

CHANCES of a BURGLAR's SON



Chances of a Burglars Son

By Vern Bouwman

Chances of a Burglar's Son!

Dedicated to [MY MOTHER!](#)

The Grandmother of my beautiful Northwest Family.
I believe I was designed to create my Northwest Family.

The first name of this character is VERN, i.e. (I, me, we, my).

The last name is Bouwman, whose life story I started to record on March 26, 2014. Well I'm going to tell my story before I die.

Cover Photo: In 2008 I took this photo of [120 stairs](#) going up to the top of a sand dune, overlooking Lake Michigan. I had climbed it many times in my younger days.

I made my/our life TOUGH with [Vacuous](#) actions on 6 occasions. John Wayne would call it stupid.

Vern Bouwman

Updated January 29, 2018

Chance 1 - BORN

I was created by a mistake my mom made and born in a Western Michigan county seat in 1935, a third generation Dutchman and an eighth generation German where I can claim I'm a "Son of the Revolution".



1935 is the year Hitler organized the Luftwaffe. My older sister, (Carolyn) was born the next year, in the same city. Herman Sr., the Dutchman and (my father); had a twin sister and they were born in the big city of 165,000, 45 miles away. That was the city where Lois (my mom) met my father while she worked at keeping houses.

Mom went to the big city with her sister Blanch to obtain their first job at the age of 16. Blanch was not actually her sister. Mom's mother Ada, my (Grandmother) a German, passed away when Mom was 3 yrs. old & her father, Emerson, also a German and my (Grandpa), had remarried to Blanch's mother Ethel, an English lady (and Second Grandma).

To make a long story short, mom got pregnant where she somehow forced my father to marry her at a Justice the Peace there in the big city. Her first husband was a shady guy. The record of their marriage *has never been recorded*, but it was a few months before I became mom's first born. My name is still legal because what is written on you birth certificate is your legal name, whatever the mom and dad's name is recorded.

In the small Michigan City, my father was given a job with the county road commission with the help of mom's brother, Merrill (Uncle Merrill). My father had a twin sister, the first girl in the family, which positioned him to NOT receive much attention. This we think is where he had lost his way in life. He was stealing batteries where he was caught and placed in the county jail.

While in jail, he was given a job to clean offices. Here he stole money off office desks. That put him in a state prison. He was in and out of prison all his life.

With mom's [husband in prison](#), we moved to be close to Grandpa's home on a beautiful western Michigan lake. As soon as mom delivered my younger sister, Arleen, (the birth taking place in her father's home on a hill behind ours); she divorced my father. *No record of that was found either.* I remember that cottage on the lake. It's where mom burned my pants up, while drying them on the oil space heater in the living room. This is where one of my anger moments showed up and I threw my wind-up train in the lake. It's also where I cut his knee on a beer bottle in the lake.

In 1940, at age 5, it was time to go to kindergarten. Our single mom family moved to a house next to the Baptist church in Fennville, a town by the lake. She started working in the fruit canning factory, just 2 blocks away. That fall, WWII broke out. Our family moved to [Kelloggsville](#), near the big city where she made parachutes using a sewing machine with 5 needles.

In 1941 I attended the first grade there. I cut my hand on a bottle here when I fell out of a tree. Mom soon changed to a better paying job so it was time to move again. I made a big mistake here. I told the babysitter (who wore riding pants many times) that we were moving, before mom was able to tell her. The sitter immediately left the house, leaving we three kids alone. When mom got home, I remember well, mom cried hard on her bed. This also was the year my Uncle Junior graduated from high school.

Chance 2 – BURGLARY

Mom's new job was to dimple airplane wings ready to be riveted together. Our new home was closer into the big city where I attended second grade. The baby sitter here seemed to also be a problem sometimes; she burned the toast.



Two fun things happened here in 1942. I saw the movie ["Bambi"](#) and I colored a picture of Bambi and gave it to mom. She kept that picture until her passing where it was passed back to me and I still have it. The other fun thing was going to the wafer cookie plant, just a block away, and eating scrap wafers they threw out the back window.

Oh, yes in a different block there was a bakery where I first saw whole loaves of bread being sliced at once. This bakery was just around the corner from where Aunt Blanch lived as a single mom with her two boys and a girl. In the summer, while living here, my sister Caroline and I made trips by train to live with relatives for a while. Caroline, with Grandmas' sister on their Bloomingdale farm, and me with my Grandparents at the lake.

With WWII in progress, I had three uncles in the service. Uncle Merrill, grandpa's son, Uncle Earl, Grandma's son and Uncle Jr. the only son that my grandparents had together. There was one grand family reunion at the lake before the left for their duty stations.

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In the big city, I had two other encounters. The second grade teacher would not allow me to be excused for the bathroom so I wet his pants. Kind of embarrassing. The other was falling after tripping on the curb on the way home from school and breaking my left arm. I'm left handed so I had to learn to be right handed.

The two-single mom sister's decided to group forces and our two families moved into a house south of the school. Things became very interesting here.

Aunt Blanche's younger son (Sonny) was not too well behaved. One time he took me down to the river where we caught snakes and burned them to watch them sizzle. But the real, bad thing was, one night he took me with him to break into a different school, taking candy for me, but money for Sonny.

The last happening at this home was when I climbing around in the garage attic, fell through the ceiling and landed, bare foot, on the car's license plate, cutting a 3-inch gash in my right foot. Putting my foot in a bucket of water created catsup in no time. My scars can still be seen.

Chance 3 - GRANDPA

In the summer, the two families made a trip to Indiana together with an old house trailer to pick tomatoes. There was a regular transit camp where they had movies outside. Sonny had a monkey too. Boy, was it trouble.

It was 1943 and Mom decided it was time to have us three kids in a more stable home while she worked in Grand Rapids. Yup, that's the big city.

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Arleen and I moved in with our grandparents at the lake, photo left, and Carolyn with [Aunt Edith](#), lower photo. The homes were quite different. We had a dial phone and an ice box that had to be replenished by an ice man a couple times a week.

Aunt Edith had the old crank phone, [more about phone later] no electricity and a clock you could hear ticking, very slowly, tick, tock, tick, tock! I still miss hearing that very quiet homey sound.



In about 1936 Grandpa Sheckler, Grandma and Junior moved to Fennville where he drove road graders and snow plows for the county. They first lived on the south edge of town but soon moved in to town to a white house that is still standing across the street from the bank. The county garage was located where the bank now is. While living in this house he built a new house, on the highest hill on the south side of Hutchins Lake. The builders put the peak of the house about 5 feet too high, Grandma was quite upset over that.

The new house, now being highest house on the south side of the lake brought interesting annual events. Canadian Geese that feed on large green fields a couple miles south, fly to the lake in the darkness of the evening hours. They fly so low that you hear the swish, swish of their wings. The next morning you see thousands of geese on the lake.

Living at the lake with Grandpa was a rewarding experience. I learned a lot from him. One night, my sister and I got into trouble. We went to the neighbors to roast marshmallows but didn't tell them where we were. When Grandpa found us, he made me cut a branch from the [apple tree](#). Then: he switched us both. Never did anything like that again.

To the East of the house was a swampy area along the creek that flowed from the lake. The muck was a good place to dig for fishing worms. The whole neighborhood got their worms there.

To the west of the house were two acres of sand where the huge garden was. Grandpa had a large garden tractor with two 30-inch wheels and 4 inch spikes. The spikes dug into the dirt for traction. It had either plow, disk, or cultivator attachments.

One crop Grandpa grew was cabbage. It was used to make salads of course but some of it was sliced on board with a sharp knife built into it. That cabbage went into a 5-gallon crock in the basement where it rotted to make [sauerkraut](#).

While Grandpa was landscaping his 5-acre, 4-year-old home, we all had fun watching him in his baggy pants, while he lifted heavy stones up and cemented them into a wall along the driveway.



That apple tree, where I got the switch, was close to the house, but further down the drive were two more apple trees, a peach tree and three pear trees.

They all produced well. The fruit was canned and stored [in the basement](#) on shelves created with orange crates.

Behind the house were two black walnut trees. Walnuts are messy to clean.

The front of the house had a beautiful front porch, but it really went nowhere. There were cement steps that went down to the ground. From there was a steep 40 ft. hill of grass where it leveled out to a large flat lawn. The hill was fun to roll down. The flat area was where we played croquet. Here is where I learned to push a reel type lawn mower and it was no easy task. The mower had 4, maybe 5 long blades which had to be sharpened a lot. I couldn't go bare foot because the lawn had quack-grass and sand burrs.

The back of the house was the main entry. It was a back porch that extended the full width of the house, with windows all around. Outside, there were three 50-gallon barrels where the supply of fuel oil was kept to heat the house. The fuel oil space heater was in the center of the house. There was an indoor stairway down to the garage on the west end of the porch. The stairway was covered with a trapdoor, intended for use only in the winter if snow was too great to get out of the house.

The back porch was the scene of many [family gatherings](#). Grandpa made a table with folding legs that seated six people on each side. At Christmas time, my many cousins would come and stay overnight. The whole house was a bedroom where they all slept on the hard floor. Even I had to give up my bed and sleep on the floor. It was a fun, fun time.

Under the back porch was the garage. When Grandpa first moved there, in about 1938, he had a 1932 Plymouth with doors that were hinged at the back. It leaked oil badly, leaving a big grease spot on the floor. When Uncle Junior left for the navy, Grandpa junked the Plymouth and used Junior's 1940 Ford. When Junior had graduated, he went to work for Heinz and bought the car. When Junior enlisted in the Navy, his empty bedroom allowed my sister and me to move in. Mom was sooooo happy!

The basement was entered through the garage. To the left of the door is where all the tools were kept, on the floor. There was no work bench. To the right of the door was the water well. It had a sand point, driven into the sand where the water was not too deep because of lake level water table. Beside the well was the pump that kept the water tank full. In the center, by the same chimney that served the space heater upstairs, was the water heater.

The hot and cold water was piped not only to the kitchen and bathroom above, but to the basements east wall, were a set of spigots. That's where Grandma's [washing machine](#) was rolled to on wash day. Two rinse tubs were set up next to the washer. I say set up on wash day because the area was kept clear for other uses. One special use was we kids, after swimming, enjoyed washing up and cleaning the sand out of our swimming suits after being in the lake. All cousins remember this well. Guess who also enjoyed swimming, Grandpa. He would float on his back, way out into the lake, looking like a big bubble floating on the water.

The canned goods were along the back/north wall. On the central house support beam, the cane fishing poles were hung. Beside the chimney, on a support beam was a bench grinder where Grandpa kept his tools sharpened.

Back upstairs, off the back porch, into the main part of the house was the kitchen. To the left was [Grandma's baking cabinet](#). It had a shelf that pulled out to work on bread, etc. Inside the cabinet where special bins to hold flour and sugar.

The next room, in the center of the house, is where the space heater was. To the left was a short hall. Straight ahead, west, was the bathroom, with sink, tub and lavatory. To the right, front of the house, was Grandpa and Grandma's bedroom. To the left was Uncle Junior's bedroom where Arleen and I slept. Each bedroom had a long closet where stuff could be hidden way back in.

Back in the central room there was a desk, the radio stand and Grandpa's chair. This was the entertainment area. On the radio, we would listen to the news by Gabriel Heatter, comedy like Burns & Allen or Jack Benny. The big event I always cherished was when Grandpa picked up his [guitar](#) and sang. His songs were from the Pennsylvania hills and he sounded just like Burl Ives. He also had a Banjo but it was up in the attic. I found it and still have it also. This room had a wide opening to the front of the where the living room was. It opened onto the front porch. In the corner was a round lamp table. In 2016 the table went to my daughter, Kelly in Beaverton, Oregon.

Going to school from Grandpa's was somewhat of a task. I had to [walk 3 miles](#) in to Fennville. It was kind of fun though. I lived the furthest away and as I walked more kids joined me. All of us were friends, especially Julie Anne Miller, a classmate.

During the walk to school, I would put my ear tight to a pole. I liked to hear the [telephone poles hum](#). They hum because the wires were pulled very tight and the wind made them vibrate. It took two wires to make each party line work. There were 10 wires on the pole line so that meant there were [5] party lines around the lake. This continued into 1944. I had to take the third grade over, but this was O.K., it put me in my age group.

These years at the lake, still being while the war was on, gave us kids a chance to help. Along the road, we collected milk weed pods, placing them into bushel size gunny sacks. We took them to the Farm Bureau Mill where they gave us 10 cents a bag. The pods contained a very light element that floated on water. They were used as stuffing in life preservers on a ship. We also collected scrap metal.

Grandpa's job, like I said, was to [drive a grader truck](#) for the county. Most country roads then were made with gravel so he graded them to help keep them smooth. If they weren't graded, the surface became wavy from the wind caused by cars driving over them. The road was then considered to be a washboard road. In the winter, Grandpa added a big V- shaped snow plow to the front of the truck. A wing was added to the right side so snow could be pushed further off the road. Sometimes, I was able to ride with him all day, pushing and bucking snow drifts. It was hot inside the truck, quite comfortable and a LOT OF FUN.

One of the most import parts of living by the lake was fishing. We used long cane poles with a bobber on the line. The bobber had to located so as the fish hook was lowered to just the right depth, where the fish were swimming. In the winter, I fished by lying [on the ice](#) with a bag over my head to make it dark. Then I could see the fish swimming around. Some persons have lost their cars out at their fishing houses when the ice was not strong enough. The cars are still there.

Grandpa had made a row boat. It was kind of heavy and hard for a kid my size to row. A few years later, when I had a job, I bought a 1.5 horse power motor.

Chance 4 - POST OFFICE

In the fall of 1944, Mom returned to Fennville and rented a room at Keith and Bee Hutchins. She got a job as a clerk at the Post Office and then rented a little white house on a street two blocks south of the post office. I was this year in the fourth grade.

The Post Office was on the NE corner of the town's main intersection. On the NW corner was a restaurant created from an older gas station. On the SW corner was the Fennville Hardware. Across the street, on the SE corner was the towns' only bank. The bank was created by the Hutchinson's that owned the canning factory. Above the bank were lawyers' offices. This family also owned a very large house on the west edge of town which we considered to be a mansion, but it was just a big house with large pillars. The owner was U. S. Representative Edward Hutchinson who called for Nixon's resignation in 1974.

Mom probably met almost every person in town from behind that window where she sold stamps or handed out packages, she most certainly made a lot of friends. I soon knew a lot of them also. Without a doubt, it was she who made sure I received a lot of chances.

To the east of our house was a main railroad called the Pere Marquette which ran from Chicago to Grand Rapids. That's the [train I rode](#) several times before. The train engines were steam engines which could be heard for miles. The whistles were loud, and their chugging shook the earth below, vibrating everything within a half mile of the tracks. One time I thought there was an earthquake.

Across the railroad tracks is the Michigan Fruit Cannery, where mom worked at before the war. German prisoners of war were working there while we lived here. I couldn't get too close because there were army guards with sub-machine guns guarding the prisoners. The [prisoners lived in a camp](#) several miles east of town, in the woods overlooking the Kalamazoo river. The prisoners also worked in the area orchards. Crane's orchard owner was not made to go to war because his orchard was important to feed not only our country but to feed the service men and women.

To the west of our house, and across the street lived the Carters. Mr. Carter traveled/worked on the trains. Mrs. Carter had this big wood burning stove where she made the best bread you could imagine. They had a very heavyset daughter named June who was "picked on" quite a bit. Not a nice thing to do.

An incident occurred during this time when my real father appeared in town. He had a woman with him, perhaps a new wife. He got a kid, who lived across the street from the bank, to go to my house and get me to meet him at the Post Office. I did and he scared the heck out of me. He wanted me to get in the car and go for a ride. I quickly ran home, told mom. She called the police where a restraining order was put on him.

WWII was over in Germany on May 8, 1945 - "VE-Day", a month before school vacation.

To the east of our house, and across the street was the area maintenance garage and office for Consumers Power Company. With the ending of the war, an army truck driver came back and went to work at Consumers. His name was Irwin and during the end of the war, near Berlin, Germany; his unit lost communications with the main force and he drove his jeep through the enemy lines and somehow regained communications. Irwin received the "Silver Star" for his bravery.

Guess what, mom had been rooming at the home of Irwin's, brother. When Irwin came to the Post office, hearing his last name, drew mom's attention.

A few weeks later, Irwin's co-workers, Dutch and Ruth dared Irwin to ask Mom out on a date. He did ask her and on April 19, 1946 they were married. The wedding was held at Grandpa's house out at the lake.

I now called Irwin, "Pa". Mom and Pa rented a house in the block west of the post office. My sister Arleen and I moved in with in a couple days, were awaked one night with a loud "Boom", "Boom". Grandpa had borrowed the big bass drum from the school, where he headed up an old fashion "Shivaree" on mom and pa.

I figured out in about the year 2000, it was this man. My new Pa, who had really helped me to get jobs. Even the one in Grand Rapids where my Telephony Career began. We, never in our whole life, talked much. He was shy and quiet. I was shy also.

My sister Arleen and I, in the summer created a circus in the yard. There were four maple trees arranged in a square and we placed ropes to each tree making an enclosed area. Over the ropes, we placed sheets and blankets. We made a few pennies. I remember a girl, Patty Scarlett., in my class who helped. She lived in the next block east. I had thought she was mad at me because when we were playing one time above her family's garage, I broke her doll. Now remember, we were only 11. We are still friends but don't communicate. Well we did a couple times. ☺ My wife didn't know.

When school was out that year, there was an annual picnic at a park by Lake Michigan. I couldn't go because I had the chicken pox.

The last thing I remember about living in this house was when pa brought home his weekly pay, in cash, which was lying on the table with other papers. Our cooking stove was a wood burning type. Mom burned all the papers. Yup; money also.

Chance 5 - TURKEY AND RABBITS

Going into the sixth grade, we moved to another house because the rent was too high. The new house was about the same size so my older sister, Carolyn, came back with us. There was a huge delay for her coming back because Aunt Edith had been claiming Carolyn as her daughter and it took mom some talking with lawyers to convince Edith she was wrong.



Out at the lake, Grandpa was doing new things. He had been raising rabbits where he used a bent willow stick to stretch the skins and dried them. The dried skins sold well for making gloves. The meat tastes just as good as chicken.

He decided to quit this and raise turkeys. I took a couple of the rabbits and raised them at this new home. I used, cut down coffee cans for feed and water dishes. It was fun to watch how the cycle of life occurred in the rabbit world.

To raise turkeys, grandpa first built a brooder house. He ordered chicks my mail order and they arrived in town by train. The chicks were housed, fed and watered under heated lamps. He added outdoor pens when they grew up. The pens were raised about two feet off the ground. The floor was made of one-inch square strips, spaced the same width. The bird droppings then fell on the ground. The sides and top of the pens were made of one-inch chicken wire.

Pend up turkeys have a problem. They pick at each other, tearing off their feathers. To stop this, grandpa borrowed a de-beaker. This device had a hot bar that was clamped down on the bird's upper beak and it burned about a half inch of the beak off.

The turkeys also had to have canvas coats to cover where feathers had been picked off. That was a tough project and only lasted two years.

This is the time grandpa purchased a TV set, so we naturally visited them more often. But, back in town I was acting out my own dramas, like shooting my machine gun made from a wooden stick. The rabbit pen shown above was to the left of this garage image.

I was a Boy Scout also. I only made tenderfoot though. On a hike, east of town, I took a can of soup for dinner. I laid it in an open fire to heat. The can opened itself, all over us. Boom!

There was another time we took a trip to Selfridge Air Field, near Detroit,



where we saw the jets that were being flown in Korea. This trip included crossing the river into Canada.

Summer events were plentiful, playing with several kids from all over town. One good one was going to Boy Scout camp up north. I was a hero. In the lake, we were playing a game with a greased watermelon, called a pig. Two teams were fighting to push the pig over the other team line. The melon disappeared, no one could see it. Up it popped, between my legs. I, the hero, walked it across the line.

There was one more hike I will never forget. In March, we went north along the railroad tracks and came to a creek. Wading in the creek, a water fight broke out and several of us got very wet, so we took our clothes off. I snapped a Ned Bale with a towel, older than me, and he started to chase me. Just then a passenger train went by. If passengers had looked out the window, they would have seen two necked boys running across a pasture.

The second trip I took out of state was driving to Ohio to buy fireworks.

Chance 6 - MAKING MONEY

Mom's presents in the post office made her aware of many happenings in the town. When she heard that the morning paper needed a new delivery boy, she tuned into that opportunity right away. I started delivering the Herald to over 30 homes and businesses every morning. The papers arrived in one of the mail bags at the post office at 6:00 a.m. and I was there to open the bag. I folded each paper into a square so they would fly well when I tossed them. I learned it was best to place each paper where the customer wanted it, to be out of the weather.

The first customer was Pat's restaurant, next door to the post office, then I continued east through town on the North side of Main Street. At the east end of town there was one customer about a block, a block is about 300 feet, beyond the city limits, on the South side of the street. From there I went back through town on the South side of Main Street.

In the block, east of the railroad tracks, Pa's brother Lawrence lived with his family of seven kids. I went inside many times because they were now my cousins. Their house was filled with diapers, so it smelled a bit like pee. I worked the West end of town last, ending up across from Post Office in Cady's Restaurant where I got toast and milk. Then off to school I went.

After a few months, my Uncle Jr. gave me a bicycle. That really helped me finish faster, but in the winter, it was a different story. I remember the sidewalks were cleared for the whole town with a "V" shaped snow plow pulled by a horse. The horse came from the same ranch we went riding with Mom.

Saturday was collection day. The best customer to collect from was Mrs. Rasmussen. Her fresh baked bread would have just come out of the oven and I timed my visit with that. I was not a very good banker with collections. I used it to buy too much candy. I always had a 1/4 lb. of red hearts with me to suck on in school. That made many of my teeth rotten.

This is the time I was 14 and 15 years old. There are 3 major encounters in this time that affected my future life.

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The first being with my class mate Ocie. His home was in the north part of town, 6 blocks away. Behind his house was the old, bare, athletic field. One day we went across the field into a stand of closely bunched pine trees where Ocie had an area cleared out for a secret camp. He offered me my first cigarette, so I tried to smoke it. Of course, I choked a lot and right then and there I decided it was not for me. I have never smoked since then. Ocie died in his 60's. There was a girl that lived next door to Ocie that I would have liked to be acquainted with, but I was scared of girls then. As I am writing here, she has been a friend for many years. We both worked on the history of the towns families and posted these histories in the town library.

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The second encounter is with a girl whom I was very enchanted with. Her family owned some orchards west of town which I worked on during this time. One job was to move crates around on the apple grader. But one time I was picking cherries where my ladder was on one side of the tree and her ladder was on the other side. We were both at the top of the tree and our ladders touched. Oh, how I wished we were closer friends. Her family was prominent attenders of the Methodist church and I knew she sang in the choir. So, I went to church just to watch her sing. The minister suggested I join youth fellowship and there I again had encounters with her, during a game called "[Winkum](#)". We were both good at it. At the age of 16 I was baptized, all on my own. I still know of no one in my family that goes to church. I still know that girl. We email quite a bit. She was a nurse, has put two husbands to their rest and has several grandchildren.

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The third encounter was not good. Remember, I collected money from my paper route which added to the money earned out in the orchards. Well, many times there was not enough money in my cash box to pay the paper company for my papers. I just used too much for other things. Here is where I became the towns "OPEN WINDOW BURGLAR".

In these days, the town did not have a police force so it was easy to sneak around town at three o'clock in the morning. Many stores had windows that were not locked so I would just climb into the store, go to the cash register, take out a few dollars and get back home. The stores never even reported the differences in their daily accountings.

When I was still 15, I was working as a soda jerk in the drug store, so I knew how the cash registers worked. One night, I needed cash really bad, so I snuck out of my second-floor window, walked over to the ladder leaning against the roof, went down and went to the drug store. Here was a new problem, no open window, so I broke one, right in the store I was working in. I took, maybe \$20, I have no memory of how much, and went home. The ladder to the roof leaned over the oil drum and while climbing the ladder, it banged the drum. Pa caught me while I was crawling back in the window and spanked me good, with my feet still sticking out the window. He had never done that before and I'm sure it hurt him more than it did me, but it sure put a scare into me.

The next day at the drug store, I admitted my wrong doing. I gave the money back. The State Police were there, and they took me to the county police. I was questioned where all I can remember saying was, "Don't tell Mom. Don't tell Mom". The drug store did not press charges. I quit that profession. I'll bet they did tell mom.

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There were many good experiences in these days. I spent several weeks at my Uncle Merrill's about 15 miles east. He managed the Ray and Mabel [McNutt farm](#) since WWII. I learned to drive their International Farmall Tractor. One project was to collect hay from the field where the tractor pulled a wagon with a back loader pulled behind it. This machine picked up all the hay that had been wind rolled into narrow rows. I was on the wagon with a pitch fork, stacking the hay onto hay slings. Occasionally Blue Racer snakes came at me with the hay.

With the wagon, full of hay on maybe five slings, we parked the wagon in the barn. Then the tractor was parked where its power takeoff had a huge belt wrapped over it. It connected to a device which, with the use of pulleys, pulled each sling full of hay up, then sideways into the barns hay mound.

This hay feed the many milk cows the farm had. I did learn how to milk a cow but didn't have to do it because there was a milking machine. Uncle Merrill handled that. The milk was poured into 25-gallon milk cans that kept cool in the milk house. I had two of those milk cans in my yard, until 2015.

Some milk was used in the house. Mabel had a milk separator that skimmed the cream off, and she made butter. Uncle Merrill liked to drink butter milk, yuk! They did pasteurize the milk also. Another job I really liked at the farm was gathering eggs.

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Bicycling was a big agenda for me in those days. There was always Albert Blackburn who wanted to go biking on Saturday. We would go around the lake road, because the car traffic was not too heavy, to Lake Michigan. We did have two challenging hills to climb. No geared cycles in those days.

A second trip would be to New Richmond. That route too had hills. At the river, beside the railroad, we would meet railroad tramps. Shan Reynolds taught some riddles that were laughable to we kids, like, "Old King Cole was a merry old sole with a buck skin belly and a rubber ass hole".

A third trip would be straight east of town. That was then a narrow, sandy road. Hard to peddle in. One purpose was to watch the oil pipeline being built up from the south states.

A fourth trip was to Round Lake. This road was the main road to the county seat, Allegan. At Round Lake, there was an old store that still pumped gas from the tall Visi-bowl type pump. Beside the pump was a handle used to pump the gas up into the maybe a 30-gallon glass bowl. When full, the hose was put to the automobiles tank inlet and gas flowed down into the car. I bought a mounds candy bar here once. When I took a bite, I found the coconut had turned into wiggly little maggots.

Chance 7 – OTHER JOBS

Starting in the ninth grade, one of the first jobs I had was working in the canning factory. The job was to take boxes of canned goods, as they came off the can labeling machine and stack the quite heavy cases (boxes) on to a pallet. I was too weak to do this and quit after one week.

I then went to work in the Davis Restaurant in Saugatuck, washing dishes. In the basement, I peeled potatoes with their electric tub scrubber. I just dumped them, they spun and rubbed against the rough tub liner and the peelings disappeared. If I left them in too long the whole potato disappeared. The Davis's had a daughter named Nancy. My First Nancy encounter. I took her to a couple movies. Her mom asked me if we did any spooning. ☺ There was a [big dance pavilion](#) in Saugatuck. That's where I learned to roller skate.

The next job was at the cider mill, managed by Uncle Keith, Pa's brother. I dumped pickles into brine soaking tanks, shoveled apples into a trove of running water and cleaned out vinegar making tanks.

The apple fell from benches into running water, were picked up by a belt (with big cups) running up to the grinding machine where the apples were ground into pulp. The pulp dropped down into cloth blankets and wrapping into layers about six inches thick. The layers of blankets were located on the lower table of a huge hydraulic press machine. Apple juice started to run out of each layer, as soon as the pulp entered the blankets. When the stacked layers reached four feet high, the upper plate of the machine was lowered and pressed the juice out of the pulp. The apple juice run off, by the gallons, into huge tanks.

Some of the juice was place into wooden barrels. Some was run slowly into tall tanks filled with coils of apple wood shavings. The shavings were about 1/8" thick, & 2" wide which coiled into being a round object, 3" in diameter. When the apple juice had seeped down through 25 feet of the shavings, it was ready to be vinegar. Well, these tanks of shavings had to be cleaned out periodically and I got to do that. Two persons did this by taking turns in the tank, shoveling out the soaked coils. The odor was very strong. You could only be in the tank about 15 minutes.

The next job was in the Drug Store where mom was working. I became a soda jerk. I made sandwiches, shakes, sodas, sundaes, banana splits, and a special sundae called the "Awful-Awful". This special, scooped into a soda glass, was just every type of ice cream and syrup you could think of dumping in. But my favorite was the Hot Fudge. The fountain area had a counter with about 15 stools and 5 sets of double booths. It was a favorite hangout for school kids. We worked during school lunch hour too, running the three blocks from school to sell sandwiches and hot chocolate.

The magazine rack was conveniently located at the back edge of the fountain area along with a pinball machine. The guys where a little mischievous with the pinball machine. Tipping the machine up on their toes was nothing. With a jackknife, they drilled a hole in the side and then stuck a wire through to trip rewards button to rack up more free games.

After my incident described in "Chance 6", I went to work in the [local super market](#). Mom took a job there later as a book keeper. I worked in the meat department. The market had a freezer where lockers were rented to the public. Some customers would buy a part of a hog or cow and we would cut them up, wrap the meat and put in their lockers for them. I didn't work with the beef much, maybe grinding Hamburg.

If it was a hog, we would part of it into sausage. Sausage making was not one of my favorite jobs, my hands would almost freeze, it seemed. Guess what, we never wore protective gloves. We used our bare hands with everything.

If pork parts were to be made into bacon or hams, we spread a special salt/sugar mix over them. For ham, we also had to pump salt brine into them. After a ten-day curing, the bacon slabs and hams were hung in a smoke house. This smoke house, about six feet wide, three feet deep and ten feet high, was special built for this type of business. In the lower part of the house was an electric hot plate where hickory sawdust was leaked onto it. That generated quit a smoke.

A byproduct of the pig is fat. The fat was saved and every other week, we put it into a pot which had a built-in gas fired burner. The pot was about four feet in diameter and the same deep. Filling the pot full before closing time, it would heat over night. In the morning, the fat was fully melted into a hot grease. We would first take out the parts that could not melt, the skin. That skin was then very brittle and floating on top. We would put those parts into an 18-inch lard press and squeeze out the remaining grease, pouring it back into the big pot.

The remaining dry, brittle, skin was "Chitlins", a very tasty snack food. The hot grease was next removed from the big pot by dipping out the grease with a 5-quart bucket attached to the end of 4-foot-long handle. This hot grease was poured into a 54-gallon steel drum that had a white apron tied across the top. The grease strained through the apron, making the grease pretty pure. When the grease cooled, we had lard.

This barrel of lard was wheeled in to the cooler but later wheeled to the area behind the meat counters. When there were no customers around, the clerk on duty scooped out the lard and wrapped it into 5-pound packages. It was a hot item in those days.

My favorite job was with chickens. Every Monday morning, 1000 young frying chickens were delivered to the backdoor. With a three-man work force, we had those chickens killed, de-feathered and cooling in two 15-foot horse watering tanks. By 9:00 a.m.; the chickens had been removed from the chicken crates, their heads pulled down through a funnel, (there were 8 funnels) their throat cut and their blood drained. When the killing process was, over there was 4 inches of solidified blood on the floor. The blood was scooped into other 54 gallon barrels and set on the loading dock out back.

When the chickens were dead, one by one they were dipped into the scalding tank, an open water tank heated by electric, and de-feathered. We had a machine, about 30 inches wide that had a drum that rolled horizontally away from you. This drum had soft rubber fingers about 3 inches long that pulled the feathers off the chicken. The feathers too were scooped into the barrels on the loading dock.

With the chickens in tanks, cooling with cold running water, I was left alone, all day. To dress these chickens. I could dress a chicken in two minutes if I were timed. Cutting the head and feet off, I would cut into its rear, totally around its butt hole, stick my hand inside, pull the lungs loose from the ribs and pull **everything** out. I then cut open the gizzard to empty its gravelly contents and saved it. I separated the liver out, making sure not to cut the Gaul Bladder and saved it. The Gaul bladder has a green substance that can ruin the liver. Wrapping the liver, gizzard and neck into freezer paper, I stuffed them back into the chickens' now empty cavity. I put the whole chicken into a freezer bag, placing the bagged chicken into a freezer tray. When the tray was full, I took it to the quick freezer area. The remains of the chicken were put a barrel on the loading dock.

This process was also encountered on hen chickens. Many of those had eggs still inside. We also did turkeys, a big encounter for the holidays, and geese during the hunting season. A dead goose could be a problem sometimes, because hunters would just find a dead one and ask us to clean it. It would be rotten and Jim, the owner, would really get upset.

Remember all the remains put on the back-loading dock. That stuff would be picked up on Wednesday and taken to the rendering works. By then, the stink could be quite awful and the barrels full of maggots.

Chance 8 – HIGH SCHOOL

I was very fortunate to have a school where the teachers wanted their students to succeed. In grades 7 and 8 my teacher was an [elderly lady](#) who carried a ruler around to make sure you were holding your pencil correctly. She knew I was always going to be left handed so she taught not to write back-handed, just turn the paper to the right. We kids could all write cursive well by the time we reached the ninth grade.

I was kind of average in the classes of English and History. I took one year of Spanish and that went nowhere. I took one year in homemaking which was joke because the teacher just wanted to talk with the popular boys. I was one that sat way in the back. The boys she talked to sat up front. I took shop for two years where I did well. We had a new shop building and we created the new tool cabinets in the shop. In Typing I could do 40 words per minute.

Math was my best area. I took all the courses available, Algebra, Trigonometry, Geometry, Solid Geometry, and Physics.

Because there was no drafting courses offered, I completed 54 lessons correspondence in Architecture Drafting with Chicago Technical College and received a certificate of completion dated August 1953.

Four of my high school teachers were WWII veterans. My history teacher, Mr. Sexton was an army corpsman being with the company that discovered the first concentration camp. My Physics teacher, Mr. Herbener was a MP that moved German prisoner to America and then back. Mr. Herbener and I were good friends until his death where I created webpages about his war travels and a CD with his [son's music](#).

My math teacher was the best, [Mr. Sam Morehead](#). He became the school Principle for many years. Sam and I were good friends also until his death. I made web pages about his career as a BRA gun man in the Philippines. Sam was also our coach. The only sport I got my letter "F" in was baseball. I played right field and could throw a ball on to home plate in one bounce. He was coach in the summer for American Legion Baseball. On one out-of-town contest, he hit a deer, so we were late for the game. In Douglas we ate at the first A&W Root Beer Stand in the area.

One Time, after a home basketball game I was invited to party at a cheerleader's house in river town. I think I was invited because I worked with her at the drug store. Some of the guys were drinking beer but I never liked the stuff. Some smoked too. At this part, a game being played in the living room, [spin the milk bottle](#). Yup, you have heard of it, we did it. Anyway, Barb Erlewein, who also worked at the drug store, spun the bottle and it pointed to me. The lights went out. I was sitting in a big easy chair and should have been easy to find. She said, "I'm waving my hands around, where are you?" I was sitting "W A Y H I G H", on the back of the chair. This bashful guy was not asked to a party again.

For the senior prom, I was taught dancing by local Mexican lady. One of the guys fixed me up with a date from Pullman. She was a junior and worked in her parents' home which was also the local telephone office and was an operator. She got upset with me when I took her home from the dance. I didn't kiss her goodnight.

On our Senior Trip, we went by train to Detroit and boarded my first ship voyage. The voyage was on the calm Great Lakes where we stopped at Mackinaw Island. We got to roam the island on foot where many years later the movie "[Some Where In Time](#)" was filmed in 1980. It starred Jane Seymour and Christopher Reeve, alias SUPERMAN.

The voyage continued to Chicago, making this the first time I had been there. It's where I learned about Pizza, Elevated Trains, and Minsky's Burlesque Theatre. The comedy was by far the best feature at the theatre. We continued home via train to Kalamazoo and bus to Fennville.

Chance 9 – NAVY – BOOT CAMP

I went to Grand Rapids and enlisted. In November I took the train to Chicago and to the navy receiving station. There I was given a medical examination along with several other guys where we had to disrobe, turn our head and cough, etc. We then were guided through a clothing store and fitted with every item of navy gear we would need. These items were all stuffed into our new sea bag. Next stop, Great Lakes Naval Training Station. By coincidence, enough guys ahead of me were grouped until there was a plane load for transferred to San Diego. I'm glad I didn't get in that group.

CHANCES of a BURGLAR's SON

At Great Lakes we were instructed to take I.Q. tests. My enlisted record is signed on November 10, 1953. It displays that I was above average in all tests, especially in Mechanical.

My scores were: GCT 58 ARI 62 MECH 67 CLER 59. I even tested high in a radio test. They were about to send me to Pensacola because my combined GCT/ARI score was over 115. There I could have entered a Commissioning program but that came to a halt quickly when they checked my health test. I'm deaf in my left ear. ☹

We were then assigned to barracks in the boot camp training area. This barracks was a two-story WWII era, tarpaper covered wooden building, shaped like a "H". Looking at the front, we went into the left ground level wing. That was where company 110 of 1953 was being formed. To the left of the barracks was an asphalt covered drill field which I was to see plenty of. Straight across the drill field was a similar barracks. Also, in the training camp training was my high school classmate, Roddy Galbreath. Rod entered the navy a few weeks before me. He became a Marine Corpsman and was stationed in South Korea. At this writing he is a retired pharmacist.

We were marched to the camp exchange, where our hair was cut off. I was then a skinhead.



I unpacked my sea bag, and our gear was stenciled. We then placed the contents into the ship style locker. For those days, a 24" wide x 24" high by 18" deep aluminum locker. I had rolled each item up and tied them with the strings provided for this purpose.

Truly everything did fit better. During inspection, we had to display our belongings on the floor in a certain way, like my new buddy, Jim Brown's – Above. He is the only guy assigned to my same duty locations for my duration in the Navy.

You can see in Jim's photo, we had to wear leggings [BOOTS]. They made it easier to perform, I think. You can make out the ditty bag, Blue Jackets Manuel, Flat top Winter cap, Rubbers, tennis shoes, extra pair of shoes and all the clothes rolled and tied.

To clean our clothes there was a washing room next to the head (bath-room). The wash room had a large table with maybe 4 stations, each with hot and cold-water faucets. The table was covered with sheet metal, slanted about 2% so the water would run to a drain. We were supplied with a scrub brush and a bar of Fels Naph soap, said to keep our whites, white.

After we scrubbed our items, we tied them up with our little strings on a line in a drying room adjacent to the wash room. There was an award for the cleanest recruit, and a Negro won it. He was in the army first so was trained quite well.

The seamanship class was short for us. It was winter so boating was not in progress. In swimming, we were taught how to make a preserver out of our trousers. In a pool, we jumped in from a short tower, took our trousers off, tied the bottom of each leg into a knot and swing the trousers over our head to catch air and plop the two legs under our arms as a float. It works. Guys who couldn't swim, learned soon. They were pushed in.

Firefighting school was challenging. One time I was the lead guy holding the extended spray nozzle into room filled with oil, set on fire. I moved the hose back and forth, low over the flames to push them back and snuff them out. It worked.

Gas Mask wearing was in order also. I don't remember what gas we were exposed to. In physical training I was a weakling. I could NOT climb a rope, no way, never could. I was a 150-lb. weakling.

[GUNNERY](#) training was short also. We witnessed loading 40mm guns, learned to hold an old WWII type rifle to shoot and I did shoot a 45 pistol. What a kick.

I liked to sing and joined the Great Lakes Choir. Sang Second Tenor.

It was the [Drill-Marching](#) I loved. Company 110 won 7 of the 8 Competitive flags.

On our first liberty, some of us went to Chicago, using the elevated train "EL". Going to the USO on State Street I met Betty Grable and Harry James. This was at a dinner where everyone sat at these long tables. I sat directly across from these two stars, ***at the same table***. The only words I remember are, "HOW ARE YOU DOING SAILOR". Just before my first liberty home, I got a Tattoo on my lower right arm. It is an Eagle carrying a ship anchor. It's still in good condition.

I did very little mess cooking in boot camp but after the training was complete, I reported to the main side where I did several weeks of mess cooking. There were many schools over there and many mouths to feed. We made thousands of individual salads. Using Ice Berg Lettuce, we broke 6-inch square leaf's off and lined a tray with them. Then we scooped cottage cheese into them, topping with pineapple or a cherry. The best part of the head lettuce was thrown away. That lettuce waste carried on all over the navy. We also peeled bags and bags of potatoes just like I did in Saugatuck.

During these many months, I went to Chicago many times. The second time I went with a new buddy who knew an easy way to pick up girls. We went the cafeteria in the basement Walgreens and sure enough these young teenagers were eager to be picked up.

This first time I asked a girl, Nancy Lange, to the movies and we went to the State Street Theater and saw "ROSE MARIE" starring Ann Blyth and Howard Keel. I asked Nancy for a date and the next week I went to the home she lived in. It was her Grandmothers, her Mom lived down the street. The location was on South 49th Court in Cicero. We went bowling had a snack and returned to her home, entering by the back door. It opened right into her bedroom where she had a huge display of souvenir's, from all over the world. I saw that bed, said good night and never saw her again. God was I ever a chicken. She was the most beautiful girl I have ever dated. Long dark hair, nice figure, etc. This is the second Nancy I dated but not the last. But remember her last name. It will come up in Chance 13.

HOLD IT: This had to be a **scam** to have sailors send dope to Cicero. Great Lakes rumor of quick date, Mother OK's sailor to take to Movies, Girl takes sailor to her grandmother's house in Cicero. That was no mother in Walgreens. That bedroom was not a grandmother's house. I was lucky to run that time.

Chance 10 – NAVY – NORFOLK

In the spring of 1954, when new recruits were to be transported to new duty stations in the Norfolk area, a sleeping car was reserved on the Norfolk & Western Railroad. I was one of those recruits. We boarded the train at the LaSalle Street station in down town Chicago. The train we were coupled to was called the "[POCAHONTAS](#)" and its' engine was a Class J locomotive streamlined 4-8-4 built in 1950. The last of the streamlined STEAM ENGINES.

On this train, my first trip from the Mid-West or as a U.S. sailor, we traveled through Indiana and Ohio, reaching the Ohio River East of Cincinnati in the late of the evening. We crossed the Ohio River near Ironton, Ohio. Late in the night our car was switched around to another train. We were bounced around a little. At day break we were traveling slowly through the West Virginia hills. This was my first look at how many of Americas people live, back in the hills. Later that day we arrived in Norfolk, Virginia.

CHANCES of a BURGLAR's SON

Several of us were destined for duty in Little Creek and we were billeted in a barracks on the Main Naval Base, Norfolk. One guy I became acquainted with was from South Chicago, Jack, Bower. He was full of wise cracks. We shared guard duty in the barracks. In a couple of days, we all had dental appointments. They could see that my mouth was in terrible shape. At the [Naval Exchange](#) I purchased a new camera, an Argus-C3. That camera served me well, right up to the 1970's. Making hundreds of slides.

I learned that the Battle Ship Missouri BB-63 was in port. Knowing that Lyle Birkholz from Fennville, a friend that I played with for years, was aboard, I got permissioned to visit him on board. I remember walking under those huge 16-inch guns to get to his passage way. I also remember the need to go to the head. Wow! Was that different. To pee there was the long trough like we still see in some places today. But to pass a B.M.; there was this even longer trough, on about a 3° slant, with a 12-inch plank running over that trough. I'm glad I didn't have to need that part of the facility. Can you imagine having your package hanging over that plank with several others reading or smoking or joking around?

One day on liberty in downtown Norfolk, I got on a bus to go back to the base. I like to sit in the back. The driver stopped the bus, "You move to the front boy, where white folks sit". Yup! I was learning how to live in the south.

We were soon transported to the Little Creek [Harbor Defense Base](#). Not one of us knew where we were going. The base controlled the defenses of the Chesapeake Bay. The guy's I was with, were assigned General Detail.

I was lucky and went to mess cooking. The barracks we lived in was only 50 feet away from the mess hall door.

I really did enjoy cleaning greasy hot grills, big cooking pots heated by steam.

The cooks were great to work with I always had access to something to eat. The Chief tried to get me to strike for cook but instead I went for Store Keeper. They had a better life yet.



General Detail for the other buddies I arrived with, was quite different. Jack and Jim both began to repair [torpedo nets](#). They came back to the barracks everyday with filthy, rusty dungarees that they had to clean. Mine were easy to keep clean. Torpedo nets are made up with steel grommets about 18 inches in diameter. The guys twist wire into these circles while also lacing the grommets with others to make up the nets. The nets were suspended from large floats across the Chesapeake Bay entrance. Boats from this base attended the nets and when a ship was to pass, the net was moved aside much like a gate. This base also maintained mines that were set on the sea floor. I have no idea how they worked.

I met a buddy one day who was from Northern Indiana, His name was Dwain Pavey. He was from a farm family and had a brand new 1954 Buick convertible. He was looking for guys who lived up his way to share driving home on 4-day weekends. I did that with him a couple times. It was fun when we drove hilly roads of the Virginia's. When we got the straight roads in Ohio and Indiana, early in the morning hours, we were going 100-mile per. Mom and Pa would come down a pick me up.

One time my sister Carolyn, who was going to nursing school, fixed me up with a date. The date came home with Carolyn. I took the girl roller skating south of Plainwell. On the drive to the rink, I was paying too much attention to the girl, driving at a moderate speed on the straight road through the dark forest. Up popped a stop sign, this section of the road dead ended into Hwy 40. I hit the brakes, we spun half-around and the car backed slowly into the trees. We did finish the date though, with a story to tell.

Back in Little Creek, that Buick came in handy at Virginia Beach. It was easy to beat the midshipman out for picking up girls. Later in life I met an officer who also went to Virginia Beach during that same time. I told of this experience and he did not laugh.

I wanted to go to Washington D.C. for a weekend one time and caught a hop in a Navy Beechcraft with a pilot who needed to acquire some flying hours. We landed at Bolling Air Base in Maryland. I took in the Smithsonian Institute Museum.

On another weekend liberty, I took a bus to Raleigh, North Carolina. I heard there was a Girls College there and dates were possible. At the YWCA I met this local-girl and did I ever get a date. She took me home to stay the night. What a nice family. In the morning, I had my first meal with grits. They were good. The bus ride was a little different. This girl came and sat with me and started getting lovey. It turns out she was looking for somebody to marry, right then.

In the spring of 1955, the same group of buddies who came to Little Creek, were loaded on a bus and we headed north. Again, we had no idea where we were going. Maybe the training we went through at [Dam Neck](#) on 3 inch 50 guns went along with new duty we were about to encounter.

Chance 11 – Navy - Philadelphia

Our bus trip to Philadelphia took us up through Virginia's peanut country, through Maryland, Delaware and into Pennsylvania. Quite a long bus ride.

After entering the [Philadelphia Naval Base](#), I don't remember where we got off the bus, but we were soon walking past this big ship with lines tied up at Pier No.1. The lines had big metal rat guards on them. Up the high gang way we went, onto the new ship [USS Kawishiwi AO-146](#). We were guided across the 01 deck to a stern, port side, hatchway. We then descended down a ladder to the Main deck and turned inboard into the First Division sleeping quarters. Yup! We were to be part of the First Division whose duty station was the above deck in the bow area of the ship. I picked a [top bunk](#) so I wasn't under anybody.

I was hoping to be assigned to a storekeeping job after passing the exam for it, but my records had not been updated yet.

One of my first jobs was to go over the side in a [boatswain chair](#) at the Starboard Bow and touch up the paint of the ship's huge numbers, 146. This is where I made my first mistake aboard ship. I had my billfold in my back pocket. The pocket was not secured shut so while I was swinging around to get in close to side of the ship, my billfold slipped out, down into the murky water and drifted down the Delaware River. My division lead was kind to me, this time. He gave me no restriction and let me acquire a new I.D. card. Borrowing some cash, I was given liberty to go to western union and picked up spending money my parents had sent me.

Travel to downtown Philadelphia was accomplished by bus a few miles, then by subway to the center of the city. The subway terminal was close to City Hall, a large building that was somewhat dark at night. We were advised to stay clear of sailors lurking around there. They were gay guys looking for a date. Hench, "The City of Brotherly Love".

My liberty in Philly was focused on the YMCA. This is where I learned to play hearts. They also had church services there but the big draw for me was dancing. There was a Personnel Man from the base whom I liked to watch dance there. He was good. He always danced with the same girl. Local girls volunteered here and sometimes they would let us sailors take them on dates. I took one home one time who lived way north by a navy air field. We traveled by train. I went to the "Y" with a shipmate, [Richard Hickey](#). He and I also went to the movies and saw "[Some Like It Hot](#)" with Marilyn Monroe.

My buddy, [Jim Brown](#), thought I needed some better action in my life so he invited me to accompany him with a date he had with this little Spanish girl he had met. We met at a park bench in front of the [Benjamin Franklin Statue](#). She reached over to grab my leg and you know what. I discouraged her and Jim laughed and laughed. After all, this was in front of Mr. Franklin. Hearing about Franklin's reputation, he would have laughed also.

The ship was commissioned on July 6, 1955. My Mom, Pa and younger [18-year-old sister](#) came to the celebration. They were very happy to see me on the beautiful ship and of course my sister flirted with the guys.

Soon the ship departed down the Delaware on a sea trial out into the Atlantic. At night I had duty standing watch on the 03 deck, port side, outside of the pilot house. We were about 100 miles out to sea traveling in a circle. The night was a beautiful starry night. This was to be my only sea duty, ever.

On board the ship, moored at Pier No.1, we could look to the west and see the [giant crane](#) on Pier No.5. It was said it could raise a destroyer. The crane was removed years later. From the stern, on Armed Forces Day, I took many photos of the planes flying overhead. I can still remember hearing the roar of the plane's engines that distinguish them as B-36's. On other time I stood on the stern, watching chicken coops float by after [Hurricane Diane](#) had passed. Our ship stayed in port by flooding her tanks where she settled into the mud, *(I'm told)*.

Via bus in New Jersey on the Turnpike, I took a liberty alone. It was to New York City, New York. There I visited Radio City Music Hall, a burlesque show and best of all; the Statue of Liberty.

My final hours in the navy were very tragic for me. All my life I have been haunted by this last event. One day J.T. Gray EM3, (Electrician Man) invited me to watch movies in his little office, deep in the bow of the ship. They were XXX rated movies he had purchased while serving in Europe. He said he had observed me in the head. I guess his purpose was to get me aroused, and it worked. Not being too smart on the subject, I let him do his thing with me and departed.

A few weeks later my division leader came and directed me to follow him. He told me I was accused of having relations with Gray and would be presented to the ship's captain for a hearing on the matter. My Division Leader BULLIED me into pleading guilty. He said, "You will most likely be sent to the brig". He didn't want a gay guy in his Division, and he made sure I was sent away.

The Captain gave me an [Undesirable Discharge](#). Now I think my leader was very wise. If I had stayed in the navy, I would have been labeled a homo and treated very badly by my shipmates in his Division.

Back in the First Division living quarters, I gave away all the gear I could. I should have kept a lot. The guys said nothing to me because they didn't know why I was leaving. The PN who prepared my discharge was the same dancing buddy I had known at the YMCA. He fixed it so I was hidden away. The day I walked out the gate, I was escorted by two shore patrolmen who wore arms. Now that was the most humiliated day of my life. I took the train to Kokomo, Indiana and a bus to the stop 5 miles west of Fennville. HOME.

Chance 12 – HOME AGAIN

1955, Mom and Pa had moved to a new house on the Lake. Sister Arleen was about to graduate from high school and had the 2nd bedroom, there was no third. I had to bunk in the basement. I did get my old job at the Super Market back. I was again happily killing chickens. I set my self to making model ships, made 4. I also went to work as a carpenter and electrician and created a family room in our basement. It included a closet where I could put my stuff, a book case, a desk and a fake window where I displayed my models.

My High School classmates Skip and Helen, now married, live on the south side of the lake. On a visit with them, Helen said she was talking with her friend Patty Scarlett, a classmate who then lived up in Montague. I should call her up. I did, and made a date to go up and rekindled old memories. On the way, using Pa's Plymouth, I rear-ended a dump truck, hitting only its tires. No damage to the truck but there was now a dent in Pa's car fender.

I could have got killed. A second time, I was driving Pa's old Plymouth out through the woods on a one-way sandy road with two friends beside me in the bench seat. No seat belts. All of a sudden, a stop sign popped out from behind a tree. I slammed hard on the brakes, not pumping. The car started skidding sideways, the sand had turned into gravel. The car slammed straight into a tree and started to spin to the left. My door popped open and I slid out onto the gravel. The car spun completely around me. No one was hurt.

I then bought my first car, a [1953 Chevrolet 4 door](#). I started roller skating about twice a week, met many girls this way. One, Lois, played the organ at the rink, I dated Lois for a while.

I made another date to visit Patty Scarlett. at the art school she was attending near of Traverse City, Interlochen Art School. She was living in a house with a bunch of other students and I

stayed one night with them. On a trip into the city, we visited a store with items made by artists, where I purchased a room divider screen. I had it until 2014. On one of my trips to see Pat, I gave her an 8 x 10 photo of me in my navy uniform. She kept it until I met her again. Thirty some years later, in 1989, I visited her home in San Jose, California and she gave it back to me. She, was then divorced, had raised two sons and owned her own [Art Company](#). The guy she had married, used her previous earnings to put him through school, then split. ☹

I made another trip via: Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Georgia which got me to Florida. We stopped at a Teepee motel, Caves, Silver Springs, Cypress Gardens, Dayton Beach, Fort Lauderdale. Traveling with me was Roger Hanson, a class mate of my sister Arleen. Their "Class of 1956" was the last to graduate from the [very old school building](#).

1956; John, the manager of the lumberyard had known me for many years. I had helped deliver lumber for him several times. My encounters with purchases for constructing a room in our basement, rekindled his knowledge that I liked to draw building plans. John, while at a meeting with at Engineering firm in Grand Rapids, told Ed Daverman about me. Mr. Daverman asked John to have me visit the Daverman firm.

I went to work for [J. & G. Daverman](#) under the watchful eyes of Ed for many, many years. I first helped their surveyor gather information for the new Grand Rapids airport, holding the range rod and measuring. We also surveyed an educational facility. Next, we laid out some pole lines for Telephone Company in Shiawassee County.

This encounter started my career in the Telephony business. For years, Daverman's had been engineering electric power lines. The lines were built to government Rural Electrification Association (REA) specifications. Daverman's, during this time, purchased old telephone companies that provided service with magneto (crank) service. In 1956, using a REA loan, Daverman's rebuilt and converted their next company in Calhoun County, to dial service.

Chance 13 – CALHOUN COUNTY

The town was Homer where Daverman's rented a little white building in the center of town. It had been a barbershop in the past. I was to work with [Leo Oppenneer](#), a newly hired engineer who had retired from the Tri-county Telephone Company in South Haven. This was such a huge coincidence. My home town, "Fennville", was served by that very company. Leo most certainly had worked in my home town, many times.

The first order of the day was to find a place to live. Mrs. Gladys Kurts. had a large house a block away from the newly set up engineering office. Mrs. Kurts was a widower who owned a busy store in Ohio and was always down there during the week.

In late 1956, I had earned enough money to buy a new 1957 Chevrolet. On one trip to the Homer job site, near Battle Creek, I received my first traffic ticket. It was for passing on a yellow line. It was in an area where the road went up and down with a view a long way ahead. No excuse.

I really liked Leo. I learned to spell his name quickly. He said, "just remember – "O", double "p", "e", double "n", double "e", "r"; and it still works today. I have this information on the web and a couple years ago, his niece found that information. She e-mailed me and confirmed that was how she learned to spell it also. She confirmed some of his comical replies, like, "Fart In A Jug" or "Holy Pecker Head".

The office was not supplied with tools like we have today. We had a hand operated [mechanical adding machine](#) and a calculator comptometer.

At my desk I drew design information on 8 ½" x 14" forms for the construction of telephone lines.

The construction units included, poles, pole guy wire, anchors, cross-arms, open-wire, cable, strand the cable was attached to, and terminals spliced into the cables. I took notes from a staking crew who walked every road and alley in the company area. This crew was experienced because they had measured out 100's of miles of pole lines for the building of electrical lines in Northern Michigan.

They measured the spaces between the poles using a two hundred-foot-long-steel tape. It was called a "[Chain](#)". When they reached the end of the chain, measuring from the last stake, the back worker would howler out, "Chain One". The spans be between poles could be from 50 feet. To 700 ft., depending on what type of facility was being placed on the poles.

Many of the pole lines had to be constructed over farm fields because most of the country roads were lined with brush and trees which were too expensive to cut down. One of my jobs was to obtain rights-of-way across the fields. While obtaining these permits, I had two encounters with dogs. One bit me after I got the farmers signature who was out in the field working. He had a little boy out there with him. His dog walked back with to the house also. The dog nabbed me when I got too close to the house. It was a deep bite, so I had to get a rabies shot. The other encounter was a huge Saint Bernard. I went to the house and found no one home. He jumped me with mouth around my throat. I placed one arm around his neck, holding him off and back into my car.

In the first month of 1957 I received bad news at home. On January 31st, my Grandpa Sheckler had passed away.

By a strange coincidence, Pa's brother, Keith, died the same day. The funerals were held in the parlors just one day apart.

CHANCES of a BURGLAR's SON



The photo here is how I like to member him. He was reading a letter I had sent home from Little Creek, Virginia.

Grandpa was still a school bus driver and had just started his route. He felt the problem coming on, pulled the bus over where he was found. He had a stroke. He died at the Douglas hospital. I was one of the pallbearers. I really loved my grandfather. He added a lot to my life.

Back on my job; I had to order stakes for locating poles during construction. The lumberyard was across the street from our office. The stakes were cut from 1 x 4 lumber, 24 inches long. Two stakes came from this piece by cutting diagonally, length wise, corner to corner. That made a stake with a point on one end and a place to write the pole number on the other end. An accident happened in cutting the stakes here. The old guy cut off his thumb while learning, what was the best way to cut the stakes.

One time, while I was setting construction stakes, I walked up to this older pole and there was a rattle snake. A weird thing happened. There were baby snakes there also and they ran right into the mouth of the big snake. I just got out of there. On another occasion, at the four way stop intersection of US 27 and M-60, I was setting stakes again. I heard a loud screech and a bang. A gray hound bus had just hit a car broad side, hard. I ran over to the scene and found there was nothing we could do for those in the car. A man and a young boy were killed instantly. Their bodies had splits all over them but there was no blood.

CHANCES of a BURGLAR's SON

Back in down town Homer, on another occasion, the contractor was setting new poles. In digging holes for poles, they would sometimes hit rocks that had to be removed. This time, to blow the hole, dynamite was placed, a tire was placed over the hole to direct the blast down. The man setting the charge had a helper back by their truck to touch the blast off with the truck battery. Well he did, too early. The man at the hole had his hands blown off.

Maps for the area were created at the home office. Electronics Engineer, Glen Garrison was in charge of the telephone cable and wire connection design. His main concern was the design of the switching equipment in the office. He, his family and I became good friends for many years. His niece became Miss America in 1961. Her name was Nancy Fleming and her married name is Nancy Lange. [*see Chance 8 for the 1st^t Nancy Lange I met*]. In 2011 I wanted to contact Glen again, so I emailed Mrs. Lange. Guess what, she answered me. Glen moved to Georgia after his wife died. He had re-married to Miss Georgia. ☺

My rooming house in this town was a scene that added a lot of meaning to my life. Mrs. Kurts used three upstairs rooms to take in roomers. I don't remember seeing another guest in the front room. I believe there were two rooms in the back. One room was a lady who lived as the house. A sitter during Mrs. K's absence. The other room was her 18-year-old daughters. There was a huge bathroom centrally located which we all shared.

You read the word, "daughter". Her name was Laura who was a senior in high school and a cheer leader. She had many privileges, including having a beautiful white horse, kept in a stall in the garage behind the house. I was invited a few times to share their family life, like eating meals with them. I was even invited to dinner one time to the farm home of Mrs. Kurts' daughter, north of town. I joined Gladys and Laura to church a couple times and even went to Laura's graduation. One time I went to an out of town football game and brought Laura home. I was just too lame headed not to get into a relationship.

One time later however a different situation arose. Laura had a pajama party with three of her cheer leading friends. One of the girls turned out to be somewhat of a nymph, her name was Nancy Norton. Yup, the fourth Nancy in my life. While Laura was off to the back of the house, Nancy persuaded the other girls to come up to my room. She came in without knocking and woke me up. She striped down, pulled my pajamas off and said, "let's have some fun". The other two wanted to share the fun so off their jammies came. Imagine six wonderful boobies bouncing around. This was a once in a life time dream. IT WAS REAL. Of course, I was aroused, and Nancy jumped on my man part. My first actual copulation encounter in my life.

The happiness did not last long. Laura heard the commotion, saw what was happening, screamed and kicked the girls out. Nancy and I were together three times, on the rooming house living room floor, on her parent's couch and in the back seat of my 57 Chevy. This really happened when I was 22 years of age.

Later Nancy became pregnant and announced that I was the father. Laura put her straight. "Nancy, just think a while, how long ago did LaVerne leave town. He could not possible have been the father". I found out many, many, years later, that [LAURA sent me a letter](#) saying she loved me.



Laura became a nurse and married a navy officer. A few years later, on duty in Hawaii, she went scuba diving, alone, hit her head on a rock and died. The manager of the phone company knew I had cared for her and let me know about Laura's death.

The last encounter at this project was to remove the old telephones. I was given many to take back home. I sold the phones like this to a florist. He had them made into flower boxes. Nearly all the old phones were burned in a big bonfire. ☹

Chance 14 – LIVING WITH PARENTS 1957 – 1958

When the Homer project was complete, I worked out of Mom and Pa's home on Hutchins Lake. For a few weeks I was up at Kingsley, staying at a motel in Traverse City. The job was to update the pole line staking in front of the contractor who was placing the poles. The stakes had earlier been placed by Harry Behling and his father Frank.

After Kingsley, I staked a project closer to home. The rewiring of the Bloomingdale Telephone Company. This was very interesting to me because this is an area my mother grew up in.

The very northern part of the telephone exchange area is where my Grandpa Sheckler moved to, upon marrying his second wife Ethel. Ethel's sister, Edith Lickley, lived as the most northern customer of the phone company. Lickley's were daughters of [John Barnett](#) whose home was a half mile west of the Noble school on the south side of the road.

Grandpa Sheckler moved onto the F. L. Harrington farm, just east of the Noble school, on the north side of the road. Grandpa worked the 50-acre farm which had the normal farm animals. Mom remembers her new brother, Linn Jr., chasing the pigs.

The Noble school is no longer there. My sister Carolyn, attended that school there for several years while living with Frank and Edith Lickley. Yes, Uncle Merrill, as a young boy, went to school there also.

I enjoyed the drive from Hutchins Lake, through Bravo and Pullman, to Bloomingdale. For some reason, I dream about the drive, but the location is only similar, not the same towns.

I took a side job with Bloomingdale School for a time. I changed the light bulbs at the football field. The poles were stepped so it was not too big a problem. Reaching out around the lamp shade, at the end of the mounting arm was most frightening. I got \$5.00 a bulb.

Chance 15 – MONROE COUNTY

Fall - 1958

After moving to this new job in Lambertville, I up graded by trading from my 57 Chevy to a 58 Pontiac. I purchased the car at Bales Pontiac Fennville. The dealer was owned by the family of my classmate, Skip Bale. I loved how this car purr-r-r-ed on the road.

It was winter time and I took my new car up to Montague to show it off to Patty. With another couple in the car, we took a drive along Lake Michigan. The roads were icy, and I was actually driving, too slow, on a tight curve. The car slid down into the lower part of the curve and spun around, stopping up against a guard rail. Patty yield, "this is it, this is it", as we looked way down into a canyon along the lake. There was a State Patrol car right behind us, seeing we were alright, just kept on driving.

Moving to Monroe County, I took up rooming with Hazel Krueger and her mother Maude Spencer in Temperance. The new project was to rebuild the Whiteford Telephone Company. The old telephone company office, in Whiteford Center is where Leo set up Daverman's Field Office.



This office was in an old home where in the converted living room were four operators transferring calls that customers had cranked up. The lady with the headband, front, became one of my aunt's because I married her niece.

The operators name was Helen Jacobs. and soon after we met, she thought I was a good match for her niece. Well, it took a long time for us to even meet. Remember that letter that [Laura sent](#) me from Calhoun County. I never saw that letter. Aunty saw the mail come into their office where I received mail for a while. Helen pocketed that letter because she had read it and knew it was just high school puppy love. Her daughter found it when Helen died.

Helen's daughter, Joan, mailed it to my wife. Letha gave it to me in October of 2016. YES; My life was designed to take care of the lady I was to meet in Temperance.

The project in Lambertville was very similar to the Homer job. The new dial office was a couple miles east at the edge of Lambertville. I staked the new pole lines with help of a local farmer, Russ Myers. We became good friends and still are today. On weekends, we sometimes ventured out to pick up girls, neither of us were too good at it. I also became friends with the company manager, Fred Krumm. One time we ventured out to a dance hall in East Toledo. He got lucky there, found a girl and married her.

At the new office, I became friends with the receptionist, Jane Kaemming. We were friends until her death. I posted a story she wrote about an adventure she took to an old town in [Western Colorado](#). The reason she became a friend was because her daughter Janus was friends with my future bride. Mrs. Kaemming modified her daughter's wedding gown for my bride.

At Ms.'s Krueger's rooming house I had a lot of fun. One time her mother, who always made my bed, short sheeted it. I could not get in between the sheets. What a joke. Another day I was washing my car and Hazel's granddaughter came buy. She was really cute and for some time I was hoping to date her, but it was not to happen. But also, while washing the car there were other girls that came with the granddaughter and they were all introduced to me. One girl remembers it well, but I do not. She was to be my future bride, as designed, the niece of the phone operator.

After the phone company was rebuilt and operating, with the company owned by the engineering company I worked for, I was not going to be needed for a while for the work I was trained for. I transferred to being an installer repairman for the phone company. I learned to set poles, install drop wires to the houses, wire new houses for service, run jumper wires in the office to connect the correct pair to the electronic office equipment, etc.

CHANCES of a BURGLAR's SON

One job I did not like, was climbing poles. One time a span of open wire, spanning the expressway, broke. The pole to make the repair on was the narrowest kind available, a class nine. Nine inches in diameter. When climbing it, it was easy to miss the pole with your climbing spurs. This is where the manager and I had to not use friendship to get the job done. He was there to help me to know how to repair the broken wire.

The traffic on the expressway was stopped and the wire pulled back up where I could carry it up the pole, but still broken. The traffic moved on. To bring the two broken ends of the wire together I had to first connect the two ends of a [block and tackle](#) on to the wires, then shorten the distance between the wire ends by pulling ropes of the device together. I just could not get the strength or nerve to do this. My knees were shaking like mad. Fred almost started to curse at me, yelling at me, down there, thirty feet below. Get it done Vern. I did.

Chance 16 – MARRIED - April 23, 1960

The first day of the rest of my life. Letha is a lady who wanted children and we now have a wonderful son and a wonderful daughter. BUT it took several weeks to consummate our marriage. I wish I could dance with her, but she always needs to lead. My life was designed to take care of her. I should have known at that time but only learned why in the year 2016.

Chance 17 – LENAWEE COUNTY 1961

Train ride through Iowa, Nebraska, and Colorado.

Chance 18 – KENT COUNTY 1962

**Chance 19 – ROCK ISLAND COUNTY
1963**

Trip to Gulf via:
Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Chance 20 – INDEPENDENCE COUNTY - 1964

Found position where we could settle down

Chance 21 – St. CLARE COUNTY - 1965

Employed with Illini State Telephone Company
which was recently formed.

Chance 22 – WASHINGTON COUNTY - 1966-67-68

I started to build my dream house on 5 acres. May and I welcomed in to the world two children, Bryan and Kelly.

In 1969 trouble started from the greed of other company employee – The BULLY took over my job while we were on vacation. I didn't fight, I ran to work in another part of the company where I was welcome.

Chance 23 – RENVILLE COUNTY - 1969

Wisconsin, and Minnesota

Saw Landing on the moon from new home in Hector.

We made some very good friends here. The world's best sweet corn is grown here. Designed new telephone plant on Lake Minnetonka. After words, I was not able to have a good position here, so I got a job with my old company back in Michigan.

Chance 24 – HILLSDALE COUNTY – 1970

Here I perfected the best set of [Plant Records](#) available for Small Telephone Companies. After the project was complete, I was accepted as engineer for Telephone Company in Perry, Michigan.

Chance 25 – SHIAWASSEE COUNTY - 1971-72

The manager was good to work for. We settled in well here. I even joined the Lions Club. We hosted a girl from Finland to visit America. I soon became impatient after setting up the company's property records and wanted more of a challenge.

Chance 26 – STEPHENSON COUNTY - 1973-74

I accepted a job as chief engineer for a larger company. Again, the challenge was good, but the manager had a problem, he thought I had a problem. He had studied psychology a little and wanted to help. Then he did a stupid thing. He asked use to join him and his wife to play switch.

Again, I chose to run and not fight. I found another new position in Flippin, Arkansas. My engineering partner, Fred Muller flew me there in a small plane.

Chance 27 – BAXTER COUNTY - 1975-76

The Accounting manager at the Northern Arkansas Telephone Company wanted me there to set up their property records. While setting up these records we also built a new home in Mountain Home. I wrote Plant Record Articles for the [Telephony Magazine](#). But, again, a problem came up with my work.

The Owner of the company was having health problems and was convinced I was not capable of working there as an engineer. He was kind of a BULLY. No one else there felt that way but somehow that screwed up my mind and I ran again. How my family ever put up with me I'll never know.

I went as a contractor, way down to San Juan, Puerto Rico. After a fellow engineer showed me where I would work, that scared the hell out of me. I grabbed the next plane for home via Miami, Atlanta, St. Louis and Springfield, where my family welcomed me with open arms. What a surprise I got, the wife of the phone company gave me my job back until I could find another job.

Chance 28 – MOHAVE COUNTY – 1977

I quickly found another position, way out west. I flew from Springfield, to St. Louis, to Las Vegas then by a small plane to Kingman, Arizona. I rented the only housing available, a small 30-year-old mobile home with a swamp cooler.

To move the family, we drove that old ford west. The first night we parked in the open and slept on top of the car in Oklahoma. The next night in a motel, still in Oklahoma. On entering Arizona, after stopping at Meteor Crater, we found we should not have kept our snow tires on. One blew out.

What a fun place, Kingman. With the Lions Club, again, I cut [Christmas trees](#) with the Hualapai Indians. We drove our old, rusted out ford, which we had purchased in Hector, MN, all over that desert country. Bryan stood out on a rock pillar, scaring the life out of us.

One last time, the head engineer got my mind screwed up, a smart ass BULLY from New York. He made me talk on the phone to management in the home office back east, while he stood behind me to tell lies. I ran again. This time to a beautiful position, where I would only prepare records all over the country while living in the NW, where I had always thought would be a good place to live. It is, and look at this, I have now been in 32 states.

To get here we drove through Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona. We also drove in Nevada and California.

Chance 29 – BELLEVUE, WA – 1978

I first flew to Seattle from Las Vegas finding a room in downtown, I appeared at the office of Wesley Bull & Assoc. The office overlooked the corner of 2nd and Stewart streets. It was here I learned my employer was not as generous as my previous employers. I had to pay for all my moving cost. They did pay it but took it out of my wages. Then, when that was paid, for a year later, my wages stayed the same, they called it a raise.

I did find a nice home to rent in Bellevue. Letha and Kelly flew up to Seattle and Kelly rolled in the grassy back yard, so glad to be away from the dusty, hot wind. Bryan and I put our parakeets and rabbits in the back seat of that old car and drove north. One night we thought we would sleep near the beach of the Pacific Ocean but was encouraged to check into a state park.

My first projects were preparing plant records for companies in Asotin, WA., Friday Harbor WA. & Concord, OR. At the same time the company had purchased a computer. I started to learn to program it in the Basic Language.

Chance 30 – NEVADA – 1980-1982

Driving back and forth to Tonopah, Nevada was fun. Flying to Las Vegas was necessary for my work in Pioche with the Lincoln County Telephone Co.

In Tonopah I explored a lot. I brought home a piece of Lava I picked up on a small dome north of Silver Peak. Way north in Monitor Valley, was a hot spring at Diana's Punch Bowl. At Meadow Canyon I was stuck in some mud for a while. The Ghost Town of Belmont was where I spent some time also.

Another place I spent a lot of time at was at the slots of the Mizpah Hotel. One time I emptied a quarter machine. In the three months, I was there, I lost \$300.

On a short trip there, My wife Letha accompanied me. This is where we encountered a small cattle drive going down the road in California. On another trip, I drove home by way of Death Valley without any incidence. I did spot a fire in a power transformer near the Navy's China Lake compound. I was heading for a Ducor, CA for another small records project.

Pioche, NV was a little different. Many of the employees there were under doctors' care for radiation due to the atomic tests that occurred west of that area. On a return trip, in 1985 I crossed the border into Utah, just to say I was there.

You see my reports on these events on my [web pages](#).

Chance 31 – Philippines – 1983

With a little computer training, the company saw fit for me to travel to Subic Bay, Philippines, Via Tokyo and Manila, where I was to convince the Navy they should not use a Radio Shack computer to maintain their records. I did prove that, but while working one Sunday behind locked gates, I found myself locked outside the building. There was a weapons armory adjacent to my fenced in complex and a guard walking the perimeter of the armory. I asked him to call somebody, he did, out of the barracks came the officer in charge, with no shirt, yelling "where is he, where is he". I soon heard sirens 4 armed vehicles arrived. The OOD then began to laugh and called my sponsor to help.

I didn't like Manila where there was too much poverty. The country area was interesting. I had to room off base, in a hotel named "The Holliday Inn". It wasn't, but the swimming pool was beautiful. On one occasion, I saw fruit bats hanging from trees, another, coins being tossed into filthy creeks for kids to dive in and recover. They didn't live be very old, I heard. While there, the road to the hotel was being rebuilt by a Korean contractor which they smoothed by small hand trowels.

The best encounter there, was seeing my cousin David Hutchins from Fennville, on his ship the Elliot. He was a chief and he gave me a tour where I saw that it was propelled by jet engines. I was the Phillippe's for a month.

Chance 32 – Alaska – 1984,85

Also, I worked in the small town of Troy, Idaho; just east of Moscow was a small records project for me but I have kept no record of what occurred there.

Chance 33 – Trip with Bryan – 1986

We drove through Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota and on east.

Bryan built our own computer.



1991 Vancouver Island

Chance 34 – Bothell WA 1996 - 2006

We made trips to Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Kansas, and North Dakota.

2003 started Sheckler family studies

2004 wrote book "NAVY SUPER TANKERS"

2005 started Bouwman family studies

Chance 35 - Navy Web Paging

My first report page was in 2010. It about the transporting of a retired navy vessel, the "Last Voyage of SS *Pan American Victory*". My first record with a map of the voyage occurred with the USS *Reclaimer* ARS-42. The Reclaimer was a ship formerly served on by Kawishiwi shipmate, Pat Winston. Pat was a devout reunion host with homes in Hawaii and Utah.

As I wrote these pages, I followed the "LAST THREE OILERS" to depart from Suisun Bay. I follow these voyages with the help of patriotic tow company crews who love to share their encounters on the high seas. The company is "SMITH MARITIME" based in Green Cove Springs, FL.

In the Suisun Bay area, my best partner is Captain Patrick Moloney who commands the Liberty ship "S.S. *Jeremiah O'Brien*" at Fisherman's wharf in San Francisco. We have been friends since 2005 when I hosted a Kawishiwi Reunion. The hotel for the reunion was shared with the reunion of USS *Misphillion* AO-105.

The best links to these voyages are found on my [Tug Page](#):

A good site to follow all of my pages is on my map pages. View the [Pacific Map](#). The Atlantic map is found by clicking on the edge of the Pacific Map. Both maps are based on the histories of all six Neosho Class oilers.

Chance 36

Three days after my 79th birthday, as I lay in bed thinking about my past, I was awakened. Holy Toledo, the whole town knew about [CHANCE 6]. That's why I was given all those chances. I have spent 100's of hours since I retired in the year 2000, thinking about my past. Where I was born, why there were so my relatives I never met. If only I had asked questions, like my history teacher may have tried to instill in me. But that was my worst class; "D's".

Chance 37

It's been a while since writing here. The time, September 2016. We sold our home in Holly Hills a year ago and moved into an apartment a half mile away – AVANA. The complex costs way too much so we found a less expensive complex, for seniors, and we are preparing to move again. In Trashing many items, Letha brought out a Love Letter that was sent to me before we were married. I HAD NEVER SEEN IT. Again; this was destined to be. If only I had known about how young girls develop in different ways. Read ["A 1935 Article"](#).

In October, we moved into the Vintage at Lakewood Retirement complex in Marysville, WA. It is a secure building and we are living well, working together, here.

Through the years I had many "**Vacuous**" thoughts. That word means; lack of serious though, hasty, impulsive, reckless, thoughtless, impulsive, unwise, indiscreet, lacking self-restraint.