an 12,000-foot altitude, headed in a northerly direction, flight time at 140 knots for the 135 miles distance would take approximately an hour and twenty minutes including ascent, and descent. The flight, as I listened mostly to the drone of the engine, was a pleasure. The view below was a vast expanse of blue ocean, the distant horizon was hazy without any land in sight. Trouble did not start until an hour, and thirty minutes into the

flight.

“I don’t see the island.” Ace broke the silence. I was slightly alert but not alarmed. Checking the horizon, there was no island in sight. I reached for the map to compare my flight plan with flight time, and compass heading. It all checked out.

“What do you think is going on?” I said. Ace remained quiet. Self-confident as usual, he seemed to contemplate the reasons for the discrepancy. The speed had held steady the entire trip without wind shift or air turbulence. By now, the arrival time had already passed by ten minutes. We should have been on a descent path fifteen minutes ago. Something had gone wrong neither he or I could figure out with time and fuel running short.

“I’m going to fly a grid,” I said.

“We don’t have enough fuel. We’ve only got one shot. Ten more minutes, and we’ll have to ditch.”

“Can’t believe there’s no island,” I muttered. I was as puzzled as he was.

“We should be directly over Saipan. What did you do?” he shouted over the drone of the engine.

“What?” I swallowed hard.

“What’s the compass heading?” I sensed his frustration with me being at fault. But there was nothing I could do but being humble.

“Right at 30 NNE.” Shaking my head in doubt, I compared the compass with the map once more.

“Can’t be.” He was adamant. Even he was getting alarmed as time was running out.

“Wait a minute,” I broke in.

“What?”

“I’ve got an idea,” I volunteered, clinging to hope with only minutes remaining before we were forced to ditch.

“Out with it. There’s not time.” Although we succumbed to the inevitable, we had to keep trying to solve the mishap.

“The compass. What do you read?” My nerves were stressed to the breaking point now.

“Why? There’s nothing wrong with the heading. I’ve flown it before.”

“Give me the heading,” I shouted out with an elevated urgency while fear set in for the waters below.

“30° NNE.”

“The map,” I gestured again.

“Should be 28° NNE,” Ace corrected. “You’re off by two degrees,” he said with a hint of blame in his voice.

It did not make sense to me until I checked my seating position. My quick analysis revealed that during the initial flight check when setting up the compass, I was seated in the copilot’s seat. From my point of view, the compass registered a two-degree difference from him, the pilot position. It was enough for a considerable course deviation over the 135-mile distance. Being a hazy day, and us high enough in altitude to canvas the horizon, the island should have been in view directly ahead, and below.

“I better call Guam flight control. They may have us on radar,” I huffed with droplets of sweat streaming down my face.

“Naw,” he replied. “We’re too far out for radar.” Though he did not let on, it was obvious he was trying to solve the same concerns I had, ditching the craft.

“I’m flying a grid,” I insisted, determined to find the island. Being a pilot candidate, it was unthinkable for me to fail the pilot license before I’d even been certified. “Here goes one chance,” I said, turning the craft 90 degrees west. It was the only logical heading that made sense to make up for the miscalculation. Still flying at 12,000 feet, an island, though hazy, and barely visible, gradually crept into view.

“We’ll make it,” Ace proclaimed with a grin, slapping my shoulder. I wasn’t sure if it was a friendly gesture or one of reprimand, but I felt it to the bone. Sure enough, minutes later, he’d recognized and identified Saipan. We would make it, even if the craft would run out of fuel. We had enough height to glide to our destination ten miles out.

It could have turned into a calamity ending in injury, or worse, death. On our safe return, both of us headed straight for the club. It did not have to be suggested that drinks were in order. Both of us never spoke of the experience. He had his reason for trusting my navigation skills, and I blamed myself for not having enough flying experience. I learned that, while placing complete trust in the instruments, they are only as good as the navigator’s alertness.

The two years for my contract obligation passed by too fast. At this time, I had acquired a passion for all the recreational activities I participated in. The job took care of itself once everybody on board acquired the necessary skills for performing their duties. Much of my days were occupied with performance liaison, personnel evaluations, and weekly status reports back to

HQs and to fleet command. Hardware, and software failures still popped up but with less frequency. Much of my work I could delegate to the shifts. The more difficult systems problems I would handle myself. For these, sophisticated diagnostic programs were developed. Though I was intricately familiar with them, having been part of software development and diagnostics development teams, I preferred using my own techniques. I would insert a dozen program instructions into the mainframe registers, press the Enter button, and have data analysis on the printer within seconds. One look at the information returned would be sufficient to identify, correct, and solve the failure, which for most part would turn out to be another failed transistor. With computer technology rapidly evolving, components were becoming more reliable. Solving software challenges proved to be more difficult. For that, I had to set software traps followed with analysis work to catch the bug.

Speaking of evolving, I also detected changes on the island. The rebuilding of towns, and dwellings, destroyed by the typhoon the previous year, progressed just as rapidly. Not only did the island population experience construction growth all around, new business was attracted as well. Entrepreneurs arrived daily on flights from Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines offering their respective skills, and investments. The Japanese's primary interests were in acquiring beach properties. Within months, new ground was broken all along the Tamuning shorelines. Having time on my hands, even I became involved. First, I invested in a resort complex developed along the beach, followed by the acquisition of two prime condo units, with a pristine view of the ocean and sunsets, even before property sales had closed. It became the start of the investment spirit I would carry through life.

Being tired of driving the rented Beetle, one day at the Governor's hosted party which I had been invited to, I purchased his car on the spot. He mentioned getting a new model and I took the opportunity. It was a black 98 Oldsmobile sedan, deserving of his status, which now was mine. Each day I drove it to work people would wave at me, thinking it was the island's governor. It helped me to become even more popular on the island. I was already member of the Executive bowling league, a team comprised mostly of business, and political leaders. The acquired status suited me well.

In hindsight, working decent hours supported by a well-performing crew, liaison to Naval Command, enjoying recreational opportunities, dinner

invites, beach parties, my life could have been secured and successful. Who could wish for more? I did.

There was something gnawing at my mind. That something was the world. I wanted to explore it. It was what I set out to do years ago. I felt my dream slipping away. Taking stock over my two-year commitment one day, I was faced with a difficult decision. Should I stay, and continue life at its fullest leisure, or throw it all away, and move on? I still had several more months to decide. Pushing the thought aside, I pursued my daily life of sun, fun, and excitement, not wanting to face the pending decision.

“I’m taking a trip,” Ace announced one day with the holidays coming up.

“Oh? Where’re you going?”

“Home to visit my folks.”

“How long will you be gone?”

“One week. Think you can live without me?” he said with an egocentric grin on his face. He knew quite well that it would impact my recreational activities since he was my buddy for diving, flying, and biking.

“I guess,” I replied. “I have no choice. I’ll survive.”

One week came, and went without Ace returning when I received word from the home office that Ace had been detained by authorities. Which ones? Nobody seemed to know until another week went by when he finally showed up back on Guam. “Where in hell were you? People are looking for you.”

“In jail,” he confessed.

“But why?”

“I smuggled my firearm collection through customs, and got caught.”

“What?”

“Remember the guns we bought?”

“I should. We bought them together.” While I had acquired two handguns, a 45 cal. semi-automatic, and a 357 cal. Ruger Magnum at the Anderson AFB BX, he confessed that he had bought a few more weapons.

“How many more?” I said, surprised.

“Thirty-two.”

“Are you out of your mind?”

“Hey,” he said, almost yelling. “I’m a collector.”

“What happened to your guns?”

“That’s why it took so long. I was detained at Hawaii customs until I could prove ownership.”

“But thirty-two guns?” I was still awestruck. “Did you get them back?”

“I did, but had to register them with the FBI.”

It reminded me of my own purchase. “Guess I better do the same before I leave.”

“You decided yet?”

I had expressed my desires to get off the island on several occasions. “I’m not staying if you’re leaving,” he would respond. I never found out his reasons for wanting to leave. Despite the buddies we were, with a dependency developed for life and death for each other, it still amazed me that we really did not know each other outside of our common sport activities. We may have been just too busy enjoying life to dwell on personal feelings and sentiments. We just lived the moment. Since, I have learned that women typically do a better job with that. He left the island shortly after, off to whatever venture he had decided on. Unfortunately, we lost contact with each other.

That was the turning point for me on the island. While there were a number of personnel on site with which to make friends, after two years, most had formed their own groups of friendship within their work schedules. It was then that the family spirit surfaced, keeping the common bond alive for the American overseas. No matter where or what the circumstances were, it did not take long to form a local community of home-based spirits.

I had several more weeks to go before my departure. Ace’s leaving made up my mind. I was ready to move on. When word spread of my decision, I was surprised at how many others quit with the same response: “I’m not staying if you leave.” It was an exodus headquarters had not expected. Begging me to stay on did not change my mind, even with the director paying a visit. I realized the burden it would place on the company. They had a contract with Naval Command. I was under contract, and so were the others. “But hey,” I thought, “this is not a penal colony. We live in a free society.” No matter how much Art, and the local command tried to convince me to stay, my mind was made up. “I paid my dues, two years on the Rock,” I told him.

Fortunately, two other sites’, Okinawa, and the Philippines, contractual obligations came to an end with the initial site management, operations, and support obligations of two years expired. Up for open bidding from other computer service companies, some locations changed hands, with some remaining in place. Guam was one such condition. What management did was bring in some of the released personnel from the two incumbent sites to

replace the departing staff on Guam, resolving the issue I had caused. What my future with the company held for further assignments was up in the air, but I stood my ground. I would not let me be forced into another corporate breach of commitment with a promised replacement, as I had already experienced twice.

With staffing resolved, I was released to tidy up my personal affairs. My vehicle, and sporting equipment had to be sold among bidding my farewell to my personal connections I had established in the last two years on the island, thinking it would be the last time I'd set foot on Guam. Unbeknownst to me, the future had other plans. I would visit the place many more times along the journey I was about to embark on. There was one more thing I wanted to do before my departure: take one last flight over the island.

It was a Saturday morning when I stopped by the airport to check out a Cessna-150. Air traffic was light since most international flights arrived during evening hours. I did not file much of a flight plan since it would be a local flight exercise. Taking one circle around the island would take about forty minutes, after which I would be back for the landing. Taking to the air, I was always amazed at how serene things appeared from above. The only sound I perceived was the steady engine hum. Arriving back at the airport, I decided to finish with some practice runs. Checking with ground control, I was assigned the usual area for private flight maneuvers, designated ten miles off at an 8,000-foot altitude.

From a flight perspective, there were a few procedures one could perform. Most common was touch and go, landing, and taking off practice. Next common was instrument training, followed by cross country flight. The most undesirable performance was the stall. While required by FAA flight policy, it was not much practiced after pilot certification. The reason was obvious just by the term alone. The stall was considered an emergency procedure in case of an engine failure or running out of fuel, which could happen to the best of pilots. It was the reason why pilots were instructed to "always look out for a landing spot below," no matter what route one had plotted for the flight. The rule applied to me as well today. While setting the rule aside, practice flights were at an altitude, and area near enough to the airport in case of an engine failure. It would get most light planes back to the runway on glide.

I was not happy with my first practice stall. I had lost too much height, close to 120 feet in altitude drop. The next stall I exercised was much better.

To the non-flyer, the procedure was as follows. Pulling the throttle to idle, the craft was taken into a steep climb, straight up. Within seconds, the weight of the craft would pull against the upward momentum of propeller, and engine power. The effect was the craft slowing into a motion where upward momentum stopped. The result, in an abrupt change, due to the craft's design, was that the plane's nose would drop forward into a straight dive, headed for the ground. It was up to the pilot to compensate for the sudden drop with rudder, and engine controls. Applying engine power with the flight control handle pulled in towards the chest, the craft should recover into level flight with merely a fifty-foot drop within seconds. If executed as described within the emergency recovery manual, it was a relatively simple maneuver. I had practiced the stall a dozen times or more with perfect results.

It was getting dark. Ready to call it a day after three such stalls, I had a thought. "What about a power-on stall? It should achieve the same results." Slightly apprehensive, I decided to give it a try. It was a decision I still regret to this day. "Here we go," I muttered over the engine sound. Pushing the throttle to maximum power, I pulled back on the controls with the engines roaring. The craft behaved much like a normal stall. There was only one difference: it kept on climbing upwards. Almost at the point where I was giving up the maneuver, it finally slowed its upward momentum, coming to a halt. "So far so good," I remember thinking. What transpired seconds later was completely unexpected.

Rather than the craft's nose dropping into the expected dive, the craft turned onto its left side into an ever-tightening spin towards the ground. My view straight ahead was a kaleidoscopic effect I had never experienced. Earth was spinning around its own axis at two seconds each turn to a point where dizziness took hold. Instantly, I became nauseous. Amid the sickening feeling taken hold on my body, my eyes were frantically watching the instruments spinning at an ever-increasing rate. Each time I checked the altimeter I'd dropped another five hundred feet. At this rate, my mind calculated, it would take less than thirty seconds for the inevitable crash. My mind was screaming for a solution when I recalled something, I had read in emergency manuals. But no matter how hard I tried to stop the spin by slamming the rudder paddles in the opposite direction against the spin, the craft did not stop spinning. With the craft spinning left, I punched the rudder to the right, perhaps twenty times. At the point of giving in to the inevitable, my eye touched on the power throttle. An immediate light went on in my brain. "Of

course. That's it."

In the process of setting up the stall, with throttle at maximum power, the craft moved upward until it reached equilibrium in motion. For a second it hung weightless in the air before engine torque took over. It literally spun the craft into the opposite direction of engine motion, taking the body of the plane into a rotation with the left wing pointed to the ground.

With the most frantic move I have ever made, I yanked the throttle back to idle, reducing engine power. Next was stopping the insane spinning. With the next rudder slam to the right, a miracle happened. The spinning slowed, a couple more slams and the rotation stopped. At least my focus came back, but I also realized how much height I had lost. "Not going to make it," my mind registered with the ground shooting directly at my face. I was still in a straight dive down. A glance at the altimeter brought on the next shock. The craft had already exceeded the safety speed of the Cessna design, 250 mph. "There's no way the wings will hold," were my final thoughts but I had to give it a try. I realized that I was doomed.

With engine power at idle, I pulled back on the control handle, applying all my energy while I sat, and watched the wings dip past the crest of palm trees passing by my view. At less than fifty feet, wings straining under the controls, in the last seconds, I watched the craft finally level out to a straight flight. "I'm going to make it," my mind screamed with euphoria. For my next reaction, I applied engine power to regain flight height, and not soon enough. I barely cleared the terrain, including populated dwellings in my path. I realized that I would live, but not without the possible consequence of losing my license. I took my time to calm my nerves while circling the airport.

Minutes later, I called ground control for a landing request. "You're pushing it today, aren't you?" the voice from the tower controller operator shot back.

Glad to be alive, I had regained most of my senses, evaluating what had just transpired. Not wanting to put my pilot certification in jeopardy any further, I tried to be as calm as possible with my response. "Just practicing stalls."

I did not think he quite believed me, especially not if he had been watching my last maneuver. It did not take binoculars to see where I was practicing the stall. When passing by his flight desk, all he said was, "Just take it easy with the flying from now on. I've got other planes in the air." He was right. After all, Guam Airport was international with flights arriving

though mostly for refueling stops, in addition to local pilots flying their personal planes.

I don't have to emphasize that it would be my last power-on stall for a while. I had decided to leave maneuvers like that to stunt pilots. I was not cut out for it. Perhaps in my younger years, yes. Either case required nerves of steel, and guts with a desire to face death.

It would be my last adventurous encounter before leaving the island, headquarters bound, hoping for a reassignment to the promised foreign destination. My mind was set on Asia.

The following day, I boarded the Island-hopping flight for one last time. Two hours later I landed at my immediate destination, the Philippines. I wanted to experience the place one last time in the company of my local business friends. Several days later I continued the flight to my final destination, Taiwan.

I would spend the greater part of the day contemplating what direction to turn for my future career when the phone rang. It was a Chinese friend I always visited when in Taiwan. I met up with him at the hotel bar for a couple drinks. While I would pace my alcoholic intake, he on the other hand did not. I was curious about one thing that I had noticed. Most Asian people turned red in the face when imbibing alcoholic beverages. It was not only a distinct visible sign, but it must cause a certain amount of discomfort to watch them scratching and rubbing their skin, which I'd observed on numerous occasions. When I asked about the symptoms, "Alcohol heats up my body," was the general answer. There was another thing I should mention. Asian people could, and would get drunk at any occasion, but would not develop hangovers suffering through the next day, as most white people did.

The reason was explained with a then recently conducted two-year study by Mellon University. Studying enzymes, and blood samples from dozens of human specimens, the secret finally surfaced. Asians lacked two enzymes in the intestines that white people have. It was these missing enzymes that prevented the digestion of alcohol, allowing a direct absorption into the blood stream. It would heat up their blood, resulting in their skin turning red, and heated to the touch. For now, I enjoyed my time in the company of the friend. I did not know if we would ever see each other again since the political tension between Taiwan, and mainland China was heating up. China wanted

this island outpost back in their control which they had lost during WWII.

Bidding my goodbyes to my friend, I returning back to the hotel I was staying where the hotel clerk waved to get my attention. Approaching the desk, he informed me, “You have a message waiting,” handing over an envelope. Tearing it open, I found it was an official embassy typewritten directive stating: “Report to HQs. Next available flight.” Though it was an immediate change in directions, I still had to return to Guam to collect my personal belongings, and check out with Naval Command.

“Could you please call the airport to arrange a seat on the next available flight to Guam,” I beckoned the manager. Thirty minutes later I departed for the airport. “Come again. Soon,” the desk manager said, palmed the twenty I pressed into his hand while flagging the next taxi waiting for a fare. “Airport,” I directed.

Two days later arriving at HQs, “Thought you’d slip away again,” Art, with a sheepish grin on his face, greeted me as soon as I stepped into his Willow Grove office.

“Can’t blame me for trying,” I responded. Over the years, we had developed a close, but professional relationship. We each respected each other’s status, his being the boss, and mine being his warrior for getting the job done on the frontlines. “Is Buzz here?” I asked. Buzz, the nickname he’d acquire, was suitable to his personality. He had been on the team the longest. No matter how many new members rotated through on their assignments, he was the core of the projects I was assigned. Much like me, he was a committed nomad, in for the duration of a career, inspired by contracting opportunities extended by the government. For the most part, we had become interdependent on each other.

“He’s waiting for you.”

“So,” I demanded, “what’s the assignment?”

“This one you’ll like. It’s close to your hometown, Augsburg, Germany.”

“No kidding? I’ll be able to visit my family.” It had been ten years since I’d left Germany, and my family behind. I could already imagine how happy they’d be. Earlier that year I had received a postcard from my father, informing me, “I’m getting married again.” He had promised, on my departure, to keep me abreast of family affairs. He also kept me informed about accomplishments of former friends, and schoolmates. I was looking forward of meeting his third wife, my new stepmother. Although Dad had his

own agenda, and affairs, nobody would ever replace my real mom. Although her loss already a part of history, the fondness of my memories of her would vividly stay with me, always.

“Let’s have dinner,” Art offered. It was an invitation I would never turn down. The man knew how to celebrate. It would be a steak dinner at the best restaurant in town, accompanied by jokes, reminiscing, fine Italian wine, and after-dinner drinks. “Tell Buzz, and some on the team to join us.” He knew exactly who would be seated around the table. His favorite allies. The gang he could always depend on, and took care of no matter what the prevalent situation.

“See you at six,” I promised on my way out. As expected, the gathering turned out like many times before, filled with jokes, and laughter. The host, who else but an Italian, had grown fond of us, tolerating our somewhat, at times, noisy antics, but always appreciating our presence. He would happily instigate another round of drinks, in the process getting inebriated just the same as the rest of us, with the tab paid for by the Boss, as everybody called Art.

I should point out that getting high on drinks was not a norm for us. It was reserved for special occasions by the core team within the current program. Always a treat, nevertheless, being hosted by the Boss, everybody took advantage of such a distinct social gathering. Though plagued the following day with hangovers, alcohol was the method of choice for us. It would have been unthinkable, taking to drugs. Not in our career, as sensitive as substance drugs were treated back then. Subjected to a pledge in the name of national security, one infraction would have caused immediate termination from the job, ending one’s career. Aside from that, drugs were not our choice of entertainment anyway.

A personal note: I had the opportunity to observe the results of drugs versus alcohol on projects on numerous occasions during my career, and came to the following conclusion. Where an alcohol user could be relied on to perform on the job as trained for a given skill level, a drug user could not. It must be the substance base causing the difference. Alcohol apparently stimulated brain cells, where drugs, in many cases, suppresses one’s innovative capacity. I specified “in many cases” because I have observed individuals turn into genius-level creators while habitually using psychedelic substances, especially with software designers. But those were exceptions.

Two days later we were on the way to Germany with a promise from the

Boss: "Keep up the good work. I'll visit soon."

"I'll be looking forward to it. Make it real soon."

"Wouldn't miss it," he called out, watching us head for the airport.

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Notes

[←1]

DISCO – The Defense Industrial Security Clearance Office is a component of the Defense Security Service (DSS) that maintains historical, and current investigative records on all DSS-issued (mostly government, and civilian contracting) personnel, and facility clearances.

[←2]

Dornier Flugzeugwerke (Manufacturing) was a German aircraft manufacturer founded in Friedrichshafen in 1914 by Claude Dornier. Over the course of its long lifespan, the company produced many designs for both the civil, and military markets.

[←3]

The Yalta Conference, sometimes called the Crimea Conference, and codenamed the Argonaut Conference, held from February 4 to 11, 1945, was the World War II meeting of the heads of government of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, represented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Premier Joseph Stalin, respectively, for the purpose of discussing Europe's post-war reorganization. The conference convened in the Livadia Palace near Yalta in Crimea.

[←4]

U.S. Army, Europe command.

[←5]

800 DM in the 60s was equivalent to \$200 at a 4:1 exchange rate.

[←6]

Meister, translated Master, was the German equivalent of the Plant Manager.

[←7]

National Engineering, and Manufacturing Company, at the time was a sup-contractor to GE, the place that gave me a head start in America.

[←8]

Ashkenazi Jews are Jews of Eastern European origin, mostly Russian, Polish, and Ukraine in heritage, constituting more than 80 percent of all worlds Jews.

[←9]

Operation Paperclip was the United States Office of Strategic Services (OSS), predecessor to the CIA, program in which more than 1,500 Germans, primarily scientists but also engineers, and technicians, were brought to the United States from Nazi Germany for government employment starting in 1945. One purpose of Operation Paperclip was to deny German scientific expertise, and knowledge to the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom, as well as to inhibit post-war Germany from redeveloping its military research capabilities. Another was to hire, and place the German scientific pool, once granted highly classified access, to innovative laboratories such as Alamogordo, and Sandia to develop the atom bomb. The operation was in effect until 1973 when it was eventually terminated.

[←10]

DCA – Defense Communication Agency was one of the DOD’s Intelligence agencies. In contrast to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), DOD’s analytical body, DCA, built the global Intel infrastructure, connecting the Pentagon with U.S. Military Command, and Control centers, U.S. Embassies, the White House, NATO, CIA, and NSA utilizing Oceanic sub-surface comm cables (Trunk Lines), later replaced, and integrated into the sky-based Satellite network.

[←11]

CONUS – Military abbreviation for “Continental U.S.” meaning “American Continent.”

[←12]

AUTODIN was the program acronym for Automatic Digital Network, at the time, aside from nuclear weapons development, deemed the highest classified program designed, and conceived by DARPA, and the U.S. Department of Defense. The reasons for such high classification was to protect national assets against adversary powers with ill intended purposes for the wellbeing of the citizens of the United States of America. Conceived in 1962 by then president JFK, and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, it was designed as a survivable communications grid in case of an all-out nuclear attack by the Soviet Union. To assure its intentioned design, dozens of communications, and command centers were built in strategic locations around the globe, and within CONUS.

Robert S. McNamara, after graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1937, earned a graduate degree at the Harvard Business School, and later joined the Harvard faculty. Disqualified from combat duty during World War II by poor vision, he developed logistical systems for bomber raids, and statistical systems for monitoring troops, and supplies.

After the war, McNamara was one of the “Whiz Kids” hired to revitalize the Ford Motor Company. His plans, including the implementation of strict cost-accounting methods, and the development of both compact, and luxury models, met with success, and McNamara rose rapidly in the corporate ranks. In 1960, he became the first person outside the Ford family to assume presidency of the company.

After just one month as Ford’s president, however, McNamara resigned to join the John F. Kennedy administration as Secretary of Defense. In his new post he successfully gained control of Pentagon operations, and the military bureaucracy, encouraged the modernization of the Armed Forces, restructured budget procedures, and cut costs by refusing to spend money on what he believed were unnecessary or obsolete weapons systems. McNamara was also at the center of a drive to alter U.S. military strategy from the “massive retaliation” of the Eisenhower years to a “flexible response,” emphasizing counterinsurgency techniques, and second-strike nuclear-missile capability.

[←13]

ASC is the acronym for Automatic Switching Center, the label designated for one complete AUTODIN system deployment. Each site entailed a number of departments ranging from the computer section to comm, comsec, tech-control, crypto, UPS, logistics, and management facilities. Many of the technologies, classified as they were, were housed below ground, but management, and support functions were generally located above ground for ease of access for visiting dignitaries, which were frequent.

[←14]

Automatic Switching Center, the secure Intel facility housing AUTODIN.

[←15]

Admiral Zumwalt assumed duties as Chief of Naval Operations, and was promoted to full admiral on July 1, 1970, and quickly began a series of moves intended to reduce racism, and sexism in the Navy. These were disseminated in Navy-wide communications known as "Z-grams." These included orders authorizing beards (sideburns, mustaches, and longer groomed hair were also acceptable), and introducing beer-dispensing machines to barracks. Not all of these changes were well received by senior naval personnel.

[←16]

O-scope is an abbreviation for Oscilloscope, used to troubleshoot circuit boards, and computer, wiring, and back frame connectivity. Each, and every component subject to inspection becomes a visual electronic stream rendered on the screen to identify component functionality. It is the means to identify failed transistors, diodes, capacitors, etc.

[←17]

A component in this case was either a transistor, capacitor, or resistor, configured in multiple elements to each circuit board located within each piece of equipment by the hundreds. It took many thousands of boards to make up the system.

[←18]

NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer. There were at least three distinct military rankings: Officer, NCO, and Enlisted men. The distinction between officers, and non-commissioned officers, was that officers required college graduation, and were trained to become career leaders. NCOs generally were promoted from enlisted ranks but could be elevated into leadership roles.